

UK Research and Innovation

UKRI Strength in Places (SIPF) Wave 2 Programme Overview

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Executive Summary

1. The UKRI Strength in Places Fund (SIPF) is a competitive funding scheme that takes a place-based approach to research and innovation funding. It will be driven by business need that can be met by existing research strengths. Building on a successful first wave, where 23 seedcorn funded awards are developing full stage bids, UKRI is delighted to announce a second wave of funding to support collaborative bids from consortia of publicly-funded research organisations, businesses, and local leadership¹. Projects will be led by either a research organisation or a business, with consortia including both

¹ 'Local leadership' is further defined at paragraph 3.

research organisation and business partners. Successful projects will undertake a flexible range of research and innovation interventions that will have a demonstrable impact on local economic growth.

2. Funding will be competitively awarded to consortia representing 'economic geographies' across the UK that (a) have existing research excellence and high-quality innovation capability that are focused on increasing economic growth and aligned to the needs of their local industry and business supply chains; and (b) where activities are likely to bring significant, relative economic impact and regional growth. Activities should make a significant change in rate of growth, relative to the baseline for the place. We also encourage bids in line with the principle of inclusive economic growth, where the benefits are extended across all of society. Projects should look to develop an economic strength of the place, where there is a reasonable expectation that they can develop a competitive advantage. We expect and require bidders to define the spatial geography that they will be focusing on. We expect bids to be developed after consultation with local stakeholders. That consultation includes direct engagement with local people.
3. It is expected that partnerships within projects will include and be supported by local leadership organisations including LEPs, Combined Authorities, enterprise bodies and similar economic development agencies across the four nations of the UK who may be active partners within the consortia. Full definitions of those stakeholders who can lead, or be a partner within a bid are set out at sections 28-29.
4. The programme will consist of two stages, with waves of funding. The first will call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from consortia. Following expert review and panel assessment, the EOIs that pass this pre-qualifying stage with strongest alignment to the call criteria will receive up to £50K seedcorn funding to develop full stage proposals over a period of up to 24 weeks.
5. Those EOIs supported with seedcorn funding will bid for full funding of between £10 million and, exceptionally, £50 million. After the second, full stage assessment, a number of the highest quality proposals will then receive funding for between 3 – 5 years, depending on the individual proposal, to deliver a bespoke package of interventions in their defined economic geography. In this second wave of funding, UKRI expects to fund between 4 and 8 bids.

Purpose

6. The UK Government announced the Strength in Places Fund in the Industrial Strategy White Paper, published in November 2017, recognising that there are large regional disparities that need to be addressed in order for there to be prosperous communities across the UK. The White Paper highlighted the important role science, research, innovation and skills provision play in driving

productivity and economic growth throughout the regions and nations of the UK. The UKRI Strength in Places Fund therefore forms part of the activity undertaken as part of the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) that will be contributing to the UK Government's target to reach 2.4% of GDP investment in R&D by 2027.

7. The White Paper recognised “There is world class R&D and innovation across the UK, from excellent research in university departments and public research organisations to investments from leading businesses. We need to capitalise on these strengths and foster the local ecosystems that can support innovation and sustained growth.”
8. In the decade or so before the economic crisis around half of the UK's growth was driven by innovation – new ideas, science and technology.² For example, the innovation, science and technology sector contributed an estimated £32 – 36 billion to the UK economy in 2012/13.³ However, not all areas of the UK are fully harnessing the potential of their science and technology assets and creating the conditions for innovation. As detailed in the Industrial Strategy White Paper, SIFP will address this by stimulating the business, innovation and institutional environments vital for growing science and innovation clusters across all parts of the UK.
9. SIFP has been developed to complement but not duplicate the high-level aims of other UKRI and UK national programmes, all designed to deliver against ambitions set out in the White Paper, including the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) and Future Leaders Fellowship Scheme. SIFP has been designed to complement and utilise some of the established underpinning mechanisms used to deliver these programmes e.g. knowledge exchange, collaborative research and development (CR&D), feasibility studies and demonstrator activities.
10. The design and high level objectives of SIFP takes other funding streams into account. It complements the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which will be a domestic programme of investment to boost productivity and reduce economic inequality across the country following departure from the European Union. The SIFP will support research and innovation in those consortia that are, or have the potential to be, at the forefront of the local economy.
11. We expect applicants to a research and innovation fund (as SIFP has been designed) to demonstrate alignment with the relevant national economic strategies in devolved nations and local economic strategy for the locality. For places in England these will be Local Industrial Strategies and for places in the devolved nations these will be equivalent economic strategies.

² Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Our Plan for Growth: Science and Innovation – Evidence Paper, 2014

³ The impact of the innovation, research and technology sector on the UK economy, Oxford Economics, November 2014

12. The UK Government set out in the White Paper and Local Industrial Strategies Policy Prospectus⁴ that it would work in partnership with places in England to develop Local Industrial Strategies, which will be developed locally and agreed with the Government. Places in England with a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) will have a single strategy led by the mayor and supported by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). For parts of England without a mayor, the development of the Local Industrial Strategy will be led by the LEP. The UK Government also indicated in the White Paper that it would discuss the similarity of this approach to that being taken by the devolved administrations.
13. Welsh Government set out in Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan⁵ that it will develop a place-based approach to economic development in partnership with businesses and other strategic partners.
14. Welsh Government has committed to bring partners together to understand the issues in Welsh regions and the interventions needed from them. Support will be provided to key strategic areas of the economy to develop the distinctive strengths of its regions in the pursuit of growth. Plans for growth must aim to be inclusive and recognise and address the regional disparities in wealth and opportunity between different parts of Wales. Cross-border collaboration on UK strategically important projects is supported in order to build the strength of regions.
15. In Northern Ireland, the strategic direction for economic growth is set out through the draft NI Industrial Strategy⁶. It is through this Strategy that economic priorities are identified across five key Pillars for Growth, with the ultimate aim of increasing competitiveness in Northern Ireland. These priorities for growth align with the foundations of productivity set out in the UK Industrial Strategy. Sitting under this, there are Community Plans for each of the eleven Local Councils which set out objectives for growth at a Council level.
16. For places in Scotland, consortia should demonstrate alignment with the inclusive economic growth strategy of the relevant Regional Economic Partnership⁷, where present, and with the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy⁸. The support of the relevant Scottish economic development agency, or agencies, is expected to feature in bids based wholly, or in part, in Scotland.
17. Local Industrial Strategies in England will be long-term, based on clear evidence, and aligned to the UK Industrial Strategy. They will map out specific opportunities, challenges and priorities across the foundations of productivity (including Ideas). They will also provide strategic overview which will inform

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-industrial-strategies-policy-prospectus>

⁵ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/prosperity-for-all-economic-action-plan.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/industrial-strategy>

⁷ <https://economicactionplan.mygov.scot/place/regional-economies/>

⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-economic-strategy/>

LEPs' approach to any future local growth funding deployed through them. The development of Local Industrial Strategies will mean calling on the insights of key stakeholders across places: business leaders, local government and higher education. The UK Government will aim to agree Local Industrial Strategies all LEPs and MCAs in England by early 2020.

18. For places which are defined across more than one of the UK nations, consortia will be expected to demonstrate a coherent approach to alignment with the local economic strategies (and agencies) that are appropriate across the geography.

Objectives of the Fund

19. The high-level aims of the Strength in Places Fund are:

- To support innovation-led relative regional growth by identifying and supporting areas of R&D strengths that are:
 - driving clusters of businesses across a range of sizes that have potential to innovate, or to adopt new technologies;
 - in order that those clusters will become nationally and internationally competitive.
- To enhance local collaborations involving research and innovation. Building on the underpinning regional economic impact role of universities, research institutes, Catapults and other R&D facilities (such as Innovation and Knowledge Centres - IKCs); and engaging those businesses at the forefront of delivering economic growth through innovation within the identified economic geography.

