UKRI
Innovate UK
Welcome

Farming Innovation Programme
Small R&D Partnership Round 5

Applicant briefing

Date: **September 2026**

This briefing is a recording only

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

UKRI Innovate UK

Agenda

- **Welcome and introductions**

- **Part 1**

Scope, eligibility criteria

- **Part 2**

The Innovation Funding Service, application finances, academic partners

- **Part 3**

Submitting your application, assessment, project setup for successful applicants

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Welcome and Introductions

Stephanie Armitage -

Competition Manager, Competitions Team

Esther Harper

Innovation Lead, Innovation as a Service

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Why are we supporting innovation?

Productivity: The UK has seen lower productivity growth than our neighbours over the last 30 years

Environment: Agriculture accounted for 10% of UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2018

Fragmentation: many fantastic researchers, innovative businesses and promising ideas, but players don't necessarily collaborate effectively

Coordination: failures in the current innovation system result in poor translation of public spending into real life impacts on productivity/sustainability

Adoption: Low levels of uptake of innovation by farmers, growers, businesses in large part due to capital risk & ineffective knowledge sharing

Previous Programmes

2013 - Agri-Tech Strategy
£70m Agri-tech Catalyst
£90m for 4 Agri-tech Centres

2018 - Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) £90m Transforming Food Production Challenge.

2021 - £14.5m **Farming Innovation Pathways** fund.

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https://farminginnovation.ukri.org/

The Farming Innovation Programme

- Since 2021, it has been Defra’s flagship for supporting research and innovation in farming and is one of the main vehicles for our innovation and research ambition.
- To enhance productivity, environmental sustainability and resilience in England's farming sectors
- Funding is awarded on a competitive basis to high quality, innovative projects
- Collaborative projects must benefit farmers and growers in England

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The **Farming Innovation Programme** offers a range of opportunities for farmers, growers, businesses and researchers to collaborate on industry-led research and development:

Small **Research Starter Projects** where farmers, growers & foresters can explore a new idea

Feasibility projects where businesses can check if a research idea works in practice.

Small/Large Partnership Projects, where businesses can further develop a new farming product or service towards commercialisation.

Themed competitions (Farming Futures R&D Fund), where businesses and researchers can work on longer-term innovation focussing on issues like: Climate-Smart Farming, Sustainable farm-based Proteins, Robotics and Automation, Environmental resilience or Nutrient Management

ADOPT Fund where farmers can trial on-farm new innovations, practices or technologies

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https://farminginnovation.ukri.org/

Develop a new farming product or service →

Small R&D Partnership Round 5
Scope and Eligibility
Esther Harper

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Develop a new farming product or service

→ Small R&D Partnership Round 5

Summary

Total budget

£13 Million

Total project costs

£1-3 Million

Duration

Up to **30** months

Businesses within a supply chain, are encouraged to come together as a partnership to solve major challenges or opportunities

If you have **primary producers** receiving grant funding, **a min of 50%** of those funds, **must** be **allocated to** primary producers **based in England**

For **UK businesses** wishing to **collaborate** with other UK organisations

Competition opens
1 September 2026

Competition deadline
14 October 2026 11:00 am

Projects to start by
1 April 2027

Projects to end by
31 March 2030

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Develop a new farming product or service

→ Small R&D Partnership

- Develop commercially relevant solutions/outputs for major on-farm or immediate post farmgate challenges or opportunities
- Look to improve productivity, sustainability and resilience of farming.
- Collaborate within UK communities for better R&D agricultural solutions
- Accelerate adoption by ensuring knowledge exchange with the wider sector and other stakeholders

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Scope

In Scope

Address major on-farm or immediate post farmgate challenges or opportunities. Solutions **must** significantly **improve:**

- ✓ productivity
- ✓ sustainability and environmental impact
- ✓ progression towards net zero emissions
- ✓ resilience

Out of Scope: we **will not fund** projects that

- × do not benefit farmers, growers or foresters in **England**
- × are equine specific
- × involve wild caught fisheries
- × involve aquaculture, **for fish production or human consumption**
- × involve cellular expression of proteins or cultivated meat or acellular production systems
- × are for the production of crops or plants for medicinal or pharmaceutical use

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Specific Themes

Address a significant **industry challenge or opportunity** in at least one of the below:

- ✓ farmed animals
- ✓ plants
- ✓ novel food production systems
- ✓ bioeconomy and agroforestry

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Hints and Tips

- **Preparation is Key**
  Do not leave this until last minute

- **Eligibility and Scope**
  To avoid missing out before assessment

- **Build up your partnership**
  Get to know and understand your partners

  Know who you are planning to work with before you commit and make sure all partners are aware of their role and responsibilities

