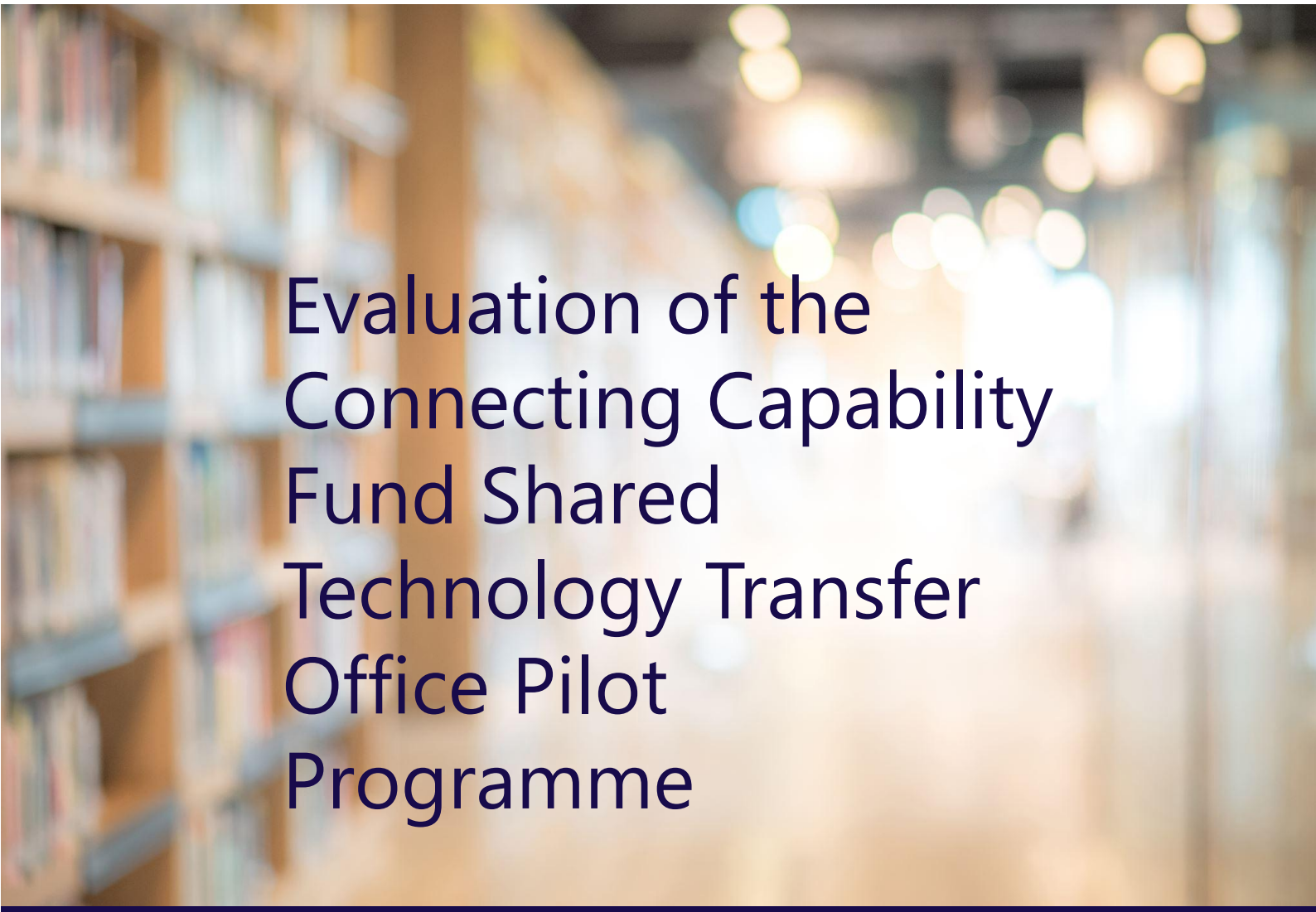

Evaluation of the Connecting Capability Fund Shared Technology Transfer Office Pilot Programme

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Prepared for Research England

Produced November 2025

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Research Consulting

Evaluation of the Connecting Capability Fund Shared Technology Transfer Office Pilot Programme.

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Contact:

CCF Team

Research England

REDCCF@re.ukri.org

Report authors:

Dan King, Frances Palmer, Tamsin Mann

www.research-consulting.com

https://ke.org.uk

Contact:

Dan.King@research-consulting.com

Tamsin.Mann@ke.org.uk

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Executive Summary

Evaluation of projects funded through Research England's "shared technology transfer office functions pilot" Call

This report presents findings from an independent evaluation of 13 pilot projects funded through Research England's Call for "shared technology transfer office functions pilot" via the Connecting Capability Fund – Research England Development Fund (CCF-RED).

The report addresses process and impact evaluation from the funded projects which were delivered over six months in 2024-25. It assesses whether shared technology transfer office (TTO) models can effectively support universities with smaller research portfolios in spin-out formation.

The Call successfully achieved its aim of creating diverse pilot models for sharing TTO functions

The Call successfully achieved its aim of creating diverse pilot models for sharing TTO functions. It responded directly to recommendation 4 of the government-commissioned *Independent Review of University Spin-out Companies*, targeting universities with smaller research portfolios and low critical mass of intellectual property.

The initiative catalysed collaborative projects that explored the development of shared services in different ways. Their work enhanced understanding and generated important lessons learned. Projects demonstrated legacy outcomes, and potential for scale-up and sustained activities. Collectively they tested different approaches and thinking to support the Call aims, which included:

- collaborative mechanisms to support researcher engagement, including developing awareness, training and identifying new opportunities, with the aim of pipeline development;
- approaches to governance and the development of shared TTO functions across Higher Education Providers (HEPs) and research performing organisations (RPOs);
- approaches to shared expertise, between TTOs, drawing on external suppliers and partners and via activities undertaken on a joint basis, such as innovation disclosure reviews and the development of template and guidance documentation;
- enhanced thinking and understanding of the issues around shared services, approaches and activities, leading to detailed reports and insights; and
- one project focused on the development of a new artificial intelligence (AI) enabled product to support the process.

The 13 pilot projects and outcomes: characteristics and summary KPIs

The Call supported 13 collaborative pilot projects which were awarded funds totalling £4.74m. Individual awards ranged from £158k to £500k, with an additional £1.7m stated in proposals as leveraged income from partners.

81 unique organisations participated in the funded projects, including 47 HEPs and 4 RPOs. Project partners included 19 businesses, 5 investor / business angel groups, 3 University owned ventures or entities, 2 NHS / Hospitals and 1 mayoral combined authority. HEPs from all KEF Cluster Groups were evident in the supported projects, which typically saw partners from different KEF Cluster Groups within each pilot project.

Although most projects reported some challenges from the compressed delivery timescale, they typically achieved most of their stated aims and objectives. Those seeking to implement shared structures and governance identified a longer journey towards approval and implementation. Projects focused on creating and delivering mechanisms

(specific interventions, training, support) were better placed to implement and complete the work within the timeframe.

The project delivered **outcomes** including spin-outs, identification of commercial opportunities, training, guidance and evidence for what types of support work

The pilots delivered a significant scale of activity in a short timeframe. Outcomes and achievements include:

- development of shared guides, toolkits and template documentation, designed to help partner HEPs to access the supporting infrastructure that underpins successful spin-out formation.
- 6 spin-outs emerging, the project activities have led to at least six projects being progressed to spin-out stage, including one spin-out being created, two awaiting approval, and three in a 'spin-out ready state'.
- 323 opportunities progressed. Over 320 commercial opportunities were identified, assessed and developed by partners throughout the course of the pilot project activity. This includes pre-spin-out assessments, innovation disclosures progressing, the validation of propositions, business case development, opportunities advancing in the pipeline and the matching of projects with venture managers to progress them.
- over 850 attendees at training events. 854 people were reported to have attended training events focused on research commercialisation, spin-outs and processes, upskilling researchers, TTO staff and students. Supporting training materials, guidance and templates are also evident as outcomes.

Other outcomes include the development of investor relations and the generation of important qualitative evidence on shared services for spin-out formation, building learning and understanding on what works and different approaches.

The project activities demonstrated three types of shared activity: **mechanisms,** shared **expertise** and shared **governance**

The projects demonstrated a range of delivery approaches, typically grouped within three types of activity:

- Mechanisms (collaborative programs): joint training, early-stage opportunity assessment, investor engagement activities.
- Expertise (shared knowledge): IP audits, guidance toolkits, cross-institutional advisory support, joint review of opportunities.
- Governance (shared frameworks and structures): policy review and development, joint TTO structures, shared decision-making processes.

The top four areas of activity, in terms of frequency of appearance within pilot projects, are:

- jointly developed and delivered training (mechanism);
- guidance and toolkits (expertise);
- supporting early-stage ideas, development or assessment of opportunities (mechanism); and
- jointly undertaken IP audits or gap analysis (expertise).

Strong **legacy outcomes are evident** as a result of this work

Most projects demonstrated clear sustainability intent, plans and ongoing activity, with institutions committing to continue collaboration through HEIF funding or other resources. However, some governance-related activities require additional development time and institutional approvals. Strong legacy outcomes emerged across multiple dimensions:

- Shared knowledge assets and enabling tools: Toolkits, guidance documents, and templates with sector-wide applicability.

- Shared structures and mechanisms: pilot projects have catalysed models for joint work that address shared TTO functions and supporting mechanisms (interventions, approaches, training), enhancing practical experience of set-up and delivery for less experienced HEPs.
- Enhanced capacity and understanding of sources for expertise: pilot projects have increased discussion and understanding of the needs of less experienced HEP and their TTOs, plus the involvement of external providers has demonstrated pathways to enabling capacity and expertise.
- Pipeline development: pilot project activities have stimulated pipeline development, encouraging researcher engagement, and identifying numerous assessed spin-out opportunities, with some moving towards spin-out formation.

Lessons learned

The pilot projects indicated that meaningful progress can be realised in short timeframes in HEPs with less commercialisation experience. But they also indicated that opportunities are likely to be in early stages and need further support to reach later spin-out stages. The benefits of joint working to create programmes and interventions, including training, is an important outcome of the pilot projects. Significantly, the Call provided the impetus for less experienced HEPs to build partnerships that supported their spin-out aims and potential.

Key lessons include the critical importance of senior leadership buy-in, the value of external specialist support for project delivery (rapid mobilisation of support for project management, additional capacity and specialist knowledge), and the need for longer timeframes to fully realise shared governance models.

Recommendations

The report makes three recommendations, alongside a number of additional points for consideration. The recommendations focus on enhancing the legacy and value of the pilot projects and options for future support against the Call aim.

- Continue to work with the cohort of pilot project and partners to share and understand the ongoing progression of activity and outcomes
- Co-ordinate the approach to curation and visibility of knowledge assets, to ensure their long-term accessibility, and proactively promote their adoption across the wider research community.
- Draw on the report findings and lessons learned to inform the shape and approach to future funding and support activity set against the Call aims, building on the progress already made and strategic options this enables.

Evaluation delivery

This evaluation was undertaken for Research England. It was led by Knowledge Exchange UK, working with Research Consulting Ltd.

Contents

1. Introduction

About this report

This report presents the findings of an independent evaluation of 13 pilot projects funded from the Research England Connecting Capability Fund – Research England Development Fund (CCF-RED) "Shared technology transfer office functions pilot".

Policy background to the requirement and Call

The pilot programme[1] was launched in May 2024 in direct response to recommendation 4 in the government-commissioned *Independent Review of University Spin-out Companies* (2023).[2] The Call was aimed primarily at universities with smaller research portfolios and a lower critical mass of intellectual property. It focused on proposals for more effective spinning out of existing IP pipelines addressing the perception – identified via the Review – that there is latent potential to create new companies in wider range of universities. The £5m funding opportunity was designed to address system-wide inefficiencies by promoting sharing of existing TTO capacity rather than building additional infrastructure.

The CCF-RED: shared technology transfer office functions pilot

The Call sought proposals for pilot projects to be delivered over 6 months to develop concepts and activities "to develop sustainable models and steps to implementation for shared technology transfer office (TTO) functions specifically focussed on more effective spinning out of existing IP pipelines". The outcome from the Call was the award of 13 collaborative projects addressing different aspects and features of shared services for spin-out formation. In line with the Call eligibility (see Appendix A), each project was led by an English Higher Education Provider (HEP).

Overview of the report and contents

This report is presented in five main sections. The Introduction provides an overview of the context and objectives for the work and the methodology employed for the evaluation. Section 2 includes the Call focus and aims. Sections 3 and 4 focus on findings from the process and impact evaluation work. Section 5 summarises the conclusions and recommendations.

The report also includes 6 case studies featuring selected pilot projects. These exemplify different approaches, partnerships and outcomes. The appendices provide summary details for all of the awarded pilot projects, a summary for the CCF-RED Call for proposals and the timescales for bidding and delivery.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the review, input, and critical advice we received from a broad range of individuals and organisations. In particular, we thank the team at Research England and the members of the pilot projects and other stakeholders who supported this work through their contributions, including at the workshop held in London in July.

[1] See https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ccf-red-shared-technology-transfer-office-functions-pilot/ for further details.

[2] Independent Review of University Spin-out Companies (2023). Source: www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-university-spin-out-companies

2. Call focus and aims

The initiative focused on developing pilot projects to **exemplify models for sharing TTO functions** to support universities with smaller portfolios and insufficient critical mass of spin-out activity

The primary aim of the Call was to seek and develop pilot approaches for sharing technology transfer office (TTO) functions, as outlined in the Government response to the spin-out review.[3]

The stated goal was to improve the spin-out pipeline for smaller universities by enabling them to access shared, experienced technology transfer capabilities they might not otherwise have the critical mass to develop independently. Specific aims of the Call also included:

- Developing diverse sharing models: seek and develop a range of diverse models for sharing TTO functions to support universities with smaller portfolios and without the critical mass of spin-out activity, helping them maintain and develop experienced back-office functions necessary to support their pipeline of spin-out opportunities.
- Identifying scalable success factors: identify insights on what works and success factors that can be embedded across the wider higher education sector in an efficient, effective and financially sustainable manner.

Further details of the Call and supported pilot projects in the **Appendices**

Further details of the Call, scope and emphasis are detailed in Appendix A.

The outcome from the Call was the award of 13 collaborative pilot projects addressing different aspects and features of shared services. Short descriptions of each are provided in Appendix B.

2.1 Evaluation objectives and methodology

Evaluating the success of the shared TTO pilot projects.

The evaluation considers both process evaluation and impact evaluation perspectives.[4] The evaluation objectives for this work are:

- To provide detailed evidence to support the policy query 'are shared TTO's the answer to supporting universities with smaller research portfolios to combine expertise and capabilities in order to spin out.'.
- To provide evidence to government that the above works or does not work and as such provide information on areas which could be explored or continued and shared i.e. what works well and what does not work well.
- To determine whether additional funding in this area would support this activity to become sustainable and successful or whether it would provide intermediate support which would not then be continued post funding.

The evaluation is also expected to inform broader questions such as: are universities with smaller research portfolios capable of keeping a shared TTO facility running or is the

[3] Independent review of university spin-out companies: government response, November 2023 Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-university-spin-out-companies

[4] HM Treasury. 2020. The Magenta Book: Central Government Guidance on Evaluation. London: HM Treasury. Source: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book

pipeline too small? How big does the pipeline need to be to see a successful shared TTO facility sustained?

Summary of the methodological approach

This evaluation was undertaken for Research England. It was led by Knowledge Exchange UK, working with Research Consulting Ltd. The approach involved the following methodological elements:

- **Desk research**, looking at the original project proposals submitted, along with data such as KEF clusters and HE-BCI tables, to help understand the focus of pilot projects and the nature of the collaborations and partnerships.
- An **in-person workshop** (London, July) involving the evaluation team, representatives from the pilot projects (both HE and non-HE project participants) exploring the process of the Call, the project delivery and the outcomes, impacts and legacy of the projects. All 13 pilot projects were represented, involving a total of 54 individuals.
- An **online survey** (open from mid-July to mid-August) of project leads and partners, exploring the lessons learned from the pilot projects, the progress made, and notable insights, enablers or barriers encountered.
- Analysis of the final **monitoring forms** submitted by the projects.

