

# Funding 101

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Knowledge Transfer Manager - Materials

[iuk-business-connect.org.uk/](http://iuk-business-connect.org.uk/)



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# Outline

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“269,000 UK manufacturing organisations in 2023, over 250,000 were SMEs (90% of the total)”  
**The Manufacturer**

## Aim

- To familiarise those with less experience with Innovate UK funding with the application requirements and encourage applications from organisations new to Innovate UK

## Contents

1. Introduction to Innovate UK funding
2. Tips for funding applications
3. Q&A

## Disclaimer

- General guidance for your application not guarantee of success!
- Each competition has a Guidance for Applicants - follow that to the letter



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A typical Innovate UK backed business raises

**>30%**

**more money**  
from the  
private sector



Than similar businesses. Since 2007

**Direct  
business  
benefit**



**£3.61**

**For every £1 invested**

Over a seven-year period. Based on the most recent independent evaluation.

# Innovate UK purpose

We drive **productivity and economic growth** by supporting businesses to develop and realise the potential of new ideas, including those from the UK's world-class research base.

We **connect businesses to the partners, customers and investors** that can help turn these ideas into commercially successful products and services, driving productivity, and supporting business growth.

**Our mission is to enable the creation and adoption of innovation across the UK.**

**Not just funding!**

## Contents

1. Introduction to Innovate UK funding
2. Tips for funding applications
3. Q&A



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## Why apply?

1. Finance to support R&D
2. Derisk new technologies
3. Platform for collaboration
4. Proven business benefit
5. Develop an innovative culture

**Help to get or stay ahead**



# How does it work? - Innovation grants

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- Innovation grants are released through competitions
- Competitions published on Innovate UK website:
  - <https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/search>
- Support and updates available at Innovate UK Business Connect:
  - <https://iuk-business-connect.org.uk>
- Competitions regularly opening (and closing)
- Each competition has specific eligibility and scope criteria

|         |                             |                       |                       |                              |                                        |
|---------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Summary | <a href="#">Eligibility</a> | <a href="#">Scope</a> | <a href="#">Dates</a> | <a href="#">How to apply</a> | <a href="#">Supporting information</a> |
|---------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|

- Applications are for specific innovation projects
- Application consists of answering ~10 questions about your proposed project – usually part funded
- Match funding – the businesses will usually need to cover some of the costs (typically 30-50% depending on size of company)

**Keep an eye out for competitions**

# What do you need to do?

## 1. Be prepared

- What's your project?
- Who do you need to work with?
- Have you got support of potential customers?
- Have you got your supply chain engaged?

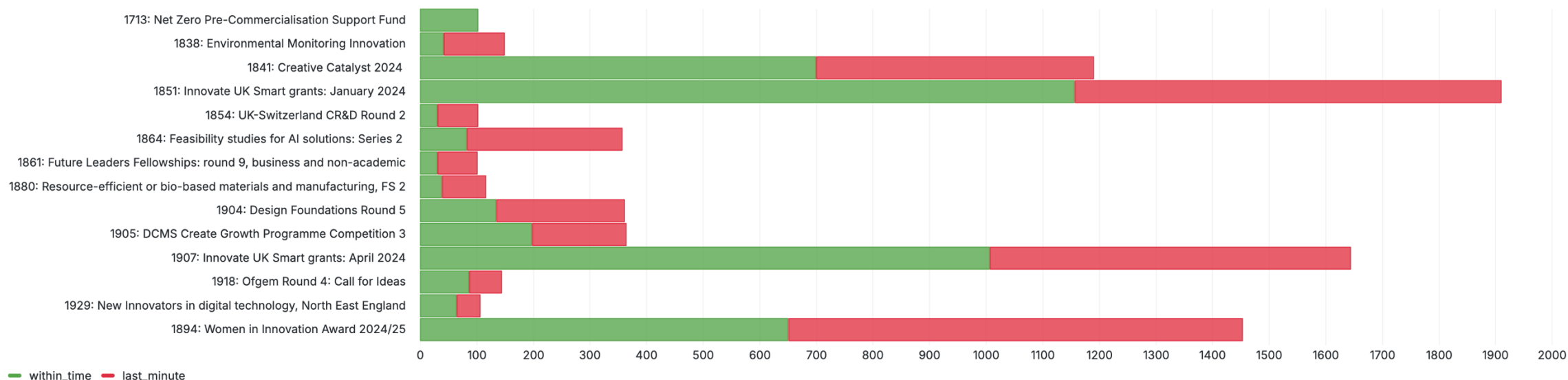
## 2. Get in touch

- Do you need partners to realise the project?
- We can help with finding partners and light touch application guidance