If you apply you will be entering a **competitive process**

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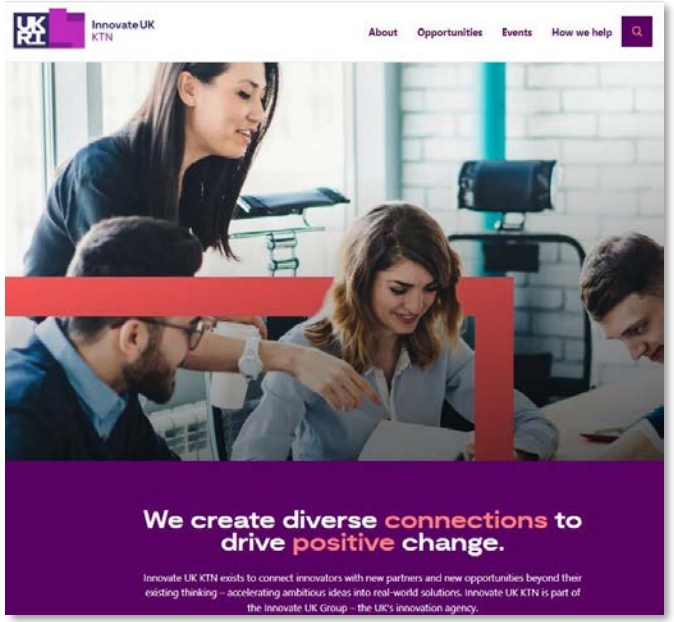
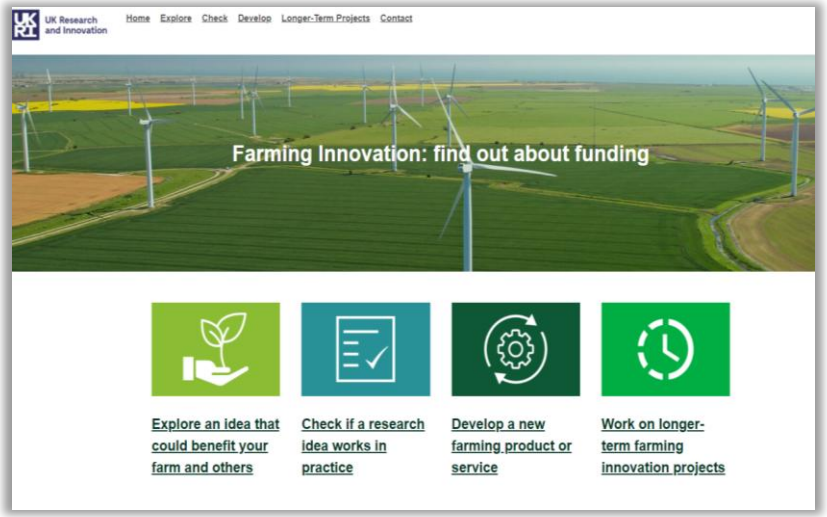
Support

- **IFS** website pages:
  - Competition brief, General applicant and finance guidance
- **Innovate UK Business Connect Agri-Food Team**
  - Identify potential collaborators and make connections
  - Put forward issues that farmers, growers and end-users may be facing across priority areas
  - Make 1-1 connections with other attendees
- **Farming Innovation Programme website**
  - https://farminginnovation.ukri.org/





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Eligibility criteria

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Key Dates

Timeline	Date
Competition Opens	**1 September 2026**
Submission Deadline	**14 October 2026** at **11am**
Applicants informed	**15 December 2026** by **5pm**
Project start and end dates	Start by **01 April 2027** End by **31 March 2030**

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Eligibility Criteria – Your Project

Your project must:

- have total costs between £1 million and £3 million
- last up to 30 months
- be collaborative
- carry out all of its project work in the UK
- intend to exploit the results from or in England
- start by 1 April 2027
- end by 31 March 2030

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Eligibility Criteria – Lead Organisation

Lead organisation:

To lead a project your organisation must:

- be a UK business of any size and be able to evidence that you are an established commercial business, including sole traders and partnerships
- collaborate with other UK registered organisations
- be or work with at least one grant claiming micro, small or medium sized enterprise (SME)

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

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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
- 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.)*

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.

To be an eligible collaboration, the lead and at least one other organisation must:

- apply for funding when entering their costs into the application
- include rationale for the collaboration and describe the structure in your application
- ensure any one partner does not account for more than 70% of the total eligible costs

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 project costs.

Eligibility Criteria – Number of applications

Number of applications

A business can only lead on one application but can be included as a collaborator in two further applications.
If a business is not leading any application, it can collaborate in any number of applications.

Academic institutions, research and technology organisations (RTO), charities, not for profits or public sector organisations can collaborate on any number of applications.

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 <u>not</u> 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 • <u>and</u> is materially different from the application submitted before • <u>and</u> fits with the scope of this competition

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Innovation Funding Service (IFS)

How to apply

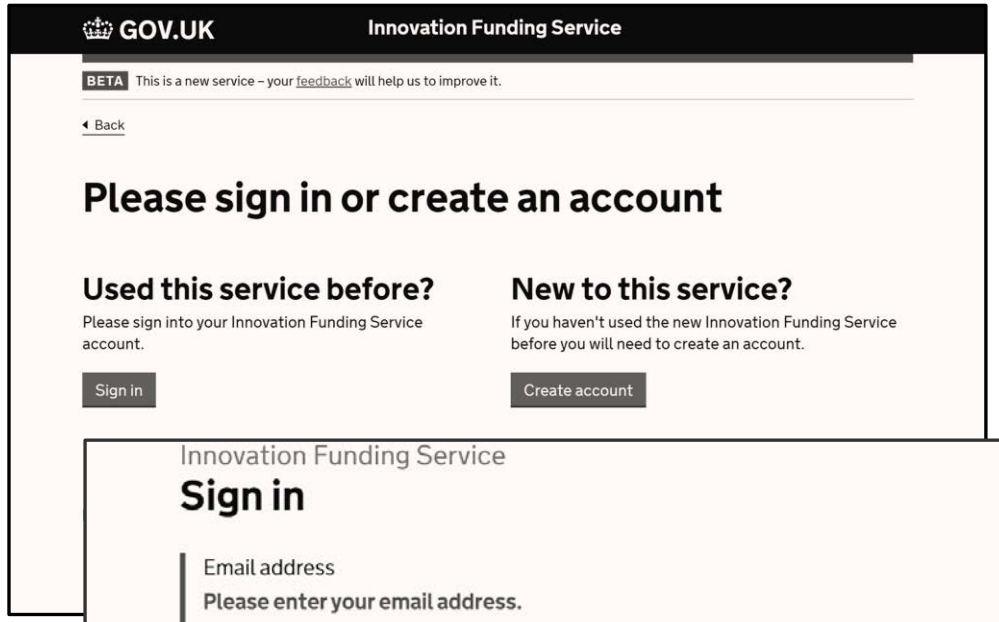
The lead applicant must create an account:

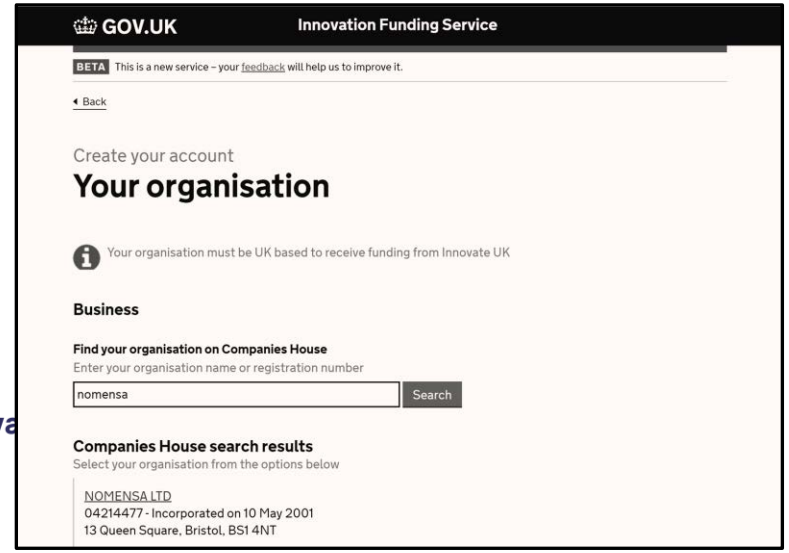
UK registered businesses

Use Companies House lookup using your company number. This facilitates our checks later if you are successful.

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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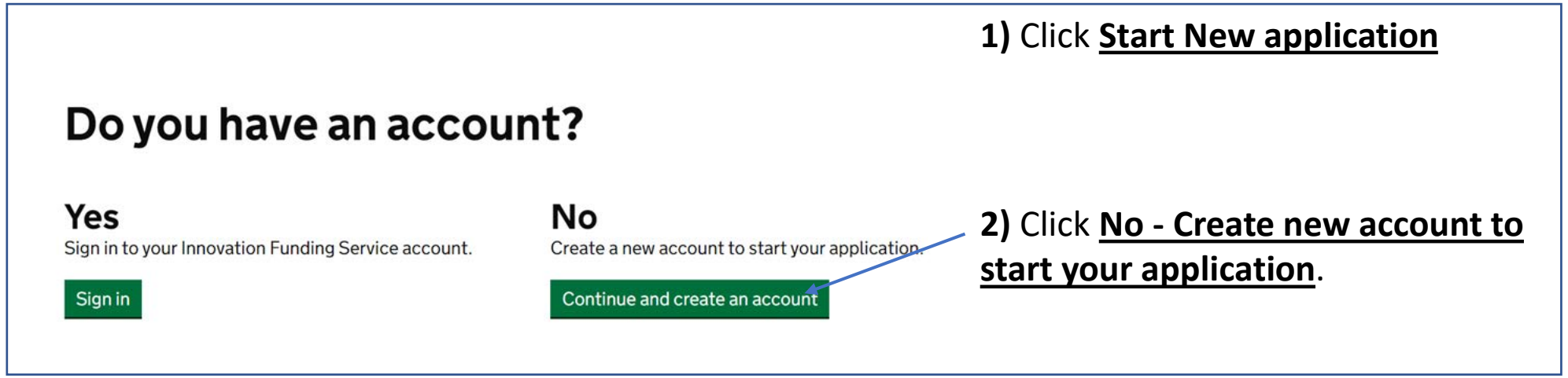
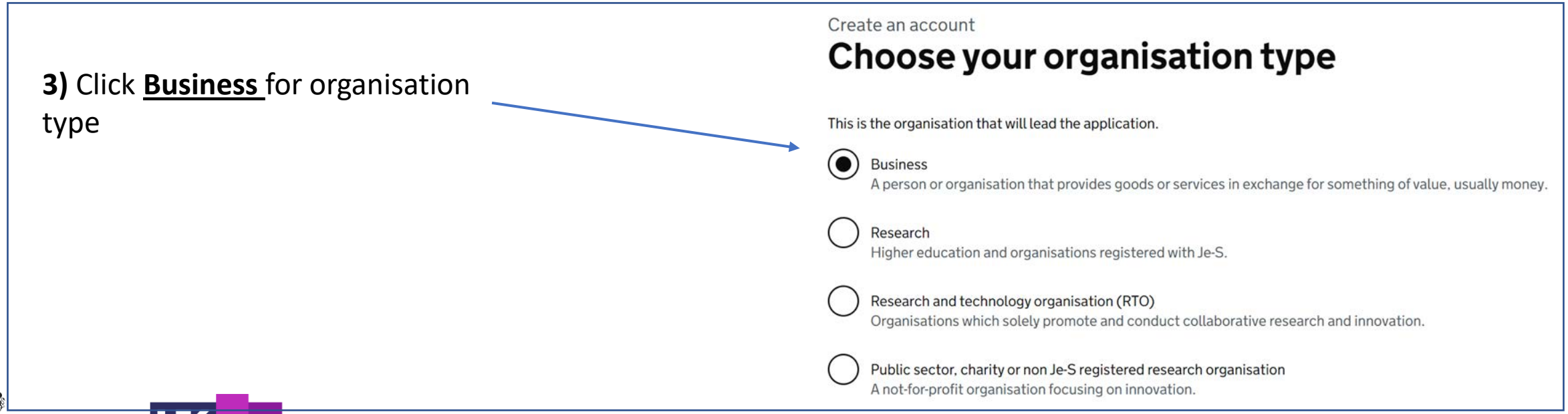
1) Click **Start New application**

