Future Flight: Strategic Growth

Applicant Briefing

Date: 19/05/2025

The webinar will start at 11:00.

- Welcome, we are currently waiting for more people to join.
- This briefing will be recorded. A copy of the slides and the recording link will be made available on IFS.
- Please enter any questions that you may have into the Q&A Box.
- For more information on the competition process, please click here to access our YouTube channel.

Welcome and Introductions

James Rayner

Competition Manager

Vicki Murdie

Innovation Lead

Simon Masters

Deputy Challenge Director Future Flight

UKRI Innovate UK

Agenda

- Key Dates
- Competition Summary & Scope
- Eligibility Criteria
- Innovation Funding Service (IFS)
- Funding Rules
- Assessment
- Use of AI
- Additional Support
- Q&A

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Key Dates

Timeline	Dates
Competition Opened	12th of May 2025
Submission Deadline	11th of June 2025 at 11am
Applicants informed	3rd of July 2025 by 5pm
Project start and end dates	Start on 1st of September 2025 End by 31st of March 2026

Innovate UK

Competition Summary & Scope

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Future Flight Challenge context

The Future Flight Challenge is driven by creating growth and new market opportunities from better connectivity

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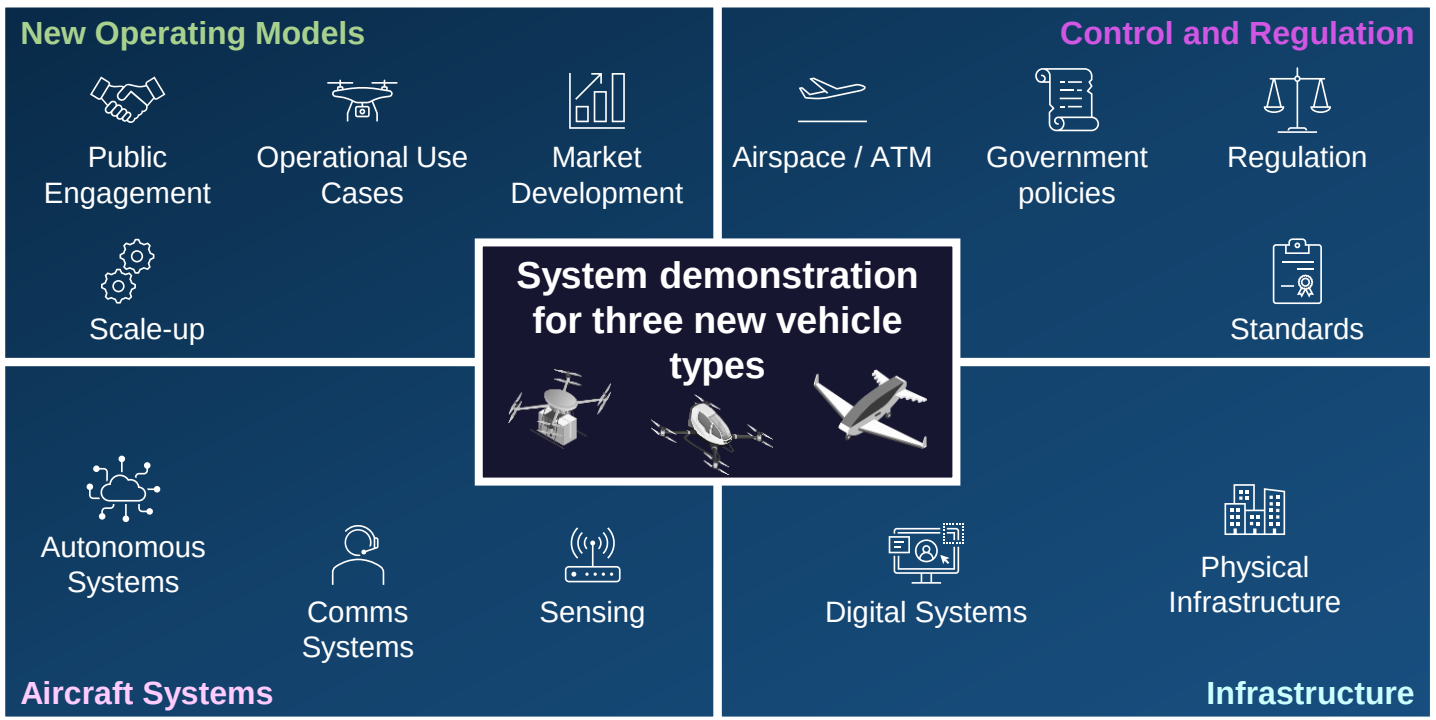
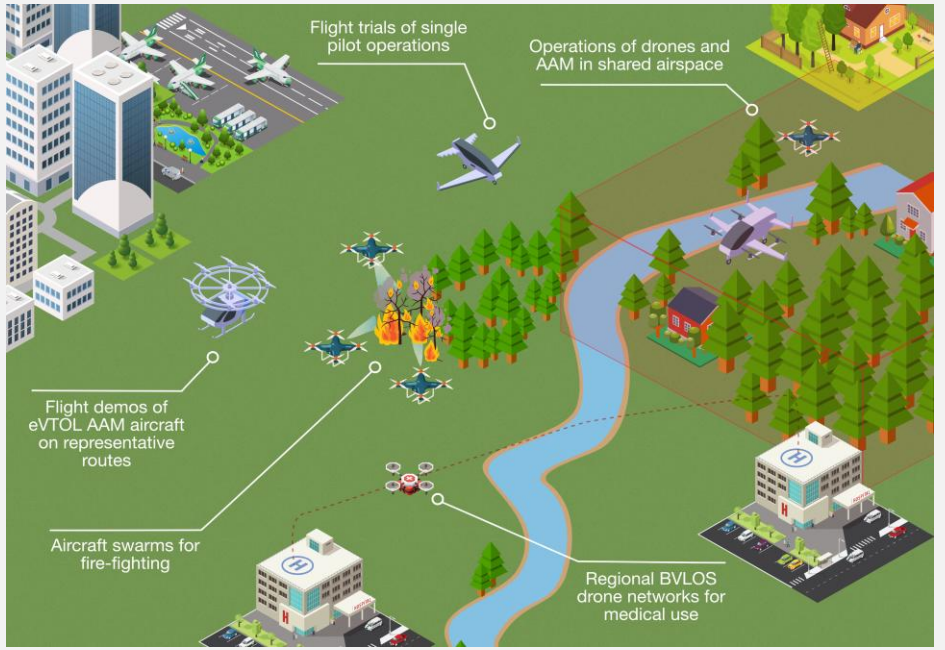
A digitally enabled, net zero, distributed aviation system

Future Flight Challenge context

We take an ecosystem approach…



..and deliver challenging real-world use cases with huge market potential ...