## 3. Apply

- Are you going to lead the application or work with someone?
- Watch the competition briefing
- Do not wait until the last minute

**Prepare early**



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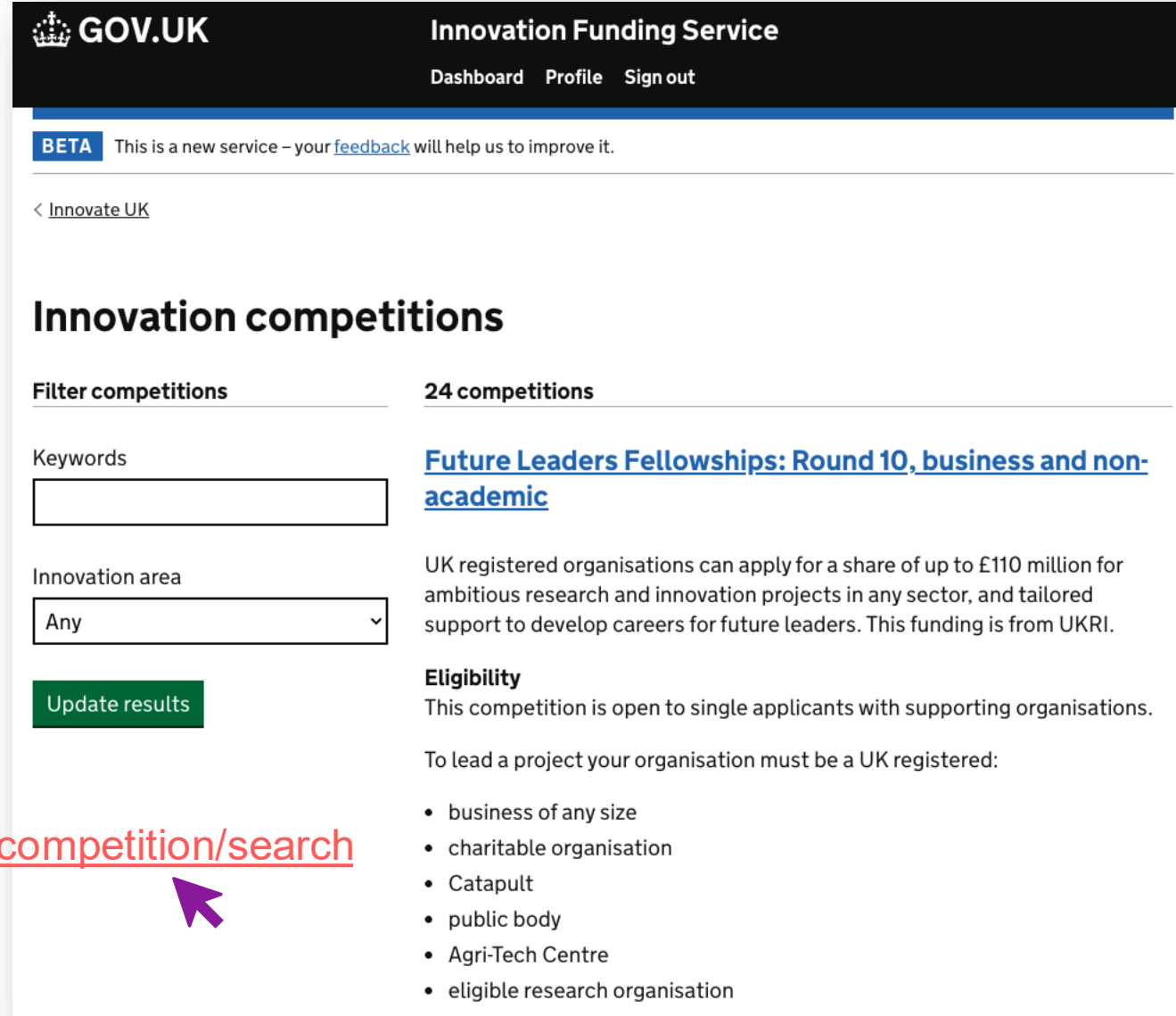
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# Innovation Funding Service (IFS)

- An online platform that allows businesses and other organizations to apply for funding to support their innovation projects.
- It's a key part of how Innovate UK manage innovation grants
- The service covers the entire application process, from initial application to grant award and project monitoring.

