

Smart October 2024

Assessor guidance

This document contains the guidance and scoring used by the Assessors when reviewing your application. Assessors will review your answers for each scored question and mark each of them between 1 and 10 (1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest).

Any questions that are not scored will not be reviewed by the Assessor.

Question 1: Applicant location (not scored)

You must state the name and full registered address of your organisation and any partners or subcontractors working on your project.

We are collecting this information to understand the geographical location of all applicants.

Question 2. Animal testing (not scored)

Will your project involve any trials with animals or animal testing?

You must select one option:

- Yes
- No

We will only support innovation projects conducted to the highest standards of animal welfare.

Question 3. Permits and licences (not scored)

Will you have the correct permits and licences in place to carry out your project?

We are unable to fund projects who do not have the correct permits or licences in place by your project start date.

You must select one option:

- Yes
- No
- In process of being applied for
- Not applicable

Question 4. Your idea and innovation

What is your idea and innovation, and why is it game changing?

Explain in your answer:

- the specific innovation you propose to develop
- how your innovation is clearly different from alternative solutions that are already available
- whether the innovation is for new solutions in existing areas, or a totally new approach or idea
- the specific need or challenge you propose to address and who would benefit from it immediately and longer term
- any work you have already done to respond to this need, for example, if the project focuses on developing an existing capability or building a new one
- any challenges or opportunities relating to equality, diversity and inclusion arising from your project

You must submit an appendix to support your answer. It can include diagrams or charts to showcase the technical merit of your innovation and should evidence how it is world leading. It must be a PDF no larger than 10MB. It can be up to two A4 pages but must be legible at 100% zoom.

Assessors will be looking for proposals involving a game changing, world class innovation where the innovation need is clearly defined. Nearest state of the art is understood and evidenced, and the proposal demonstrates an idea that is different to, and ahead of alternative, already available solutions.

A fully developed proposal needs to go beyond presenting a brand new, commercially viable idea, and should demonstrate a structured and evidenced understanding of the sector and the opportunity identified.

Question 4: Your idea and innovation - Assessor guidance and scoring

Scores 8– 10

There is a compelling reason for the project and innovation including how it is game changing and of the highest technical merit.

It credibly addresses the need and opportunity identified, including a full understanding of nearest state of the art, and how the innovation described builds on, or is materially different to, other alternative solutions that are already available.

Challenges and opportunities relating to equality, diversity and inclusion have been considered and embedded in the proposal where applicable.

Scores 6 - 7

There is a clear reason for the project, and the innovation described has merit and will address the need and opportunity identified.

Nearest state of the art is detailed, but it is not clear how the innovation described will improve on or is different to currently available offerings.

Further development of the idea is required.

Scores 4 - 5

The reason for the project is good, but the innovation lacks merit or is not different to other alternative solutions.

Nearest state of the art has not been fully explored, and the opportunity identified has not been fully realised or understood.

Scores 2 - 3

The reason for the project is poorly defined, and the innovation described has little merit.

It is unclear what need or opportunity the innovation intends to address. The nearest state of the art has not been explored, and the innovation described does not improve on current offerings.

Score 1

There is no clear reason for the project, and the innovation described is not game changing or disruptive.

References to current state of the art are not offered or are not relevant, and the idea described will not impact on current offerings.

Question 5. Justification for funding

Why is your innovation and proposal suitable for Smart funding, and why do you need public funding to help you succeed?

Smart grants are a highly competitive competition, where only the very best game changing and disruptive ideas, which score highly, will be successful in securing funding.

Explain in your answer:

- the journey you have followed to ensure you are ready for Smart grant funding, including any training, support and mentoring you have undertaken
- any other routes of investment, including alternatives from the public and private sectors, that you have already explored, why they are unsuitable, or why your application was turned down
- why you consider Smart funding to be the right route for your project, organisation and consortium, where applicable
- what will happen to your project if you are not successful in securing Smart funding

- what clear advantages would public funding offer your project that other routes would not; for example, enabling partnerships, leveraging wider investment, reducing risk and accelerating routes to market
- why public funding is justified as a means to fund this project

Assessors will be looking for applicants who have researched the match between their needs and grant readiness against the scope of the competition before applying for Smart funding.

They will also assess the impact that Smart funding will have in terms of what would happen to the project if it did not secure grant support. For example, would it still be able to go ahead albeit with adjustments or would it not be able to go ahead at all.

For projects where benefits will accrue to others outside the project, they will look at the unique advantages Smart public funding will bring in de-risking the costs for the applicants.