20. The specific objectives for the SIPF are:

- Funded activities contribute towards significant, relative regional economic growth. We define 'relative' economic growth as having a significant impact locally that closes the gap between that region and the best nationally.
 - These activities must be in line with UKRI's mission, where the focus is on supporting those businesses and research organisations at, or near to the frontier of the economy.
- Excellent research and high-quality innovation is completed, or underway as a result of funded proposals.
- Collaborations between local businesses, research organisations and local leadership are enhanced as a result of the funded proposals.
- The evidence base around the impact of locally targeted R&D spending in the UK is improved. This will be assessed from a programme-level perspective.
- Funded proposals deliver good value for money relative to the area being supported, and in terms of additionality.

21. While SIFP is a research and innovation funding programme supported by a national funder (UKRI), it is distinctive in that it will support packages of interventions that are specifically tailored toward significant economic growth and regional growth of the funded locality. Applications will come from consortia, not single organisations.
22. Consortia must include businesses and research organisations, with strong support from the local leadership. We also expect to see appropriate scale in the size of the consortia relative to the bid, representing the locality's research and business strengths. The mix of consortia partners should reflect and demonstrate that there is local absorptive capacity for the intended outputs. Consortia should also indicate how the outputs will flow through into the local economy.
23. Investment will be focused primarily on the basis of specific 'economic geographies', and on the distinctive technology supply chain or sector to be driven in that locality, rather than on driving national grand challenges – as through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF).
24. We define the 'economic geography' as being at the realistic local scale for the cluster being supported and not necessarily constrained by local authority or other administrative boundaries. Consortia are expected to define the spatial geography within which their project will focus. SIFP will only fund research, innovation and knowledge exchange activities, although proposals will need to demonstrate how the proposed activities align with, and support, wider plans for local growth. The evidence presented within a bid will vary by the economic geography making the bid and the activities proposed, but applicants should make their case using what they consider to be the most compelling evidence. This may include – but is not limited to – demonstrating alignment with the relevant economic strategy for the locality (including smart specialisation strategies; city deals; and Local Industrial Strategies or similar strategies in the devolved nations).
25. Where relevant, applicants should also draw freely on the evidence available from the UK Government's Science and Innovation Audits (SIAs). There are 25 SIAs in total, covering most parts of the UK. The SIAs provide useful evidence of comparative research and innovation advantage across the UK.
26. However, the Strength in Places Fund is not designed to be a source of follow-on funding for SIA exercise. While we expect that consortia involved in SIA submissions may bid for funding through the SIFP, we also expect and encourage bids from consortia, regions and fields which have not been the subject of an SIA.

Part 1: Guidance on preparing a bid

Who can apply to SIFP?

27. The SIFP will be a competitive fund for collaborative bids between businesses and research organisations, bringing together all the local actors in order to ensure alignment with local strengths and expertise, and smooth the pathway to delivery impact. Therefore the SIFP will welcome bids led by either research organisations or business. However, consortia must include partners from both research organisation and business.
28. The following can apply to lead a bid:
- a. publicly funded research organisations who are eligible to receive funding from UKRI
 - b. businesses
29. We expect all named consortia partners to have defined and active roles and in most cases to be grant funding recipients. We expect bids to demonstrate strong engagement from local leadership partners – but while we expect strong partnership to be developed and demonstrated, the following cannot lead a bid or receive direct funding from UKRI, but consortia leads may identify suitable activities that can be sub-contracted to these organisations. These are: Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs); Combined Authorities (CAs); enterprise bodies and similar economic development agencies across the four nations of the UK.⁹
30. Active partnership with the organisations listed at section 29 may be supported through co-investment – as set out at section 44-45.

What constitutes a ‘place’ or an area for funding through SIFP?

31. The SIFP fund will support a range of geographies from city-scale to areas that cover multiple local authorities. Most importantly, the size of geography must be driven by the economic geography of the supply chain or local industry that the bid focuses on. We expect bidders to support the choice of geography with robust evidence and for this to be reflected in the range and choice of partners involved in the collaboration.
32. All partners within a consortia must be located within the economic geography, as selected by bidders with the exception of a minor contribution from a partner outside the economic geography. Note that we will not support bids that do not have a clear and justifiable geography. Where bids go across or cover multiple local authority or devolved areas, we would expect all partners to be located within this area. Where a minor component involves contribution

⁹ In Wales only, this would include the relevant government department.

from a partner external to the economic geography proposed, applicants are strongly advised to contact the SIPF Programme Delivery Team to discuss this before submitting an application to ensure that the proposed activity would be eligible.

