

Funding 101

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22.06.2026



Innovate
UK

Business
Connect



Innovation in Textiles: Funding 101

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. Funding Landscape
4. 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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Innovate UK

Turning breakthrough ideas into industry giants

As part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Innovate UK is a publicly funded agency that helps turn innovation into commercial and economic growth in the UK.

Innovate UK sits at the heart of the UK innovation system, connecting the full pathway from discovery research to commercial success.

 **Grow and scale**



**UK Research
and Innovation**

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

- Funding – grants and loans
- Sector specific innovation programmes – tackle unique challenges
- Expert growth support – mentoring and strategic advice
- Connections – UK's Innovation Network



Not just funding!

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

- Innovation grants are released through competitions
- Competitions published on Innovation Funding Service (IFS):
 - <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 are regularly opening (and closing)
- Each competition has specific eligibility and scope criteria



- 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

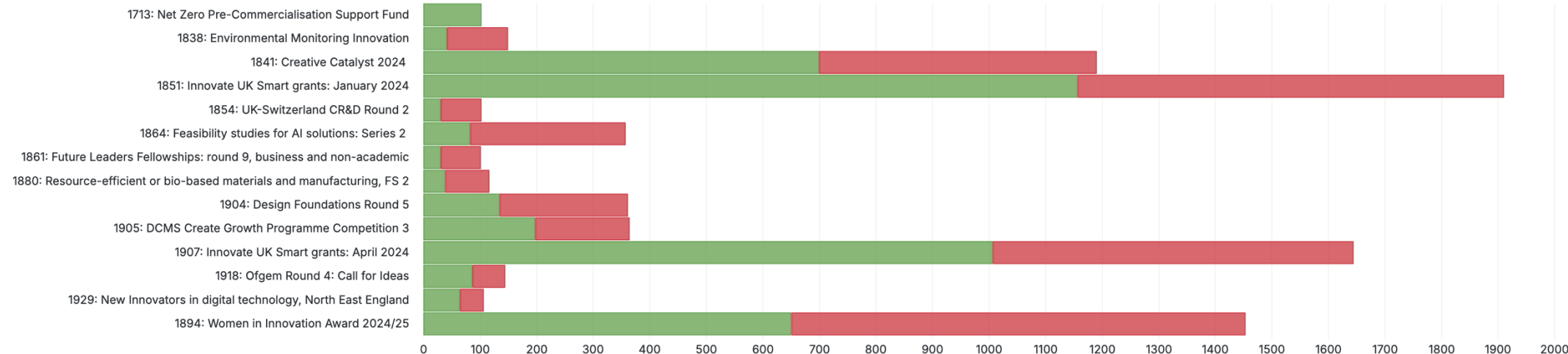
- Do you need partners to realise the project?
- We can help with finding partners and light touch application guidance

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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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.

The screenshot shows the GOV.UK Innovation Funding Service interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'GOV.UK' and 'Innovation Funding Service' along with links for 'Dashboard', 'Profile', and 'Sign out'. Below this is a 'BETA' notice: 'This is a new service – your [feedback](#) will help us to improve it.' A breadcrumb trail shows '< Innovate UK'. The main heading is 'Innovation competitions'. On the left, under 'Filter competitions', there are input fields for 'Keywords' and 'Innovation area' (set to 'Any'), and a green 'Update results' button. On the right, it shows '24 competitions' and a link for 'Future Leaders Fellowships: Round 10, business and non-academic'. Below the link, it states: '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.' Under 'Eligibility', it says: 'This competition is open to single applicants with supporting organisations. To lead a project your organisation must be a UK registered:' followed by a bulleted list: business of any size, charitable organisation, Catapult, public body, Agri-Tech Centre, and eligible research organisation.

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

Application Question - example



- 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

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

1. Alignment to scope

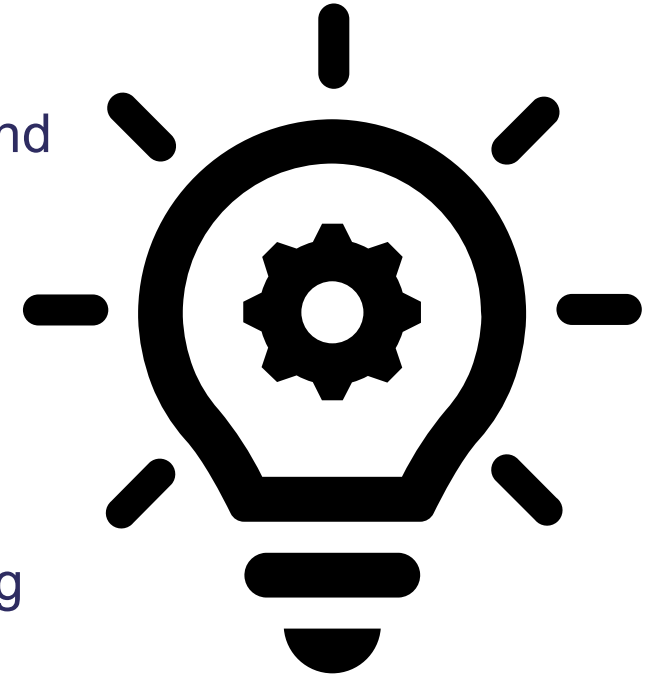
- Read the briefing document carefully
- Be very clear and specific about how your project fits the scope
- Don't assume assessors are experts in your field
 - ✓ Use layman's terms
 - ✓ Avoid acronyms
 - ✓ Avoid over emphasizing
- If you are not sure, you can ask:
support@iuk.ukri.org



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

2. Quality of research & innovation

- 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 - gtr.ukri.org to see current and past research projects



Why is your project exemplary?