Question 5: Justification for funding - Assessor guidance and scoring

Scores 8 - 10

A strong and compelling case for Smart funding has been presented.

The project team have clearly articulated their readiness for grant funding and the journey leading to a Smart application. Valid and justified arguments as to why other funding mechanisms are not appropriate have been presented.

Smart funding will materially change the trajectory or outcome of the project and will bring unique advantages.

Scores 6 – 7

A reasonable case for Smart funding has been presented.

The project team have described their journey leading to a Smart application. This includes details of other funding opportunities considered and discounted, but further details are required.

The advantages of public funding have been explored and Smart funding will positively impact on the project.

Scores 4 - 5

Some justification for Smart funding has been provided, including high level detail surrounding their journey and readiness for grant funding, but this could be expanded.

Some consideration has been given to other funding opportunities, but a more in-depth review is required.

Advantages of public funding are limited, and the impact of Smart funding would be minimal.

Scores 2 - 3

The reason for Smart funding is unclear and the argument for public funding has not been substantiated or justified. Limited detail has been provided surrounding the applicant's readiness for grant funding.

Other funding opportunities have not been explored in a meaningful way.

Score 1

No justification for public funding has been provided, or the project could be self funded.

The project team have not described their journey to the point of application, and no other funding mechanisms or opportunities have been explored.

Question 6. The potential market

What is your target market and what is your strategy for securing the market opportunity you have identified, including your route to market and commercialisation of project outputs?

Explain in your answer:

- the size and current structure of the specific markets you are targeting, including international, domestic, or both, supported by current market data

- the structure and dynamics of the target markets and how your innovation is distinct and strong enough to change and impact these, including customer segmentation, competitors, trends affecting market growth, and predicted growth rates within clear timeframes
- who is ready to commit to buying your innovation, and how you will ensure significant return on investment (ROI), including evidence from any end user or market research that you have already carried out
- your agreed plan for exploitation, your proposed route to market and commercialisation, including your business models and any partnerships you have formed or will be looking to form to secure market share
- the export potential for your project outputs
- any barriers to entry and how you will overcome these
- your freedom to operate and your project outcome's potential for significant but realistic returns

Assessors will be looking for proposals where the target market and customer base have clearly been researched and defined, and a strong understanding of the potential markets, including how the proposed innovation will disrupt these in an ambitious way, has been presented and evidenced.

Route to market and commercialisation plans must demonstrate business skills and planning, the potential for early revenue generation, de-risking the path to significant ROI, and how commercial viability will be achieved.

All plans must be realistic, appropriate, and practical for the identified market, including any barriers that exist and provide achievable solutions to show how these will be overcome.

Question 6: The potential market - Assessor guidance and scoring

Scores 8 – 10

The target market size, structure and dynamics are well understood and are fully quantified and evidenced. The likely impact that the innovation described will have is significant and any claims relating to this have been substantiated.

Barriers to market entry have been understood and a realistic plan to address these has been presented. Target customers have been identified and there is an evidence-based understanding of the value proposition to them.

Strategies for route to market are realistic, well defined and evidenced, and show significant potential for healthy ROI, as well as an increase in market share and opportunities.

Scores 6 - 7

There is a good awareness of the target market's structure and dynamics, and the market size is quantified with some supporting evidence provided.

Barriers to market entry have been identified but further detail is required as to how these will be addressed to allow successful commercialisation. Target customers have been identified and there is some understanding of the value proposition to them.

The route to market, exploitation and commercialisation of project outputs is broadly outlined and shows some potential for ROI and an increase in market share.

Scores 4 - 5

The general market size and dynamics are understood but the specific target market is poorly quantified, and no supporting evidence has been provided. Target customers are described but the value proposition to them is not clear.

The route to market is not clearly defined or explained and plans for commercialisation lack clarity and detail. It is not clear how ROI will be achieved.

Scores 2 - 3

Some information about the general market is offered but the extent and size of the target market for the project is not described.

There is some information about target customers, but it is not clear what the route to market will be or how the innovation will be commercialised.

Score 1

The market is poorly defined or is irrelevant to the reasons for the project.

No information on customers has been presented, or there are no plans to bring the innovation to market or commercialise project outputs and outcomes.

Question 7. Impact and benefits

What will be the impact of receiving the grant, both for your business and outside your organisation?