<https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/search>



The screenshot shows the 'Innovation Funding Service' (IFS) website. At the top, there's a black header with the 'GOV.UK' logo and the service name. Below the header, a blue banner indicates it's a 'BETA' service. The main content area is titled 'Innovation competitions'. On the left, there's a 'Filter competitions' section with a 'Keywords' text input field and an 'Innovation area' dropdown menu currently set to 'Any'. Below these is a green 'Update results' button. On the right, it shows '24 competitions' and highlights a specific competition: 'Future Leaders Fellowships: Round 10, business and non-academic'. This competition is described as being open to UK registered organisations for up to £110 million. A list of eligibility criteria is provided, including business of any size, charitable organisations, Catapult, public bodies, Agri-Tech Centres, and eligible research organisations.

**GOV.UK** Innovation Funding Service  
Dashboard Profile Sign out

**BETA** This is a new service – your [feedback](#) will help us to improve it.

[< Innovate UK](#)

## Innovation competitions

### Filter competitions

Keywords

Innovation area

[Update results](#)

### 24 competitions

[Future Leaders Fellowships: Round 10, business and non-academic](#)

UK registered organisations can apply for a share of up to £110 million for ambitious research and innovation projects in any sector, and tailored support to develop careers for future leaders. This funding is from UKRI.

**Eligibility**  
This competition is open to single applicants with supporting organisations.

To lead a project your organisation must be a UK registered:

- business of any size
- charitable organisation
- Catapult
- public body
- Agri-Tech Centre
- eligible research organisation

# Example: Made Smarter Innovation: Feasibility Study 2025-26

<https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/2225/overview/c43ef163-3872-4178-b80d-88c406691610>



- Each competition slightly different – depends on what type of projects Innovate UK are looking for
- Detailed guidance available on IFS and how to apply

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

# Key features of a good application

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1. Alignment to the competition scope
2. Quality of research and innovation
3. A strong business case / a convincing value proposition
4. A credible plan for Research and Development
5. The right consortium (e.g. supply chain and route to market)
6. A clear need for support
7. Sufficient risk



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# 1. Alignment to scope

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- Read the briefing document carefully
- Be very clear and specific about how your project fits the scope
- Don't assume assessors are experts in your field
  - Use layman's terms
  - Avoid acronyms
  - Avoid over emphasizing
- If you are not sure you can ask: [support@iuk.ukri.org](mailto:support@iuk.ukri.org)



**If assessors don't think the project is in scope,  
the rest of your work will be wasted!**



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## 2. Quality of research & innovation

