

# Your Questions Answered about the UKRI Proof of Concept Funding Opportunity

## Timeline of the Funding Opportunity

Event	Date	Time
Intention to Submit Opening date	20/01/2025	9:00am UK time
Intention to Submit closing date	03/03/2025	4:00pm UK time
Full Opportunity Opening date	12/03/2025	9:00am UK time
Full Opportunity Closing date	29/05/2025	4:00pm UK time
Applicants informed of decisions	Late July 2025	N/A
Latest Project Start Date	01/10/2025	N/A

### Q1: Is my organisation eligible to apply?

In terms of eligibility, only UKRI eligible research organisations can apply to lead/co-lead. You can check the current [eligibility of your organisation](#). Business based applicants including spinouts are not eligible to apply for funding as lead or co-lead. International applicants based outside the UK are not eligible to apply.

Government departments and their arm's-length bodies including UKRI-wholly owned institutes are not eligible to apply for PoC when wanting to develop their owned knowledge assets. This is on the basis that they are eligible to apply to Government Office for Technology Transfer Knowledge Asset Grant Funding.

Only those applicants who have completed an intention to submit, have been selected by their research organisation to make a full application can apply for this funding opportunity.

### Q2: Who is eligible to apply within an eligible lead organisation?

Only those applicants who have completed an intention to submit, have been selected by their research organisation to make a full application can apply for this funding opportunity.

Please see details on individual eligibility and different roles here: [Roles in funding applications: eligibility, responsibilities and costings guidance – UKRI](#). Doctoral students are not eligible to apply.

### Q3: Can you say more about eligibility alongside other UKRI funding calls?

We will support projects that are not eligible for funding via existing UKRI funding opportunities, and those projects that have been funded by other mechanisms and now require further de-risking at a larger scale. If your project is eligible and in scope for live or upcoming UKRI council specific translation,

knowledge exchange or commercialisation support via a specific council funding opportunity, you should apply via that council.

We are not able to confirm if your project scope fits the funding opportunity at the Intention to Submit stage. You should carefully consider the degree to which your proposal meets the published assessment criteria for this scheme, or whether it is better suited to other UKRI programmes.

**Q4: Are early-stage projects eligible?**

Please see [here](#) for the scope of the Opportunity and what activities this opportunity will support. The UKRI Proof of Concept funding opportunity supports early-to-mid stage commercialisation activities that validate the development of concepts that arose from research. This is to support and enable the commercial application of existing research along varied commercialisation pathways such as licensing or company creation (spinouts or social ventures) or any other commercialisation routes.

We are not able to confirm if your project scope fits the funding opportunity at the Intention to Submit stage. You should carefully consider the degree to which your proposal meets the published assessment criteria for this scheme, or whether it is better suited to other UKRI programmes.

**Q5: Could a university working with a start-up which owns IP, be eligible?**

Yes, the university would be eligible to apply a company as a project partner. However, the foreground IP generated during the POC grant will be owned by the university under UKRI terms and conditions of grant. Please see also questions Q14, Q15 and Q31.

Partnering organisations on the proposed application, including any already established spinout companies are permitted as project partners. It will be for the applicants to explain and justify the appropriateness of the proposed partners, how they will contribute and add value to the proposed project, and how relationships will be managed in terms of access to research outputs including IP generated from the PoC funding.

We would expect any arrangements with partnering and collaborating, or other 3rd parties, to be in line with UKRI's standard research grant terms and conditions which will apply to the Proof-of-Concept funding. This will include appropriate publication and dissemination of research outputs, and management of knowledge assets including intellectual property arising from Proof-of-Concept funding. In addition, the host research organisation will be expected to ensure best arrangements for managing project outputs, including intellectual property, within the appropriate governance and legal frameworks including UK legislation (Subsidy Control Act 2022, National Security and Investment Act 2021) and other UKRI guidance (Trusted Research and Innovation).