Comparator project IMPACT-IP is undertaking similar work to the pilot projects

Research England identified IMPACT-IP,[5] led by the University of Southampton, as an additional comparator project for the evaluation. It was chosen as a project already supported by Research England (funded via CCF-RED) and undertaking closely related work on shared service development. Representatives from this project attended the workshop and were interviewed by the evaluation team. A summary of the IMPACT-IP project is provided in Appendix B.

[5] Webpage for the IMPACT-IP programme www.setsquared.co.uk/programme/impact-ip/

Case Study 1

Symbiotic Technology Transfer Resource Enabler and Mobilisation to Leverage Increased Net Efficiencies (STREAMLINE)

A project pooling TTO resources to accelerate commercialisation through shared disclosure processing and investor engagement.

Scenario

Two institutions with small TT resource (2 FTE at each) and distinct but complimentary research profiles. Aim is to deliver greater than the sum of parts to accelerate commercialisation at both HEPs by sharing technical (subject/application) and commercialisation expertise. Identified points in the commercialisation process where resources could be shared; notably, at disclosure review and in presentation of opportunities to investors. Problem was not lack of pipeline but lack of resource to process and progress disclosures to the next stage. At the other end of the journey, investors were hard to engage because of low numbers of opportunities presented at any one time.

Solution

Capacity connection. Build on existing relationship (cemented via previous collaborative grants) to address shared problems, pooling expertise and building confidence to progress cases with most potential. Third party expertise was used to triage existing pipeline and dormant IP cases to significantly accelerate the identification of strong spin-out opportunities, whilst also putting in shared processes to enable the more efficient identification of new opportunities.

Two priority areas were identified – AgriTech and HealthTech – that played to institutional strengths and investor interest. Monthly shared disclosure meetings during the pilot embedded the approach and built trust. A joint investor showcase approach, supported by the regional Innovate UK network, brings the ecosystem together.

Outcomes

- Online tools for disclosure assessment
- Renewed / invigorated commercialisation culture
- Model for shared commercialisation training to professional and academic staff

STREAMLINE enables Cranfield University and University of Hertfordshire, as a collective, to deliver more effective spinning out of existing IP pipelines and more spin-outs.

Legacy

Project designed to be lean for sustainability. Online tools were an up-front cost and could be accessed by others. Training and disclosure meetings are face to face or online and represent value for time committed.

Case Study 2

Manchester-Salford Commercialisation Consortium (MSCC) – building a regional TTO community

A regional ecosystem project where a research-intensive university supports less-resourced HEPs across a city region to build collective commercialisation capacity and create a broader investment pipeline.

Scenario

Uneven resource to support research commercialisation across a growing city region innovation ecosystem with a strong desire to be inclusive of all HEPs. Academics, professional staff, and investors need to be better connected and upskilled to deliver economic growth aligned with ambition for the region and beyond.

Solution

University of Manchester (UoM), via its Innovation Factory, demonstrates how large and research intensive HEPs can support less well-resourced or less experienced HEPs (UoM is in the TenU group of international universities, as well as being a member of the Russell Group). The MSCC brings all the inner Greater Manchester HEPs into the commercialisation conversation, delivering potential for broadening investment opportunities by building pipeline and entrepreneurial skills across the city region. The project builds on an existing service agreement between UoM and Salford to extend to other HEPs in the project group.

Outcomes

- Whole city region approach to commercialisation pipeline creation
- Sharing best practice, expertise and resources (knowledge base) for a sustainable 'TTO community'
- Academic audience engagement
- Collaborative IP commercialisation outreach, such as RNCM's World IP Day event 'IP Beyond Music'

Notably, Manchester Metropolitan University's leadership are investing in a 10-point commercialisation plan, that includes new professional services and academic commercialisation posts, and increased budget for activity. Salford University also participated in ICURe Surface to further their commercialisation ambition.

[the project team] became one family..

Legacy

Could be replicated in other well-defined regions where a research-intensive HEP exists alongside smaller or less research-intensive partners.

3. Process evaluation

About this section

The process evaluation considers how the Call was designed, managed, and delivered, and how applicants and funded organisations experienced the process. It explores what worked well and what could be improved in the event of future funding for pilot projects (new or continued). This section considers the characteristics of the award pilot projects, set against the Call aims and their experience of the Call and delivery process. It provides some context and definition for the types of activity observed within the pilot projects, and concludes with a discussion of the enablers and barriers experienced in project delivery.

3.1 Characteristics of the pilot projects

The Call achieved the aim of creating a set of pilots that developed **diverse models** for sharing TTO functions

The Call set out to "seek and develop a range of diverse models for sharing TTO functions". This aim was achieved and the 13 pilot projects show a diversity in several aspects, including:

- the types of universities and research performing organisations (RPOs) within each project collaboration;
- the focus and approach of the pilot project (mechanisms, sectors, disciplines); and
- the location of and geographical footprint of the pilot project partners.

The CCF grant **award values** ranged from £158k to £500k

A total of £4.74m Research England funds were awarded to a range of consortia types and regional distributions. Individual pilot project award values ranged from £158k to £500k. The submitted proposals indicated additional funding of £1.65m from other sources.

81 unique organisations were involved, including 47 HEPs and 4 RPOs

A total of 81 unique organisations were involved in the pilot projects, including 47 HEPs and 4 RPOs. The wider landscape of partners included 19 businesses, 5 Investors / business angel groups, 3 University owned ventures or entities, 2 NHS / Hospitals and 1 Mayoral combined authority.

Seven HEPs were involved in two projects, and one business was involved in a total of six projects, while another was a part of two projects.

There was strong evidence of external partners taking active and critical roles in the delivery of these pilots. Typically, they supported projects with (i) expertise in research commercialisation and spin-out formation and (ii) project management and delivery capacity. This is discussed further in section 4.2.

The nature of pilot project collaborations: **geography**

The pilot projects involved HEP or RPO partners from most regions of England, but there were some gaps, notably the corridor stretching from Leeds, down through Sheffield-Nottingham and onto Leicester. Figure 1 shows the distribution of HEP and RPO consortia. Figure 2 and Figure 3 illustrate how pilot project consortia are split between those having a smaller geographical distribution, and those operating over larger geographies, in terms of their HEP and RPO partners.

The nature of pilot project collaborations: **KEF Cluster Groups**

The HEP partners were also mapped to KEF Cluster Groups [6] to provide a view on the diversity of HEP types within the pilot project, shown in Figure 4. HEPS from all KEF Cluster Groups were present in the pilot projects, and projects typically included HEPs from multiple Cluster Groups. HEPs from the same Cluster Group are typically seen in different projects.

The Golden Circle (Case Study 3) project was distinctive in having 6 of its 7 project partners drawn from one Cluster Group (X). This was also the largest project in terms of the number of HEP participants, and as shown in Figure 1, has one of the largest geographical distributions of partners.

Did the projects have a particular focus on the different **stages of spin-out formation**?

As part of the evaluation, projects were asked about the stage(s) of focus for their activity. This was tested against the following stages of spin-out formation:

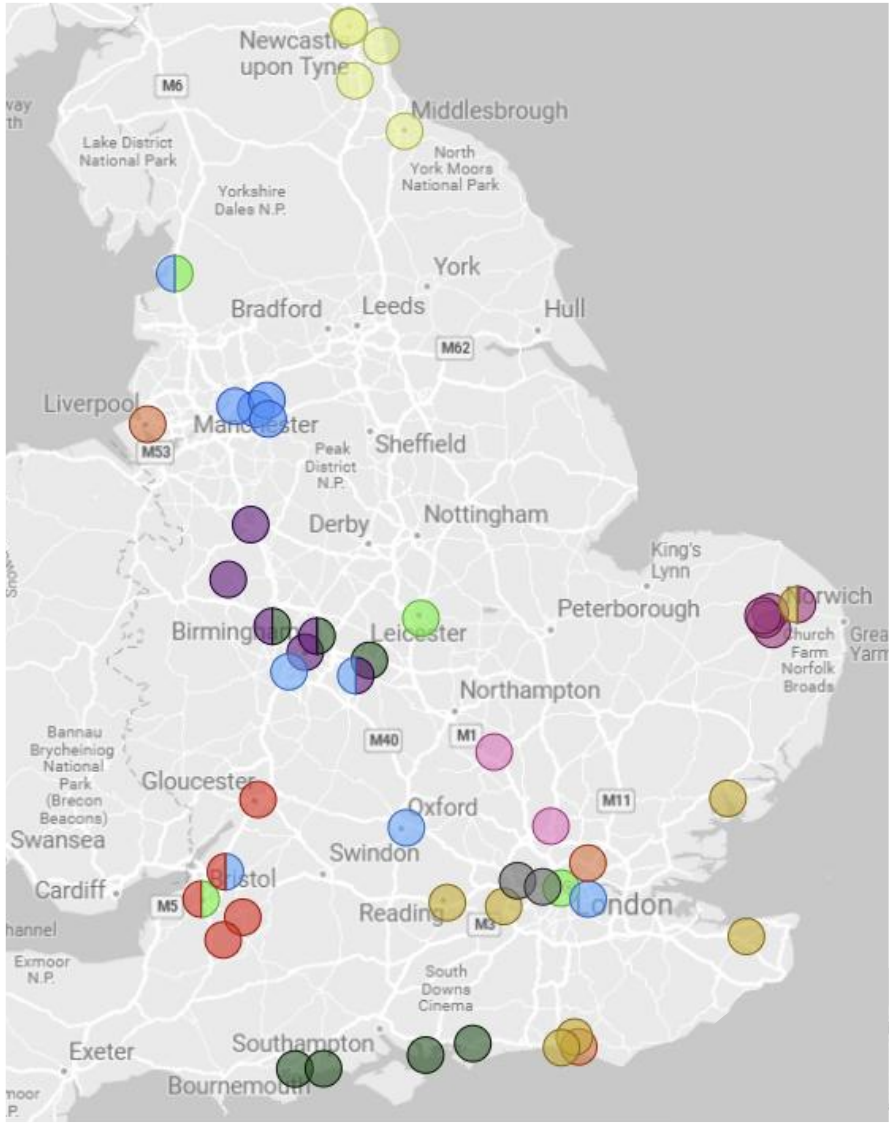
- ideas and opportunities;
- initial development;
- further development and spin-out decisions;
- spin-out formation and development; and
- growth and scale-up.

Most pilots (60%) reported some focus in terms of the activities being undertaken, and this was weighted to the earliest two stages: ideas and opportunities and onto the initial development of spin-outs. This, understandably, reflects the need for less experienced HEPs to develop their pipeline of possible opportunities.

But it also suggests that the pilot projects may not have explored the considerations of, and needs for, shared activities in the later stages of spin-out development as fully. As the next section describes, later stage activities did feature in some projects, including investor relationships and networks (see Case Studies 1 and 3).

[6] See https://kef.ac.uk/notes for further details on the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) Cluster Groups. The purpose of these is to group providers into clusters that have similar capabilities and resources available to them to engage in knowledge exchange activities.

Figure 1 The regional distribution of pilot projects: HEP and RPO partners. To allow visibility of each HEP in the map locations are indicative, particularly for those with tight geographies (e.g. projects in Manchester (MSCC); Norwich (NR 4ward) and in London). Circles split with two colours indicate a single HEP involved in two projects.



Key	Lead HEP: Project Name
	London School of Economics & Political Science: Creating the evidence base for shared TTO needs and opportunities in supporting SHAPE spinouts
	University of Manchester: Manchester-Salford Commercialisation Consortium (MSCC)
	Teesside University: Pathways towards a shared TTO capability for the North East
	Cranfield University: Symbiotic Technology Transfer Resource Enabler and Mobilisation to Leverage Increased Net Efficiencies (STREAMLINE)
	University of Bath: SpinOutWest
	Coventry University: DigiSpin WM: Powering the future of Advanced Manufacturing with Digital Innovation
	University of East Anglia: NR 4ward
	University of the Arts, London: Shared TTO to Accelerate the Growth of Self-fundEd Spinouts (STAGE)
	University of West London: VirtualTTO: an end-to-end solution for scalable and effective spin-out support utilising AI and TTO best practice
	University of Sussex: The Golden Circle
	University of Portsmouth: Bridging the Gap: A Shared Technology Transfer Office Vision for Wessex
	University of Warwick: Shared Technology Transfer Office in Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing for the Midlands (STTOAEMM)
	LSTM: Sustainable Innovation in Global Health Technology (SIGHT)

Figure 2. Nine of the 13 projects have **relatively small** geographical spread of the HEP and RPO partners.

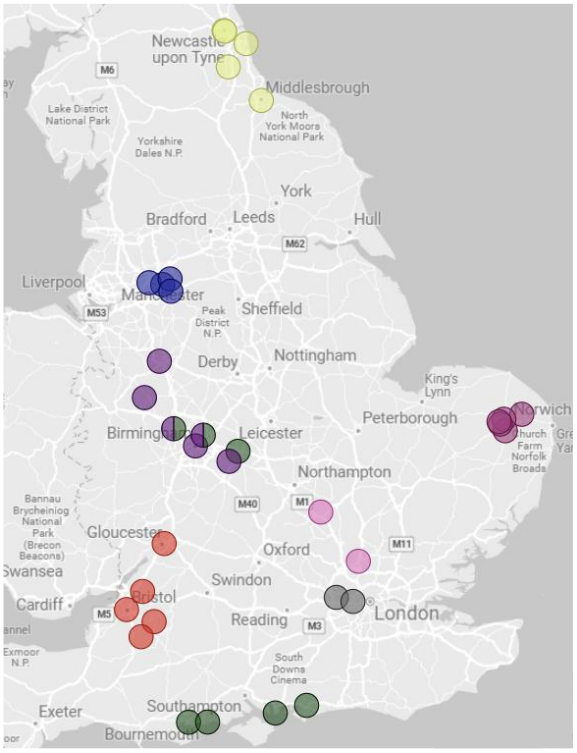


Figure 3 Four projects had a **larger geographical spread** between the HEP and RPOs represented in their projects.

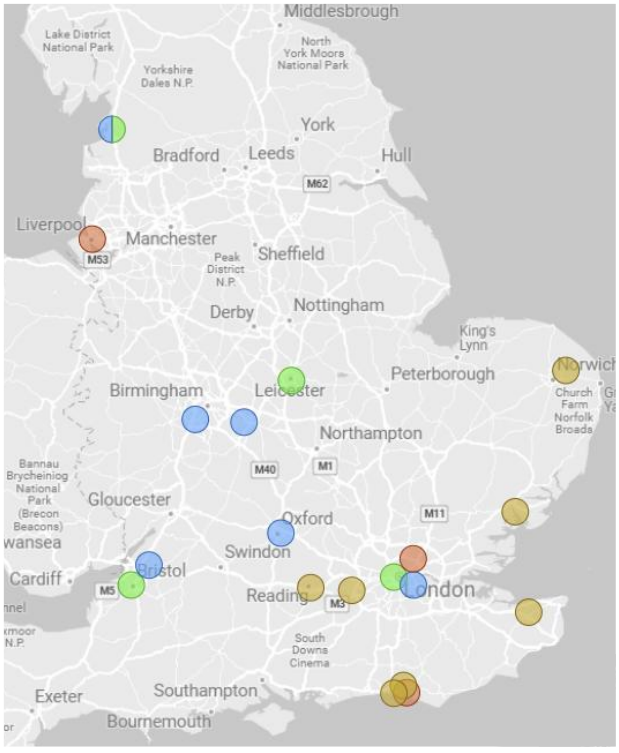
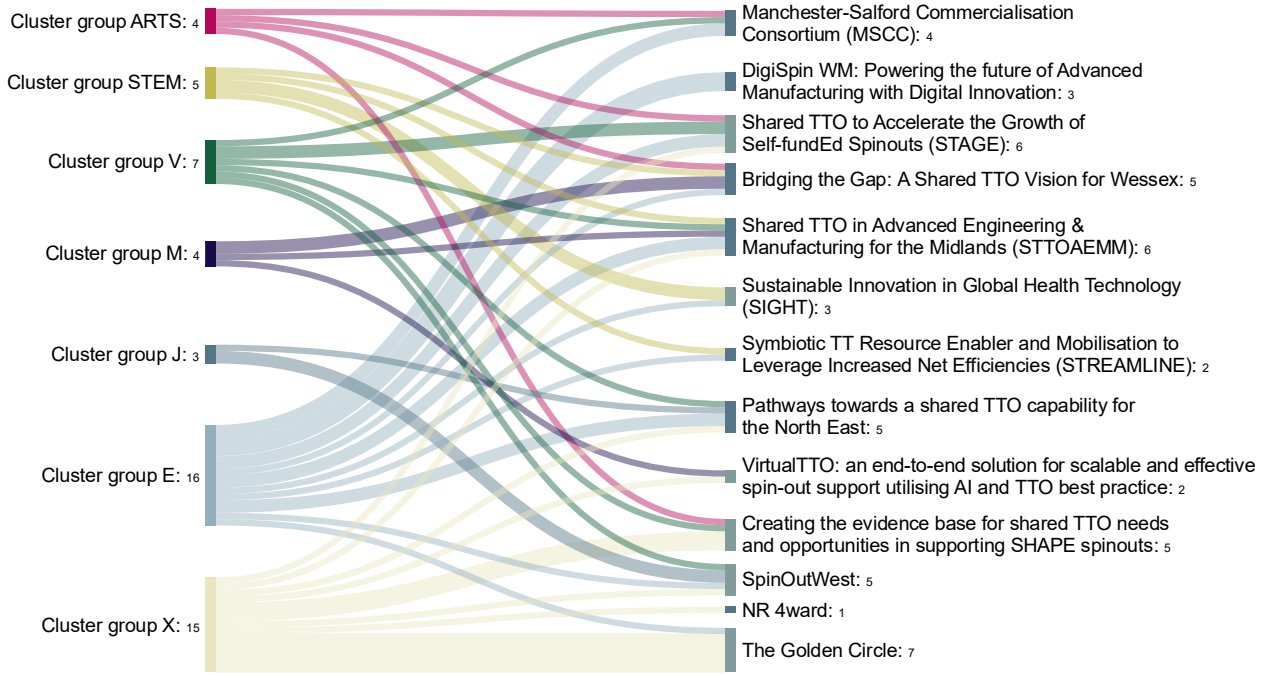


Figure 4 Illustration of pilot project HEP partners and how they map to the KEF Cluster Groups.