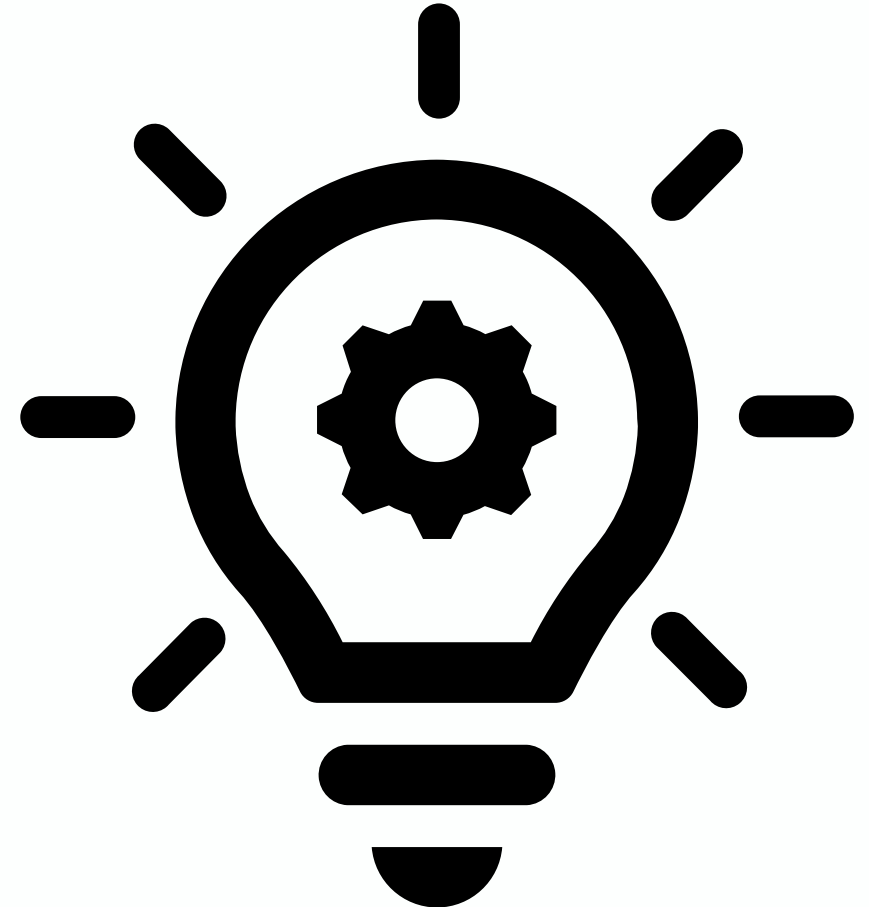
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- All projects must involve significant innovation and pushing boundaries
- Show how your project is commercially/scientifically innovative and how your research will progress understanding / deliver breakthrough
- Provide evidence to support this i.e. results of:
  - Patent searches
  - Competitor analyses
  - Literature surveys
- Freedom to operate - Detail background IP, strategy for protecting any IP generated and distribution of IPR

Gateway to research - <https://gtr.ukri.org/>

See current and past research projects

**Why is your project exemplary?**



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### 3. Make a strong business case

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- What is the need/benefit that this project will address?
- What is the current market like (size, dynamics etc.)?
- How will the partners profit from success; when and how much?
  - Quantify the Return on Investment
  - How will you commercialise over few years after project?
- Describe the route to market
  - Have you got partners in the supply chain?
- Articulate the wider impact – Social, environment



**It is considered as an investment**



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## 4. Have a credible plan for R&D

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- Outcome focussed research
- Provide sufficient detail to be able to judge the quality & feasibility of the technical plan and the value for money
- Work packages; partners involved; timeline; description of activity; milestones
- Demonstrate the necessary skills & resources are available
- Provide a clear/simple management structure and plan
- How are you going to disseminate the results?