… with a people-based focus on social benefits and desirability

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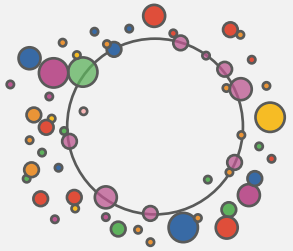
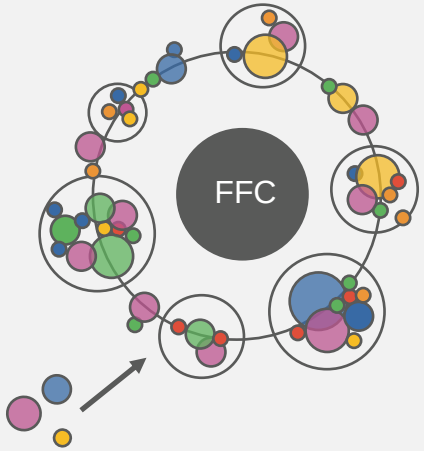
A multi-phase programme, developing a community

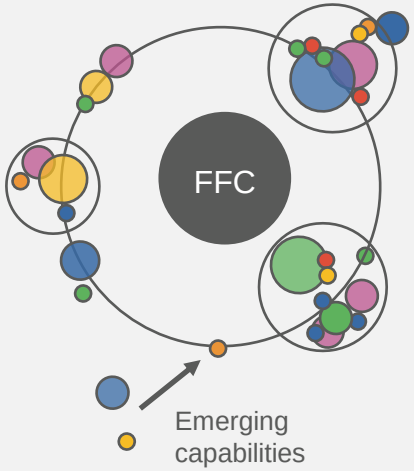
2019 – 2020	2020 – 2022	2022 – 2024
Concepts	Development	Demonstration



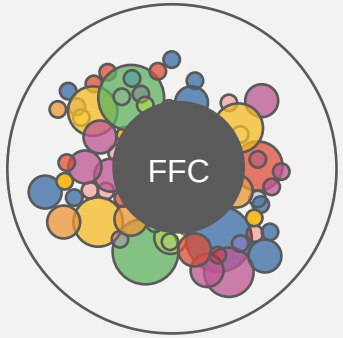
Exploring concepts, setting the vision and building the community



Full development of multiple, competing aviation system concepts



Realisation and demonstration of aviation systems with real use cases for 3 vehicle classes



Fully integrated system demonstration of multiple vehicle classes with public engagement

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Future Flight Challenge in numbers 2019-2025

£125 m
challenge funding

78
Projects

225
organisations, researchers and end-users

130 UK SMEs starts-ups and tech entrants to aviation supported

£380m+
industry investment by 2029

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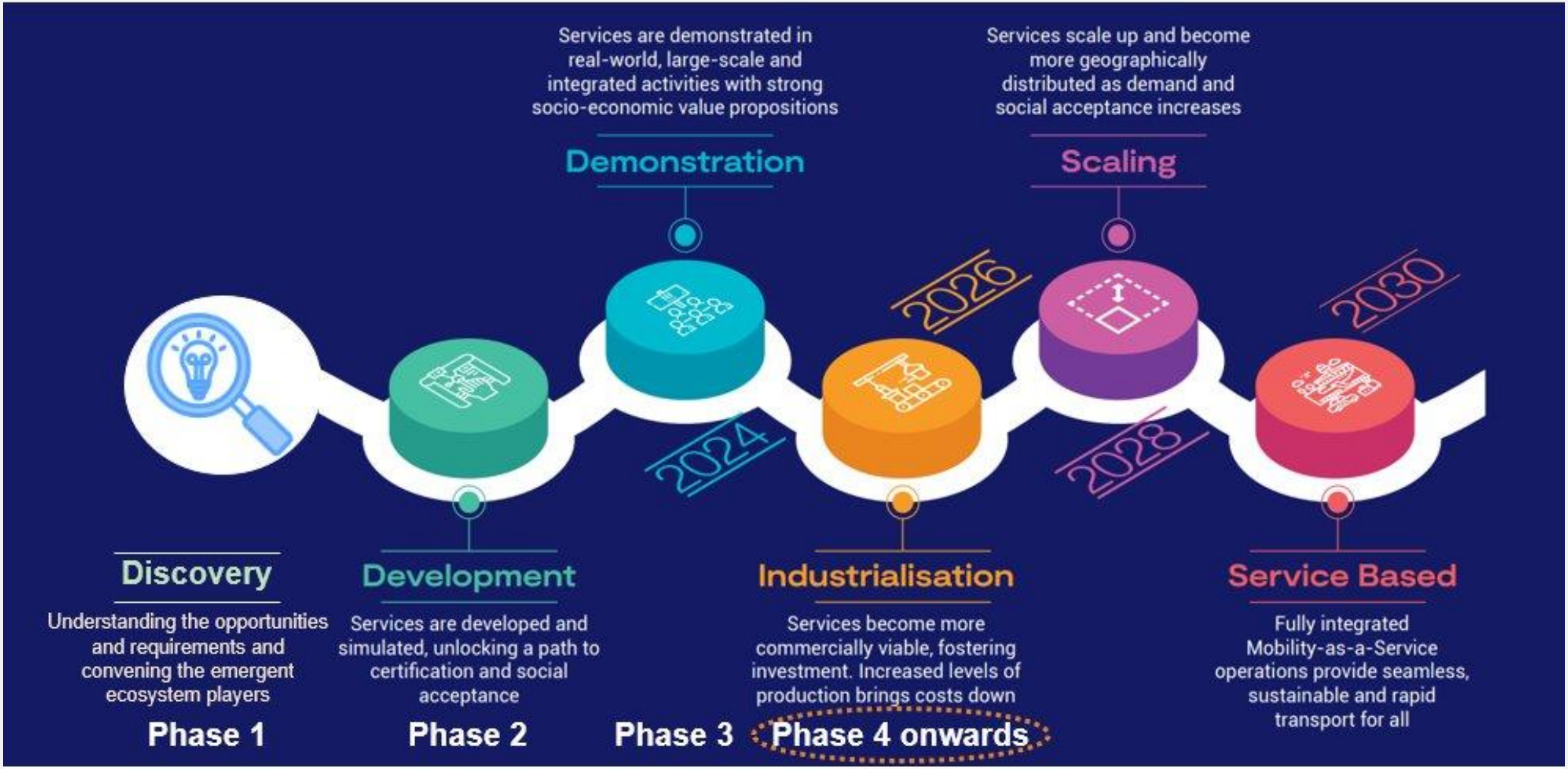
Delivered by Innovate UK and ESRC

Where are we now?



Department for Transport Future of Flight Programme

- The DfT Future of Flight Programme will deliver the regulation, technologies and infrastructure for the routine use of innovative aircraft, so that they are safe, secure, sustainable and work for citizens and communities.
- To fully realise the benefits of Future of Flight technologies for the UK, which includes drones (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), the Future of Flight Programme is working towards:
  - enabling routine Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) drone operations at scale in integrated airspace by 2027
  - enabling piloted electric Vertical Take-off and Landing (eVTOL) vehicles from 2028 to deliver better connectivity across the UK and economic growth

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Department for Transport

Future Flight Competitions

- Two competitions are now open, both closing on 11th June They are jointly funded by Innovate UK and Department for Transport
- The current funding is for the 25/26 financial year only. Projects must complete by 31st March 2026. The competitions are therefore targeted to meet specific areas for delivery in this timeframe
- Future Flight: Strategic Growth - The aim of this competition is the development of the UK drone sector, creating growth and meeting the objectives of Department for Transport (DfT) Future of Flight Action Plan
- Future Flight: Regional Demonstrator - The aim of this competition is to accelerate the transition from trials of cutting-edge innovations to real world commercial operations at a regional scale. This will unlock high value, socio-economic benefits for UK communities and meet the objectives of the DfT Future of Flight programme
- Both competitions are independent, rules on how many projects you can be involved in are per competition
- There are separate briefing sessions, recordings of which will be available on the relevant IFS page.
  - Strategic Growth 11:00-12:00 19th May
  - Regional Demonstrator 15:30-16:30 19th May.

