**EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account**

**November 2024 Open Funding Call**

**Information and Guidance Notes**

Application deadline: 21 November at 12 noon. Submit through:

<https://forms.office.com/e/XXqhqnN5U7>.

# SUMMARY

This funding is available for University of Edinburgh researchers and academics to support activities that **accelerate or amplify impact** arising **from EPSRC-themed research**.  Applications are now requested for the following:

1. Collaborative projects
2. Secondments
3. Commercialisation projects

The deadline for submission of full applications is **21 November 2024 at 12 noon**.

Details including the scope and application types; eligibility and regulations; costings and application process and assessment criteria are given below. Applicants are also **strongly encouraged to contact the relevant** [**Business Development or Technology Transfer colleague**](https://www.ed.ac.uk/edinburgh-innovations/for-staff/commercialisation-routes/business-development-team) at the earliest possible stage, to discuss the proposed project and the intellectual property (IP) plan.

Activities that sit mainly within [EPSRC’s remit and aims](https://www.ukri.org/councils/epsrc/guidance-for-applicants/epsrc-remit/) are eligible for funding. There is no longer a requirement to demonstrate a link to a previous EPSRC grant. The EPSRC IAA is committed to **equality of opportunity for all applicants at all career stages** in line with the University’s long-standing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

# WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE CALL?

The EPSRC IAA can fund activities that accelerate and amplify impact from research that sit mainly within EPSRC’s remit and aims. Activities that intersect with other UKRI research council remits are encouraged as there is an ongoing harmonisation of Impact Acceleration Accounts across UKRI. Proposals that span the remit of several research councils are expected to note this in the tick box on the application form.

Impact can be pursued through collaboration or knowledge exchange with partner organisations outside academia or through commercialisation of knowledge or technologies. Applicants are invited to look at the [case studies](https://www.edweb.ed.ac.uk/edinburgh-innovations/for-staff/industry-engagement-success-stories/epsrc-iaa-case-studies) available [online](https://uoe-edinburgh-innovations.ed.ac.uk/for-staff/success-stories/epsrc-iaa-case-studies) as examples of previously funded IAA projects. The three project types for which applications can be submitted are outlined below:

## **Collaborative projects**

This funding stream is intended to develop impact from outputs of EPSRC themed research through collaborative projects. Collaborations may include public, private, or third sector organisations, including government, business, charity, NGO, and other partner organisations where these bring distinctive contributions to the collaborative research activity.

Collaborative projects most often take the form of the joint pursuit of research with an impact partner, with the key aim to accelerate impact through increased engagement of Edinburgh researchers with end-users of the research in non-academic organisations.

Proposals should support activities to build relationships between the University and external partners and to promote a culture of innovation. Collaborative projects always require at least one external partner.

There is an expectation that the partner organisation will contribute actively to the project through the direct provision of resources (at no cost to the University), in line with their potential to benefit. This includes a financial contribution (cash match funding) of minimum:

* 30% of the IAA contribution for businesses with 10 or more employees.
* 10% of the IAA contribution for public sector organisations and businesses with up to 9 employees.

The remainder is expected through in-kind contributions such as access to facilities, equipment, and technical expertise amongst others. The cash contribution requirement may only be completely waived if sufficiently justified by a partner’s status as a not-for-profit unable to provide cash funding together with a demonstrated potential for significant public benefits from anticipated impacts. Private and public sector organisations typically do not qualify as not-for-profit.

Proposals should make clear why the chosen partner organisation is the most appropriate to support this particular project. Where the partner is an existing or prospective spinout, this is particularly important. A clear statement of how conflict of interest will be managed must be included. Applicants can expect the review panel to give additional scrutiny to proposals that involve University spinout companies.

It is recognised that some complex interdisciplinary projects may need to be tackled through multi-institutional collaborations, which bring together the necessary expertise to address the challenging research problems.

Any collaboration must demonstrate that it brings together the capabilities, expertise, and resources necessary to address the proposed project.