33. UKRI reserves the right to request, as a condition of funding, that those Expression of Interest consortia proceeding to full stage come together if: overlapping bids are received that focus on the same intervention within an area; or if the evidence suggest that they are proposing a sub-optimum economic geography (too large or not sufficiently broad).

What activities will UKRI support?

34. The specific funding package will depend on the needs of the consortia as articulated and refined through the bid development process, which will be supported through challenge and expertise from UKRI councils. This will ensure local areas are able to align proposals with their locally-identified needs and opportunities. Funded activities would be in line with R&D mechanisms currently delivered through UKRI's councils.
35. The fund is open to any technological area, sector or research discipline focus including the creative industries. However we would expect bids to demonstrate a focused approach, rather than aiming to drive research and innovation across a number of, or all, of the locality's interests.
36. UKRI encourage applicants to ensure that bids identify barriers to research and innovation-led local economic growth. Proposed solutions should identify the intervention or mix of interventions that can address those barriers. Examples of the types of locally-focussed solutions the fund might support include:
 - a) Capacity to commercialise: Bids can include further investment in a critical mass of researchers in an excellent research group that lacks scale and range, specifically in a sector / technology area with potential to accelerate or further develop an existing, high-quality local cluster, the additional research capacity being required to deliver business outcomes through commercialisation (taking technologies to market, e.g. licensing to existing companies or industry partnerships). Bids can include investment in networks to draw in venture capital and mentors.
 - b) Assess potential for demand for technologies / products / services and potential for scale up: Bids could include targeted activities that incentivise, increase the number and improve the survival rates of technology driven start-ups and spinout companies within a cluster, both from university groups and established businesses.
 - c) Draw in overseas R&D/business: Bids could include investment in collaborative research between excellent research group and a potential global partner considering re-location, with consideration to

how this leverages/grows local business supply chains within the cluster.

- d) Revive a legacy industrial base through use of underlying technologies. Bids could include interdisciplinary research programs underpinning new and cross cutting technologies, joint programmes of translational research & innovation with the existing business base, exploiting opportunities for new inward investment and investment in a start-up eco-system, but focused on support for new start-ups that modernise and transform a legacy industrial base.
- e) Transferring technologies between industries. Bids could include investment in R&D facilities and interdisciplinary research, joint centres with clear evidence of local business interaction.
- f) Collaboration between universities/research organisations and SME technology-focused companies in specific geographic clusters to drive new market opportunities through a culture of collaborative innovation. We ask bidders to note the guidance on 'wash-through' of funding (as at section 56) into local competitions and that UKRI will reserve the right to run any subsequent local competition on behalf of the consortium.

37. Proposals can draw on a mix of capital and revenue funding as relevant to the interventions proposed. Whilst development of new national centres of excellence will be out of scope (as at section 43), activities that extend the activity and infrastructure for the benefit of local economic growth at an existing national centre within the bid's geography will be considered.

38. Research activities supported in SIPF must be informed by business or industry need. UKRI recognises that existing research expertise may be suitable for development as part of a proposal, but SIPF will not support new research centres or new research teams.

Inclusion of Skills activities in bids

39. Bids may wish to give consideration to the current skills pipeline - the availability of a workforce with the right skills within the economic geography specified - and whether this presents risks or dependencies which may affect sustainable and demonstrable impact on local economic growth. Depending on the specific focus, bidders should consider, in discussion with colleges, universities and other skills providers, the existing skills pipeline in the specified area, and any gaps that may need to be filled at all levels, in order for the funded activities to deliver maximum growth.

40. Skills activities to fill gaps are expected to demonstrate impact upon the skills needs of the specified economic geography during the funding period. Examples might include: upskilling existing employees through continuing professional development provision (CPD); employing higher and degree apprentices who can add immediate value whilst undertaking developmental

training on and off the job; involving existing students and graduates in enterprise activities; or competitions to build knowledge and skill capacity.