**Q6: Can we change the Project Lead between the Intention to Submit and Full Stage?**

No

**Q7: I have applied for another UKRI Funding Opportunity and my application is already under consideration, can I also apply for UKRI POC funding?**

No. We do not allow duplicate applications for this scheme. Through the Proof-of-Concept funding opportunity, we aim to support projects that are not eligible for funding applications via other existing UKRI funding opportunities. Please look at our submitting your application UKRI guidance for more information about duplicate applications in the guidance on [Submitting your application](#).

**Q8: Can a Project Lead make multiple applications for one opportunity?**

Yes

**Q9: Can you please advise further how is UKRI going to do demand management?**

Research organisations have been allocated a cap for the maximum number of full applications allowed to be submitted as Project Lead. Please see [Additional Information](#) on the funding opportunity for more details.

**Q10: What advice is given to the research organisations to make sure SHAPE opportunities get fair access?**

It would be for the relevant research office and/or Technology Transfer Office to manage the applications that are submitted at the full application stage.

We encourage research organisations to prioritise diverse and distinctive ideas to facilitate commercialisation of research, and to help support a diversity of applicants to the scheme. In making our final funding decisions we will consider portfolio balance, factors that could contribute to portfolio balance include (but not limited to) geographic distribution, host organisation type and discipline areas. Guiding principles for portfolio balancing are that funding decisions should broadly be in proportion and mirror applications.

**Q11: What is the spend deadline for this call?**

The project must start by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025. The duration of this award is a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 12 months from project start date. The full economic cost (FEC) can be up to £250,000 for maximum 12 months duration with a minimum of £100,000 for 6 months. UKRI will fund 80% FEC.

**Q12: Is my project in scope?**

The UKRI Proof of Concept funding opportunity supports early-to-mid stage commercialisation activities to support and accelerate the development of new or improved technologies, products, processes, and services arising from research activities, along varied commercialisation pathways such as licensing or company creation (spinouts or social ventures) or any other commercialisation routes. Please see [here](#) for the scope of the opportunity and what activities this opportunity will support.

Applications are welcomed from across all research disciplines and councils' remit (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC and STFC) including cross and multi-disciplinary approaches.

We are not able to confirm if your project scope fits the Funding Opportunity at the Intention to Submit stage. You should carefully consider the degree to which your proposal meets the published assessment criteria for this scheme, or whether it is better suited to other UKRI programmes.

**Q13: My application was unsuccessful in a recent UKRI Funding Opportunity. Can I apply for POC funding?**

We do not allow the resubmission of any previously unsuccessful applications (including applications previously submitted to a research council).

**Q14: Are projects that are a collaboration between a university and a business eligible?**

Partnerships between research organisations and industrial partners are welcomed. The partnership would be assessed as per the published assessment criteria.

We would expect any arrangements with partnering and collaborating, or other 3rd parties, to be in line with UKRI's standard research grant terms and conditions which will apply to the Proof-of-Concept funding. This will include appropriate publication and dissemination of research outputs, and management of knowledge assets including intellectual property arising from Proof-of-Concept funding. In addition, the host research organisation will be expected to ensure best arrangements for managing project outputs, including intellectual property, within the appropriate governance and legal frameworks including UK legislation (Subsidy Control Act 2022, National Security and Investment Act 2021) and other UKRI guidance (Trusted Research and Innovation).

**Q15: Can pre-investment spin-outs be partners?**

This new UKRI PoC funding is targeted at the pre-incorporation and/or pre-other appropriate commercialisation routes such as licencing or social venture creation.

Partnering organisations on the proposed application, including any already established spinout are permitted as project partners. It will be for the applicants to explain and justify the appropriateness of the proposed partners, how they will contribute and add value to the proposed project, and how relationships will be managed in terms of access to research outputs including IP generated from the PoC funding. Please also see the previous question regarding UKRI expectations around collaborations.

**Q16: If a spinout company (related to the IP in the project) is formed during the project can this company participate as a partner?**

The applicants will need to explain and justify the appropriateness of the proposed partners/collaborators in the application stage as mentioned in Q15. Any change of project partners during the project would need prior permission from UKRI and would need to include plans for relationship management in terms of access to research outputs including IP generated from the PoC funding.