## **Secondments**

One of the most effective ways to exchange knowledge can be through the movement of people. The secondments funding stream is meant to be flexible and to promote interaction between Edinburgh researchers and research users in non-academic organisations – e.g., government, businesses, charities/NGOs or other partner organisations.

Secondments involving part-time working with an external organisation (e.g., one day a week over a period of three, six or eight months) or full-time secondments are both possible. The duration will depend on the needs of the project.

Secondments can be both outward and inward:

* Outward: secondment of researchers/academics to establish or strengthen connections with external organisations by transferring knowledge or technology from EPSRC-related research
* Inward: secondment from non-academic organisations can be supported (although salary costs for non-University staff cannot be requested)

Secondees are expected to visit the partner location in person as appropriate and otherwise appropriately combine site visits with virtual formats, in line with the [University Sustainable Travel Policy](https://www.ed.ac.uk/sustainability/topics/travel/sustainable-travel-policy-2021). The application should make clear and detail how the secondment will be managed in terms of what time will be spent at/with the external organisation and how the project will be managed when not on-site.

As a minimum, secondment partners are expected to match the IAA request through in kind contributions.

## **Commercialisation projects**

There is often a gap between the end of research grant support and the point at which a technology is sufficiently robust to qualify for translational funding, to attract capital investment for spinning out, or to license the technology to interested commercial entities. The commercialisation funding stream is intended to bridge that gap.

Projects must be linked to the development or refinement of existing EPSRC themed research outputs. Activities supported include, but are not limited to:

* Developing or producing prototypes or demonstrators
* Scale-up testing and development work
* Licensing technology
* Forming a start-up or University-spinout company

Existing research outputs will likely be characterised by a high degree of uncertainty or risk, but the aim of a project should be to de-risk the technology and advance it closer to the point where it is suitable for support from other sources and/or commercial exploitation.

Proposals must outline the commercial relevance of the idea, how the project outputs will be commercialised, and have a clear impact plan or roadmap. It is of key importance that a demand for the product, technology or service is demonstrated in the application, as well as a comparison with competing alternatives.

Projects should address specific questions or explore identified issues; purely speculative proposals are unlikely to be supported.

Whilst there is no requirement for commercialisation projects to engage with a project partner, proposals that do have an external partner should make clear why the project partner is not paying for the project and outline what they will contribute.

# RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION

The University of Edinburgh is committed to maintaining the highest standards of research integrity in all aspects of its research. There are specific University guidelines on research integrity. By applying to the call, applicants confirm that they are aware of and comply with the high standards expected, which in addition to the specific guidelines also includes the University’s commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion, and the University’s sustainability policy, including its [travel guidelines](https://www.ed.ac.uk/sustainability/topics/travel/sustainable-travel-policy-2021).

For impact acceleration projects, responsible innovation is also a key commitment. Responsible innovation is the alignment of impacts with societal benefit and public interest and should be considered and embedded in proposals from earliest possible stages as well as throughout the lifetime of a project. Applicants are encouraged to consider the future directions of the proposed project, anticipating the potential and plausible societal consequences in order to promote desirable and avoid undesirable impacts. Teams should regularly reflect on assumptions, integrate diverse sources of knowledge into strategic decision making, and consider alternative processes to remain responsive as the understanding of impacts develops. Teams should consider the perspectives of stakeholders and end-users, engaging with them as appropriate, to ensure a broad understanding of how desirable different impacts will be for different public and stakeholder groups. For further guidance please also refer to the [EPSRC framework for responsible innovation](https://www.ukri.org/about-us/epsrc/our-policies-and-standards/framework-for-responsible-innovation/).

# WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY RULES AND REGULATIONS?

The EPSRC IAA is committed to equality of opportunity for all eligible applicants. The University has a long-standing commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion and to promoting a positive culture which celebrates difference, challenges prejudice, and ensures fairness. Applications are encouraged from **research-active staff at all career stages and from diverse subject areas**.