Explain in your answer:

- the nature of the outputs you expect from your project, for example, reports, demonstrator, know-how, new process, product or service design, and how these will help you to target the need, challenge or opportunity identified
- how your project fits with your current product, service lines or offerings and how your organisation will profit from the innovation, including increased revenues, growth, or cost reduction
- how your innovation will affect your share of the market, productivity and growth, in both the short and the long term
- the timescale needed to realise these benefits
- how your innovation will impact on the creation, safeguarding or displacing of jobs, both within your consortium and the wider sector
- how you will protect and exploit the outputs of the project, for example, through know-how, patenting, designs, or changes to your business model
- the sustained, long term expected impacts on the UK economy, society, and the environment, to your customers, supply chains and the broader sector
- any expected regional impacts
- any negative impacts that you have identified, and how you will mitigate against these
- how you have considered equality, diversity and inclusion in the development and design of your innovation, for example, unintended exclusion of minority groups

Assessors will be looking for proposals that deliver and evidence considerable positive impact for the organisations involved and for the wider economy.

Impact should be considered at every level, from job security or creation and safer working environments or practices, to developing skills, capacity, increasing market share.

Societal, environmental and regional benefits should also be demonstrated and measured, for example benefits to quality of life, public empowerment and waste avoidance.

Question 7: Impact and benefits - Assessor guidance and scoring

Scores 8 - 10

Project outputs are well defined, and a wide range of positive impacts relevant to the proposed innovation have been described, evidenced, and are embedded in the development of the proposal.

Timelines for benefits realisation are fully developed and realistic.

Any possible negative impacts are outlined and fully mitigated where appropriate.

Scores 6 - 7

There is good awareness of how the project may produce positive impacts, but these could be further developed, and more evidence is needed to support claims.

Timelines for benefits realisation are broadly described and appropriate.

Negative impacts are identified and mostly mitigated against where appropriate.

Scores 4 - 5

There is basic awareness of the positive impacts of the project, however, there is little evidence to suggest that it will bring about significant benefits.

Timelines for benefits realisation are provided but are poorly described or are unrealistic.

Negative impacts have been identified but little mitigation is provided.

Scores 2 - 3

Some information is provided about possible benefits, but it is not clear how this will bring about positive impact.

Negative impacts are not considered.

Score 1

There is no information given about the impact or benefits of the project.

Any information provided is unsubstantiated or is not relevant to the innovation or sector discussed.

Question 8. Delivering your project

Who is in the project team, why do you have the right skills and experience to succeed, and how will you successfully deliver your project?

Explain in your answer:

- the roles, skills, expertise and experience, including in project and risk management, of all team members, which are relevant to ensuring successful delivery of the project
- the diversity of the project team that is relevant to your approach, observing confidentiality of protected characteristics
- your capability to deliver in the required timeframe, given your existing business activities or constraints, and considering no extensions or delays to the project duration are possible for Smart funded projects
- any roles you will need to recruit for, and how you will promote equality, diversity and inclusion
- the resources, equipment and facilities needed for the project and how you will access them
- the details of any vital external parties, including subcontractors, who you will need to work with to successfully complete the project and why these tasks cannot be carried out by project partners

- the current relationships between project partners and how these will change as a result of the project, if your project is collaborative
- your approach to project management, identifying any major tools and mechanisms you will use to secure a successful project outcome
- how your project team will deliver outcomes and impact beyond the life of the project, and how you will ensure swift, successful commercialisation following project completion

You must submit a project plan to support your answer. This needs to be in sufficient detail to identify any links, dependencies or potential duplication between work packages or milestones.

Your appendix can include diagrams and charts. It must be a PDF no larger than 10MB. It can be up to two A4 pages but must be legible at 100% zoom.

You must also submit a risk register, indicating the main risks for your project, including, but not limited to, technical, commercial, managerial and environmental.

You must include any identified interdependencies between these risks, the likely impact and your mitigation strategy. You should pay particular attention to how you will mitigate project delivery risks with your immediate and extended teams, for example your supply chain or end users.

It must be a PDF, up to two A4 pages long and no larger than 10MB in size. The font must be legible at 100% zoom.

Assessors will be looking for strong and capable project teams, who have clearly shown and evidenced their capacity to deliver the project and outcomes. This must include skills in managing complex R&D projects, financial and risk management as well as technical skills relating to the nature of the innovation itself.

Project plans should be realistic and should show how progress will be tracked and managed. A comprehensive risk register should give confidence that the project team have the necessary tools and mitigation strategies in place to successfully overcome challenges that may be encountered.

If applicable, relationships between consortium members, and how this will lead to the successful delivery of work packages, should be defined. Post-project strategies for commercialisation should be adequately resourced and should take into account existing business commitments and plans.