HEPs from all KEF Clusters Groups are represented across the 13 projects. Pilot projects typically included HEPs from multiple KEF Cluster Groups. The numbers indicate the number of HEPs in that Cluster Group or project.



3.2 Experience of the Call and delivery process

Experiences of **project formation and delivery**

This section considers the experience of the participants in the Call and how the context for the delivery affected their work and progress. This Call was notable in terms of the compressed timeframe for project delivery, in particular the timescale from award notification to the required start date, and the 6-month window for project delivery.

Participation in the Call: building collaborating partnerships

The workshop allowed for reflection on the experience award holders had of the Call process. It was evident that some of the target beneficiary HEPs had not always found it possible to successfully engage experienced HEPs during the development phases of projects. It was also noted that the capacity of larger technology transfer teams to support other HEPs cannot be assumed. Whilst they may have more FTE resource, workloads limit their capacity to engage in additional activities.

Despite this, as shown in Figure 5, the successful project participants generally regarded the timelines for Call announcement-to-deadline as being sufficient to build the right partnership for the proposal. The existence of pilots demonstrating new or different collaborations, also indicates that the Call allowed enough time to bring together the collaborating partners.

It should be noted that the evaluation did not seek input from *unsuccessful* applicants, and so this view is acknowledged to be limited and draws only from HEPs whose proposals were successful.

The **six-month delivery window** catalysed rapid delivery, but presented challenges for projects

Overall, there were mixed views on the six-month duration of the pilot. Appendix C is a visualisation of the Call and delivery timelines.

The delivery timeframe was viewed to have catalysed rapid delivery. Some felt the six-month duration was helpful to build momentum, maintain focus and enable rapid mobilisation.

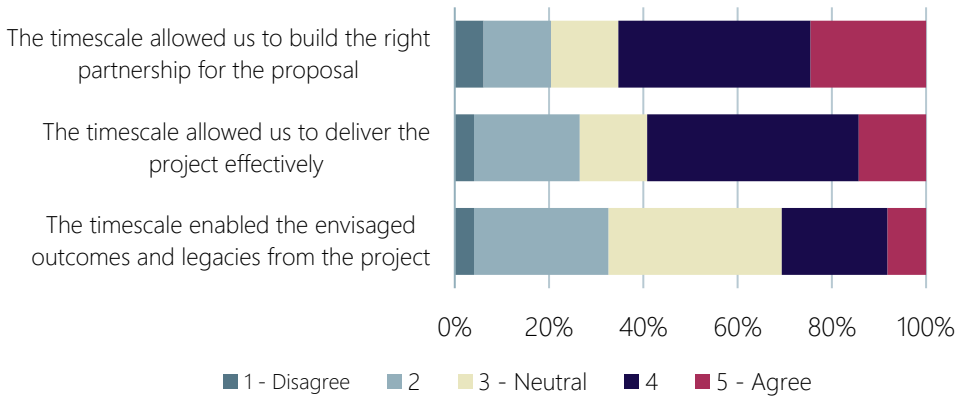
But projects also reported experiencing some challenges from this and it was commonly felt that the timescale was not long enough. This group cited challenges for delivering and implementing all planned project activities and enabling outcomes to be self-sustaining. Flexibility in the end date for activity was a commonly observed request.

Participants highlighted three compounding factors that created challenges:

- the short lead time from award notification to required project start;
- the delivery period which meant that the Christmas / New Year break disrupted the timeline for most projects, impacting on momentum; and
- the requirement for a 6-month delivery window and completion of project activity by April 2025.

The timeline is reported to have had most impact in terms of the delivery of envisaged outcomes and legacies from the project (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 Views of project participants on the timescales for the Call and delivery (n=49, workshop participants).



The completion of **collaboration agreements** was widely experienced as a challenge to delivery

A consistent challenge for projects, linked to the short lead time for project start, was the completion of the enabling collaboration agreements. These were needed to ensure the project started effectively. Whilst projects could make some progress prior to the completion of these, certain activity types, especially relating to the sharing of confidential or sensitive information, were impeded until the agreements were in place. This is an important consideration in the design of future calls or activity.

> *Barriers include lack of duration and flexibility of the fund. The timescale to set up the partnership and in particular, push through the paperwork, was not long enough.* ***Survey response, HE partner***

Reflections of participants on the timeframes for project start-up and delivery

This section highlights reflections of the participants on the timeframes for project start-up and delivery. Relating to the Call and timeline from award notification to project start, the main point consistently highlighted related to the (very short) lead in to project implementation:

> *More time for project setup. Contracting, bringing staff up to speed, setting aside time from the 'day job' without resource was difficult. This meant that the 6 months was actually more like 4!*
> ***Workshop, Mentimeter response***

The delivery timeframe created some challenge for projects, but did create impetus for rapid progress. Projects commonly observed a desire for extended end dates to allow time for reporting outcome progression:

> *6-months is not long and being able to support delivery over a longer timeframe would have been beneficial. We had to be very careful about managing expectations. In addition, a start date of 1st November is difficult as you are quickly into the holiday season which means a slow down in delivery. A start date of 1st January would have been potentially better.*
> ***Monitoring report***

> *The timescale was challenging but did keep the focus. It was difficult to schedule all the training, 2 weekly meetings and other activities in a busy NHS research schedule.*
> ***Survey response, NHS partner***

> *Flexibility with the end date. We completed critical preparation work to enable the design of a shared TTO model, but did not have time to see this fully implemented.*
> *Workshop, Mentimeter response*

3.3 The types of shared activity evident in the pilots

The **characteristics of shared activity**: a framework to support understanding

To better understand the nature of shared activity, an analysis was undertaken of the activities described by projects in their stated KPIs and monitoring reports. The categorisation of this is based on the understanding and reports generated by the Teesside-led project ("Pathways towards a shared TTO capability for the North East").[7] It provides a helpful framing of the *types* of shared service activity observed in other pilot projects.

This approach classified shared TTO activity as ***mechanisms***, ***expertise*** or ***governance*** related. These three terms are used in later sections of this report and are defined later in this section. They form a framework that helps to understand the basis for activity relating to shared TTOs.

Mechanisms and expertise were commonly featured in the pilots, with less activity focused on governance

The analysis shows that *mechanisms* and *expertise* were commonly featured in the pilots. There was less activity focused on *governance*, and where it was evident it tended to be in exploratory or developmental areas, with some work examining policies (for spin-outs and IP) and joint structures for spin-out formation. This is not an unexpected outcome, and reflects a hierarchy of challenge / difficulty as the shared activity moves into *expertise* and *governance* domains.

These are inherently more difficult to develop and establish as they reach further into institutional resourcing and policies for technology transfer. As such they can raise difficult questions around management, value and resources. The pilot projects have made progress in considering aspects of governance, but at the time of reporting, had not implemented these.

The **types of activity** evident across pilot projects

A summary of each projects is included in Appendix B, and the main report features 6 case studies that exemplify different approaches and types.

Figure 6 indicates the results of analysis which show that the top four areas of activity, in terms of frequency of appearance within pilot projects, are observed to be:

- jointly developed and delivered training (mechanism);
- guidance and toolkits (expertise);
- supporting early-stage ideas, development or assessment of opportunities (mechanism); and
- jointly undertaken IP audits or gap analysis (expertise).

This is consistent with other evidence in the evaluation indicated that the earlier stages of spin-out development and pipeline development were frequently the area of focus.

[7] Research Consulting was also a project partner in this project.

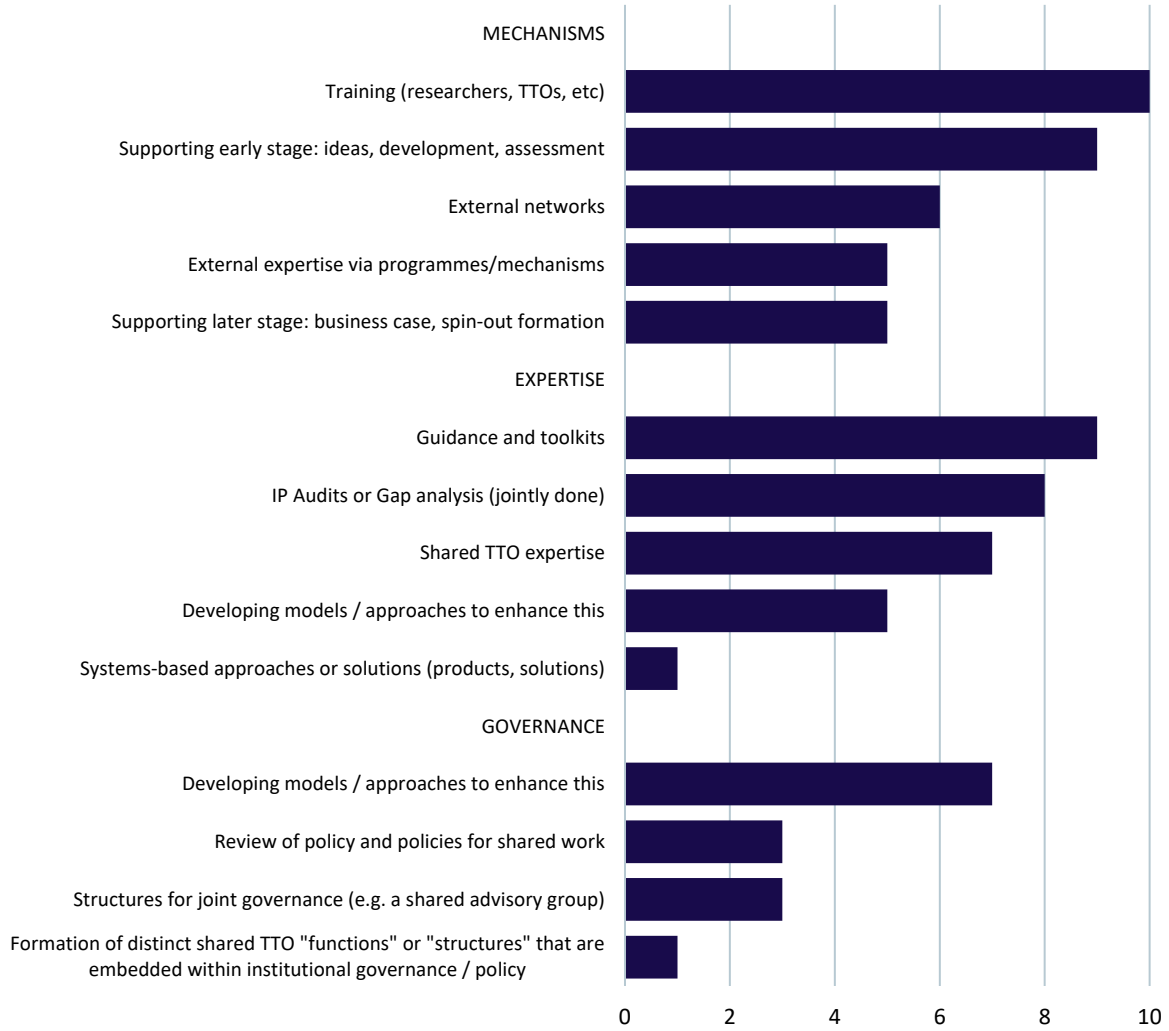
Case studies in the report exemplify the **different approaches and characteristics** of the pilots

The report features 6 case studies that exemplify different approaches and types. The case studies exemplify different features and characteristics of the pilot projects, for example:

- shared resources and documentation (case studies 3, 5 and 6);
- third party expertise, paid and pro bono, to support delivery (case studies 1, 3 4 and 6)
- enhanced investor relationships (case studies 1 and 3).
- illustrate very local HEP partnerships (case studies 2 and 5), compared to the much wider geography of HEP partners in case study 3; and
- case study 2 is builds on an extension of an existing tried and tested approach to delivering shared support through a service level agreement.

Figure 6. Analysis of the types of activity undertaken by projects, and frequency of occurrence within the 13 pilot projects.

The numbers in the table relate to the number of pilot projects assessed to be undertaking this activity type from their KPIs and monitoring reports.



The remainder of this section explains and defines the three terms used in the above narrative and Figure 6 (mechanisms, expertise and governance).

Defining **mechanisms**: collaborative programmes or initiatives supporting common needs in spin-out formation.

Mechanisms are defined as collaborative programmes or initiatives, that deliver supporting interventions for spin-out formation. Typically they are delivered drawing on the consortium collective capacity, but do not create sustainable shared services. They may have no material bearing on an institution's governance / policy for spin-outs, but do support a strong environment for spin-out formation (funding, advisors, investors, cohort-based accelerator programmes, individualised support). Most TTOs with significant volumes of activity are involved in multiple programmes of this nature, extending to significant investment funds.

It should be noted that "mechanisms" have been and remain **a common area of shared or collaborative development for spin-out formation**. They provide access to the development of the critical infrastructures and environments for spin-out formation (different levels and types of financial support, expertise, accelerator programmes, entrepreneurs in residence and frameworks for investor engagement). There is a long standing history of support for such mechanisms, for example the Office of Science and Technology's "University Challenge Seed Fund" in the early 2000s.[8] Institutions with strong spin-out portfolios typically have had sustained access to a number of mechanisms over time, drawing on a range of national, regional and local funding sources. But access is not evenly distributed, and HEPs with less experience and scale of spin-out formation are most likely to lack access.

Defining **expertise**-related shared services activity: the expertise of TTOs (at individual or office level) being shared across institutional boundaries

Expertise-related shared services activity is defined as activity that evidences the expertise of TTOs being shared across institutional boundaries: knowledge or experience from one TTO supporting delivery at another institution. To a limited extent this can be evident in, and an outcome of, mechanism-based collaborations, but often stops short of substantive assistance or advisory input on specific spin-out or issues. Approaches to enable this expertise to be shared more effectively across HEPs include joint review of invention disclosures (e.g. case study 1), access to deep sector or technology expertise or "buy-out" / joint appointment mechanisms to enable individual cross-HEP working on an ad hoc or sustained basis.