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Future Flight Competitions

- Both competitions have different summaries, scope, and eligibility. The application process and questions used, and dates are the same across both competitions
- Before applying, closely check the contents of the competition pages on Innovation Funding Service to make sure that your project meets the full detail of the summary, scope and eligibility pages for the relevant competition. Do not assume that anything in these sections can be read across from one competition to the other
- If you are unsure which competition is relevant for you, please contact the Customer Support Services, any queries that need to be referred onto the FFC team will be co-ordinated by the CSS

	Strategic Growth	Regional Demonstrator
Vehicle types	Drones (RPAS/UAS)	Drones, eVTOL, zero-emission CTOL
Total funding	£3 million	£600,000
Project min-max	£250,000-£500,000	£150 000 - £200,000

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Department for Transport

Future Flight: Strategic Growth

All the material in the rest of this presentation relate to one specific competition,

Future Flight: Strategic Growth

Summary:

- Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, will work with Department for Transport (DfT) to invest up to £3 million in new innovation projects.
- These projects will be to demonstrate progress towards commercialisation or achievement of routine Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) operations, building on current state of the art approaches.

To support industry progress and government and regulatory frameworks we ask that the key learnings from your project are shared openly.

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Scope – aims and outputs

The aim of this competition is to accelerate the development of the UK drone sector, creating growth and meeting the objectives of Department for Transport (DfT) Future of Flight Action Plan.

Your project must demonstrate progress towards commercialisation or achievement of routine Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) operations, building on current state of the art approaches.

Your project must deliver either:

- tangible outcomes in new use cases previously at a demonstration phase, or scaling up of existing commercial use cases; these must have strong end user involvement.
- or
- tangible developments in support of the regulatory policy concepts, or concepts of operation being developed by the Civil Aviation Authority to enable RPAS; this can include data, testing, concepts of operation or other relevant development and you must be willing to share data and outputs with the CAA.

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Scope – additional requirements

- You must include the participation of UK registered end users or operators in your project.
- Your project can include flight activities where this adds benefit to your project.
- We particularly welcome applications that focus on strategically important use- cases such as medical delivery, inspection of critical infrastructure, maritime, agriculture, support to front -line public services.
- Your project must be developing further maturity against Future Flight Challenge phase 3, or other industry work. It must not be a repetition of previous work already completed by yourselves or others.
- You must detail clearly in your application any dependency on regulatory approvals. You must demonstrate that any required approvals are either already granted or obtainable by a clear and supported route within your project timeline.
- Portfolio approach - We want to fund a variety of projects across different technologies, use cases, regulatory areas, UK regional markets and research categories. We call this a portfolio approach.

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Specific themes

- You project must focus on one or more of the following:
- use cases that deliver economic and social benefit
- regulatory areas;
  - Electronic Conspicuity (EC),
  - Detect and Avoid (DAA)
  - Multiple Simultaneous Operations (MSO)
  - Uncrewed Traffic Management (UTM)
  - Atypical Air environments (AAE)

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What we will not fund

We are not funding projects that:

- have no engagement with an end user or operator
- are reliant on any regulatory approvals that are not either already granted or obtainable by a clear and supported route through the regulator within the project timeline
- are developing advances that relate to regulatory areas which are not currently being resourced by the regulator
- are repetitions of work already carried out within industry
- are a development of systems or sub-systems for application to passenger aircraft
- are developing alternative propulsion systems or fuels such as hydrogen fuel cells, hydrogen combustion or sustainable aviation fuels (SAF)
- are developing batteries or charging systems for electric aircraft
- focus solely on defence, space applications or High Altitude Platform Stations (HAPS)

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Eligibility criteria

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Eligibility Criteria – Your Project

Your project must:

- have a grant funding request of between £250,000 and £500,000
- last between six and seven months
- carry out all of its project work in the UK, unless specifically stated and pre-approved by Innovate UK
- intend to exploit the results from or in the UK
- start on 1 September 2025
- end by 31 March 2026

If your project's duration falls outside of our eligibility criteria, or you wish for UK funded partners to carry out any project work outside of the UK, you must provide justification by email to support@iuk.ukri.org as soon as possible before the competition closes. We will decide whether to approve your request.
If you have not requested approval or your application has not been approved by us, you will be made ineligible. Your application will then not be sent for assessment.

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Eligibility Criteria – Lead Organisation

Lead organisation:
To lead a project your organisation must:

- be a UK registered business of any size
- collaborate with other UK registered organisations
- involve at least one micro, small or medium sized enterprise (SME)

More information on the different types of organisation can be found in our Funding rules.

Academic institutions cannot lead.

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Eligibility Criteria – Collaboration

For this competition, your project must be collaborative.

In all collaborative projects there must be:

- At least two grant claiming partners
- At least one SME
- Evidence of an effective collaboration

    This means one partner must not account for more than 70% of the eligible costs and you must include rationale for the collaboration and describe the structure in the application.

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Eligibility Criteria – Project Team

Project team

To collaborate with the lead, your organisation must be one of the following UK registered:

- business of any size
- academic institution
- charity
- not for profit
- public sector organisation
- research and technology organisation (RTO)

Each partner organisation must be invited into the Innovation Funding Service (IFS) by the lead to collaborate on a project. Once partners have accepted the invitation, they will be asked to login or to create an account in IFS. They are responsible for entering their own project costs and completing their Project Impact questions in the application.

You can include non-UK organisations in your project, with them being either a non-funded partner or an overseas subcontractor, where justification must be provided.

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Eligibility Criteria – Partners/Subcontractors

Non-funded partners

Your project can include non-UK partners, including partners based in the EU, who bring their own funding. Non-UK partners are permitted to carry out project work from within their home countries and exploit results overseas. Their costs will count towards the total eligible project costs.

Subcontractors

Subcontractors are allowed in this competition.

Subcontractors can be from anywhere in the UK and you must select them through your usual procurement process.

You can use subcontractors from overseas but must make the case in your application as to why you cannot use subcontractors from the UK.

You must provide a detailed rationale, evidence of the potential UK contractors you approached and the reasons why they were unable to work with you. We will not accept a cheaper cost as a sufficient reason to use an overseas subcontractor.

All subcontractor costs must be justified and appropriate to the total eligible project costs.

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Eligibility Criteria – Number of applications

Number of applications
A business can only lead on one application but can be included as a collaborator in one further application.

If a business is not leading any application, it can collaborate in two applications.

An academic institution, research and technology organisation (RTO), charity, not for profit or public sector organisation can collaborate in two applications.

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Previously submitted applications

This competition does allow you to submit a previously submitted application.