## Project eligibility

* Applications **must sit to at least 50% within the remit and aims of EPSRC.** [Check the remit of EPSRC here.](https://www.ukri.org/councils/epsrc/guidance-for-applicants/epsrc-remit/)
  + Applications that span other research councils’ remits are expected to indicate this in the appropriate tick box on the application form in order to facilitate cross research council IAA coordination.
* Applications must clearly state and justify why the project has not been enabled by, and is therefore different or additional to, impact activities that could be expected to be embedded in an original research application. EPSRC explicitly state that IAA funds cannot be used for work that should have been anticipated, i.e., IAA funding should enable opportunities not anticipated, opportunities out of original scope, or further acceleration of the impact of outputs.
* Projects should have a **clear knowledge exchange or commercialisation focus** with the impact clearly identified.
* Proposals should indicate any **link to funding** from other funding sources and outline how this could provide additional advantage. Proposals with a clear strategic link to UK strategic impact and innovation initiatives (e.g., Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund or UK Innovation Strategy priority areas), and/or show clear capacity building towards these will be considered to provide additional value.
* The expectation is that **partners will match funds requested from the IAA.**
  + For collaborative projects, partners **must** make a cash contribution to the value of at least:
    - 30% of the amount requested from the IAA for businesses with 10 or more employees.
    - 10% of the amount requested from the IAA for public sector organisations and businesses with up to 9 employees.
  + The cash contribution requirement may only be completely waived if sufficiently justified by a partner’s status as a not-for-profit organisation unable to provide cash funding together with a demonstrated potential for significant public benefits from anticipated impacts. Private and public sector organisations typically do not qualify as not-for-profit.
  + Partners are **expected** to add in-kind contributions such as staff time, equipment, consumables etc to the value of the full amount requested from the IAA.
  + For secondments, partners are expected to make in-kind contributions, such as staff time, equipment, consumables etc, to the value of the full amount requested from the IAA.
  + Commercialisation projects are not required to have an external partner but proposals that do should make clear why the project partner is not paying for the project and outline what they will contribute.
* All proposals must be discussed and signed off with your relevant BD or TT colleague prior to submission, and a dedicated section on the application form must be completed by them
* Applicants are required to follow School research application procedures when applying for this funding and include a costing using Worktribe
* All proposals for collaborative projects or secondments require a [letter of support or email statement from the partner organisation](https://www.ukri.org/councils/epsrc/guidance-for-applicants/what-to-include-in-your-proposal/project-partners-letter-of-support/) including details of match funding, detailing the purpose of their involvement and why the project is important to them/the business – what difference will it make
* Undergraduate activities, core PhD training, Masters and CPD will not be supported
* New basic research activity such as that covered by responsive mode grants from EPSRC will not be supported
* The EPSRC IAA will not support Non-Specific Public Engagement activities and science communication. However, IAAs may support public engagement where interaction is key to informing the research impact such as user or patient engagement as a critical pathway to achieving societal and/or economic impact.
* Projects can start from **January 2025 and must finish by January 2026 due to the end of the current programme.**
* **Maximum project duration is 12 months.**

## Eligible partner organisations

UK and overseas businesses, public sector or third sector/charity organisations are all eligible. Exchanges with other HEIs (universities) or other academic and educational institutions are not eligible.

## Intellectual property (IP)

Applicants should not refrain from working with external partners solely due to fears around protection of the IP. BD colleagues should ensure that all the necessary contractual arrangements are put in place to ensure that IP is appropriately protected, referring to the standard terms attached in the appendix below. This may include confidentiality agreements for pre- and post-application discussions, collaboration agreements or secondment agreements, amongst others.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the relevant BD or TT colleague at the earliest possible stage, to discuss the proposed project and the IP plan.