Defining **governance** for shared services: the framework for decision-making and accountability

Governance related activity for shared services is defined as work to develop the framework for shared decision-making and accountability, through structures, policies or decision making. The framework for decision-making and accountability is about the structures, functions and permissions that exist from which spin-outs are formed, approved and created. It covers the policies that exist, the permissions and structures / functions that are established on a shared basis to support this. This could include, for example, shared functions that prepare spin-out for institutional approval, shared institutional approval panels involving external experts or the creation of joint/shared TTOs (e.g. case study 5).

[8] Publication discussing the University Challenge seed fund initiative which led to the establishment of commercialisation seed funds 1999-2000 https://www.nature.com/articles/nm0898-871.pdf

3.4 Project delivery

About this section

This section focuses on the delivery of the pilot projects by each project consortium, the enablers and whether any barriers or limitations were experienced.

Utilisation of the £4.7m CCF grant funds was high, despite the short delivery timeframes and lead time to projects starting

Despite the timescale challenges reported by award holders, the utilisation of the CCF grant by award holders was high. The average underspend on the CCF grant was under 6%, and the average underspend on the total project costs was 7%.

But this underspend was not evenly distributed. Around half of the projects (6 of the 13) demonstrated zero or very low (less than 1%) underspend of the CCF grant. Most (64%) of the £195k reported CCF grant underspend came from two projects. These were also amongst the smallest by award value, and so the underspend was a significant percentage of the overall grant value.

Award holders noted that the delivery period coincided with a difficult time for the sector and wider university environment. Some participating institutions were experiencing redundancies in both academic and professional services teams, alongside recruitment freezes and other limitations on spending. This was reported to have placed additional pressures on delivery.

Other funding leveraged by the CCF award was largely secured

A total of £1.2m of other funds, from institution and partners was leveraged as spend by the CCF awardees. This is less than the £1.65m indicated in the proposals, but is overall a very positive outcome and provides good evidence that the lead HEPs were able to catalyse the resources of their collaborating partners. The comparator project IMPACT-IP, operating over a longer time period, also indicates success in securing substantial leveraged income or match funding.

This suggests that there is a strong opportunity for this type of work to secure positive contributions from a range of partner types: vendors, investor groups, local partners, advisors (e.g. law, IP) and consulting firms (for example see case study 4).

Most pilot projects reported the **achievement of their stated KPIs**

The monitoring reports identify that most pilot projects have met their KPIs (typically expressed as outcomes). Some KPIs have been partially achieved, and in such cases, this typically relates to needing longer to fully meet the KPI.

The nature of KPIs selected by pilot projects are indicated in the sub-categories shown in Figure 6. Examples of KPIs selected and met by pilot projects include the following, illustrating the range of activity progressed through the pilots:

Developing capacity, expertise and governance for shared models:

- Preparation of models, options, plans and business cases to support shared service models.
- Guidance and toolkit documentation, including an online repository of tools to support university spin-out formation, covering all stages from early awareness to investor readiness and evaluation tools.
- Development of an expanded service level agreement and charging structure to enable HEP partners to provide TTO services to each other
- Audits and review of policies and processes supporting spin-out development.
- The development of a specific product to increase the capacity of TTOs in developing and assessing IP and spin-out potential from disclosure onwards (case study 4).

Delivering spin-out activity and supporting actions through shared activity:

- Joint training and awareness for IP, spin-out formation and ideas
- Joint invention disclosure reviews, and assessment and identification of early-stage opportunities and their potential for development to spin-out.
- Investor engagement through networks, events and contacts, creating the critical mass to enable effective engagement.
- Audits and analysis of IP and opportunities for spin-out development.
- Support for academic entrepreneurs: mentoring, accelerator schemes, external advice, training and awareness.

> *"11 innovation projects were supported from disclosure through to pitch readiness. Each benefitted from training, mentoring, validation, and investor exposure"* **Monitoring report, Lead HEP**

The **activities** observed through the pilot projects align strongly with work assessing the potential for shared TTO activity and drawing on wider views from the sector

The activities delivered through the pilot projects align strongly to findings of the LSE-led project "*Creating the evidence base for shared TTO needs and opportunities in supporting SHAPE spin-outs*". The public report, informed by wider consultations with the sector, identifies a number of activity areas with strong potential for shared work.[9]

> *"There is strong potential for a number of different interventions to make tangible positive impact and that these can be implemented through shared approaches. These include: peer support, case studies, good practice and policy sharing, template documents, academic training/ awareness-raising, specialist support, and acceleration services (all tailored to considered the unique characteristics of SHAPE commercialisation)."* ***Public report from the LSE project "Creating the evidence base for shared TTO needs and opportunities in supporting SHAPE spinouts"***

Although pilots made good progress, **further time is needed** to see full realisation of the potential identified

It is evident that the full impact of the pilot projects, for those seeking to develop and implement approaches to shared expertise and governance, will take time to be realised. It is expected that approaches will further evolve and develop over time.

This is particularly true for governance-related activities, where further work and institutional approvals were underway to enable implementation. This process is also likely to yield changes and evolution, as the initial concepts move towards implementable structures, functions or processes. For this reason, it is recommended that the stakeholders continue to support and facilitate ongoing sharing of practice, lessons learned and outcomes from these pilot projects.

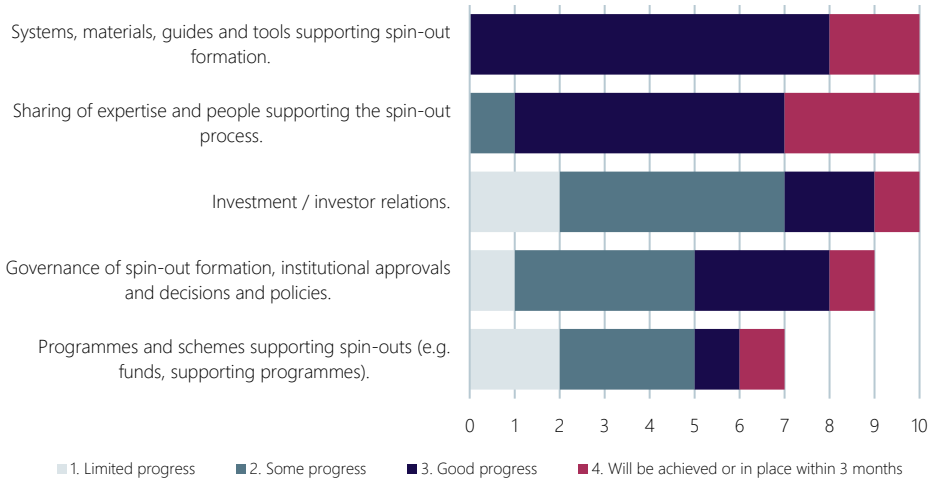
[9] Public report available at: info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/innovation-and-impact/Shared-approaches-to-supporting-SHAPE-commercialisation

Figure 7 Self-assessment of project progress

Progress has been made in a range of areas, but particularly systems, materials, guides and tools.

Based on the survey question 'To what extent has the project enabled progress towards shared services or shared approaches in these areas?'

Response from 10 projects



Case Study 3

The Golden Circle – building capacity and capability, collectively

A regional collaboration between mid-sized HEPs in the South East region to build shared commercialisation capacity and leverage proximity to the 'golden triangle' investment ecosystem through collective pipeline development and investor engagement.

Scenario

Lack of TTO capacity in a group of mid-sized HEPs (cluster X, post-92s, specialised) clustered on the outskirts of London meant they were unable to capitalise on pipeline potential or benefit from investor focus and spillover innovation effects (skilled workforce, infrastructure) in the nearby 'golden triangle' geography. Identified strength from diversity of institutional profiles, with shared gaps in TT resource and skill-set in academic staff.

Solution

A three-phase approach to build capacity and capability for commercialisation across the group, with third-party support crucial to ensure partnership between the universities, and to provide the technical expertise for the three phases.

First, an audit of IP pipelines as well as IP policies and processes was conducted to benchmark strengths and challenges, establish common ground, and identify needs and complimentary skills and resources for sharing.

Second, a pilot accelerator programme which moved seven spin-out opportunities towards investor readiness. Concurrently, the third phase was the development of a shared bank of resources.

Outcomes

- Shared repository of commercialisation resources
- Commercialisation-focused institutional peer network
- Aligned processes and common language for spin-out development across the partnership
- Combined investor networks and shared opportunity pipeline
- Pooling of expertise, mentors, sector experts, professional services and investor communities for the benefit of regional innovation opportunities
- Established a foundation for a strategic shared investment platform.

The Golden Circle consortium of universities and third-party service providers has leveraged individual institutional strengths across seven universities and enabled them to continue the development of a truly shared technology transfer function.

Legacy

Strong potential for other institutions and 'post-92' institutions in the South East region to join the group and participate in learning, access resources and join investor showcase events.

Case Study 4

Virtual TTO – harnessing new technology to build capacity

A product-focused project, addressing the very early stage of the commercialisation pipeline. Deploys new technology to address low TT resource and/or skills and reduce up front burden for inventors.

Scenario

Less research intensive / more teaching focused HEPs lack resource and expertise for commercialisation. Additionally, academic staff lack time and confidence at the disclosure stage, meaning a small and unpredictable IP pipeline reflecting low spin-out numbers in this type of HEP. Whilst best practice (e.g. USIT) and know-how for commercialisation exist, it is hard to deploy this knowledge on an as-needed and timely basis.

Solution

Harness AI to transform the spin-out user experience for both researchers and TTO staff. Virtual TTO integrates a new data security framework, designed by experts to ensure the safe application of AI. Various AI strategies have been developed and incorporated to enhance TTO capability. Features include encumbrance checking, a TRL checker, commercialisation toolkit, TTO mentor agent, streamlined disclosure workflow, adoption of best practices from legal services and elements of the USIT guides. On the TTO side, resource is focused only on areas that need most input. Time is also saved by producing marketing material from finalised disclosure forms.

External partners provided legal expertise, advised on data security and privacy, and interface design. Nervousness about using AI for potentially commercially sensitive disclosures was a barrier to use, which had to be addressed as part of the technical solution.

Outcomes

- Strong use case for the adoption of AI in technology transfer
- Insight into the legal and security aspects of AI adoption in this space
- Insight into user perceptions of AI, notably trusting commercially sensitive materials to the platform.

The grant funding enabled the project to bring in specific legal and data security expertise to build the pilot product, which built trust in the proposed platform.

Legacy

Strong potential for the tool to be adopted in low resource / small pipeline HEPs and those where more resource is needed to meet demand. The product could also be delivered in a non-HEP setting (e.g. public sector research lab).

4. Impact evaluation

About this section

The impact evaluation explores the difference the programme made for participants, and for stakeholders including Research England. It examines the outcomes that were achieved, the extent to which these can be attributed to the programme, and the value generated. It considers the lessons learned from the pilot programme, and the legacy and sustainability of activity catalysed by the pilot projects.

Strong **outcomes and legacy benefits** are evident

The pilot projects have delivered a set of strong outcomes and legacy benefits, that can be characterised in three areas:

- improved understanding and thinking around the potential for shared service activity to improve spin-out formation (and the wider landscape of technology transfer);
- a set of delivered activities that, in a compressed timescale, have been developed and delivered to demonstrate the value of shared work, and provide a blueprint for continuation and further development; and
- progress towards scale-able and sustainable approaches and governance that support less experienced HEPs.

Creating a space for **active discussion and consideration** of shared services

The evaluation evidence indicates that the Call has supported new discussions and thinking in how collaborations and shared services can be developed. For some projects the implementation of this will come in the future, but in other projects shared delivery during the project demonstrated the immediate value of the shared approach.

For some HEPs these projects marked an important first step in working collectively on spin-out formation, and raising the profile of spin-outs within their researcher communities.

> *"The funding was needed in our partnership to get to a point of a basic level of training, knowledge and confidence to move commercialisation up agendas across the universities at all levels. This has allowed a step change in thinking and action towards innovation & impact, that would not have happened if this fund had not been available. "* Monitoring report, Lead HEP

In other cases, the pilots allowed open discussions and reflection of how things are currently done, and what areas might most benefit from shared approaches. These may lead to additional types of shared work or support in the future.

> *"The openness of participants to share experiences and reflect on their practices was a major strength. The project sessions created space for honest dialogue, which helped build mutual understanding. Informal sharing of expertise already exists, and there's strong potential to formalize this through structured networking and regional specialist roles."*
> **Survey responses, HEP Lead**

The Call and pilot projects **catalysed** different discussions and thinking

It was evident that the Call and projects have created the opportunity for a different conversation about spin-out formation and technology transfer. This catalysed new thinking in how to approach the project activities. This was also evident within strong pre-existing collaborations, and has identified the limitations of past discussions around collaboration and shared activity. A similar observation was made by the IMPACT-IP team.

> *"There is regional interest in shared services as a concept but little thought prior to this project had been given as to what that could look like and the activities that would need to happen to move it from concept to reality. The workshops explored fundamental questions about how and why we work in certain ways and the approaches we take"* **Monitoring report, Lead HEP**

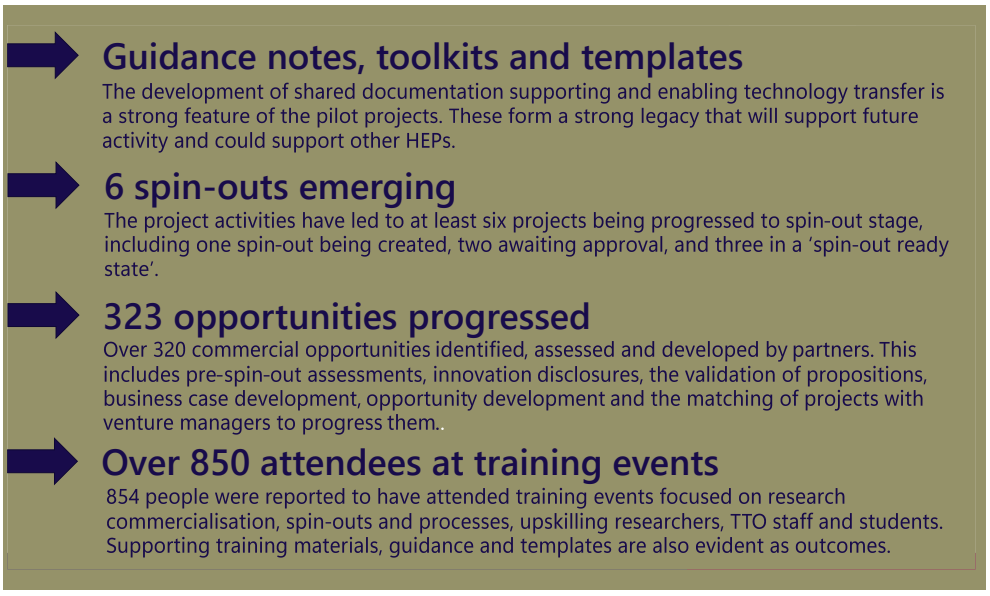
4.1 Outcomes from the pilot projects

The pilots delivered a **significant scale of activity** in a short timeframe

Outcomes from the activities and interventions developed by the pilot projects are summarised in Figure 8. These are significant in terms of the volume of activity started and delivered in a short period of time. The evidence indicates that the pilots were instrumental in quickly mobilising resources that have made significant contributions to opportunity assessment, developing spin-outs, and the delivery of relevant training.

In addition, there is strong evidence of other types of outcomes supporting the aims of the initiative. This includes guidance notes, toolkits and document templates developed on a shared basis, jointly delivered IP audits and assessment of opportunities and work to engage external networks on a shared basis, increasing the critical mass of activity and enabling engagement with investors. These are exemplified in the selected case studies.

Figure 8 A summary of key outcomes from the pilot projects



A **portfolio of over 320 spin-out** development opportunities: identified, assessed and progressed

Over 320 commercial opportunities were identified, assessed and developed by partners throughout the course of the pilot project activity. This includes pre-spin-out assessments, innovation disclosures progressing, the validation of propositions, business case development, opportunities advancing in the pipeline and the matching of projects with venture managers to progress them.

At the time the evaluation data was gathered the project activities have led to at least six projects being progressed to spin-out stage, including one spin-out being created, two awaiting approval, and three in a 'spin-out ready state'. Subsequently, some projects have indicated ongoing progress increasing these numbers.