Previously submitted application	Not a Previously submitted application
A previously submitted application is an application Innovate UK judges as not materially different from one you have submitted before (but it can be updated based on the assessors' feedback). If you have previously submitted an application that reached our assessment stage, you can re-apply once more with the same proposal.	A brand-new application, project or idea that you have not previously submitted into an Innovate UK competition. or A previously submitted or ineligible application which: • has been updated based on assessor feedback • and is materially different from the application submitted before • and fits with the scope of this competition

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Innovation Funding Service (IFS)

How to apply

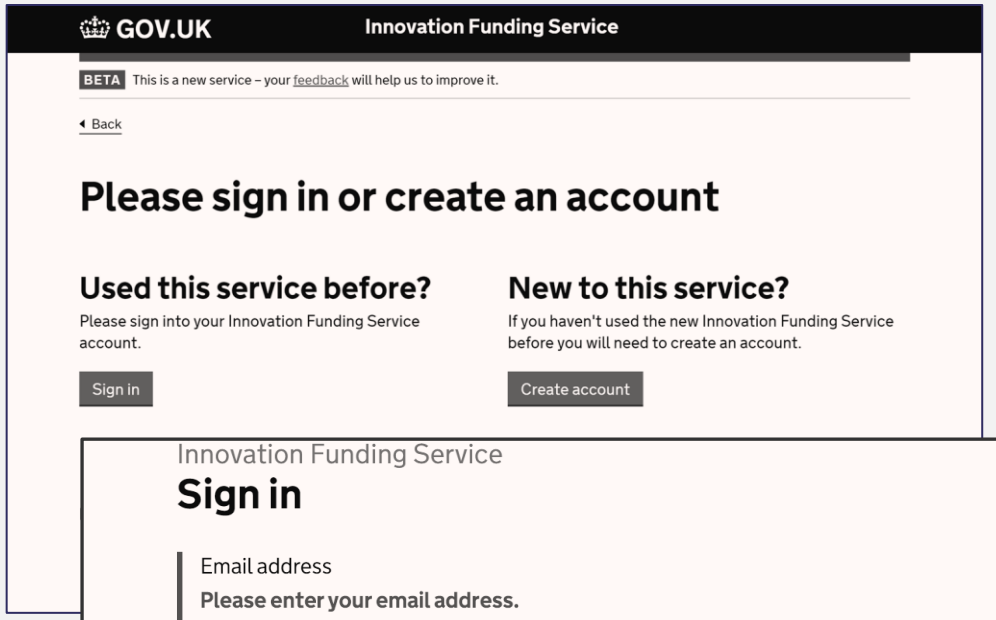
The lead applicant must create an account:

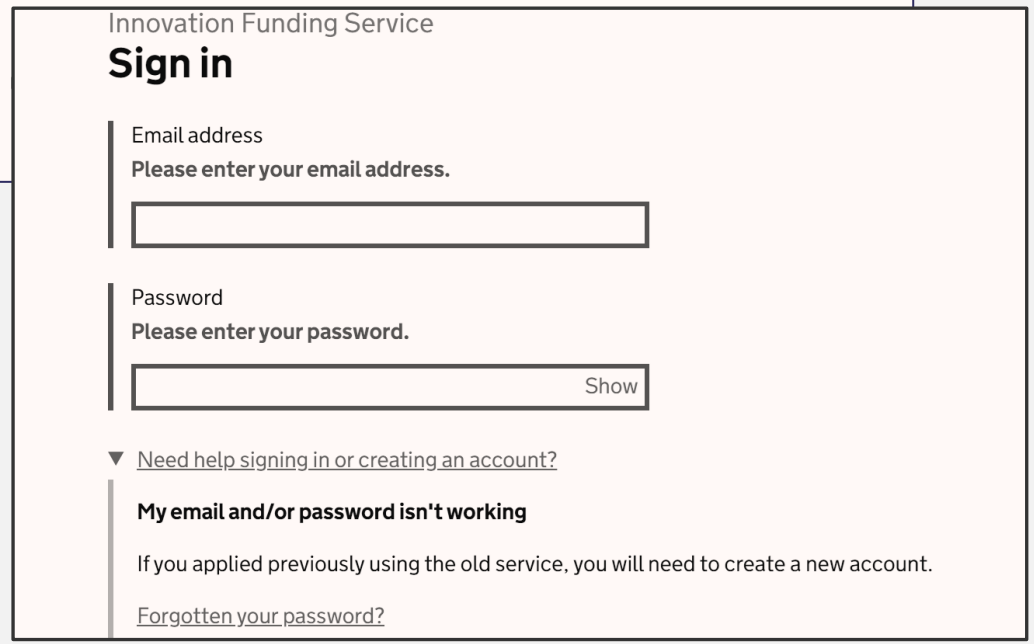
UK registered businesses

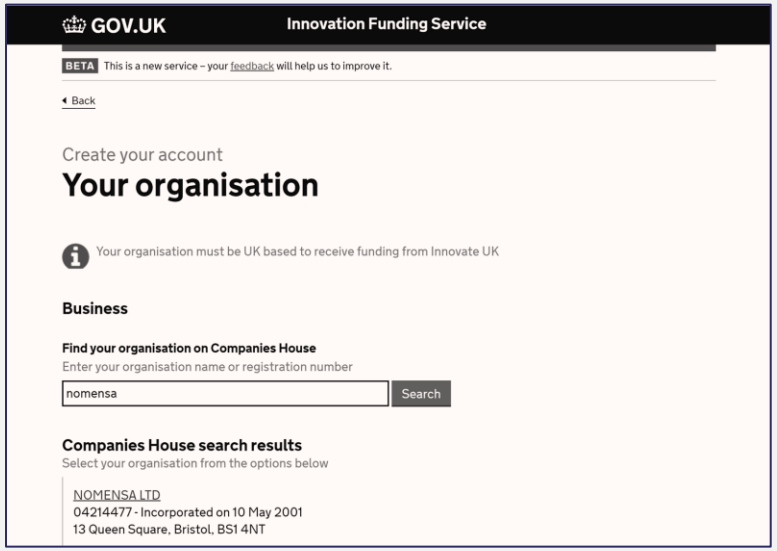
Use Companies House lookup as it speeds up our checks by providing your company number. You are unable to enter this at a later date.

Research organisations, academics and universities

To avoid being listed as a business and to ensure you receive the correct funding, enter your information manually on IFS







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Application Questions

Detailed guidance available on IFS

Application Form		Word Count	Appendix inc. number of pages
Question 1	Applicant location (not scored)	100 words	No
Question 2	Animal testing (not scored)	Multiple choice	No
Question 3	Permits and licences (not scored)	Multiple choice	No
Question 4	International Collaboration (not scored)	400 words	
Question 5	Trusted Research and Innovation (not scored)	400 words	
Question 6	Need or challenge	400 words	No
Question 7	Approach and innovation	400 words	Yes – optional – 2 pages
Question 8	Team and resources	400 words	Yes – optional – 2 pages
Question 9	Market awareness	400 words	No
Question 10	Outcomes and route to market	400 words	No
Question 11	Wider impacts	400 words	No
Question 12	Project management	400 words	Yes – mandatory – 2 pages
Question 13	Risks	400 words	Yes – mandatory – 2 pages
Question 14	Added value	400 words	No
Question 15	Costs and value for money	400 words	No

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Changes to questions from standard

For those familiar with the standard wording of questions on IFS, please be aware that for this competition there are some changes to standard wording or scoring guidance. A link to the assessor guidance for this competition is available on IFS in the assessment section under 'How to Apply', all applicants are encouraged to read this

- Question 7 Approach and Innovation – for the bullet point on being competitive, the wording has been changed to 'how it will make you more competitive, either directly or through making the UK more competitive'
- Question 11 Wider Impacts – in the section of the question on economic benefits, the wording has been changed from 'the economic benefits' to 'any economic benefits' as it is recognised that for some projects the current benefits may not be primarily economic
- Question 12 Project Management– minor changes to the scoring guidance to remove mention of research category since this is not asked for in the standard question text
- Question 13 Risks – Added specific scoring guidance where any regulatory requirements are identified