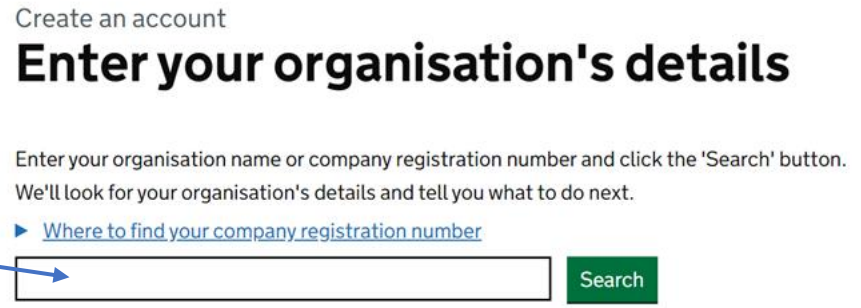


2) Click **No - Create new account to start your application**.

3) Click **Business** for organisation type



4) The next page it will give “Enter your organisation’s details”. In the search box put a single digit and click **Search**



5) The next page will show a list of companies. And links to further pages of companies. **Ignore these**.

Look near the bottom of this page there is some text “My organisation is not Registered” Click **Find Out What To Do**

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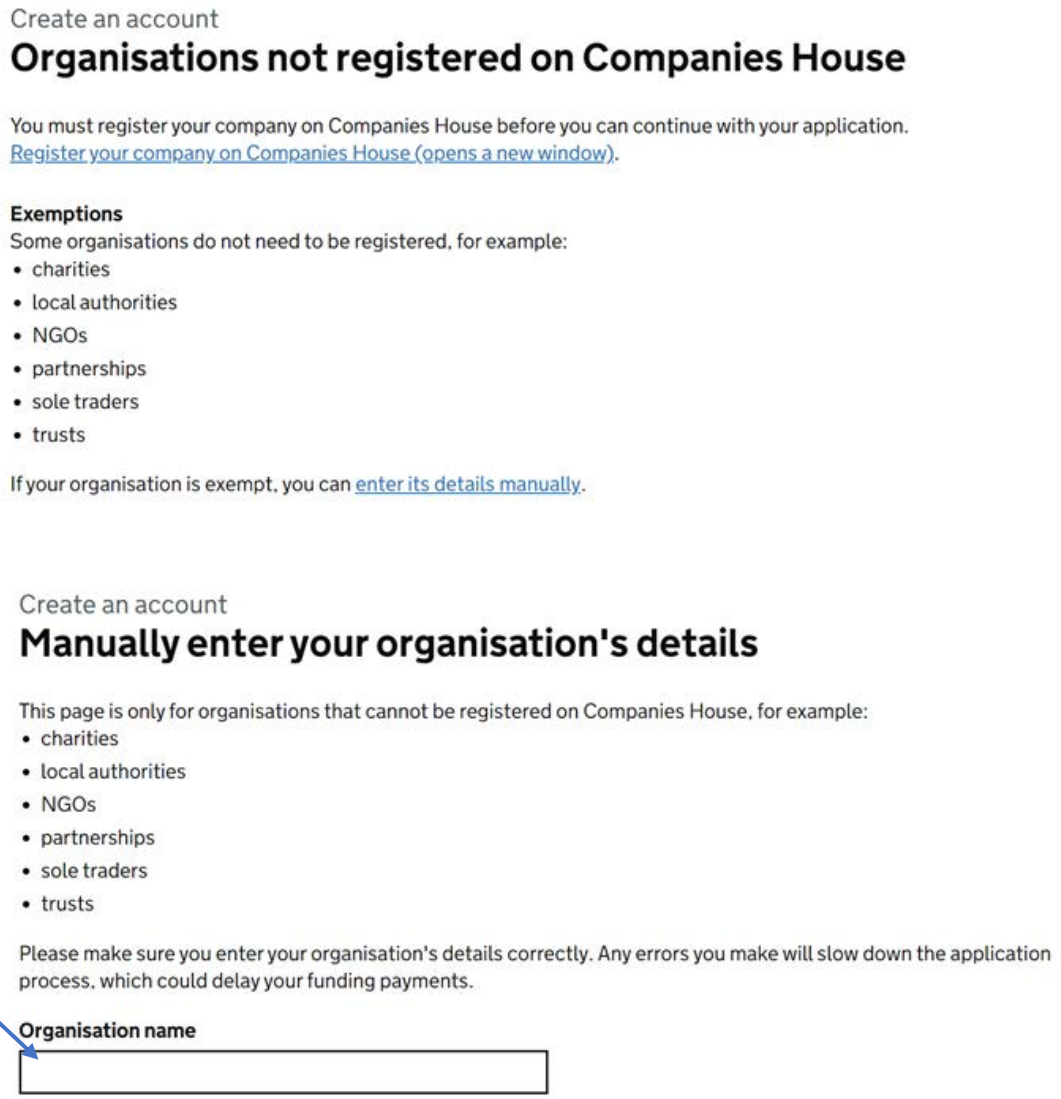
6) The next new screen will enable you to enter text manually into boxes with the company business details. Once completed these can be submitted and application started.