3. Make a strong business case

- 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 the 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

4. Have a credible plan for R&D

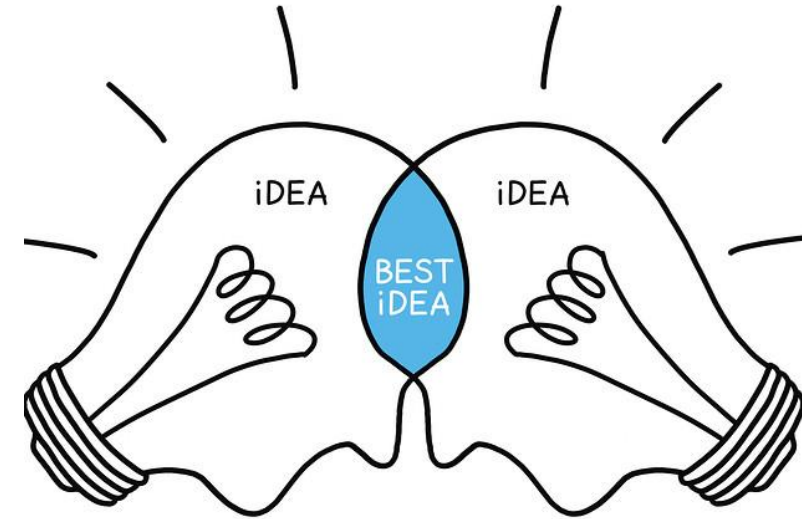
- Outcome focussed research
- Provide sufficient detail to be able to judge the quality & feasibility of the technical plan and the value for money
- Work packages; partners involved; timeline; description of activity; milestones
- Demonstrate the necessary skills & resources are available
- Provide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



You will be held to the plan

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 whole is greater than its parts

6. A clear need for support

- 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?

7. Sufficient risk and mitigation

- 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

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**

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

Additional support



Finding potential project partners

- Briefing session
- Drop-in sessions
- Networking events
- Workshops
- Webinar

Materials & Manufacturing

team-materialsmanufacturing@iukbc.org.uk

Chemistry and Industrial Biotechnology

team-chemistryindustrialbiotechnology@iukbc.org.uk

Emerging & Enabling Technologies

team-emergingenablingtechnologies@iukbc.org.uk

Accessibility and Inclusion

Reasonable Adjustment Service

- Help overcome barriers, including but limited to those with disabilities, long-term conditions, or neurodivergent individuals who face challenges applying

<https://iuk-business-connect.org.uk/how-we-help/reasonable-adjustments-service/>

- Proofreading, Clarifying languages, Resources, Intro to sector experts, Time management, Note-taking
- IUK Customer Service team support@iuk.ukri.org or call 0300 321 4357

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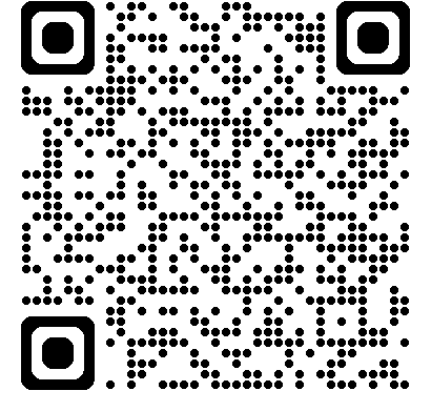
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Grant Funding



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UKRI Funding Finder

<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/>

02

Innovation Funding Service:

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

03

Innovate UK Business Connect Opportunities Page

<https://iuk-business-connect.org.uk/opportunities/>

04

Outside the Innovate UK ecosystem:

DBT's Finance and support for businesses

<https://www.gov.uk/business-finance-support>

Industrial Strategy 2025

- 10-year plan to increase business investment and grow the industries of the future in the UK
- **High-potential sectors:**
 - Advanced Manufacturing
 - Clean Energy
 - Digital and Technologies
 - Creative Industries
 - Life Sciences
 - Defence
 - Professional services
 - Financial services
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** Aerospace, Automotive, Batteries, Space, Advanced Materials

National Materials Innovation Programme

The National Materials Innovation Programme (NMIP) aims to establish a nationally coordinated approach to the UK advanced materials sector, driving the translation and adoption of materials across key industrial sectors.

The four-year programme will drive growth across the UK through targeted materials innovation support

Specific

- Improve awareness and integration of UK capabilities
- Strengthen cross-industry innovation
- Accelerate commercialisation of materials to unlock potential
- Strengthen national resilience and security
- Leverage private investment in priority materials innovation areas

Open Competitions

- **Accelerated Knowledge Transfer Partnerships 6 (AKT 6)**

The compact version on a KTP partnership between UK Knowledge base (HE, RTO, Catapult) and business. Align with Industrial Strategy. 3 months project, **Find solutions to immediate and long-term challenges, identify innovation blockers, develop new business models and expand capacity Etc,**

Deadline: 15/07/2026

- **IBIC ICURe Discover: September 2026**

IBIC (Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Catalyst) ICURe Discover is a part-time **hybrid market exploration programme** for researchers, technicians and research students, with up to £2,500 support for market discovery activities.

Deadline: 17/07/2026

- **Future Leaders Fellowships: Round 11, business and non-academic**

Deliver ambitious research and innovation and develop future leaders

Deadline: 04/11/2026

- **Circular Bio-Based Europe: 2026 call for project proposals**

CBE-JU is funding projects developing innovative and sustainable bio-based solutions, with up to €20m for the largest projects. **HORIZON-JU-CBE-2026-RIA-03-Develop breakthrough and sustainable bio-based textile fibres**

Deadline: 22/09/2026

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Thank you!

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The UK's innovation agency