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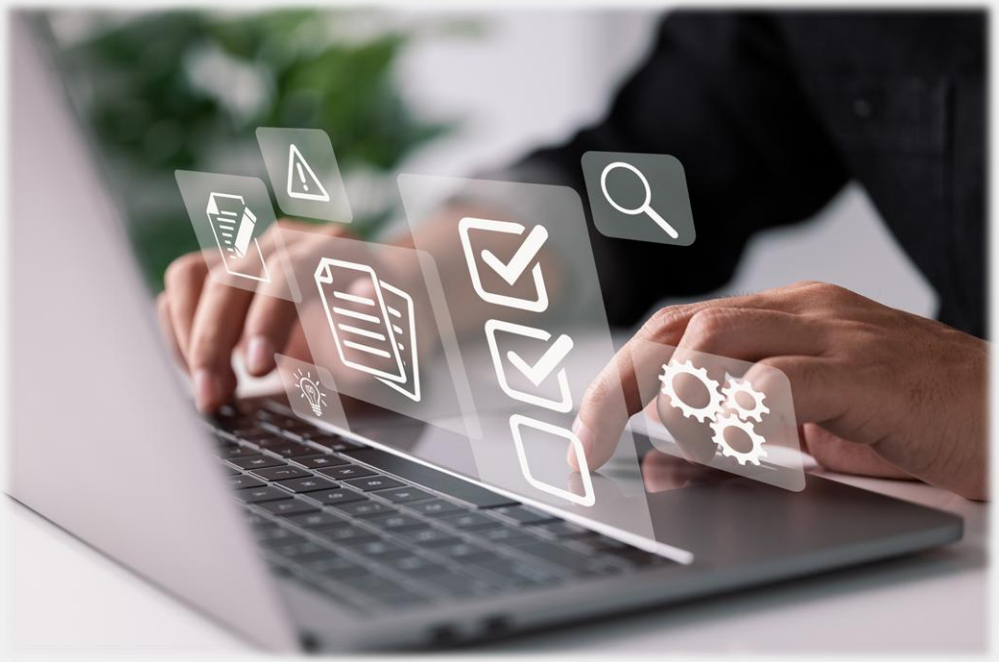
Project Impact questions

- Each organisation in your application will complete the Project Impact questions within the ‘Supporting information’ section
- The Project Impact questions ask for data about your business and innovation and its contribution to the UK economy, society, and the environment
- Visit the Project Impact guidance page for more information, the types of questions you will be asked and how to get further support
- By providing this data, you are enabling us to better understand the impact of our support. It will help us identify success stories and provide evidence to government and the public of the value of supporting innovative businesses



For more information:

- Watch Our Impact Management Framework video
- How is the Project Impact data collected? video

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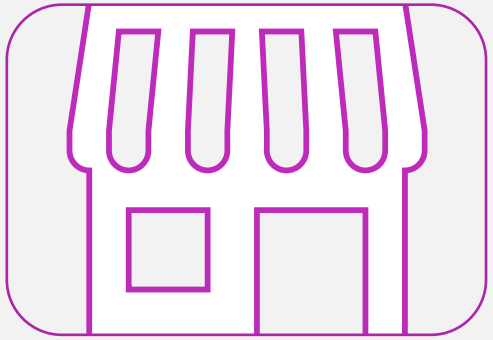
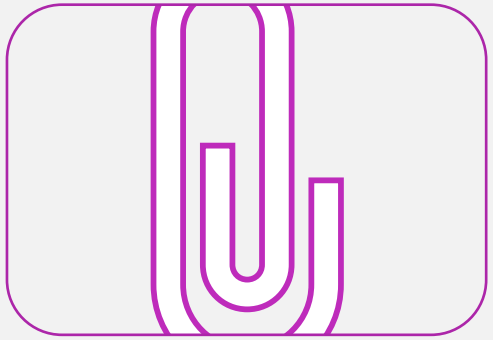
Your Project Cost Categories