Question 8: Delivering your project - Assessor guidance and scoring

Scores 8 – 10

The team described have the relevant skills, expertise and experience, and give confidence that they will successfully deliver the project. The approach to project management is structured and well designed to meet the aims and objectives described.

A comprehensive risk register is provided, including mitigation plans that allow for continued delivery in the timelines specified.

Where applicable, relationships between consortium members show evidence of true collaboration. Post-project plans for commercialisation are fully resourced and embedded in ongoing business as usual.

Any gaps in knowledge and expertise are identified, and appropriate recruitment plans are in place.

Scores 6 - 7

The team described have the relevant skills, expertise, and experience to successfully deliver the project, but some areas are weaker than others. The approach to project management is sound, and the project plan allows aims and objectives to be achieved within the timeframes detailed.

A risk register covering key risks is provided, and mitigation plans are sensible and appropriate.

Relationships between consortium members (where applicable) are defined and provide confidence that each partner is committed to the project. Post-project plans for commercialisation have been considered and described at a high level.

Gaps in knowledge and expertise within the project team are identified.

Scores 4 - 5

The team described has some level of skill, expertise and experience, but it is not clear how this will translate to the successful delivery of the project. Gaps in knowledge or project management skills are evident but are not identified or mitigated.

A project plan and risk register are provided and cover key areas at a high level, but more detail is required.

It is unclear what will happen once the funded project has completed and how the team will move forward towards commercialisation.

Relationships between consortium members (where applicable) are not clearly defined, and it is not evident how each partner will work together to deliver their input.

Scores 2 - 3

The team described does not have the skills, expertise and experience required to deliver the project, with significant gaps in knowledge evident. Project planning and risk management is at a very high level and is missing vital information.

No consideration has been given to post-project planning. Relationships between consortium members (where applicable) are not defined and it is not evident what each partner brings to the project.

Score 1

It is unclear how the project team will be able to achieve delivery of the identified aims and objectives. The project plan and risk register give no confidence or has not been provided.

Question 9. Value for money

How will you spend your grant funding and how does this represent good value for money for the taxpayer?

Explain in your answer:

- what the funding will be spent on and how are costs distributed between consortium partners, if applicable
- a breakdown of costs aligned with tasks or work packages, and how best value for money has been calculated, for example, quotation comparison
- how you and any project partners will fund their contribution to the project and ensure that this is in place, ready for the latest possible start date stated in the competition's eligibility criteria

- any subcontractor costs and how these have been calculated
- how you will fund and resource any post project activities to continue your journey towards commercialisation
- any wider support that you may need to access, for example, partnerships, private finance and export advice, and how this is critical to project success

Assessors will be looking for proposals where costs are commensurate with works being carried out, with evidence of how best value for money has been calculated.

Availability of match funding should be agreed by all consortium partners, where applicable, to ensure that the project is able to proceed if successful in this competition. Assessors will also be looking beyond the project to confirm solid financial planning, which will lead to swift commercialisation.

The project must demonstrate it is fully resourced, financed and has plans in place to maximise chances of success, for example, is funding available, is expertise in commercialisation and growth in house or externally provided.

Question 9: Value for money - Assessor guidance and scoring

Scores 8-10

The project costs are entirely appropriate for the research and development work described and represent excellent value for money, with evidence provided to show how costs have been determined where appropriate.

The organisations involved have a clear idea of how they will finance their contribution and are fully committed to the project. The balance of costs and grants between any consortium members and use of subcontractors is justified.

Commitment to post-project activities is evident, and these are fully resourced and funded.

Scores 6 – 7

The project costs are appropriate based on the work proposed. The balance of costs and grants between any consortium members and use of subcontractors seems reasonable and organisations have considered how they will fund their contribution.

Overall, the project represents good value for money, but more detail could be provided surrounding how best value for money has been decided.

Post-project activities are defined, and some detail is given surrounding how these will be resourced and funded.

Scores 4-5

The project costs seem reasonable, but the breakdown and justification could be clearer to determine if this represents good value for money.

The balance of costs and grants between any consortium members or subcontractors is acceptable for the works to be undertaken. It is unclear how organisations will finance their contribution to the project or how post-project activities will be funded or resourced.

Scores 2 – 3

The project costs seem too high or too low given the proposed project.

The split of costs and grants between any consortium members is unbalanced, or inappropriate use is being made of subcontractors.

Little consideration has been given to best value for money.

Score 1

The costs are not appropriate or justified.

There is no balance between consortium members and subcontractors involved.

The project does not represent good value for money.