Application Questions

Application Form		Word Count	Appendix
Question 1	Applicant location (not scored)	100	No
Question 2	Farmers, growers or foresters location (not scored)	250	No
Question 3	Animal testing (not scored)	Multiple choice	No
Question 4	Permits and licences (not scored)	Multiple choice	No
Question 5	International Collaboration (not scored)	400 words	No
Question 6	Trusted Research and Innovation (not scored)	400 words	No
Question 6	Need or challenge	400	No
Question 8	Approach and innovation	400	Yes – optional, 2 pages
Question 9	Team and resources	400	Yes – optional, 2 pages
Question 10	Market awareness	400	No
Question 11	Outcomes and route to market	400	No
Question 12	Wider impacts	400	No
Question 13	Project management	400	Yes – mandatory, 2 pages
Question 14	Risks	400	Yes – mandatory, 2 pages
Question 15	Added value	400	No
Question 16	Costs and value for money	400	No

for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

UK

Detailed guidance available on IFS

National Security and Investment Act - overview

Subject to certain criteria, UK applicants are legally required to tell the government about acquisitions of certain entities in 17 sensitive areas of the economy (called ‘notifiable acquisitions’).
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-security-and-investment-act-guidance-on-notifiable-acquisitions/national-security-and-investment-act-guidance-on-notifiable-acquisitions

These 17 areas are:

- Advanced Materials
- Advanced Robotics
- Artificial Intelligence
- Civil Nuclear
- Communications
- Computing Hardware
- Critical Suppliers to Government
- Cryptographic Authentication
- Data Infrastructure
- Defence
- Energy
- Military and Dual-Use
- Quantum Technologies
- Satellite and Space Technologies
- Suppliers to the Emergency Services
- Synthetic Biology
- Transport

If there is significant uncertainty about whether an acquisition is notifiable, you may contact the government on **investment.screening@cabinetoffice.gov.uk** to seek a view or get legal advice from your own sources.

UK Strategic Export Controls - overview

UK strategic export controls - GOV.UK

The UK government has put together this guidance for those who export or transfer goods, software or technology (including data, information and technical assistance) which might be subject to strategic export controls.

It explains what control lists are, as well as who they apply to and when, so that exporters can make sure they comply with the law.

Applicants should assess how these controls may impact the project and confirm if they will need a licence (see question 5).

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Q4 International Collaboration (not scored)

Does your proposed work involve any international collaboration or engagement?

You must provide details of any expected international collaboration or engagement. You must include a list of the names and the countries any international project co-leads, project partners, visiting researchers, or other collaborators are based in. You must also include details of any subcontractors or service providers.

If your proposed work does not involve international collaboration or engagement, your answer must confirm this.

Q5 Trusted Research and Innovation (not scored)

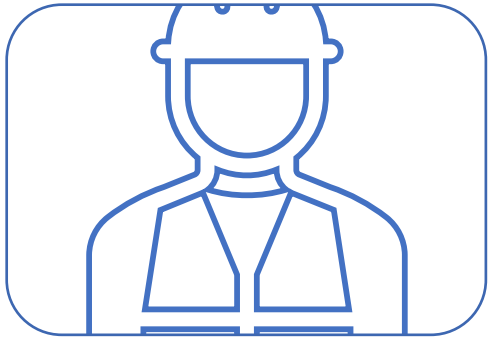
You must explain if your proposed project work relates to UKRI's Trusted Research and Innovation Principles, including:

- a list of any dual-use (both military and non-military) applications to your research
- a list of the areas where your project is relevant to one or more of the 17 areas of the UK National Security and Investment (NSI) Act)
- whether an export control license is required for this project under the *academic export control guidance* and the status of any applications
- a list of any items or substances on the UK Strategic Export Control List

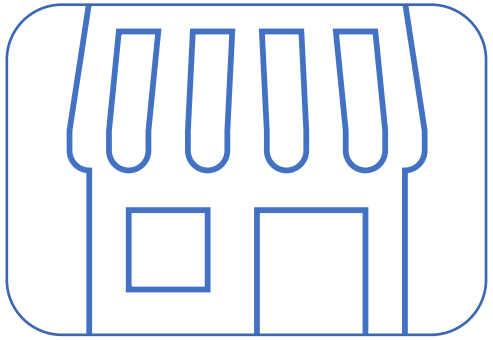
We may ask you to provide additional TR&I information at a later date, in line with UKRI TR&I Principles and funding terms and conditions

Your Project Cost Categories

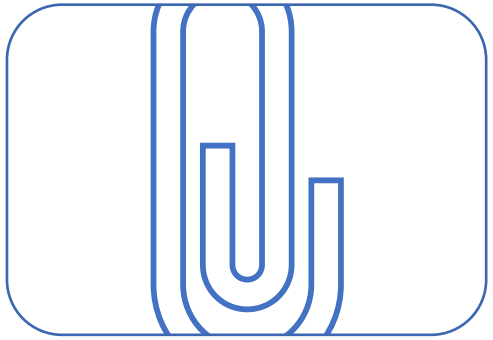
View our Application Finances Instructional Video