View our Application Finances Instructional Video

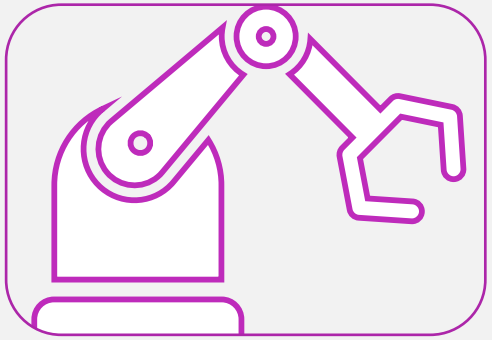
Labour



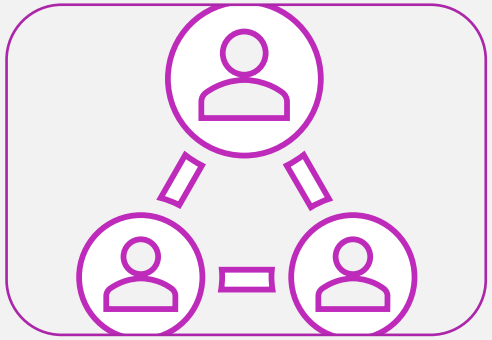
Overheads



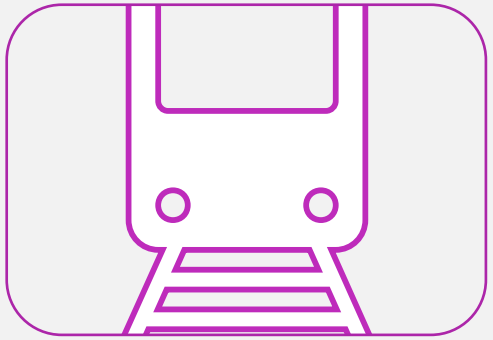
Materials



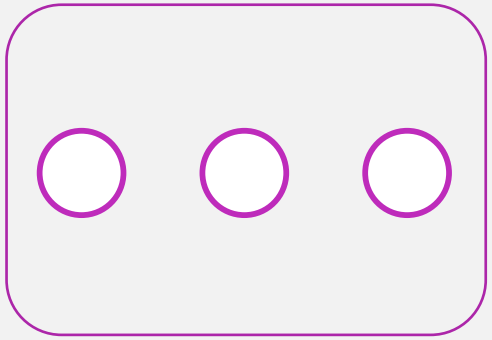
Capital Usage



Subcontractors



Travel & Subsistence



Other

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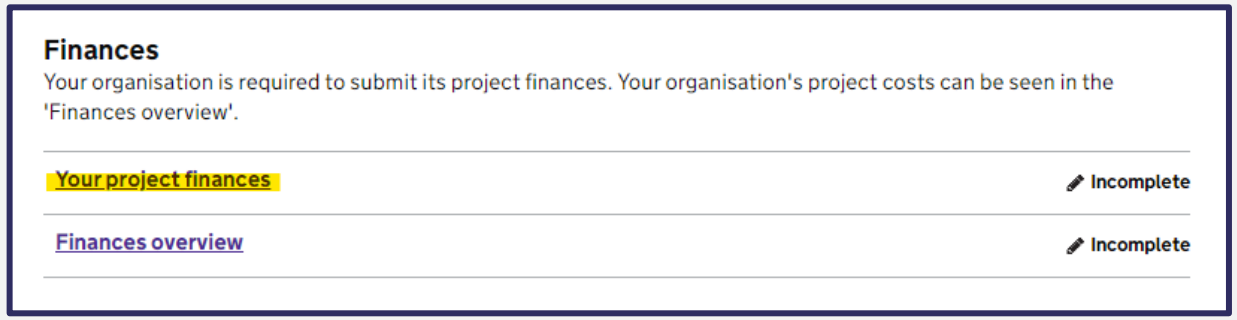
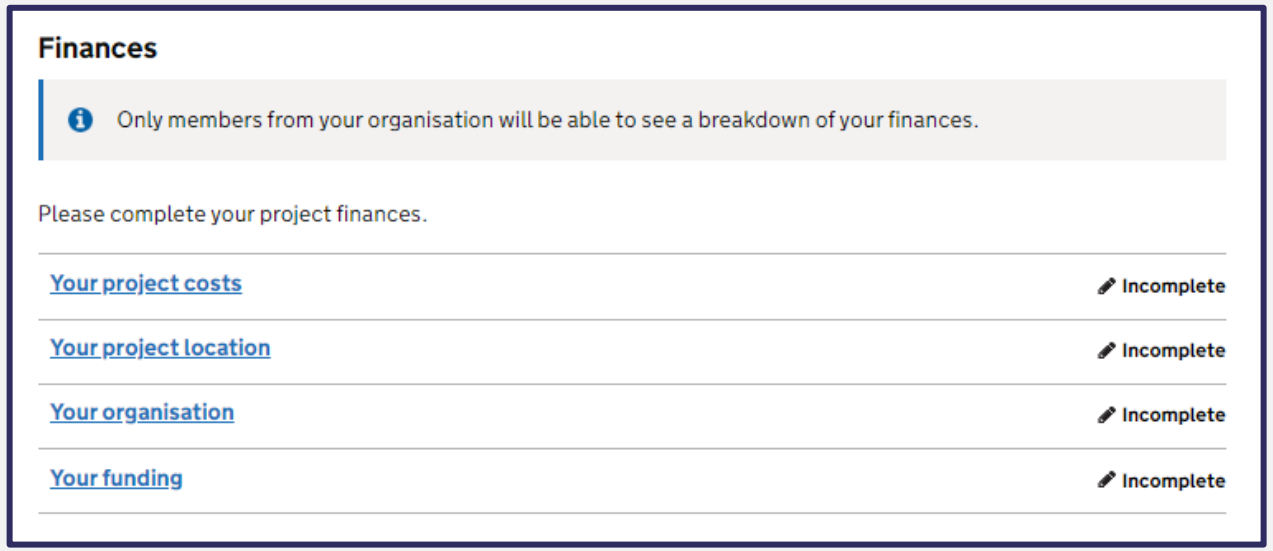
Your project finances





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Your project costs
Add your project costs by category – refer to previous slide for link to instructional video

Your project location
Enter postcode for where most of the project work will take place.

Your organisation
Add details of your organisation including size, turnover and number of employees

Your funding
Include your funding level percentage according to the competition's funding rules.

You can declare Other Public Sector Funding here if you have previously received public money for **exactly** the same activities

Checking your finances are complete

Finances summary

These organisations have not marked their finances as complete:

- Ludlow
- EGGS

This application cannot be submitted until all items in the finances section have been marked as complete by all partners.

	Total costs (£)	Funding level (%)	Funding sought (£)	Contribution to project (£)	Other public sector funding (£)
Empire Ltd Lead organisation	**200,903**	30.00	57,803	140,632	2,468
Ludlow Partner	**200,903**	30.00	57,803	140,632	2,468
EGGS Partner	**990**	100.00	990	0	0
Total	**£402,796**		116,596	281,264	4,936

Check your finances have been correctly inputted, with the correct costs, funding level % and funding sought figure, as per the eligibility criteria of the competition.

The lead must ensure that all partners have marked their finances as complete.

Research organisation participation must be no greater than 30% of the total project costs.

IFS DOES NOT VALIDATE TOTAL PROJECT COSTS

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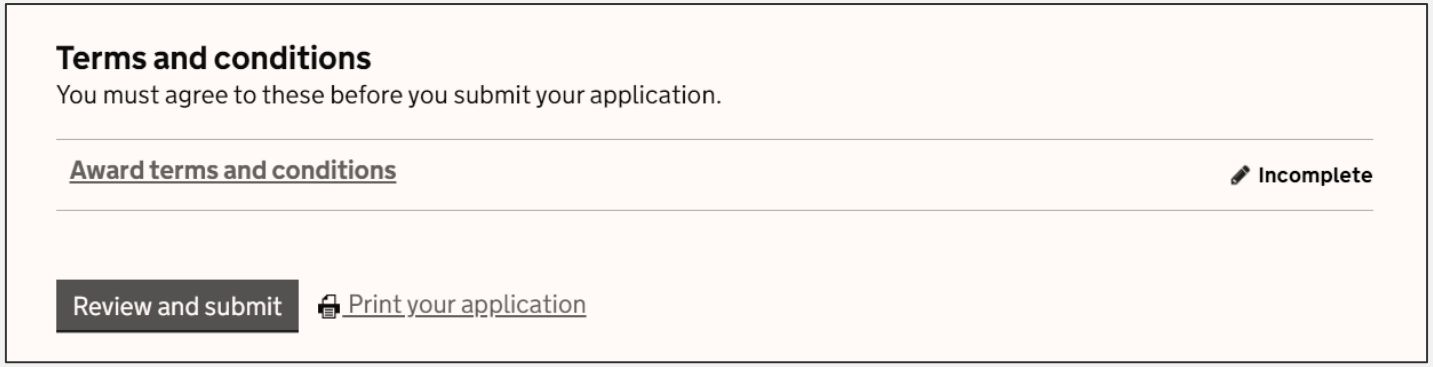
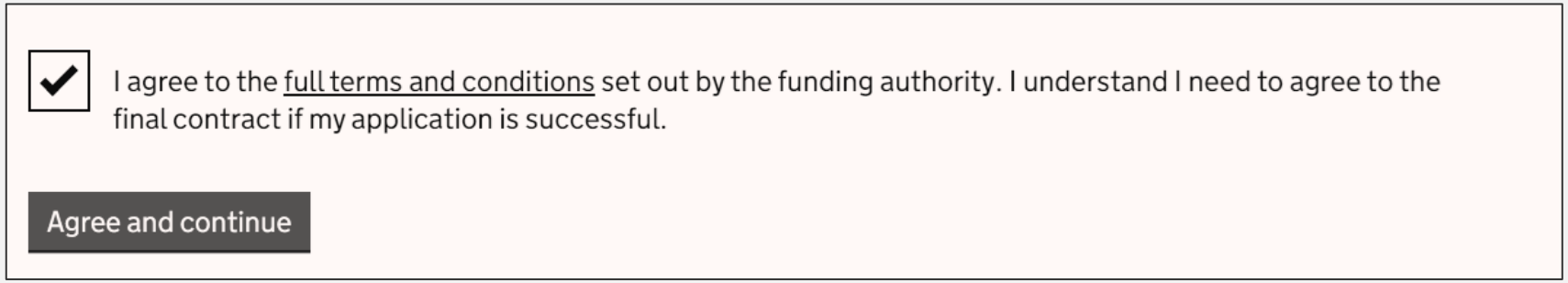
Terms and Conditions

Before you can submit your application, **all** organisations in an application must agree to the draft terms and conditions for this competition. Please ensure you share the T&Cs with your legal team at the earliest possible opportunity.