**Q17: Do you have a limit or specific expectations regarding the number of partners involved in the project?**

No, there is no limit or specific expectations regarding the number of partners involved in the project. It will be for the applicants to explain and justify the appropriateness of the proposed partners/collaborators, how they will contribute and add value to the proposed project, and how relationships will be managed in terms of access to research outputs including IP generated from the PoC funding. Please also see Q15 regarding UKRI expectations around collaborations.

**Q18: Are there any restrictions on subcontracting spend amount or location on a project?**

Subcontractors are allowed in this call in line with [UKRI terms and conditions](#) for research grants. Whilst there is no restriction, applicants' response to resources and costs justification including subcontracting costs will be assessed as part of the assessment criteria which can be found on the funding opportunity. Any outsourcing costs are also limited to 80% FEC.

The applicants will need to explain and justify the appropriateness of the proposed subcontractor(s) in the application stage as mentioned above.

**Q19: Can the grant fund capital costs or depreciation only?**

Applicants response to resources and costs justification including any equipment that will cost more than £10,000 and infrastructure costs will be assessed as part of the published assessment criteria which

can also be found on the funding opportunity. Please refer to [UKRI terms and conditions](#) for research grants regarding equipment capital and depreciation costs.

**Q20: Can this call be used to fund a TTO/ Research Associate (RA) to focus on supporting the project?**

Please see [here](#) for what activities this opportunity will support. Funding for TTO/RA activities mentioned above would be eligible. Applicants' responses to the questions regarding applicant and team capability to deliver, as well as Resources and Cost Justification will be assessed as part of the assessment criteria which can be found on the funding opportunity.

**Q21: Where can I find the assessment criteria?**

Assessment criteria has been published as part of the funding opportunity. The assessment areas we will use are:

- opportunity and market analysis
- route to market
- intellectual property (IP) management and communication
- applicant and team capability to deliver
- resources and cost justification
- ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)

Find details of assessment questions and criteria under the 'Application questions' heading in the 'How to apply' section in the pre-announcement.

**Q22: What will the panel membership look like?**

We are working with research councils including working with their different committees and panels. We will also look to include appropriate input including expertise from investors, entrepreneurs and business organisations to help review applications.

**Q23: Could you expand on the level of support that institutions are expected to provide?**

We would expect the tech transfer office or equivalent, the research office, or a combination of both, to articulate how will they support the applicant throughout the project. This should be tailored and specific to the proposed project and should include details of the activities and support that will be provided for the project and any support that might add value to the work.

**Q24: Do we need letters of support from both the Tech Transfer Office and other person of responsibility (eg Head of Dept)?**

There is no need for a specific letter of support, but the host research organisation's support is expressed via the response to the specific TFS question and should be added in the box on the application form. It could be from any person of responsibility within the research organisation and should be specific to the project as detailed in Q23.

**Q25: Do you accept / welcome letters of support from industry?**

No, we do not require/accept letters of support from industry.

**Q26: What success rate does UKRI expect for the call (considering the shortlisting institutions will do)?**

We are aiming to maintain an award rate of approximately 20% at the point of full application to UKRI. We aim to fund projects with different durations and project costs across all disciplines.

**Q27: Will this call run again in future?**

Future rounds will depend on the outcomes of this round and the next spending review. Please check our [UKRI Funding Finder](#) for future rounds or updates.

**Q28: Can multiple commercialisation routes be selected in the Classification of your proposed project or just one.**

Multiple routes can be selected. You can select up to 4 keywords from the [list provided](#), you can also provide 1 word specific to your project as a free text box.

**Q29: How do we demonstrate that we are past the discovery stage?**

Please use the Route to Market section in the application form to demonstrate this.

**Q30: Would UKRI disclose the list of project titles included in the EOI?**

No, we will not be publishing that list. We will publish the outcomes of the funding opportunity through the normal route.