For some projects, the continued development of early-stage opportunities is likely to require some funding beyond that currently available to the HEP and wider consortium.

> *"We have designed, developed and implemented a bespoke programme, providing a suite of training modules to guide researchers on the steps to commercialisation. This uses a blended learning approach, providing both online and in-person training, and includes a presentation / pitch session with feedback in front of an expert panel"* Monitoring report, Lead HEP

The development of **co-created shared guidance and toolkits** is an important legacy asset...

...and an opportunity to **extend the impact** of the pilot programme

The development of guides, toolkits and template documentation was a notable feature of pilot project outcomes. 8 of the 13 pilots reported relevant activities and outputs in this area; a set of knowledge assets that have wider potential for the sector (both as an approach and set of documents/templates to draw on). Also see case studies 3, 5 & 6.

The development of guidance and template documentation, including for training delivery, has featured strongly in the pilot projects and is likely to have wider benefit for the sector. This is also a strong feature of the IMPACT-IP comparator project (see Appendix B), providing robust, co-created templates that can be used by multiple HEPs and are being disseminated.

> *"The HEIs partners did not have legal templates for IP & Commercialisation. A highlight is the creation, training and use of legal templates which are now in use"* Monitoring report, Lead HEP

This suite of knowledge assets merits further work to curate and ensure wider awareness and access. Future projects should also be directed to consider this landscape before instigating work to potentially duplicate these. Other work, such as the IMPACT IP Toolkit, should be considered as part of this: some assets may have potential for national roll-out or adoption. It is recommended that Research England work with the sector, and Knowledge Exchange UK, to consider how best to further share these assets and raise awareness of them.

> *"We have sight of the Impact IP work of SetSquared Partnership and have agreed to use these commercial templates and have developed some with [law firm] which complement the set"* Monitoring report, Lead HEP

Other forms of **report and evaluation evidence** generated by the pilot projects

The projects have delivered other outcomes in terms of reports and evaluations of project-level work. Some, but as yet not all, of these are public domain.

Publicly available reports and evidence include the output of the project led by LSE on "Shared-approaches-to-supporting-SHAPE-commercialisation" which examined the value proposition for shared TTO models in SHAPE commercialisation. The STAGE project, led by University of the Arts London, also incorporated a project-level evaluation.

Other guidance, toolkits and templates are held in shared repositories, accessible to the project partners. The outcomes from these pilot projects add to those of other Research England supported (CCF-RED) projects, including the IMPACT-IP project which is actively disseminating the deal readiness toolkit.

Demonstration of **mechanisms** supporting delivery by diverse HEP consortia

Mechanisms that have demonstrated joint approaches to training, awareness and early-stage discovery and the development of spin-out potential. This includes those aligned to specific sectors or disciplines (SHAPE, digital, manufacturing). For example case studies 1 and 6.

Some of these have potential as scaled-up and expanded activities, enabling a wider group of HEPs to benefit and to minimise the costs of reinventing similar activity in further small projects.

Understanding the post-project **progression of identified opportunities**

As well as tracking the development of shared service structures at a HEP level, Research England and the wider sector may see some benefit from understanding how the participating less experienced HEPs were able to further progress the individual spin-out opportunities after the conclusion of the pilot work.

This is recommended as a consideration for further evaluation activity or shared learning. The research question is: was the initial shared support sufficient to generate the momentum for progress or are other support mechanisms and expertise needed?

Outcomes by project

An overview of the outcomes by project is presented in Table 1. This does not show all of the outcomes achieved, but does illustrate the range and nature of outcomes projects reported.

Table 1 Example outcomes from the 13 pilot projects

Lead HEP: Project Name	Example outcomes (not exhaustive)
London School of Economics & Political Science: Creating the evidence base for shared TTO needs and opportunities in supporting SHAPE spinouts	An in-depth public report, informed by extensive consultation with stakeholders nationally (from ~87 HEPs across the UK): "Sharing support for SHAPE Commercialisation An exploration of the evidence base and options for shared approaches for supporting SHAPE commercialisation", July 2025
University of Manchester: Manchester-Salford Commercialisation Consortium (MSCC)	A series of workshops to develop a common baseline of spin-out process understanding; agreed, shared approaches to investor engagement; informal support moving towards a formalised approach informing [commercialisation] policy development across the consortium. A new commercialisation plan and additional commercialisation post for one project partner.
Teesside University: Pathways towards a shared TTO capability for the North East	The work and action learning approach developed a clearer set of views and perspective on shared TTO approaches and the creation of a roadmap for senior leaders to consider. An internal report provides recommendation and options. Additional funding for the consortium provides a basis for implementation of agreed actions.
Cranfield University: Symbiotic Technology Transfer Resource Enabler and Mobilisation to Leverage Increased Net Efficiencies (STREAMLINE)	Developed an extensive shared training programme (for academics, TTO staff and students) and a shared disclosure review framework. A joint investor showcase event was made possible by the combined portfolio approach and with support from the external partner. Creation of spin-outs and pipeline of projects with assessed commercial potential.

University of Bath: **SpinOutWest**	Identified 21 priority commercialisation projects, from 60 identified opportunities from 52 researchers. Devised a joint training programme and online shared platform holding guides, training materials and a partner networking function. Active plans for a scaled-up sustainable legacy project.
Coventry University: **DigiSpinWM: Powering the future of Advanced Manufacturing with Digital Innovation**	Spin-out Code of Principles adopted across all three partner universities; a shared digital IP pipeline platform to manage technology evaluations, workflows, academic engagement, and investor readiness. Structured training and mentoring to researchers. 40 opportunities reviewed, of which 11 progressed to investor pitches. 2 now moving through ICURe 'Explore' toward spin out. Investor events and engagement.
University of East Anglia: **NR 4ward**	Established a Collaborative TTO model harmonising work processes and business case for the continuation of this approach. Creation of templates for use across the Norwich Research Park to accelerate spin-out development and a framework for conducting technology audits and identifying a pipeline of potential spin-outs.
University of the Arts, London: **Shared TTO to Accelerate the Growth of Self-fundEd Spinouts (STAGE)**	Delivered an agreement and legal structure to enable the 6 HEP partners and 2 private companies to create a shared, independent TTO function that supported 14 projects. Created a 'document bible' to enable the model to be repeatable. The project was also evaluated in real time and published findings.
University of West London: **VirtualTTO: an end-to-end solution for scalable and effective spin-out support utilising AI and TTO best practice**	Developed and validated the VirtualTTO platform; a sophisticated web application designed to streamline the research commercialisation process for university researchers and TTO managers. A spin-out may be created to commercialise the product itself. Development was informed by industry collaborators, academic data security experts, and technology leaders.
University of Sussex: **The Golden Circle**	Starting point for seven collaborating universities was a policy/process audit to identify areas suitable for sharing, facilitated by external partner and a potentially useful model to replicate. Rolling Steering Group leadership until 2027, with each partner leading specific workstreams. Established a Business Angels network. Several projects successfully engaged local angel investors and developed ongoing relationships with external partners.
University of Portsmouth: **Bridging the Gap: A Shared Technology Transfer Office Vision for Wessex**	An in-depth public report, informed by extensive consultation with stakeholders nationally (from ~87 HEPs across the UK): "Sharing support for SHAPE Commercialisation An exploration of the evidence base and options for shared approaches for supporting SHAPE commercialisation", July 2025
University of Warwick: **Shared Technology Transfer Office in Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing for the Midlands (STTOAEMM)**	Leveraged a sector focus, providing ongoing mentoring and support for projects which has resulted in a more active spin-out pipeline. A spin-out evaluation tool was developed, and used by partners to support an audit and selection of projects for acceleration support. 24 projects were considered, of which 15 received support and 10 the full acceleration support by Nov 2024.
LSTM: **Sustainable Innovation in Global Health Technology (SIGHT)**	The work and action learning approach developed a clearer set of views and perspective on shared TTO approaches and the creation of a roadmap for senior leaders to consider. An internal report provides recommendation and options. Additional funding for the consortium provides a basis for implementation of agreed actions.

4.2 Lessons learned from delivery of the pilot projects

Lessons learned from the pilot project delivery

This section considers the lessons learned from the pilot project delivery and reported outcomes.

Understanding the **different needs** and contexts of HEPs

The delivery has highlighted the differing needs of ostensibly "similar" HEPs. The different types of work undertaken by the pilots to assess pipelines, practices and policies forms an important point of learning and potentially forms a further knowledge base for the wider sector to draw on.

> *Despite having similar issues, all [partners] in our consortium needed a slightly different approach to address these, for example one HEI had a large pipeline that needed structure and support while another HEI needed to focus on awareness raising and to contextualise the benefits of commercialisation / spin-out.*
> ***Survey response, Lead HEP***

The development of toolkits and common templates, seen across many projects, was an important enabling feature of the pilots. These resources efficiently address common barriers for less experienced HEPs. Access to practical documentation and templates for spin-outs that are developed with the experience of 'real world' use is a key enabler.

Common documentation creates efficiencies for those using it (over and above the upfront costs and time of developing them). It can also provide a better foundation for shared activity across HEPs. When partners work from the same templates, policies and guidance, this creates a common operating basis that can more easily enable shared services. However, as indicated below, establishing trust among partners and strong leadership are equally critical to making shared services effective.

The criticality of **buy-in from senior leaders**, for project leads and partner HEPs

The delivery phase, and to some extent the experience of some HEPs during the proposal development phase, emphasises the importance of buy-in to the concepts and approach to the development of shared services activity.

This is an area to consider in further follow-up monitoring: to what extent are the shared activities supported and / or championed by senior leaders?

> *We found that senior leadership buy-in from the beginning was critical. [Project name] set up a Steering Board composed of senior leaders and I think this was ultimately critical to its successful delivery and exploring a sustainable model of continued partnership.*
> ***Survey response, HE partner***

> *The fact that [Project name] did not incorporate a mechanism for senior leadership buy-in was a significant barrier to the project delivery.*
> ***Survey response, HE partner***

Pilot projects reported that opportunities are **earlier stage than anticipated…**

…so pilot projects may not have fully explored shared

It was common for projects and participating HEPs to observe that the opportunities identified and drawn into supporting activities were earlier stage than anticipated. This is an important learning point when considering the nature of support and outcomes from work directed at supporting spin-outs in these HEPs.

activities in the **later stages of spin-out development.**

The focus of projects on training activities, including awareness raising and encouragement for researchers to engage in research commercialisation, is also indicative of less experienced HEPs needing early stage support to build their pipeline.

> *"While we focused on accelerating spinouts, we came to realise, that HEIs (where there is potential to develop more spinouts) have mostly very early stage projects and their own processes are still being implemented to enable spinouts to be formed. The Shared TTO activities have enabled researchers with early-stage projects to explore this space, but the creation of the spinouts itself is a long-term goal, that requires sustained support."*
> **Monitoring report, Lead HEP**

> *"There were fewer later stage projects than anticipated in the HEP pipelines"*
> **Monitoring report, Lead HEP**

As such the pilot projects may not have explored the needs of less experience HEPs for shared activities in the later stages of spin-out development.

Spin-outs versus the **wider research commercialisation landscape**: the benefits are likely to accrue more widely

It should be noted that the Call (Appendix A) was focused exclusively on spin-out formation. A point raised on several occasions through the evaluation is that for less experienced HEPs, the stimulation of awareness and opportunities for spinning-out is helpful in the wider context of research commercialisation. As such it is likely that awareness raising, and the specific early-stage opportunities catalysed as a result of this activity, may achieve other research commercialisation outcomes in future years.

Private sector specialists were a strong enabling factor in the pilot program: expertise, capacity and project management

In section 3 Process evaluation, the supporting role played by various external providers is briefly noted. This merits further discussion as a positive lesson learned from the pilot programme.

A significant delivery role for private sector commercialisation / consulting firms has been a feature in the pilots. Private sector specialists were recognised by lead HEPs as a strong enabling factor in the pilot program: bringing expertise, capacity (by which we mean *time*) and project management. Feedback from participants suggests that such organisations play an important enabling role in the further development of shared services. It also addresses a further learning point, that larger, more experienced TTOs noted that they were perceived as having capacity to support other HEPs, whereas in reality workloads can limit the extent to which this is possible.

A key question for Research England is how this capability and expertise can be more effectively utilised or accessed by HEPs. Some HEPs may have been reluctant, or unable, to access this resource in the past. For example they may have lacked the capacity to convene a wider collaboration to share costs, or to engage suppliers directly. Possible considerations include a form of national provision, scale-up of the piloted programme activities or HEP-led case studies from the pilots. The evaluations undertaken by projects themselves suggest that mechanisms (programmes, interventions, support) can be accessed at a relatively low unit cost of participation, once created with sufficient scale.

Participant views on the role of **external delivery partners**

> *[Company] were our project managers, and we would not have had the time to deliver the project as well without them. There is too much demand on HEI TTOs time and resources. External project management support was critical here for our consortium.*
> *Survey response, Lead HEP*

> *External partners played a vital role in the success of the project. [Company 1] provided expert 1:1 mentoring and strategic input that strengthened commercialisation pathways across institutions. [Company 2] delivered practical workshops that supported wider participation and skills development among academic staff. Patent attorneys from [Company 3] ran sector-specific IP workshops and consultancy sessions, helping to identify and assess commercial potential. Their involvement not only brought valuable expertise but also encouraged collaborative working across institutional boundaries, something staff highlighted as a key benefit of the project.*
> *Survey response, Lead HEP*

The **requirements of the CCF-RED Call** are likely to have influenced the need to draw on additional external capacity

However, it should be acknowledged that the context of the Call—particularly its short, compact timescales and rules preventing the "buy out" of existing staff time—may have increased the need for HEPs to involve this class of partner.

As a comparator, the longer and larger IMPACT-IP project (see Appendix B) did not need to draw on external resources in this way (noting the significant experience and track record of the IMPACT-IP project partners, individually and via SetSquared).

Including external private sector suppliers and their HEP clients in **future discussions** on the next steps

There is an active market for support services in spin-out and technology transfer. The pilot findings suggest strong potential for collaborative approaches to help less experienced HEPs access and benefit from these services more effectively. Such providers, and the wider group of less experienced HEPs that use them (i.e. those not involved in the pilot projects), could usefully be included in future discussions on the next steps and opportunities.

4.3 Legacies from the pilot projects

The pilot projects have delivered a set of **strong legacy outcomes**

The legacies from these project are expected to be evident in three areas:

- implementation of joint or shared functions, activities and approaches in the areas explored within the pilots and augmented learning on 'what works' in practice over a longer time frame;
- the onward use of the shared guidance, toolkits and templates for spin-out development and how these are utilised by less experienced HEPs in future years; and
- the delivery of training and awareness raising to researchers in less experienced HEPs, with the suite of supporting materials.

Achieving **critical mass** in supporting spin-out formation

The pilot projects have provided direct evidence of the benefits of shared activity in terms of achieving the critical mass to enable activities and supporting outcomes. This is observed in the development and delivery of training, of guides and template documentation and in the delivery of supporting mechanisms.

Evaluations undertaken by individual projects also indicate that for mechanism-based activities, the unit cost of interventions can be affordable (e.g. within existing HEIF budgets, even where these are modest) once the programme is in place.

A more detailed 'business model' consideration of how mechanisms might be sustained effectively on a shared basis could look at options to fund the activity through HEP contributions on a unit cost or cost to participate basis. The timing of the Call made it difficult for pilot projects to undertake this kind of evolution to sustainability during delivery, but future support over 2-3 years may enable this. In selected pilot project cases it is recommended that consideration is given to supporting (small, focused) follow-on activity that could further inform future approaches to supporting the Call aims.

Further relevant discussion on this point is made later in this section regarding the potential for scale-up of pilot activities.

> *"The critical mass provided by our Shared TTO in this model provided experienced coaching and support for projects which would not have been possible if each university had needed to independently recruit and employ commercialisation managers. "* Monitoring report, Lead HEP

> *"(We) had not previously run an investor showcase event. Combining portfolios meant that this provided enough interest – from both investors and participants – to host this event"* Monitoring report, Lead HEP

Good evidence of **legacies and sustainable change** from the pilot projects

There is good evidence that some form of continuation or sustained activity is planned or likely. There is some evidence in monitoring reports that these will evolve from those initially conceived in the submitted proposals – and this should be expected as the short project delivery timescale did not easily allow for evolution and implementation of lessons learned during the delivery phase.