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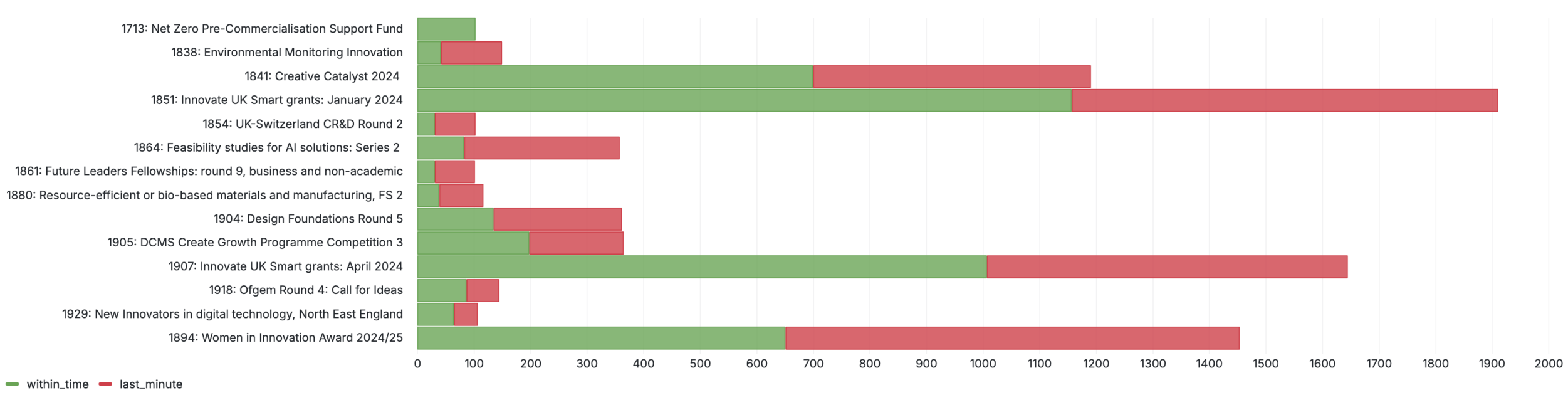
Submitting your application

Customer Support can help resolve any issues you might have when submitting **but only if they are contacted before the deadline**.

Once the deadline has passed, your application cannot be submitted.



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Pros & Cons of using AI to support you

With the advances in AI technology, it is only natural to use technology to support you in applying to our competitions. Whilst we don't recommend or advise against it, we would like to make you aware of the following which could potentially impact your project.

Pros

- Removes barriers for people with disabilities and non-English speakers
- Allows you to rephrase your content to meet the word count in a question
- Ensures all aspects of a question are answered
- Can aid a better understanding of:
  - intended/wider market
  - best practice in project management
  - complementary technologies and advances in the industry
  - expected project impacts

Cons

- It is not always accurate in its assumptions and can get things wrong
- AI learns from the information you give it as well as what it has already learnt
- May provide a generic response meaning your application could use similar phrasing to others
- AI can be detected as non-human as it lacks expression and insight because it relies on logic to summarise information based on the question asked

Whilst AI offers many benefits, it is important you are aware that **you are potentially sharing your idea with the world,** so be careful what you share as you have no control over how it is shared on once you do.

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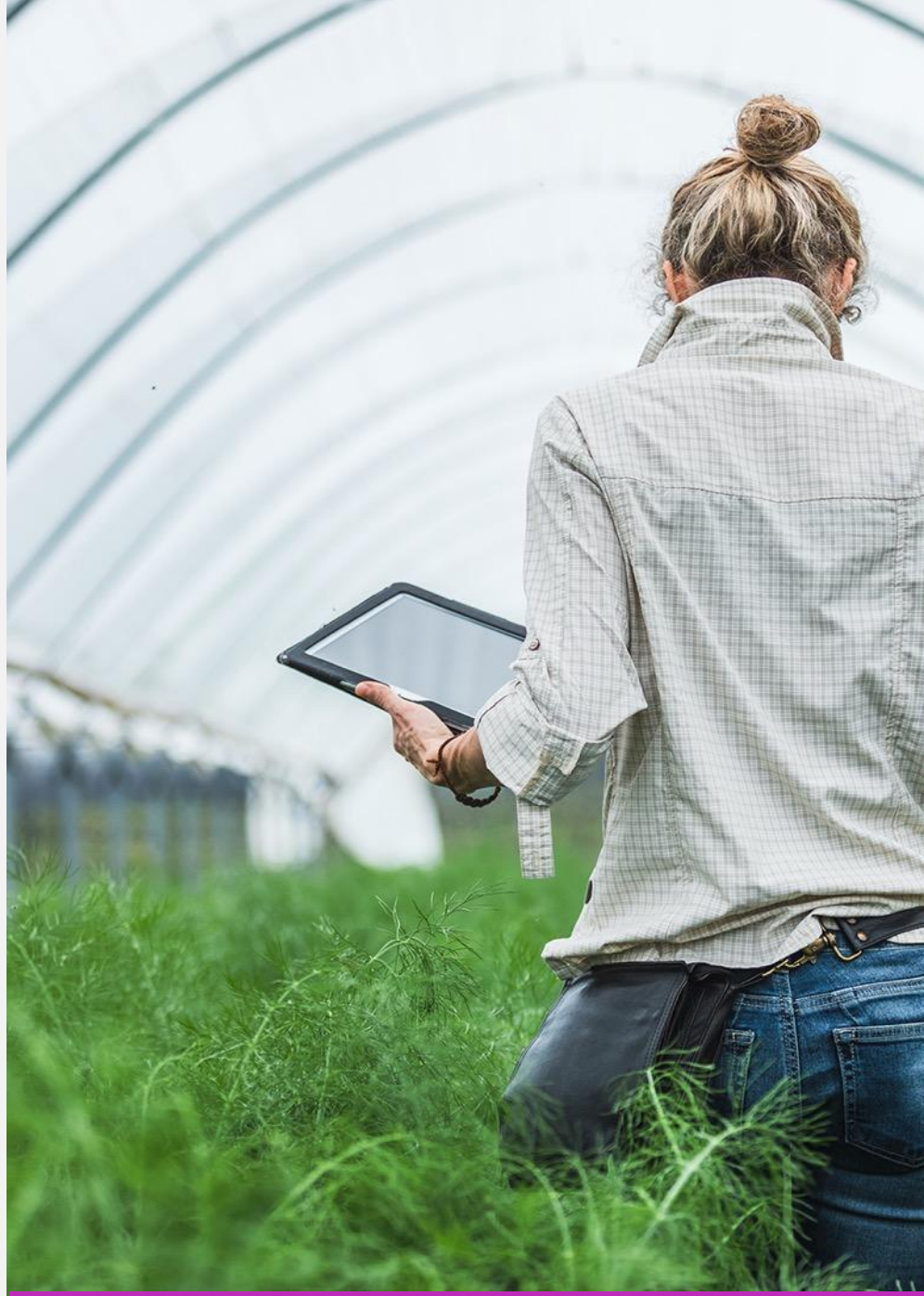
Funding Rules



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Other Innovate UK projects

If you have an outstanding final claim or Independent Accountant Report (IAR) on a live Innovate UK project, you will not be eligible to apply to this competition, as a lead or a partner organisation.