41. We would not expect bids to include funding for new undergraduate courses. We also would not expect requests for postgraduate skills funding to make up significant components of SIFP bids, as support is available through a number of established UKRI programmes. We would consider postgraduate skills support as part of SIFP bids in exceptional circumstances, but these would need to have a clear and demonstrable economic outcome and a clearly articulated research component.
42. All opportunities for skills development should be accompanied by a clear indication of the expected and/or potential outcomes.

What activities are out of scope for UKRI support?

43. EOs which are considered out of scope for the SIFP will not be taken forward for expert review or submitted to the SIFP Assessment Panel for consideration. The following activities are out of scope for SIFP:

- Investment in new strategic national infrastructure that should be supported through other UKRI programmes, e.g. establishing new Catapult centres, Innovation Knowledge Centres (IKCs) etc;
- Recreating national grand-challenge programmes at a regional level that would risk duplication of funding through ISCF and other UKRI programmes;
- Developing outreach programmes to transfer a localities expertise to other regions around the UK.

What co-investment is required?

44. UKRI is strongly encouraging the development of collaborative bids that leverage funding and other in-kind support from local sources at the full stage to show tangible commitment, while demonstrating the additionality of UKRI funding. This would normally be demonstrated through a cash contribution. For example:

- a. Revenue interventions that leverage local capital funding into a new centre of excellence and de-risks its establishment;
- b. Matched contributions that create a bigger 'pot' for the intervention and accelerates the speed of journey to market.

45. Eligible co-investment would include local growth funds; city deals; European Structural and Investment Funds; Venture capital, Angel investor and direct private sector investment; and universities' own funds including block grant

funds from Research England, funding awards from the devolved funding bodies.

Process following submission of bids

46. EOIs which are successful in being selected will enter a bid development stage in which up to £50K seedcorn funding will be awarded to support development of full business cases over 6 months. At full stage, those EOIs who received seedcorn funding will submit full business cases which will then be assessed by expert review and by the panel, with a number of proposals selected to be funded.
47. The panel may choose to recommend to UKRI that a small number of unfunded Wave 1 full stage bids are permitted to apply directly to Wave 2 full stage. Should UKRI accept this recommendation, those proposals will not receive further seed corn funding. They will be considered in full competition with the Wave 2 full stage proposals that have been invited from Wave 2 Expression of Interest stage.

Part 2: Funding and assessment

48. This section covers:
 - Introduction
 - Funding and eligibility
 - Assessment information and role of the SIPF Assessment Panel
 - Criteria against which bids will be scored
 - Requirements for the EOIs
 - UKRI decision making process
 - Guidance on preparing a bid – how to submit an EOI
 - Payment of funds and profile of co-investment

Introduction to funding and assessment

49. Bids will be assessed against the objectives of SIPF by an expert panel – the SIPF Assessment Panel. The expert panel will apply the published assessment criteria to make an appropriate judgement on the relative strengths of bids, taking into account expert reviews, and analysis provided by UKRI to establish the relative impact of proposals. The analysis provided by UKRI will include evidence which is routinely available to UKRI councils including evidence of comparative research and innovation performance, as well as any relevant insights on capability that might help inform their assessment.
50. UKRI will aim to develop a balanced portfolio of bids across the UK, following the waves of commissioning awards.

51. It will be the responsibility of bidders to supply convincing and robust evidence that meet the requirements of the assessment criteria, as detailed at section 55.

Funding and eligibility

52. The lead organisation must be a legal entity which is eligible to receive funding from UKRI as at section 28. Applicants will be required to demonstrate ability and experience in running large-scale research and innovation grant awards.
53. Bids that were unsuccessful in the first wave are eligible for resubmission in Wave 2, provided that feedback supplied has been fully addressed, and the application is declared as a resubmission.

Assessment information and role of the SIFP Assessment Panel

54. An independent assessment panel, chaired by Dame Kate Barker, will assess the EOIs. UKRI will provide analysis or information to the panel to help inform its recommendations: this may include information provided to UKRI by another organisation, or a relevant UK government department. The assessment panel will make recommendations to UKRI to support the EOIs to develop full stage bids that best fit the high level objectives of the Strength in Places Fund. To do this, the panel will:
 - i. ensure the requirements for the fund have been met by those EOIs being recommended;
 - ii. consider the relative strengths of each bid against the criteria.