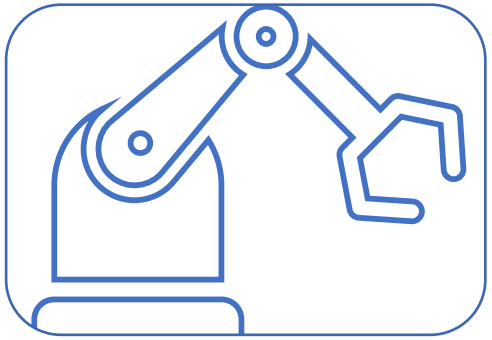
Labour



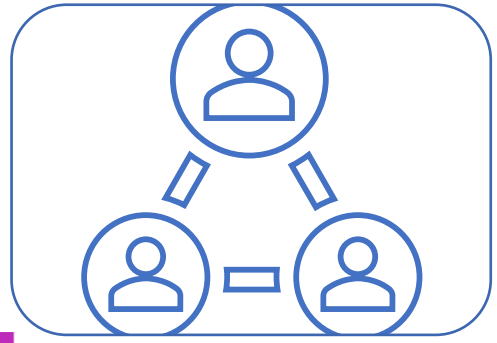
Overheads



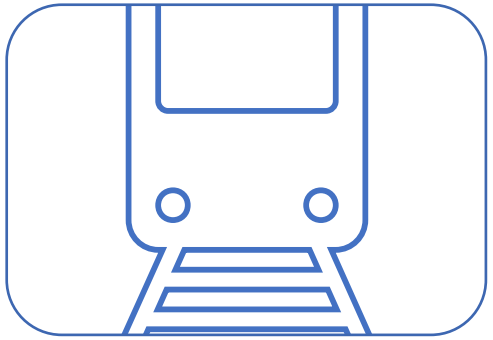
Materials



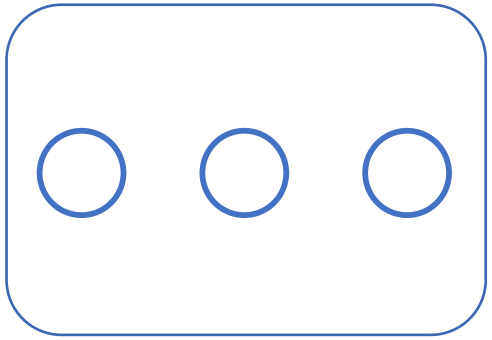
Capital Usage



Subcontractors



Travel & Subsistence



Other

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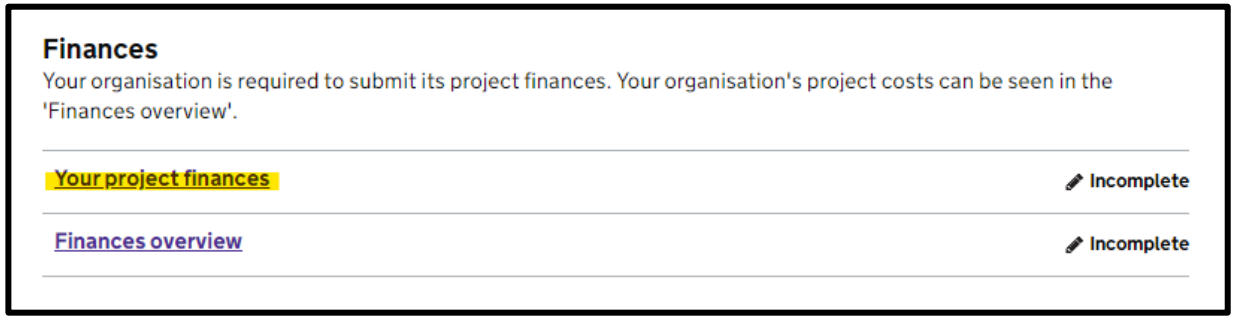
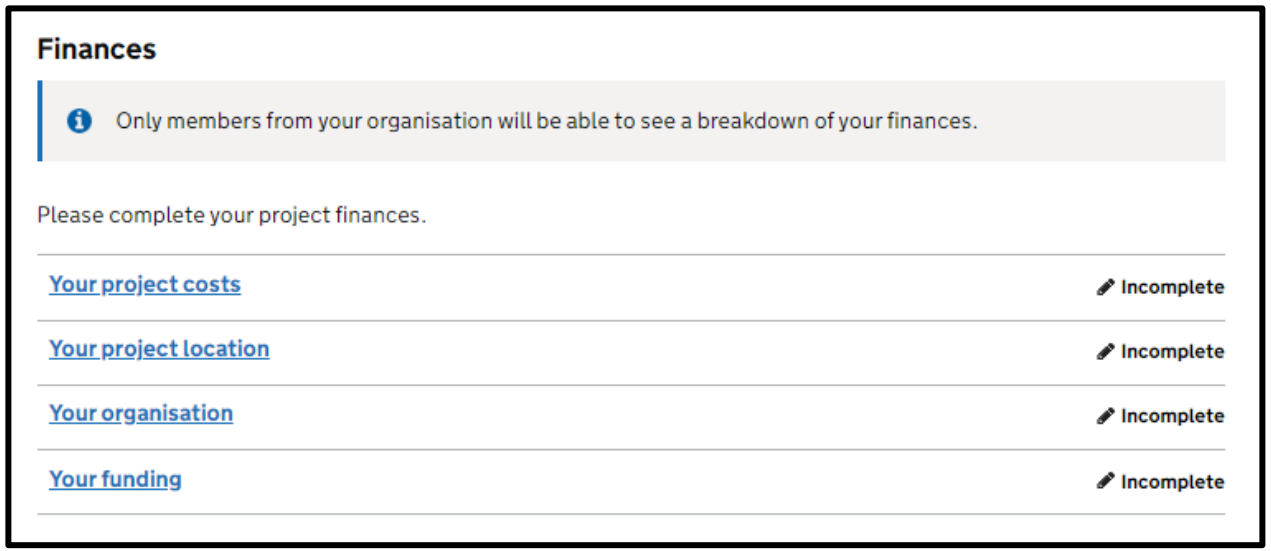
Your project finances





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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 entered, with the correct costs, funding level % and funding sought figures, as per the eligibility criteria of the competition.