EPSRC makes no claim to the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) arising from the research they fund. Whilst they prefer that the IPR generated reside with the University that generates it, they suggest a flexible approach. They do not lay down any prescriptive rules about how IP should be identified or managed. EPSRC do require any collaboration agreements to be signed by all relevant parties before the project can commence.

## Conflicts of interest

All applicants are required to recognise and disclose activities that might give rise to actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest and to ensure that such conflicts are properly managed or avoided.

# PROJECT COSTING

It is expected that projects to a value of £200,000 will be awarded in this funding round.

* A maximum of £60,000 can be requested per proposal
* IAA funds will only cover **direct project costs**. (Please refer to the [EPSRC guidance on project costs](https://www.ukri.org/councils/epsrc/guidance-for-applicants/costs-you-can-apply-for/) for definitions.)
  + The activities in the proposal are to be **costed** on a [full economic costing (fEC) basis](https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/fundingguide/resources/principlesfec/) and IAA funds requested for the **permitted costs**.
  + Permitted costs that IAA funds can be requested for are **directly incurred costs** and **directly allocated costs except estate costs**. Indirect costs cannot be funded.
* Projects are to be costed in Worktribe thus creating a Worktribe record.
* All submissions must include the spend profile form and clearly detail and justify the resources/activities for which IAA funding is sought
* IAA funds will not support basic research
* IAA funds cannot be used for direct subsidising of commercial R&D
* Patent filing or similar costs associated directly to registering intellectual property rights will not be supported
* Visits to industry-targeted conferences and events (as or when feasible) will be eligible where clear objectives and impact from the attendance can be demonstrated
* Equipment costs are not normally supported. In exceptional circumstances where a clear case for why the project cannot go ahead without the equipment being provided, equipment cost requests up to a maximum of £10,000 will be considered by the review panel
* In addition to the cost rules summarised above, for all other costs standard EPSRC grant cost eligibility rules will apply

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| **Eligible costs** | **Ineligible Costs** |
| Directly incurred and directly allocated costs | Estates and indirect costs |
| University of Edinburgh staff costs | Partner organisation time |
| Consumables | Equipment costs above £10,000 |
| Travel and subsistence costs incurred by University of Edinburgh staff | Travel or subsistence costs incurred by partner organisation (except for travel costs associated with secondments) |

# WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

All projects will be evaluated by the University’s EPSRC IAA panel comprising members from both scientific and commercial backgrounds. Applicants are urged to ensure that applications are written with clarity and a non-specialist audience in mind. The panel will consider:

* Project rationale and viability
  + Fit with EPSRC's remit
  + Societal need and benefit
  + Clarity of plan to achieve project aims
  + Viability of the proposed activities
* Strategic fit
  + Strategic benefit to the University and to the other parties (including potential for follow-on activities)
  + Existing or potential leverage of funds from, and alignment to, other impact or industry funding streams, e.g. Innovate UK (UKRI), ISCF (BEIS)
* Outcomes and impacts
  + Likelihood of impact
  + Reach and significance of impact
  + Timescale to impact
  + Planned engagement to understand emerging impacts (desirable and undesirable)
* Costs
  + Value for money
  + Value of the contribution from the partner organisation

Where consensus is not reached across the panel, the final decision will be taken by the panel chair (Dean of Research or Associate Dean of Impact at the College of Science and Engineering).

# WHAT ARE THE AWARD CONDITIONS?

* To satisfy EPSRC requirements, applicants must report on progress, both in terms of output and spend, during the project at agreed intervals
* To satisfy EPSRC requirements, applicants must provide a final report and may be asked to provide case study upon completion of the project, including providing and updating information in ResearchFish
* Applicants must provide a spend forecast at the time of the application and ‘actual versus planned’ spend updates at agreed intervals during the project
* Applicants must ensure they work with their BD or TT colleague(s) to ensure knowledge exchange and commercialisation opportunities are maximised and IP is protected/managed where appropriate
* Applications must be properly costed (with only direct costs allowed) and have received approval through their usual departmental systems
* All project costs must be posted to the correct job code no later than one month after project completion. Failure to comply with this may result in being disqualified from submitting applications to future programmes and in the withdrawal of the unclaimed or full amount of the award.
* Any problems or issues that arise during the course of the project must be highlighted immediately. This includes identified underspend in the project period; this is important as these funds need to be reallocated to prevent their loss to the University of Edinburgh

# WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE?

There is an opportunity to [register a project idea](https://forms.office.com/e/JV4F18zs2G) that will allow the applicant the opportunity to join a Q&A session about the call. Please register your idea at your earliest convenience but **no later than October 21** if you wish to join a Q&A.

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| **Deadline for applications** | **Panel meeting** | **Outcomes** |
| 21 November at 12 noon | 10 December | Application outcomes expected within 2 weeks of the panel meeting |

All applications must be **uploaded using the following Microsoft Form:**

<https://forms.office.com/e/XXqhqnN5U7>

The following documents must be uploaded for the application to be complete:

* Application form
* Worktribe costing (excel sheet)
* Letter of support or email statement from the partner organisation (not applicable for commercialisation projects with no project partner)

Letters of support from the partner organisation are not strictly mandatory at the time of application; however, awards will be conditional on receipt of a satisfactory letter of support.

Any letter of support should demonstrate the partner’s commitment to the project (incl. details on *how* they will contribute) as well as clearly detail *what* the partner will contribute to the project (nature and value of any cash and/or in-kind contribution) in line with the information provided in the application.

*Please note: The relevant BD contact* ***must*** *create the project for which funding is sought as an opportunity in IRM prior to or upon the application being submitted. No award can be made without this being documented.*

**Appendix: EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account**

**External Collaboration Standard Terms**

Please use this term sheet to communicate standard terms to any partners interested in pursuing an ESPRC IAA Collaborative Project. Each project requires signature of a collaboration agreement which will be based on these standard terms that are drafted to ensure supported projects will not qualify as a subsidy under subsidy control requirements. Please contact the EPSRC IAA team if there are any questions or reservations around any of these standard terms from a potential project partner.

**Confidentiality**

All projects bound by standard confidentiality practices and legal agreement.

**Publication and impact reporting**

The University will be free to present the project outputs at conferences, internal symposia and to publish in journals or otherwise, with the company’s prior consent to ensure no commercially sensitive information is disclosed. Acknowledgment to the contribution of each party will be made in accordance with standard scientific practice to be agreed on in writing before publication.

The University has the right to publish the results, pending right of review (30d) by the company to check for any of their confidential information to be removed (if ever unintentionally included). Publication can be delayed by up to 90d only for the purpose of patenting the results. No indefinite embargo period.

The company acknowledges that the Institution is required by its funders to demonstrate the project’s impact on society and will provide any reasonably requested information to demonstrate such impact. This does not apply to information which is confidential or identifies any individual.

**Intellectual Property**

Any foreground IPR solely generated by UoE would be owned by UoE. Foreground IPR jointly generated would be jointly owned. Any Foreground IPR solely generated by the company would be owned by the company.

If there was UoE patentable IPR generated, we would expect UoE to lead on the filing and prosecution. If this is at company’s request, we would expect the company to then support the costs of the filing.

**Licensing**

If the IPR generated by the UoE would be of interest to the company for commercial exploitation, the University would then give the company the first right of refusal (option for 90days) to negotiate a royalty-based commercial licence to the UoE’s IP. Any licence would be negotiated on fair and reasonable grounds, including considering the party’s contribution. Terms would be negotiated at point of licence when there is a clear view of what is being licenced and expected commercial use.

The University would retain a research licence to the project results for teaching and research purposes only including (i) in research funded by third parties provided that those third parties do not gain or claim any rights to such Foreground Intellectual Property; (ii) the right to grant sub-licences to other institutions for their educational and research purposes only (notwithstanding confidentiality).