Requirements for the Strength in Places (SIFP) Expressions of Interest (EOIs)

55. The assessment criteria are as follows:

The requirements that EOIs need to meet are as follows:

- a. Bids must be led by a research organisation or business, with consortia including both research organisation and business partners.
- b. Bids must apply for SIFP seedcorn support funding with a view to developing full bids that will request funding of between £10 million and £50 million. In addition:
 - i. Seedcorn support funding (up to £50K) must be spent on services and goods received by an agreed date (specified in the EOI grant letter) prior to the full bid being submitted.
- c. Bids must involve research and innovation activity relating to a specific economy geography, as set out at section 23-24.

56. The criteria against which bids will be scored and ranked at both EOI and at full stage are outlined below. We wish to invest in collaborations between research organisations, business and local leadership where participants can demonstrate a strong track record of research excellence and high quality innovation at a significant scale, relevant to the field of the proposed activity outlined in the bid.

1. The potential for ambitious, coherent and well-evidenced bids to drive significant, relative local growth and productivity, by aiming to achieve, through research and innovation activities:

- i. a significant, relative, uplift in growth and/or productivity;
- ii. in a defined geographical target area/ economic geography;
- iii. that increases private sector R&D intensity in the region in support of the government's 2.4% R&D commitment.

The Panel's assessment of bids relating to this category will be supported by analysis submitted by UKRI.

2. Research excellence:

- i. Evidence of how proposed research activities build on established research excellence, and/or present a sound case to increase sustainable research activity to achieve economic impacts;
- ii. Where appropriate, proposals should provide evidence of research excellence at the level of the departments or Units of Assessment most closely related to the bid. This should be the most recent and relevant evidence available. It might include (but should not be limited to) volume of research activity at 3* level and above (measured as full-time equivalent staff) in the relevant Units of Assessment in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. Evidence supplied could also include external research income from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) finance record for 2016-17, UKRI funding, or other funding and awards in relevant disciplines.

3. High quality innovation: Evidence of how proposed innovation activities are fit for purpose for intended target area (by technology, industrial sector and/or in line with proposed research activities) and intended economic impacts, and exemplify leading edge practices, including sustainability of the activity;

- i. Market impact of those industrial supply chains involved in the cluster to include evidenced examples of those new and improved products, services, and processes driving growth. This should

- include clear logic modelling leading to an estimate of in what way will they contribute to the current and future GVA of the local economy, as well as the likely impact on regional productivity.
- ii. Proposals may provide evidence of participants' track-record in generating new IP. Proportion of national innovation funding to the region as well as private sector R&D investment can be used as a proxy for strength of innovation activity. Ideally this data should be normalised per head of relevant business population to allow comparison with other bids:
 - a. For research participants, proposals should draw on relevant examples of 'research impact' in the locality, at the level of the departments or Units of Assessment most closely related to the bid in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework;
 - b. Research organisations may also draw on evidence of successful activities from the Higher Education Business & Community Interaction (HE-BCI) survey.
 - iii. Network activity and broader knowledge exchange activities can be cited to demonstrate how participants are starting to work together in the 'spirit' of collaborative innovation. This should include a quantitative assessment (e.g. number of SMEs) of those businesses participating to evidence that there is an established or growing critical-mass of businesses within the locality that can exploit the activity.
4. **Collaboration:** Sound collaborative approach, with strong commitment of appropriate partners, clear project leadership and contributions of local partners to leverage in complementary assets, alongside research and innovation, to achieve intended economic impacts; and demonstration of alignment with the relevant strategic plan for the locality (e.g. smart specialisation strategy; city deal; local industrial strategy).
5. **Co-investment where appropriate:** Significant co-investment by partners necessary to achieve intended impacts and in line with potential contributions and benefits, including evidence setting out the extent to which any co-investment supporting research or innovation activity is additional funding, specific to the activities outlined.
6. **Sustainability & Value for money:**
- i. Evidence that the project will contribute towards the aims & objectives of the fund, at sections 19-20;
 - ii. Evidence that the requested funding will support additional activity, leading to public benefit, in keeping with the scale of the investment sought;
 - iii. Evidence that the development will be sustained;

- a. Evidence of the long-term return on investment, through stimulating additional investment into the area.