**You will be held to the plan**

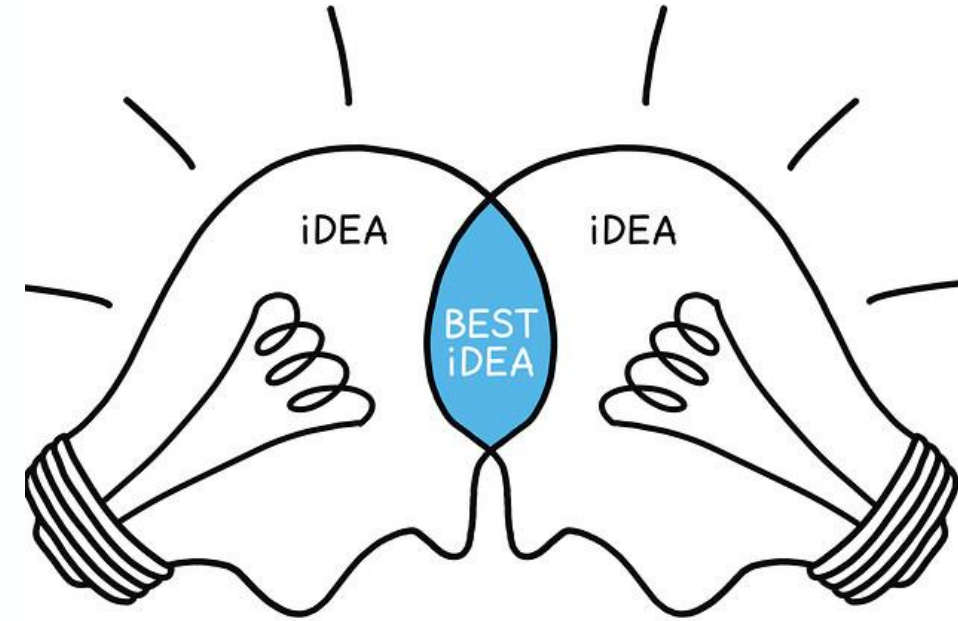


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## 5. The right consortium

- Matched funding – partners show intent
- Horizontal or vertical consortia (or both) possible
- Why these partners? – what makes this a particularly strong consortium?
- Show how all the partners have an active role to play and how each benefits in some way (no “passengers”)
- Is the supply chain complete? If not, how will you fill
- If there are global markets in mind, explain how these will be accessed



<https://seapointcenter.com/what-is-collaboration/>

**The sum greater than it's parts**



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## 6. A clear need for support

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- What would the consequences of not getting the funding be?
- Explain why the project would not go ahead (or would be delayed or reduced in scope) without funding support:
  - Explain and justify why you are not funding the project yourselves
  - Explain how the project would be undertaken differently with funding support
- A realistic prospect of success, but sufficient uncertainty that there is still need for R&D



**Why should taxpayer money support this?**



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## 7. Identify risks and mitigation strategies

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- Explain the risks and how these will be mitigated
  - Technical (incl. regulatory)
  - Commercial
  - Managerial
  - Environmental
- Use risk management tools e.g. risk register
- *“funders recognise that projects of this type are inherently risky, but seek assurance that projects have adequate arrangements for managing this risk”*



**It should be risky so you need to mitigate**



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# Assessment

<https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/what-happens-after-you-have-submitted-your-application/>

1. Applications are assessed for eligibility. They will check: business registered, collaboration requirements, finances, duration, if previously submitted
2. Applications are assessed against the scope by Innovation Lead. Their decision is final.
3. Sent to independent assessors – experts from across business and academia. They are allocated based on their skills and expertise relevant to your project.
4. Assessors complete their assessment independently and are bound by a non-disclosure agreement as part of their contract.
5. Each assessor submits a score for each scored question. They will also provide comments which form your application feedback.
6. A ranked order of all applications based on the average assessor score of each application. The highest-ranking applications (subject to meeting a minimum quality threshold and any **portfolio approach**) are recommended to Innovate UK for funding.

**Feedback can be helpful for future**



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# General tips

- Answer the question fully
- Build a narrative
- Use evidence and quantify where possible

## Need or challenge

**6. What is the business need, technological challenge or market opportunity behind your innovation?**

▼ [What should I include in this section?](#)

Explain:

- the main motivation for the project
- the business need, technological challenge or market opportunity
- whether you have identified any similar innovation and its current limitations, including those close to market or in development
- 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
- the wider economic, social, environmental, cultural or political challenges which are influential in creating the opportunity, such as incoming regulations

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

Words remaining: 400



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**Additional support**



## Finding potential project partners

<https://app.mural.co/t/ktn5092/m/ktn5092/1748597375517/349716dea4644b4659e3622023a53cbd869441e3>





**MADE SMARTER**  
INNOVATION

Delivered by Innovate UK,  
EPSRC and ESRC

## Made Smarter Innovation Feasibility Study - Give Get Board

### Instructions

i. Fill in a **Give-Get Form** on either the "**Manufacturers**" or "**Digital Technology Providers**" board (excluding the "**Interested Partners**" section).  
 ii. Review the organisations on the opposite board and add your details to the "**Interested Partners**" section if appropriate.  
 iii. Innovate UK Business Connect will contact **Give-Get Form Owners** and request permission to connect **Interested Partners**. If approved, we will provide an introductory email with resources to apply for the Feasibility Study.

[Watch the tutorial video here!](#)



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### Manufacturers

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SCROLL FOR MORE

Tutorial video: <https://vimeo.com/1093754697/f458bd1d23>

# Contact

## Innovate UK Business Connect

### Materials & Manufacturing team:

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