We will not award you any further funding if you:

- applied to a previous competition as the lead or sole company and were awarded funding by Innovate UK, but did not make a substantial effort to exploit that award
- applied to a previous competition as the lead or sole company and failed to comply with grant terms and conditions.

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Compliance with the UK Subsidy Control Regime

On 4th January 2023, the Subsidy Control Act 2022 came into effect.

This provides a framework for public authorities to design and award subsidies in a compliant way, whilst minimising any negative effects of subsidies both within the UK and Internationally.

Innovate UK offers funding in line with the UK's obligations and commitments to Subsidy Control. To ensure that Innovate UK remains compliant with the UK's international Subsidy Control duties in respect of:

- the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement;
- the subsidy control act 2022
- Article 10 of the Windsor Framework (successful applicants which are affected by the Windsor Framework will be funded in line with EU State aid regulations)
- Article 138 of the Withdrawal Agreement (some Union law applicable after 31 December 2020 in relation to the UK's participation in Union programmes and activities)
- the Subsidies and Countervailing measures within the WTO (ASCM)
- any other Free Trade Agreements active at the time of award

All awards will be conditional on compliance at all times with the UK's international obligations on Subsidy Control - this will be reflected in the terms and conditions of any award.

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Subsidy Control (and State aid where relevant)

The Subsidy Control Act 2022 definition of a ‘subsidy’ means financial assistance which:

1. is given by a public authority. This can be at any level: central, devolved, regional or local government or a public body.

2. makes a contribution (this could be a financial or an in-kind contribution) to an enterprise, conferring an economic advantage that is not available on market terms.

3. affects international trade.

For awards made from 4 January 2023, the majority are subject to Subsidy Control Act 2022. EU State aid rules now only apply in certain limited circumstances.

Financial viability and eligibility
Innovate UK is unable to award funding to organisations that are considered to be in financial difficulty. All applicant organisations are subjected to financial viability and eligibility checks to ensure they are suitable for public funding.

General guidance on Subsidy control (and State aid where relevant).

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Article 10 of the Windsor Framework

The EU and the UK formally adopted the Windsor Framework on 24 March 2023.

The Windsor Framework replaces the Northern Ireland Protocol, providing a new legal and UK constitutional framework.

Article 10 provides that European Union State aid rules will continue to apply to the UK in respect of measures which affect trade in goods or the electricity market between Northern Ireland and the EU.

Article 10 does not directly apply to subsidies for services and such subsidies will need to comply with the UK's subsidy control regime.

Undertakings in difficulty
In the unusual circumstance of an award having to be made under the EU GBER regulation (State aid), the applicant must pass **'undertaking in difficulty' checks as defined by GBER (2014)**.

Guidance on Article 10 of the Windsor Framework.

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Research, Development and Innovation Streamlined Subsidy Scheme

- Designed by Government to award subsidies to enterprises if they met defined criteria contained within the Scheme

- 3 categories available please check the competition you are applying for applicable categories
  - Feasibility Studies
  - Industrial Research and Experimental Development
  - Small and Medium Sized Enterprise (SME) Research, Development and Innovation Support

- When submitting an application as part of our due diligence you will be asked to declare any previous awards made in the ‘applicable period’ to ensure limits are not breached.
  - The applicable period is made up of:
  - (a) the elapsed part of the current financial year
  - (b) the two financial years immediately preceding the current financial year

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Category 2: Industrial Research and Experimental Development Projects

For Industrial Research projects, you could get funding for your eligible project costs of:

- up to 70% if you are a micro or small organisation
- up to 60% if you are a medium-sized organisation
- up to 50% if you are a large organisation

For experimental development projects which are nearer to market, you could get funding for your eligible project costs of:

- up to 45% if you are a micro or small organisation
- up to 35% if you are a medium-sized organisation
- up to 25% if you are a large organisation

Eligible costs please refer to the competition to which you are applying.

For a detailed definition of these research categories see guidance document section 14.3.

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Assessment

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Assessment

[YouTube Playlist]

1

How do our assessors assess?

Innovate UK • 8.1K views • 2 years ago

2

How are successful applications selected for funding?

Innovate UK • 17K views • 2 years ago

3

What steps are there before a project starts?

Innovate UK • 7.7K views • 2 years ago

4

How are successful projects monitored?

Innovate UK • 4.1K views • 2 years ago

5

How successful applicants receive their funding.

Innovate UK • 4.6K views • 2 years ago

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Project setup

If you pass the technical assessment, you will have a further eight steps detailed in your notification to complete in Project Setup before being able to start your project.

These are:

- Project details
- Project team
- Documents
- You will be allocated a Monitoring Service Provider (MSP)
- Bank details
- Finance checks
- Spend profile
- Grant Offer Letter

Please share the T&Cs with your legal team at the earliest possible opportunity to avoid any delays.

You are expected to complete all the steps above **within 90 calendar days** of receiving your notification. Failure to do so may result in funding being withdrawn.

Work can only commence on your project once you have received your Go Live email.

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Additional Support

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Innovate UK Business Growth

https://iuk.ktn-uk.org/business-growth/

Innovate UK Business Growth (previously Innovate UK EDGE) is a key part of the UK innovation agency's deep investment in the pioneering businesses that drive economic growth. It is a publicly-funded service available to all high potential small to medium sized innovation-driven companies, including Innovate UK grant winners.

Exploit Innovation:
Grow your business by protecting your IP, improving innovation management and accessing the innovation ecosystem globally through us.

Source funding:
Grow and scale your business by accessing the right finance and funding for you and becoming investment ready.

Enter new markets:
Helping you to make connections to partners and leverage insights to expand into vertical and international markets and achieve scaling ambitions.

Ready to scale?
The Innovate UK Scaleup Programme helps the highest potential businesses realise their ambitions.

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Useful Information

- UKRI's General Guidance
- Innovate UK Business Connect's Good Application Guide
- Who we fund
- Collaboration Agreement Guidance: Lambert Toolkit
- Innovate UK: Shaping the Future

Funding opportunities

To find out more about the competitions currently available you can visit either the **Innovation Funding Service (IFS)** or the **funding finder** on the UKRI website. Through these links, you can review the competitions available and decide which ones may be right for you.

You can **sign up to our newsletter** to receive all the latest information on our competitions straight to your inbox or **register for email alerts** to get page updates from Innovate UK.

The government also offers **other opportunities for businesses to get finance and support**.
Innovate UK reserves the rights to host competitions on a needs basis and will adjust each competition criteria and scope accordingly. We may occasionally run closed competitions that are for invited applicants only. These are run based on the challenge requirement or need.

UKRI Innovate UK

We’d love your feedback

We’re considering a change to the applicant briefing process for our competitions.

Please let us have your feedback on this briefing.

FEEDBACK SURVEY

Innovate UK

Q&A

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Contact

Customer Support Services

0300 321 4357 (Monday - Friday 9am-12pm and 2pm-5pm)

support@iuk.ukri.org

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ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk

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www.iukbg.ukri.org

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Thank You

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