If collaborative, 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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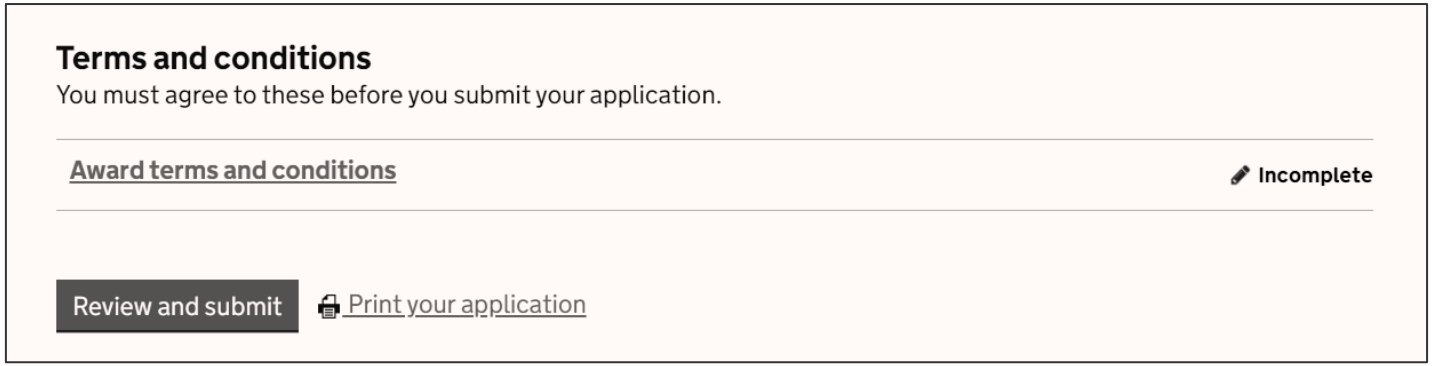
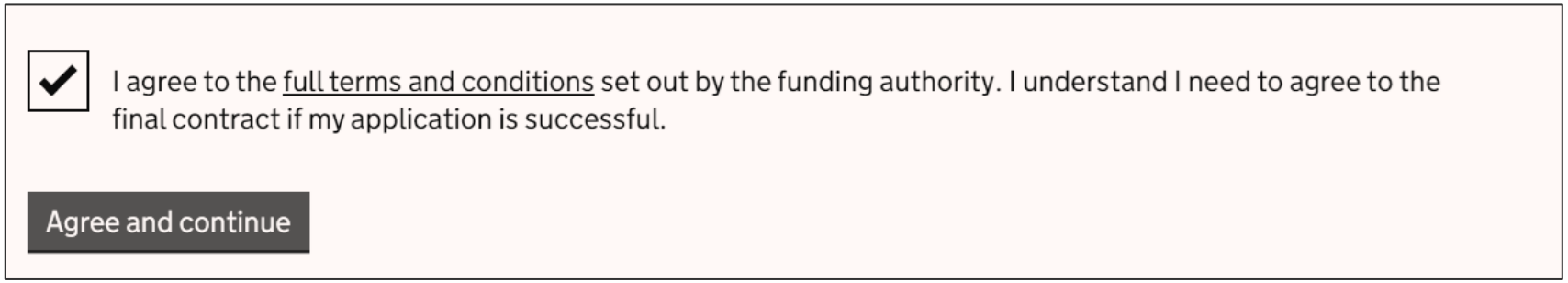
Terms and Conditions

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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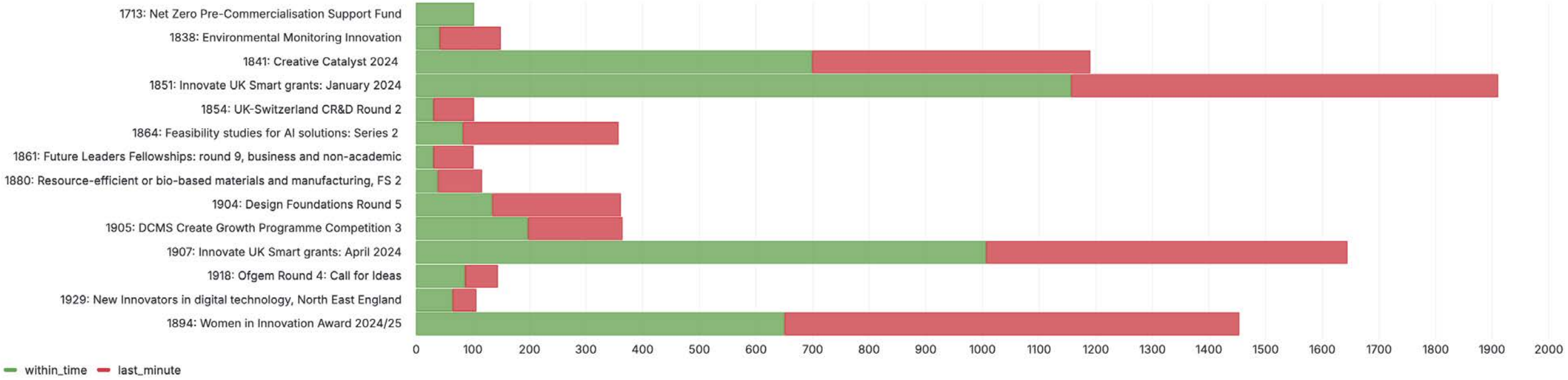
Submitting your application