**Q31: Can you expand the non-subsidy explanation? Can you give an example if we have industry partners that can benefit from the results of this PoC project?**

The PoC Funding Opportunity is awarded as non-subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Under UKRI terms and conditions of research grants and as per usual academic practices, the output of the PoC grant will be expected to be published under UKRI Open Access policy. Taken together with the Subsidy Control Act, this means that the outputs of the PoC grant cannot benefit directly or indirectly a specific enterprise (as defined by the Act). The outputs of the PoC funding and notably any foreground intellectual property (IP) needs to be managed as per usual technology transfer practices. This is where IP generated and owned by the research organisation can be traded at 'market rate' and for a fair return on commercial terms on the open market.

Please contact your TTOs at the earliest opportunity to ensure that you understand, manage and mitigate the implication of the Subsidy Control Act. You can access further information about the Act as part of the [Government website](#) including guidance for subsidy control and what it means.

**Q32: Can you explain what is meant by 'enterprise' when saying that a single enterprise cannot solely benefit**

An enterprise is a generic term under the Subsidy Control Act to describe an entity that is operating on the market. It could be a business, a company or a charity. Further information and guidance is available on the [Government website](#).

**Q33: Can we, rather than specify a single project, seek funding for a process whereby candidate projects are reviewed by the Institution and moved to commercialisation**

No, The UKRI Proof of Concept funding opportunity supports early-to-mid stage commercialisation activities that validate the development of concepts that arose from research. This is to support and enable the commercial application of existing research along varied commercialisation pathways such as licensing or company creation (spinouts or social ventures) or any other commercialisation routes.

We will be supporting individual projects in eligible Research Organisations which go through application and assessment process for this opportunity and is not intended for organisations for their broad range of commercialisation activities.

**Q34: Can you expand on what you see as "discovery" research?**

The PoC funding is to help development of new products, processes and services which have arisen through research towards the market through specific commercialisation goals. This would need to build on existing research, research data or research knowledge previously 'discovered' that have been tested or validated as part of previous discovery research activities.

**Q35: We are pre-patent submission. How are you ensuring confidentiality in the review process / are you doing anything different to the normal peer review process?**

The normal UKRI process will apply to the peer review process and will be carried out in confidence with our peer review assessors and will adhere to usual reviewer confidentiality. Submitting a grant application to UKRI does not constitute a disclosure in the public domain.

**Q36: Does the funding cover cost of IP protection?**

No, the cost of filing for IP protection including patents, registered trademarks or registered design is not an eligible cost under the PoC funding opportunity.

**Q37: Are you looking to fund proposals that only have an IP exploitation plan?**

No. The PoC Funding Opportunity aims to support all routes to commercialisation. As part of your application, you will need to describe your proposed exploitation plan to move the new product, process or service towards the market through appropriate commercialisation routes. How you articulate it will depend on what you are trying to achieve and the user and market you are trying to reach.

**Q38: What TRL (technology readiness level) level is the call targeting?**

We are welcoming applications from across all different disciplines and sectors. Technology Readiness Levels are not always suited to all those different disciplines across SHAPE and STEM. The PoC Funding Opportunity aims to derisk furthering your research so that it could be of interest to other parties or attract further investments. The PoC Funding Opportunity will not fund fundamental or discovery research but the application of research toward specific market or needs.

**Q39: Can I change my project information when I complete the full application?**

The Intention to Submit did not include a full project description or summary so providing that the Leads does not change, applicants have freedom to tailor their projects to their needs.

**Q40: Can the same industrial partner participate in multiple projects at the same time?**

Yes, there is no limit on how many projects an organisation can partner on. Please see Q15 and Q17. It will be for the applicants to explain and justify the appropriateness of the proposed



partners/collaborators, how they will contribute and add value to the proposed project, and how relationships will be managed in terms of access to research outputs including IP generated from the PoC funding.

**Q41: What limitations are there in terms of international collaborations?**

There is no limit on international collaborations, but it would need to be completely justified. The partnership would be assessed as per the published assessment criteria.