> *"All consortium partners in the process of signing an extension letter to continue to work together under the same collaboration agreement until April 2026"* **Monitoring report, Lead HEP**

> *"Three models of shared TTO services were presented to senior leadership ranging in financial commitment and complexity"* **Monitoring report, Lead HEP**

> *"A collaborative TTO Model was established and will continue. A Steering Committee with senior members from each partner and stakeholder was formed and this Collaborative TTO model worked well and there is commitment to continue. A business case has been prepared for a Project Coordinator to support the Collaborative TTO and ensure regular meetings and completion of a program of work for the next 6 months"*
> **Monitoring report, Lead HEP**

For some projects **other (secured) funding** is the pathway to further development and implementation of the pilot project

Sustainability may also come through collaborating partners continuing to work together, through new and existing funded programmes and initiatives. The is some evidence of lessons learned from the pilot programme influencing their delivery of these. A small number of projects reported having access to other collaborative funds that would form a platform for further development and implementation of shared activity.

> *"The legacy of this project is that it has gathered and developed a set of perspectives and potential approaches on how a shared TTO function could develop. The report outlines a roadmap addressing mechanisms, expertise and structures that gives our Directors of Research and Knowledge Exchange a basis for consideration and decision making. During the pilot project, the (project consortium) was awarded additional funding … and this provides a structure by which some of these recommendations could be reviewed and adopted.* **Monitoring report, Lead HEP**

But other projects have reported that they are actively considering how substantive funds can be secured to support a continuation and development of the initial pilot work. A future request or approach for funds to build on the pilot project funding is to be expected from some collaborations.

Some projects indicate the **potential for scale-up** to additional HEP partners…

The mechanisms and approaches developed through the pilots have the potential to be expanded and to include a wider group of HEPs. Building on the mechanism established, and opening this to a wider group of HEPs. In reporting, some projects actively identified the potential to introduce new or additional partners in sustained scaled-up activity. It is recommended that this is considered as part of future considerations on the Call aims.

> *"We have an approach that can be scaled to other regions and sectors and we would welcome the opportunity to do this."* **Monitoring report, Lead HEP**

…drawing on the learning from the success and evolution of the **ICURe** programme

On this point the development and evolution of the Innovate UK ICURe programme is worth noting. Since 2014 ICURe has developed from an initial pilot activity, with limited partners, into a national programme delivered through regional delivery partners. Funding and cohorts were scaled up and local delivery partnerships were established to run regional cohorts. ICURe in 2025 is more flexible and accessible than at launch, and includes short tasters for individuals, team-based funded market testing, regional delivery partners, and sector-specific activity. ICURe provides access to the mechanisms (funding, training, mentoring) and expertise needed by researchers and as such represents an additional 'shared' access programme.

At least two pilot projects have reported progression of spin-out opportunities to involvement in ICURe programmes, see case studies 2 and 6.

Maximising the benefits of the Call and activities

Feedback from project participants indicates a desire to see further work maximise the benefits of the Call and activities to date. This includes opportunities to learn from other projects, to ensure the knowledge assets created during the pilot projects are accessible and to enhance visibility of the pilot outcomes across the sector.

This does not fall exclusively to Research England, although they play an important role in terms of funding and 'convening power'. Knowledge Exchange UK offer a national online platform to support the onward benefit and impact of this work.

It is recommended that additional events and opportunities for ongoing shared learning from this process are supported in the coming months. In particular, this should enable pilots projects to share their learning points directly with others.

> *To further support the aims of the call, Research England could prioritise the dissemination of key learnings from across all funded projects. This could include hosting a national knowledge-sharing event or workshop series to bring together participating institutions, enabling peer learning and cross-institutional dialogue... Finally, establishing a centralised framework or platform for sharing best practice, tools, and resources would greatly enhance sector-wide learning. Such a resource would allow research organisations to access exemplars, avoid duplication of effort, and accelerate the development of effective models for spin-out and commercialisation support.*
> **Survey response, RPO**

Case Study 5

NR 4ward – creation of a specialist spinout ecosystem

The Norwich Research Park (NRP) is one of Europe's single-site hubs of research, training and education focussing on farm to fork and to clinical outcomes. Partners* in this geographically 'tight' cluster delivered the NR 4ward Shared TTO pilot project, with support from specialist organisations PBL Technology and Health Tech Enterprise. *see Annex

Scenario

The Department of Business & Trade designates the NRP as a "High Potential Opportunity Area" in Plant Science and Nutrition. With a significant R&D base and infrastructure supporting scientists, clinicians, students and postgraduates, it presents a potentially fruitful spin-out ecosystem. However, NRP institutions have not been able to maximise potential for spin-out creation from R&D activities, leading to a lack of pipeline flow, seed investment and business skills. Lack of the latter two means NRP spin-outs tend to leave the region to seek investment and employees, affecting the regional economy and graduate opportunities. The NRP needs to be more 'sticky' for founders, attract managerial talent with business acumen, and develop deeper relationships with early-stage, deep-tech investors.

Solution

Build on strong institutional and collaborative ties across the NRP by establishing a 'pre-accelerator' (collaborative TTO) that pools resources (including mapping infrastructure), establishes a standard trusted approach to commercialisation, addresses academic skills and investor readiness, and can build mass of investment opportunities. The uniqueness of the NRP is its high concentration on research focused organisations tackling adjacent sectors

The solution seems obvious, but the pilot grant was instrumental to turning ambition into reality and enabling the creation of resources and allied initiatives – notably through the appointment of a project manager.

Outcomes

- Highly aligned commercialisation ecosystem
- Standardised approaches and pooled resources to maximise impact
- Register of Experts
- Strong pipeline of spin-out opportunities to support and develop further
- Action plan to tackle the current challenges and scale and accelerate spin-out creation on the NRP

This CCF Shared TTO grant has been recognised as a significant opportunity to kickstart and accelerate the delivery of this initiative.

Legacy

Demonstrates the potential in aligned sector collaboration for commercialisation between HEPs and other research organisations. The regional focus of this pilot also has potential to reach further across East Anglia and into Lincolnshire (University of Lincoln) where partnerships have been created through other collaborative awards (e.g. Agri-Tech CCF).

Case Study 6

DigiSpinWM – intervention focused

A West Midlands collaboration of 3 universities to pool TTO resources and support advanced manufacturing and digital innovation commercialisation through shared expertise and aligned processes.

Scenario

Three universities (founding members of West Midlands Combined Universities) with complementary research strengths saw a shared opportunity to accelerate commercialisation and better position emerging ventures for investment. They recognised that navigating complex IP negotiations and the capital needs of manufacturing technologies would benefit from a more coordinated approach. Building on their role within the £160 million West Midlands Investment Zone, and the wider West Midlands Combined Universities network, the partners worked together to increase regional impact. Early focus was advanced manufacturing and digital innovation but the model was designed to adapt across other areas.

Solution

DigiSpinWM created a connected framework for commercialisation. The programme aligned policies and introduced joint case review, supported by external expertise to assess pipelines and identify priority opportunities. Collision sprints shaped commercial pathways, while a VC foundry programme brought the wider ecosystem around investment ready projects. A shared digital platform was developed as a common TTO workflow, hosting standardised processes, training and harmonised spin-out processes aligned with the USIT Guide and UK Spin-out Review, helping founders and investors see a clearer route to market.

Outcomes

- Shared digital TTO workflow and harmonised policy framework
- Increased capacity through cross institution expertise
- Collaborative training for academic and professional staff
- Around 40 opportunities reviewed and 11 progressed to investor pitches, with 2 now moving toward spin out and ICUREe participation
- Clearer commercial pathways and earlier investor engagement

…'a fire has been lit' under those who didn't know about spin-outs or investors but much more funding and work needed to 'kindle the flame'.

Legacy

DigiSpinWM demonstrates that a shared TTO approach can work in practice and culture. It leaves a common operating rhythm, aligned policies and an MVP digital workflow that goes beyond disclosure capture and helps opportunities move toward market. The model has proved adaptable to other fields and is not limited by sector. The programme has strengthened capability and confidence among founders and staff and created a single route into expertise and investors. It provides a practical pathway for others to follow; early feedback suggests this degree of coordinated working across independent universities is uncommon in the UK and internationally.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Evident **enthusiasm and engagement** in the aims and opportunity

A notable concluding view is the level of enthusiasm that the project team has seen from participants involved in these projects. This provides an inspiring and positive outcome for the future of research commercialisation, and provides a strong basis for this work to provide inspiration for wider activity across more universities to sustain change and innovation in research commercialisation.

A second point is that whilst participants generally understood the CCF-RED initiative as aiming to "do more, better", the delivery and evaluation took place against a backdrop of significant financial pressure for UK HEPs. Institutional cost-saving was a dominant theme within HEPs, and wider discussions about shared services was often positioned against this. Some participants noted the risk that a cost saving rationale, inferred or intended, is a potential risk to sustaining the positive progress made thus far through this initiative.

A **significant contribution** towards understanding and practices that enhance shared services to benefit less experienced HEPs

The evaluation findings are that the Call and pilot projects have made a significant contribution towards understanding and practices that enhance shared services to benefit less experienced HEPs. The pilot projects have delivered strong outcomes, particularly in supporting the *early stages* of spin-out development (awareness, opportunity, training) and the infrastructures that support this (guides, templates, frameworks).

But this is also clearly observed to be a journey where further time is needed to see how activities evolve and develop, particularly where it relates to approaches building shared governance. Additional support for *some* activities, collaborations and HEPs is likely to be sought in future.

> *"If I might use a cooking analogy, this pilot project has enabled us to settle on a menu, ensure we have all the equipment and utensils we need, ensure the kitchen staff are fully trained up and even do some of the food prep. What we need next is the time to cook!* ***Survey response, HE partner***

Summarising the findings against the **evaluation objectives**

The evaluation objectives set out four research questions to address in the evaluation. In this concluding section, these are considered and discussed based on the evidence presented earlier in the report.

- To provide detailed evidence to support the policy query 'are shared TTO's the answer to supporting universities with smaller research portfolios to combine expertise and capabilities in order to spin-out'.
- To provide evidence to government that the above works or does not work and as such provide information on areas which could be explored or continued and shared i.e. what works well and what does not work well.
- To determine whether additional funding in this area would support this activity to become sustainable and successful or whether it would provide intermediate support which would not then be continued post funding.

- Inform a broader questions set of question such as: are these types of institutions capable of keeping a shared TTO facility running or is the pipeline too small? How big does the pipeline need to be to see a successful shared TTO facility sustained?

Are shared TTO's the answer to supporting universities with smaller research portfolios to combine expertise and capabilities in order to spin-out?

The concept of a "shared TTO" was often reported to initially be understood as a single joint TTO function operating across several HEPs to deliver their spin-out activities. What the pilot work has shown is that there exists a range of approaches and opportunities to increase shared activity (mechanisms, expertise and governance) and to achieve benefits from this.

It is also clear that supporting collaborations and mechanisms which actively share expertise has made a difference. These efforts have enhanced the spin-out performance of less experienced HEPs, presenting a suite of approaches and interventions that enable less experienced HEPs to build momentum in their spin-out activities. In a short timeframe, they have produced positive outcomes and examples that directly address the aims of the Call.

For some projects the funding has enabled a journey towards an integrated TTO and spin-out function, with associated governance. But it is still relatively early in that journey, and the lessons from ongoing implementation and shared TTO practice are still being accrued. Ongoing observation of their progress, evolution and successes is merited.

Collectively the projects have demonstrated shared or collaborative ways of working that have enabled them to access expertise and capacity from more experienced partners (HEPs and other organisations). These have generated short-term benefits for less experienced HEPs in terms of pipeline development, opportunity assessment, researcher awareness and resources for training.

A significant outcome of the pilot projects is the creation of knowledge assets supporting spin-out formation: guides, template agreements and playbooks. This exemplifies how different types of shared activities can deliver benefits to less experienced HEPs. Further support for these outcomes to characterise, curate and broaden visibility is merited.

What **works well and what does not work well**: areas which could be explored or continued and shared

A concluding view is that HEPs are not short of ideas of how things could be done better or differently, but they are short of dedicated time to try those things out and often risk averse. There is also a lack of evidence on 'tried and tested' approaches to shared resource to mitigate perceptions of risks for managers and HEP leaders (a key element in Case Study 2 which featured expansion of a tried and tested approach). This initiative has incentivised and enabled them to try new ways of working. Notably, in the use of AI at disclosure stage in the Virtual TTO pilot project. The short timescale, whilst challenging, was successful in catalysing working quickly to explore these ideas and approaches.

The evaluation report identifies a number of features and ways of working in the pilots that are attributed to successful outcomes and reflections from the partners:

- Training and awareness raising to create pipeline interest (stimulating academic engagement), with direct links into opportunity assessment, review and development.
- Improved assessment and review of opportunities, drawing on shared input and being open to the involvement of peer colleagues from other institutions in this process.

- Development of underpinning infrastructure with "real world" experience and views built in: guidance documents, advisory notes, and templates to support spin-out processes and templates.
- Drawing on a range of non-HEP external partners and organisations to provide both paid and unpaid advice, support, capacity, project management and expertise not available within the HEP.

Areas which may not have worked as well in terms of testing the boundaries of shared service potential and capacity

But some aspects of the Call may not have worked so well in terms of testing the boundaries of shared service potential and capacity.

Some HEP partners reported that the mechanisms they were involved in were not ideally positioned for them. But in view of the project timescales, there was little scope to be able to meet delivery timeframes *and* evolve the approach. As such the pilot initiative may have lost some evidence around the *evolution* of tested approaches to meet HEP needs.

Secondly, the funding Call and delivery requirements may not have unlocked the ability of more experienced / larger HEP TTOs to develop a sustainable approach to resourcing support. The Call explicitly prevented recruitment of additional staff (via grant funds). As such, relevant pathways to supporting less experienced HEPs through additional capacity in larger TTO teams has not have been tested in these pilot projects.

Whether **additional funding** in this area would support this activity to become sustainable and successful

The question of additional funding is a complex one. Undoubtably the Call and pilot projects have created an appetite for continued support. This is observed in three areas:

- to continue activities or mechanisms perceived as successful;
- to enable additional support for the next stages of commercialisation for opportunities developed in the pilot phase; and
- to expand the involvement of HEP partners.

A key consideration is the wider landscape of funding and support available to individual HEPs and their collaborations. Some are anchored in well-supported, long-standing collaborations with other funding support mechanisms and enabling activity in place (e.g. proof of concept funding, external advisors, accelerator programmes). Those located within coherent structures supporting regional economic development (e.g. mayoral combined authorities) have access to other funding streams (not least previous and new CCF awards).

Within the pilot project portfolio some collaborations are new, and are not observed to have access to existing funding supporting the wider ecosystem for spin-out formation. Some do not sit coherently within defined regional structures through which funding might be sought.

Such considerations might inform decisions and priorities for future funding against the Call aims. Further, the strategic direction for Research England in terms of future funding for work in this area might consider different approaches to realising the benefits for less experienced HEPs. The options might include:

- open competition: a further call, or calls, allowing projects to form and address the needs as the partners determine; and
- strategic commissioning to expand provision across the target HEP group and generate further evidence over a longer period: to use the evidence of what works under this Call to develop scaled interventions that can address the needs of a wider

set of less experienced HEPs, building on the mechanisms developed through the pilots.

The short-term delivery window has largely precluded projects from being able to develop approaches that can be evolved from highly focused support to sustainable activity through partner contributions in the longer-term. This may be an area to consider in future (acknowledging that the CCF-RED Call was explicitly designed as a pilot exercise).

Opportunities to **maximise the impact of the pilot projects** and their outcomes which do not require significant additional funding

It is also evident that there are additional opportunities to maximise the impact of the pilot projects and their outcomes in ways which do not require significant additional funding. These include further work on sharing experiences and lessons learned from the pilot projects and also actions relating to awareness and uptake of the knowledge assets (guidance, templates and documents) created by the pilots.