UKRI decision making process

57. Following the recommendations from the SIPF Assessment Panel, UKRI will take an overarching strategic portfolio approach in consultation with BEIS Ministers that takes account of:
 - a. how bids come together across regions and sectors; and
 - b. alignment with UKRI and other portfolios of national-level investments

This will ensure:

- a. Proposals in the round will add to the UK's national R&D and innovation strengths;
 - b. There is a diversity across research disciplines/technologies/sectors to be supported, to achieve a balanced portfolio of investments that recognises business needs;
 - c. Bids that naturally align to other pre-existing funding streams, or have previously been submitted to alternate funding streams (from across the councils of UKRI and in the wider funding landscape) will be fully scrutinised to determine the appropriateness of support under SIPF. There is the expectation that these bids will not be considered, given the distinctiveness of SIPF.
 - d. Consortia from overlapping geographies that are proposing a common technology or sector focus, and are both allocated seedcorn funding will be encouraged to work together in order to develop complementary rather than competing proposals.
58. Decisions made by UKRI are final, and there is no opportunity for appeals to a funding decision.

Guidance on preparing a bid - how to submit an EOI

59. All proposals – without exception – are to be submitted through the [Innovation Funding Service \(IFS\) system](#). Applicants should apply via the Innovation Funding Service, an online application process. You will need to create an account in the service to start an application. Full technical guidance on completion of applications is provided here.

Timetable

60. A timetable of the decision points for the second wave is set out below.

Call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs)	May 2019
Closing date for applications	9 October 2019
EOI awards start	June/July 2020
Full stage (invite only) to be submitted	December 2020
Full awards start	Summer 2021

Payment of funds and profile of co-investment funding

61. Following being successfully awarded funding, a single grant letter will be issued to the lead organisation, which will either be a research organisation or business. Funding will be allocated only with agreement that the lead organisation will allocate funds to partners, in line with a consortium agreement. The consortium agreement will need to be in place at the time of grant letter issue, as a condition of grant.
62. Those proposals that intend to run a subsequent local competition (known as ‘wash-through’, involving collaborative research and development activity) with onward distribution of funds will be required to run this through the IFS and a UKRI governed assessment process, in order to assure and maintain high quality. In this instance those consortia will be expected to budget for those UKRI operating costs from the funding received. Any onward distribution of funds to SMEs or other related activities must be in line with State Aid rules.

Part 3 State Aid

63. This final section covers State Aid. All proposals should be compliant with state-aid rules. For the seedcorn funding stage, all applicants will be eligible to claim up to the maximum of £50k, for those EOI taken forward to full stage. Research organisations leading an EOI bid may apply for funding support up to 100% of eligible project costs if the lead (or delivery) organisation involved is a non-profit distributing research organisation. Businesses leading an EOI bid will be allowed to claim grant via de minimis – or if the limit has been reached, businesses could instead apply as a feasibility study, bringing in co-investment as required to provide match funding against the full £50k.
64. At full stage, research organisations leading a bid may apply for funding support up to 100% of eligible project costs if the lead (or delivery) organisation involved is a non-profit distributing research organisation. Businesses leading a full bid will need to find the relevant match funding as governed by the relevant state aid rules. UKRI expects applicants to detail the grant split and contribution from each of the consortium partners, and how they comply with relevant general State Aid regulations.

List of abbreviations

BEIS	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
CAs	Combined Authorities
CPD	Continuing professional development
CR&D	Collaborative research and development
EOIs	Expressions of Interest
HE-BCI	Higher Education Business & Community Interaction Survey
IFS	Innovation Funding Service
IKC	Innovation and Knowledge Centres
IP	Intellectual property
ISCF	Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund
GVA	Gross Value Added
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
MCA	Mayoral Combined Authority
NPIF	National Productivity Investment Fund
R&D	Research and development
SEP	Strategic Economic Plan
SIAs	Science and Innovation Audits
SIPF	Strength in Places Fund
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
UKSPF	UK Shared Prosperity Fund