We would expect any arrangements with partnering and collaborating partners, or other 3rd parties, to be in line with UKRI's standard research grant terms and conditions which will apply to the Proof-of-Concept funding. This will include appropriate publication and dissemination of research outputs, and management of knowledge assets including intellectual property arising from Proof-of-Concept funding. In addition, the host research organisation will be expected to ensure best arrangements for managing project outputs, including intellectual property, within the appropriate governance and legal frameworks including UK legislation (Subsidy Control Act 2022, National Security and Investment Act 2021) and other UKRI guidance (Trusted Research and Innovation).

**Q42: Are co-leads from other universities allowed, and if so, does this affect the demand management process?**

Yes, Co-Leads are allowed from UKRI eligible organisations. The demand management cap only applies to the project lead organisation.

**Q43: As a main applicant of a PoC proposal, how appropriate would be to involve a spin out company I am engaged in (as a Founder) as a route for commercialisation? Would that be beneficial or detrimental to a PoC application?**

This new UKRI PoC funding is targeted at the pre-incorporation and/or pre-other appropriate commercialisation routes such as licencing or social venture creation.

Partnering organisations on the proposed application, including any already established spinouts are permitted as project partners. It will be for the applicants to explain and justify the appropriateness of the proposed partners, how they will contribute and add value to the proposed project, and how relationships will be managed in terms of access to research outputs including IP generated from the PoC funding. Please also see the previous question Q5, Q14, Q15 and Q16.

**Q44: Could these people (team members we like to hire) be based overseas?**

There is no restriction on the location, and it would need to be included and justified in the application.

**Q45: Could a project be led by TTO or RO professional instead of an academic lead?**

Yes, as long as they are eligible under UKRI eligibility for [Roles in funding applications: eligibility, responsibilities and costings guidance – UKRI](#) and they have been listed as the Project lead in the intention to submit.

**Q46: Can this project have a Co-Lead in addition to a collaborator?**

Yes, other eligible research organisations can be Co-lead on the project.



**Q47: For applications that involve commercialisation of collaborative research between two universities, is only the lead applicant organisation eligible for funding (e.g. for staff time)?**

No, Co-lead and their team would also be eligible for funding for Staff time if they are also an organisation eligible for UKRI funding. It would need to be included and justified as part of the application.

**Q48: Can project partner receive funds or only contribute?**

In general Project Partners are expected to provide contributions to the delivery of the project and should not therefore be seeking to claim funds from the UKRI PoC grant. It will be for the applicants to explain and justify the appropriateness of the proposed partners, how they will contribute and add value to the proposed project, and how relationships will be managed in terms of access to research outputs including IP generated from the PoC funding.

We would expect any arrangements with partnering and collaborating, or subcontracted 3rd parties, to be in line with UKRI's standard research grant terms and conditions which will apply to the Proof-of-Concept funding. This will include appropriate publication and dissemination of research outputs, and management of knowledge assets including intellectual property arising from Proof-of-Concept funding. In addition, the host research organisation will be expected to ensure best arrangements for managing project outputs, including intellectual property, within the appropriate governance and legal frameworks including UK legislation (Subsidy Control Act 2022, National Security and Investment Act 2021) and other UKRI guidance (Trusted Research and Innovation).

**Q49: Can the industry partner be a subcontractor to provide with commercialisation skills?**

Subcontractors are allowed in this call to provide a specific service. It will be for the applicants to explain and justify the appropriateness of the proposed subcontractors, and how relationships will be managed in terms of access to research outputs including IP generated from the PoC funding.

We would expect any arrangements with partnering and collaborating, or subcontracting other 3rd parties, to be in line with [UKRI's standard research grant terms and conditions](#) which will apply to the Proof-of-Concept funding. This will include appropriate publication and dissemination of research outputs, and management of knowledge assets including intellectual property arising from Proof-of-Concept funding. In addition, the host research organisation will be expected to ensure best arrangements for managing project outputs, including intellectual property, within the appropriate governance and legal frameworks including UK legislation (Subsidy Control Act 2022, National Security and Investment Act 2021) and other UKRI guidance (Trusted Research and Innovation).