Approaches and models for shared expertise and governance are actively developing and may be implemented during 2025/26. It is recommended that project partners, Knowledge Exchange UK and Research England support or facilitate ongoing sharing of practice, lessons learned and outcomes from these pilot projects.

> *"It is critical for Research England to view the output from the Shared TTO programme holistically and seek to engineer an ecosystem-level programme that enables the different interventions to work effectively together"* ***Public report from the LSE project "Creating the evidence base for shared TTO needs and opportunities in supporting SHAPE spinouts"***

> *RE should disseminate the overall findings from the Shared TTO project with the HEP and KE sector. What are the different models of shared TTO operation. What worked and what did not. RE should suggest on where possible pooling of resources developed from the shared TTO projects such that all KE active organisations could benefit from these resources and some standardisation brought in the KE approaches. The resources could be held through a common portal such as KE UK.*
> ***Survey response, HE Partner***

> *Research England could benefit the broader ecosystem by encouraging sharing of these resources across the research community or if funds were available developing a lasting repository when such resources could be hosted and updated.*
> **Survey responses, HE Partner**

Broader evaluation questions are not possible to answer authoritatively at this time

The evaluation aims also sought evidence on questions including: are these types of institutions capable of keeping a shared TTO facility running or is the pipeline too small; and how big does the pipeline need to be to see a successful shared TTO facility sustained? The evaluation is unable to answer these questions authoritatively at this time, the data to inform this is simply not yet available.

What can be said is that the pilots have developed and demonstrated approaches that include partners with no prior track record in spin-out formation, and relatively small

levels of research funding.[10] In the longer term, the impact of these interventions should be seen in data reported to HESA.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Continue to work with the cohort of pilot project and partners to share and understand the ongoing progression of activity and outcomes

There is a strong case for the project partners, Knowledge Exchange UK and Research England to support or facilitate ongoing sharing of practice, lessons learned and outcomes from these pilot projects.

The progress and outcomes from these pilots represent valuable learning for the wider research ecosystem, and continuing to monitor them will provide critical insights into what works in practice. There is a need to understand and share how the approaches and models for shared expertise and governance develop and are implemented over the next year.

There is clear appetite and need for more engagement between projects and with the wider sector. The strong interest shown at the KEUK 2025 conference,[11] combined with projects' consistent requests for more time to share learning points with each other, indicates that additional events and opportunities for shared learning would be valuable. These should enable pilot projects to share their experiences directly with others who could benefit from their insights.

Finally, while following the development of shared service structures at the higher education provider level is important, there's also value in understanding the longer-term outcomes for participating institutions. In particular, tracking how the less experienced HEPs were able to progress their individual spin-out opportunities after the pilot concluded. This would address an important additional evaluation question: was the initial shared support sufficient to generate momentum for continued progress, or are additional support mechanisms and expertise needed? This would also inform future programme design and resource allocation.

Recommendation 2

A coordinated approach to curation and visibility of knowledge assets, to ensure their long-term accessibility, and proactively promote their adoption across the wider research community.

A coordinated approach should be established to curate the suite of knowledge assets, ensure their long-term accessibility, and proactively promote awareness and adoption of such approaches across the wider research community. This will require work within the sector, Knowledge Exchange UK and possibly other national networks.

These knowledge assets represent a significant legacy value that extends beyond the pilot projects themselves. However, without deliberate effort to curate and promote them, there's a risk they may become fragmented, outdated, or simply overlooked by those who could benefit from them. The key questions to address are how best to ensure wider use and adoption, how to maintain and update these resources over time, and what mechanisms will support long-term access.

Looking forward, it's important that future projects are directed to consider this existing landscape before developing new resources, helping to avoid unnecessary duplication

[10] 27 of the participating HEPs reported no new spin-outs in the 3-year period 2021/22 to 2023/24, and 7 participating HEPs reported research incomes of under £1.5m in 2023/24. Source: HESA.

[11] KEUK Conference 2025 session write up 'Preparing for KE challenges: Learnings from the Shared TTO projects', a panel discussion. Source: https://ke.org.uk/resources/conference-digest-2025/

of effort. Some assets, such as those developed through the IMPACT IP Toolkit and similar initiatives, may have potential for national roll-out or adoption and should be considered as part of this broader knowledge asset portfolio.

By working collaboratively these valuable resources can be effectively retained, maintained, and made proactively available to institutions and practitioners who need them. This will help maximize the return on investment from the pilot projects and ensure their learning benefits the sector for years to come.

Recommendation 3

Draw on the report findings and lessons learned to inform the shape and approach to future funding and support activity set against the Call aims

The report findings support different options in considering future funding and support activity set against the Call aims, including a strategic commissioning approach.

The mechanisms and approaches developed through the pilots have demonstrated strong potential for broader adoption and participation.

The timing and structure of the initial Call made it challenging for pilot projects to develop sustainable business models during delivery. A longer funding timeframe would allow projects to evolve toward sustainability, potentially through models where participating HEPs contribute on a unit cost or cost-to-participate basis. This approach would also provide the opportunity to generate more substantial evidence about what works over an extended period.

In their reporting, some projects actively identified opportunities to introduce new or additional partners, indicating there is appetite and scope for expansion. Where pilot projects have shown particular promise, consideration should be given to supporting small, focused follow-on activity that could further inform future approaches and help refine the models before wider roll-out. This would help ensure that any expanded provision is built on solid evidence of what works in practice.

A 'business model' consideration of how mechanisms might be sustained effectively on a shared basis could look at options to fund the activity through HEP contributions on a 'unit cost' or 'cost to participate' basis. The timing of the Call made it difficult for pilot projects to undertake this kind of evolution to sustainability during delivery, but future support over 2-3 years may enable this.

There are different strategic options available for future funding: open competition versus strategic commissioning. Strategic commissioning offers particular advantages in this context, as it could focus deliberately on expanding provision across the target HEP group and building systematically on the mechanisms that have been developed and tested through certain pilots.

6. Glossary

Glossary of the terms and abbreviations used in this report.

Acronym	Term	Definition
AI	Artificial Intelligence.	The branch of computer science concerned with creating systems or machines that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and language understanding
CCF-RED	Connecting Capability Fund - Research England Development Fund	Funding stream managed by Research England that supports English higher education providers to develop capabilities for commercialising research—especially via collaborations between universities and external partners
FTE	Full Time Equivalent.	Standardised way of measuring an employee's workload relative to a full-time position.
HE-BCI	Higher Education Business and Community Interaction survey.	An annual mandatory return by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for all publicly-funded UK higher education providers (HEPs).
HEIF	Higher Education Innovation Fund	The Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) is a strategic funding stream that supports knowledge exchange (KE) activities between higher education providers (HEPs) and the wider economy and society.
HEP	Higher Education Provider	An organisation, including universities, that delivers higher education courses and is registered with the Office for Students (OfS) or an equivalent regulator in the UK nations.
ICURe	Innovation to Commercialisation of University Research.	A UK-wide programme funded by Innovate UK that helps university research teams validate the commercial potential of their ideas through market discovery and customer engagement.
IP	Intellectual Property	The legally protected output of research and creative work, which universities can use to commercialise innovations, generate income, protect academic outputs, and foster collaborations with external partners.
TTO	Technology Transfer Office.	A university or research institution department responsible for managing the commercialisation of research outputs, particularly focused on spinning out companies based on university-generated intellectual property (IP).
RPO	Research Performing Organisations.	An organisation whose primary purpose is to conduct or manage research and experimental development (R&D), either publicly or privately funded. It includes Universities and higher education institutions (HEIs), but also applies to public sector research establishments (PSREs) and independent research institutes or Catapult Centres.
Spin-out	Spin-out.	A company created to commercialise research or intellectual property originating from a higher education provider or publicly funded research organisation, where the organisation typically holds an equity stake or other formal interest.
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation.	The national body that brings together the seven UK research councils, Innovate UK, and Research England (for England only) to fund and support research, innovation, and knowledge exchange across the UK.

7. References and further reading

Reference included in the main report, and links to further reading. The latter relates to articles, publications and sources related to the projects and aims of the CCF-RED Call and pilot projects.

Referenced in the report

#	Details	Source type
1	Independent Review of University Spin-out Companies, November 2023. Source: www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-university-spin-out-companies	Independent report
2	HM Treasury. 2020. The Magenta Book: Central Government Guidance on Evaluation. London: HM Treasury. Source: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book	Guidance documents
3	Webpage for the **IMPACT-IP** programme from SETsquared. Source: www.setsquared.co.uk/programme/impact-ip/	Link to website
4	Technical notes on KEF cluster groups. Source: https://kef.ac.uk/notes	Link to website
5	Publication discussing the University Challenge seed fund initiative which led to the establishment of commercialisation seed funds 1999-2000. Source: www.nature.com/articles/nm0898-871.pdf	Article
6	Reports and evidence from LSE project 'Shared approached to supporting SHAPE commercialisation. Source: info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/innovation-and-impact/Shared-approaches-to-supporting-SHAPE-commercialisation	Link to website
7	Independent evaluation of the STAGE project. Source: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/syahirah-abdul-rahman_independent-evaluation-of-stage-activity-7372150735725076480-8W66/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAABuYUwBPoW5TUm8IFwt_4ysDzzC20Y5Sx0	LinkedIn post with report embedded
8	The Deal Readiness Toolkit from IMPACT-IP and SETsquared. Source: toolkit.setsquared.co.uk/	Link to website
9	Innovate UK ICURe Programme. Source: https://iuk-business-connect.org.uk/programme/icure/	Link to website
10	Write up of the KEUK conference session 'Preparing for KE challenges: Learnings from the Shared TTO projects', a panel discussion. Covers the following projects: Virtual TTO, SIGHT, STTOAEMM, Golden Circle and Bridging the Gap: A Shared Technology Transfer Office Vision for Wessex. Source: https://ke.org.uk/resources/conference-digest-2025/	Conference digest

Further reading

#	Details	Source type
11	Independent review of university spin-out companies: government response, November 2023 Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-university-spin-out-companies	Link to website
12	Interview with Mark Mann and Gavin Clarke, regarding the STAGE project. Source: thenextleap.is/episode/007-gavin-clark-mark-mann/	Podcast episode
13	Blog post of the KEUK workshop session. Source: https://ke.org.uk/news/shared-tto-pilot-demonstrates-appetite-for-innovation-through-collaboration/	Link to post
14	DigiSpinWM press releases. Sources: https://www.coventry.ac.uk/news/2024/west-midlandsuniversities-forge-a-new-path-for-innovation-with-digispin-wm/ and https://www.warwicksciencepark.co.uk/digispin-wm/	Links to press releases

15	Spotlight on Paul Cilhar about the ICURe Surface programme. Source: https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7350811411859554305/	LinkedIn post with embedded video interview
16	ICURe press release. Source: https://iuk-business-connect.org.uk/news/icure-surface-pilot-opens-doors-for-underrepresented-universities/	Link to press release
17	'Forging Ahead' press release. Not specifically linked to the Shared TTO pilot involving Midlands HEPs but a CCF project to develop a programme similar to SETSquared. Source: https://www.lboro.ac.uk/news-events/news/2025/may/forging-ahead/	Link to press release
18	Global University Venturing article about shared TTO initiative. Source: https://globalventuring.com/university/europe/cash-strapped-uk-universities-explore-joint-tech-transfer-to-save-money-increase-output/	Link to article
19	Post about STAGE working with Kindling ventures. Source: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/kindlingventures_what-if-early-stage-ip-and-capital-lite-activity-7326252026651099136-VMNu/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAABMoOrcBJfAR0T3u4AJb0GPN4jrd1Kq6RfI	LinkedIn post with embedded video

Appendix A. The Call for Proposals

The CCF-RED Shared Technology Transfer Office (TTO) Functions Pilot was launched in May 2024 as part of Research England's response to the Government's acceptance of recommendations (specifically recommendation 4) from the Independent Review of University Spin-out Companies (2023). The Call recognized that universities with smaller research portfolios and lower critical mass of intellectual property (IP) and partners face challenges in maintaining sustainable and experienced TTO capacity to support their spin-out pipelines. The funding opportunity was designed to address system-wide inefficiencies by promoting sharing of existing TTO capacity rather than building additional infrastructure. The initiative formed part of the broader Connecting Capability Fund-Research England Development Fund (CCF-RED) programme.

The key features of the Call for proposals "CCF-RED Shared Technology Transfer Office Functions Pilot", and requirements for the applicants and delivery of the awarded projects, are outlined in the following text.

£5m to fund **projects of between £200 and £500k**, delivered over a 6 month period

Research England made available a total fund of £5 million through this Call, with individual projects able to receive awards ranging from £200,000 to £500,000 over a six-month grant period. While there was no specific match funding requirement, applicants were expected to provide clear evidence of meaningful partner contributions to demonstrate buy-in and value for money.

The Call opened on 13 May 2024, with applications accepted until the deadline of 8 July 2024. Following the assessment period, Research England communicated outcomes to applicants in August 2024. The Call stipulated that all projects must deliver relevant outcomes within the six-month period.

The application process was structured as a single-stage competition, with proposals submitted directly for assessment without any opportunity for feedback during the development phase. Applicants were required to submit their proposals using the CCF-RED fund template, with a maximum length of eight pages including tables. Applications were assessed by Research England with expert advice provided by the Commercialisation Expert Group and the RED panel, before final recommendations were made to Research England's Executive Chair.

Projects were assessed against selection criteria which included: building capabilities, delivery of efficient processes, dissemination and sustainability, delivery and funding value for money.

The Call **aim**: pilot models for sharing TTO functions to support universities with smaller portfolios and insufficient critical mass of spin-out activity

The Call aimed to seek and develop a wide range of diverse models for sharing TTO functions to support universities with smaller portfolios and insufficient critical mass of spin-out activity. Other aims included:

- Enabling these institutions to maintain and develop experienced back-office functions necessary to support their pipeline of spin-out opportunities.
- Identifying success factors and effective practices that could be embedded across the wider higher education sector in an efficient, effective and financially sustainable manner.
- Making the existing higher education tech transfer system more effective and efficient through sharing, rather than capacity building.

The scope of the Call was focused on **spinning out companies**

The Call emphasised "exclusive focus on spinning out companies based on university-generated IP" (not general knowledge exchange or pipeline creation).

The Call stipulated that projects should address access to expertise and efficient operating processes. It expected projects to explore elements including partnership models, IP and technology identification, protection processes, operating models, and due diligence. The Call anticipated the project "models" which may come forward, indicating these as:

- HEPs with established spin-out pipelines partnering with institutions without critical mass;
- HEPs partnering with non-higher education tech transfer providers; and
- Collaborative arrangements organized around tech sectors, geography, or other principles.

It also allowed for pilot projects to build on existing CCF-RED or other funded projects where the additionality was clear.

The **features and characteristics** of projects sought by the Call

Only eligible English HEPs could lead applications and be the recipients of support, with individual institutions permitted to lead a single application while also serving as partners on any number of additional projects. Applications were required to be collaborative in nature, comprising a minimum of one English higher education provider (HEP), plus at least one other partner with relevant tech transfer capabilities and experience, which could include private commercial partners, charities, other universities, or public bodies.

Importantly, all applications were required to demonstrate clear sustainability plans showing how activities would continue beyond the CCF-RED funding period, alongside commitments to disseminate findings and learnings for the benefit of the wider higher education sector.

The Call set out **eligible and ineligible** activities

The funding Call delineated which activities could and could not be supported through the grant. Eligible activities included legal and regulatory advice and due diligence (encompassing partnering, IP administration and contracting), finance functions (including interface with university finance, investment portfolio management, audit and tax), marketing and communications support, IP and technology audits, mentorship and initial advice provision, evidence pack development, and the engagement of fixed-term project managers and consultants. Broader aligned activities could also be considered where they directly enabled the wider performance and sustainability of the proposed model.

The Call explicitly excluded funding for additional permanent tech transfer staff posts, proof of concept funding, the establishment of university venture funds or other financial vehicles, knowledge exchange and commercialisation activities with a focus beyond spinning out, wider ecosystem development activities, and capital expenditure. However, the Call welcomed contributions in these areas as matched funding from partners, including where development partners were providing access to such activities through other CCF-RED projects, other UKRI grants, or alternative funding schemes, thereby enabling proposals to form part of larger targeted efforts to improve knowledge exchange and commercialisation outcomes.