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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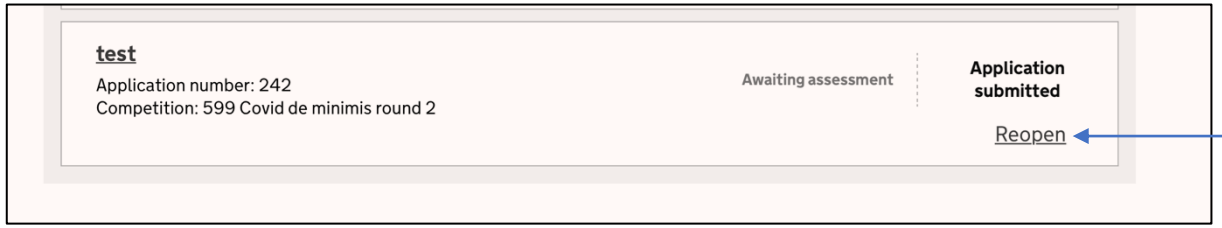
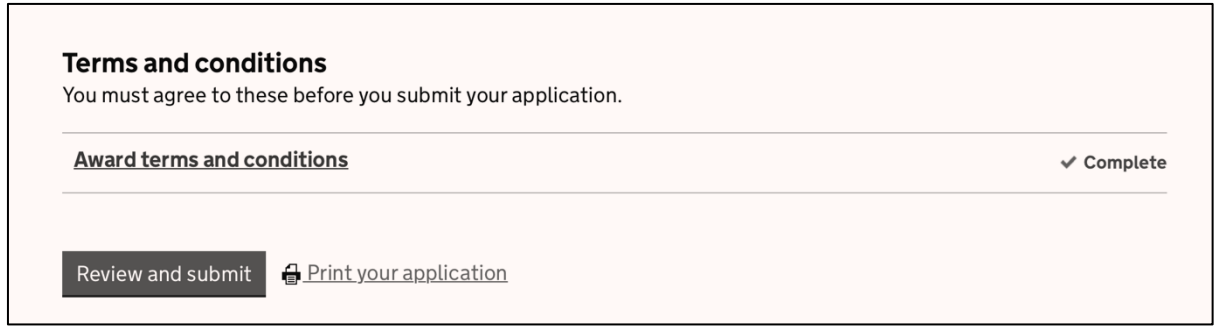
Editing a submitted application



Reopen by clicking here



Remember to press ‘Submit application’

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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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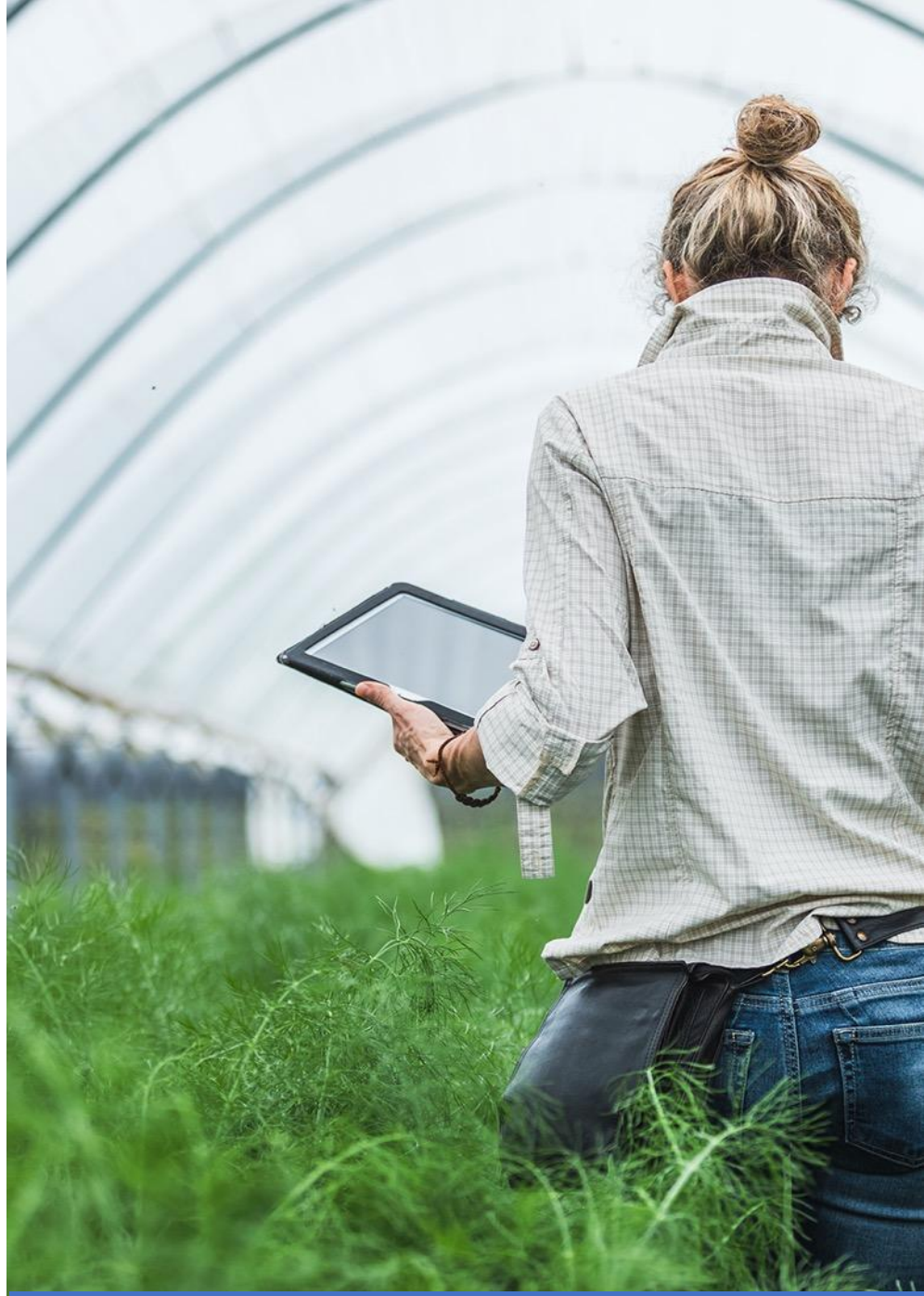

Other Innovate UK projects

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.

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).

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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Eligibility Criteria: Funding Opportunities

Funding for R&D projects split into **3** categories: feasibility studies, industrial research and experimental development.

For feasibility studies and **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 research organisations conducting fundamental research you could get funding for your eligible project costs of up to 100%.

For general guidance on what our research categories are please visit:
https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/categories-of-research-and-development/#contents-list

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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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.

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Contact

Customer Support Services

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

support@iuk.ukri.org

Innovate UK
ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk

Innovate UK Business Connect
iuk.ktn-uk.org

Innovate UK Business Growth
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Thank You

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