Appendix B. The awarded pilot projects

This Appendix provides details of the 13 pilot projects, funded from the CCF-RED Call.

It also provides a summary of the IMAPCT IP project, funded from Research England, and referenced elsewhere in this report as a comparator project.

The awarded pilot projects

1. SpinOutWest

University of Bath, with University of Bristol, Bath Spa University, University of Gloucestershire, University of the West of England, SETsquared, Royal United Hospital, QantX, Angel Investors Bristol, WECA

Award value: £363,974

SpinOutWest is led by the University of Bath in partnership with West of England Higher Education Partners (Bath Spa, Bristol, Gloucestershire, West of England), SETsquared Bath, QantX, Angel Investors Bristol, West of England Combined Authority and Royal United Hospital (RUH) Bath. SpinOutWest aims to increase spin out activity in less research-intensive HEPs by enhancing TTO and researcher capacity through training, process development, best practice sharing and piloting shared regional TTO resources. The pilot focus is health and social care, which is a research strength of all HEPs, builds on existing collaborations and brings in the RUH who have similar commercialisation challenges within the NHS.

2. Shared TTO to Accelerate the Growth of Self-fundEd Spinouts (STAGE)

University of the Arts, London with Lancaster University, the University of Warwick, the University of the West of England, the University of Birmingham, Oxford Brookes University, Mark Mann Limited, SHAPE Innovation Ltd

Award value: £415,980

This is a "learn by doing" demonstration of a shared TTO for accelerating self-funded spin-outs which either typically emerge from SHAPE disciplines or develop as social ventures emerging from all research disciplines. The shared TTO is targeted at smaller universities who do not have the infrastructure to support such spin-outs around the critical incorporation stage. The project will provide:

1. A virtual business unit for pre-incorporated trading;
2. Focussed and specialist business mentoring and support for the ventures, and
3. Granular Insight and intervention cost data to show what does and doesn't work.

3. Manchester-Salford Commercialisation Consortium (MSCC)

University of Manchester with Manchester Metropolitan University, Royal Northern College of Music, University of Salford, University of Manchester Innovation Factory

Award value: £215,334

This project sets out a series of work packages, to enable the partner TTOs to collaborate and share best practice and provide the opportunity to develop a longer-term, formal arrangement for regional TTOs to collaborate and support each other to generate successful spin-outs and technologies that receive investment, generate jobs and revenue, and become part of the GM ecosystem.

The University of Manchester (UoM) has a large, well-established TTO, which offers a comprehensive range of support for IP commercialisation. UoM will work within the consortium to offer:

- Advice, training, expertise and support for TTO staff;
- Opportunities to access, engage and partner with external networks of investors;
- Develop strategies to engage academics and students towards commercialisation; and
- Develop a peer-to peer network of TTO staff, founders and innovators who collaborate, network and benefit from being active members of the ecosystem.

4. Bridging the Gap: A Shared Technology Transfer Office Vision for Wessex

University of Portsmouth with Abel + Imray, AECC University College, Anderson Law, Arts University Bournemouth, Future Planet Capital, Mazars, Openshaw & Co, Oxentia, Skillfluence, Southampton Solent University, University of Chichester

Award value: £487,664

Main Aims: The project led by the University of Portsmouth aims to address the limited ability of smaller universities to exploit their research outputs by establishing a shared Technology Transfer Office (TTO) model. This initiative seeks to unlock commercial potential, create a visible pipeline of spin-out opportunities, and foster cross-university partnerships.

Methods: The project will audit existing IP assets, create a shared pipeline of opportunities, widen participation in the commercialisation process, and leverage external expertise. It will focus on a lean, distributed TTO model, providing training, legal support, and market assessment to support spin-out ventures and enhance regional economic growth.

5. Creating the evidence base for shared TTO needs and opportunities in supporting SHAPE spinouts

London School of Economics & Political Science with Lancaster University, Oxentia, Royal College of Art, University of Bristol, University of Leicester

Award value: £158,686

The London School of Economics (LSE) will work with Lancaster University, the Royal College of Art (RCA), the University of Bristol, the University of Leicester and Oxentia on a new project titled: "Creating the evidence base for shared TTO needs and opportunities in supporting SHAPE spin-outs". A combination of literature reviews, surveys, interviews and focus groups will be used to generate new evidence of the differing needs and interests of a range of institutions supporting SHAPE-based innovation activity, and how these institutions might benefit from shared technology transfer office (TTO) functions. Thematic and cost-benefit analysis of this new evidence will allow us to improve understanding of the value proposition for various shared TTO models in SHAPE commercialisation. Key outputs will include a report on project findings, and a decision tool to enable universities to identify and implement a shared TTO model that best fits their individual circumstances and requirements.

6. DigiSpinWM: Powering the future of Advanced Manufacturing with Digital Innovation

Coventry University with Birmingham City University, University of Wolverhampton

Award value: £370,485

DigiSpinWM, a collaborative pilot between Coventry University (CU), Birmingham City University (BCU), and the University of Wolverhampton (UoW), aims to enhance the technology transfer process for spin-out companies in the advanced manufacturing sector within the West Midlands Investment Zone. By establishing a collaborative framework, enhancing TTO capacity, and creating a shared online platform, the project will streamline processes, foster knowledge sharing, and promote investment readiness. Ultimately, DigiSpinWM seeks to stimulate economic growth, job creation, and innovation in the region.

7. NR 4ward

University of East Anglia with Anglia Innovation Partnership, Earlham Institute, Health Tech Enterprise, John Innes Centre, Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, PBL Technology Limited, Quadram Institute, The Sainsbury Laboratory

Award value: £382,455

The Norwich Research Park (NRP) is Europe's largest single-site hub of research, training, education, and enterprise in climate, plant, nutrition, and health sciences. With 3000 scientists, clinicians, graduates, postgraduates, and infrastructure support, the NRP is well placed to provide a UK-based, world leading spin-out ecosystem. This "NR 4ward" project is a step towards that reality bringing NRP partners to a pilot virtual TTO and harmonise our approaches, share resources to scale and accelerate spin-out development. The main aims during the NR 4ward project are to:

- audit our processes and develop a common approach and resources for developing spin-outs;
- audit "technologies and spin-out opportunities lining them for growth.

- foster a culture of enterprise with training, development and Investment Readiness programs; and
- develop resources for sustained growth of pipeline of innovations and spin-outs delivering "real-world" solutions boosting the regional and national economy.

8. Pathways towards a shared TTO capability for the North East

Teesside University with Durham University, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, University of Sunderland and Research Consulting Limited

Award value: £217,798

This project focuses on a shared approach to developing and capturing learning and practices that are critical to informing options, mitigating risks and establishing a clear business case for an effective regional shared service for spin-out formation. The project will directly address the risks, challenges and necessary points of learning to inform the project partners, and benefit the sector more generally. Through a programme of pilot activity and action research, the proposal considers four critical dimensions: governance, performance & delivery, sustainability and the roles & functions associated with support for spin-out formation. This project will

- Deliver shared TTO pilot activity across the partnership that informs understanding of practice and options;
- Draw on this learning to establish a model for shared TTO working that can be adopted and supports those partners with lower technology transfer capacity (in particular, the University of Sunderland, and Teesside University); and
- Identify models that also deliver clear benefit to the wider group, in terms of a business case that can support an overall broadening of the regional TTO capacity (breadth and depth), addressing pockets of limited expertise and adding resilience.

9. Shared Technology Transfer Office in Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing for the Midlands (STTOAEMM)

University of Warwick with Birmingham City University, Harper Adams University, Keele University, Oxentia, University College Birmingham, University of Wolverhampton

Award value: £489,398

This project aims to utilise the expertise, resources and networks of Warwick University (via Warwick Innovations and Warwick Manufacturing Group), and access to the experience, international networks and resources of Oxentia Ltd to develop spin-out pipelines in a range of midlands-based HEIs who have under-resourced technology transfer offices. The project will explore the feasibility of a regional TTO function for the advanced engineering and manufacturing sector.

The HEI consortium will work with Warwick & Oxentia to identify a baseline spin-out project pipeline, from which up to 15 projects will be selected for acceleration. Bespoke engagement activities will be delivered to HEI research communities in efforts to identify new spin-out projects. Success will be measured by looking at the change in spin-out pipeline at the HEI and consortium level between the beginning and end of the project. Project outcomes will be disseminated through regional, national and international knowledge exchange networks.

10. Sustainable Innovation in Global Health Technology (SIGHT)

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine with Brighton & Sussex Medical School, iiCON, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, LYVA Labs, Oxentia

Award value: £499,749

The Sustainable Innovation in Global Health Technology (SIGHT) project brings together the infectious disease and public health resources and expertise of three specialist higher education providers (HEPs): Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, and Brighton and Sussex Medical School. In collaboration with Oxentia, LYVA Labs, and iiCON, SIGHT aims to develop and pilot a shared technology transfer office and venture-building model that will unlock the economic and public health benefits from the combined R&D portfolios of these 3 HEPs, overcoming the limitations of traditional technology transfer office models in effectively translating global health research into sustainable and impactful interventions.

11. Symbiotic Technology Transfer Resource Enabler and Mobilisation to Leverage Increased Net Efficiencies (STREAMLINE)

Cranfield University with Innovate UK Growth (East of England; via Exemplas Ltd), Orion Innovations, Oxentia, University of Hertfordshire, VennGroup Recruitment (Venn), Wellspring

Award value: £282,542

The "STREAMLINE" project brings together Cranfield University and the University of Hertfordshire to address challenges faced by small Technology Transfer Offices through shared functions that accelerate spin-out creation. Both institutions have very small TTO teams (two FTE each) managing substantial IP pipelines, creating bottlenecks in disclosure reviews and limiting investor engagement.

The project will establish joint monthly disclosure review workshops drawing on combined expertise to triage pipeline and dormant IP cases, reducing Phase 2 bottlenecks. A shared invention disclosure tool and repository of TTO resources will be developed. Staff training will be provided to academics, KE, legal/contracts teams and students to reduce TTO 'hand holding' and enable shared training provision between institutions. The project will conclude with a shared investor showcase event bringing together both universities' networks and spin-out opportunities. The partnership aims to deliver 2 spin-outs and 4 advanced-stage spin-outs during the six-month pilot.

12. The Golden Circle

University of Sussex with Angel investor networks: Henley (lead), Sussex, Kent and Essex, Oxentia, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College (RHUL), The University of Brighton, The University of East Anglia, The University of Essex, The University of Kent, The University of Reading, Wellspring

Award value: £437,233

The Golden Circle" project will connect the capability of universities across South East England outside the "Golden Triangle" of Oxford-Cambridge-London to improve and accelerate their spin-out creation. Raising the capability of these universities will enable their spin-outs to benefit from the investment, supply chains, skills and infrastructure clustered around the Golden Triangle. Participating universities will undergo a systems audit and receive customised support to address areas for improvement. A staff training programme and a shared framework to shape and promote spin-outs will be rolled out. Investor networks will be pooled. Key projects will be targeted for more intensive support and a legacy 'library' of resources will be developed to support future activities following project completion. Project partners are the Universities of Sussex (lead), Brighton, Essex, East Anglia, Kent, Reading and Royal Holloway. Consultancies are Wellspring EMEA Ltd and Oxentia Ltd. Angel investor networks are Henley (lead), Essex, Kent and Sussex.

12. VirtualTTO: an end-to-end solution for scalable and effective spin-out support utilising AI and TTO best practice

University of West London with Brunel University London, MDRx LLP, Mishcon de Reya, Sega Europe Ltd

Award value: £420,286

'Virtual TTO' is an AI-powered product that saves time and increases capability for TTOs and inventors. Improving the quality of invention disclosures, IP assessments, encumbrance checking, technology readiness levels and more. Providing real-time mentorship for researchers and reducing the administrative burden for TTOs to augment and support larger portfolios of IP to spin-out. Continuing the development of a prototype created by MDRx LLP and The University of West London, there will be continuous learning by the AI itself based on user feedback. The product will draw on "best-of" TTO practices by HEPs, industry advisors, and University Spin-out Investment Terms Guide. Using the latest GenAI technology, these methods will democratise access and application of best practice.

The comparator project: IMPACT-IP

IMPACT-IP

University of Southampton with University of Bath, University of Bristol, Cardiff University, University of Exeter, University of Surrey

Award value: £1.5 million via the Research England CCF-RED Fund

Funding and Leadership

- The project is part of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Connecting Capability Fund (CCF) initiative.
- It was announced with £1.5 million in funding from Research England.

IMPACT-IP aims to increase the impact of higher education research through improved processes. It's a collective project to strengthen technology transfer capacity, foster deal readiness among researchers, and develop self-service resources for commercialising academic research, benefiting the higher education sector, investors, and industry.

IMPACT-IP's ambition is to harvest the collective capabilities across commercialisation teams with investors, entrepreneurs and professional services to transform how they support commercialisation and spin-out.

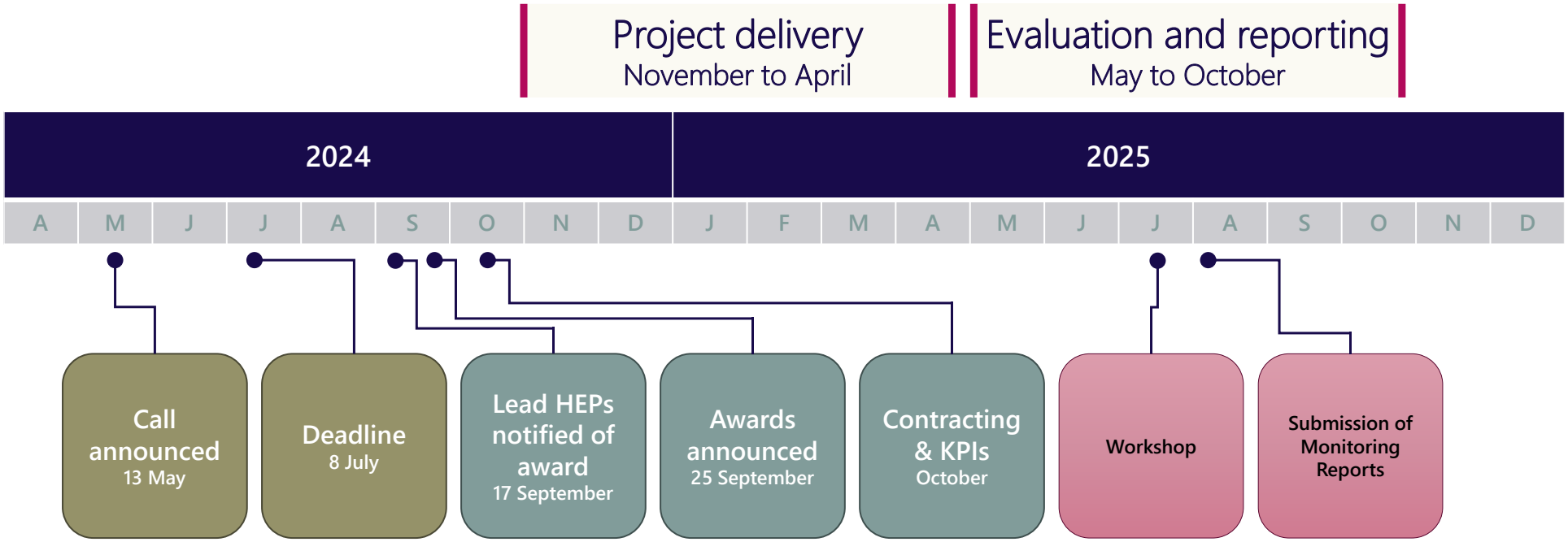
The project aims to achieve this by building a common understanding among all stakeholders and by creating toolkits, playbooks, guidance, templates, and standardisation to help streamline the commercialisation process.

What they offer:

- Templates for the 'How': Practical, ready-made documents that founders and investors can easily adopt, streamlining the entire process.
- Playbooks for the 'Why': Detailed guidance that explains the rationale behind the terms, helping all parties understand the logic and benefits.
- Trusted Resources: Their toolkit provides credible, reliable information designed to help founders and investors navigate the complexities of spin-outs and startups with confidence.

Appendix C. Timelines for the Call and project delivery

Overview of the timeline for the applications and awards. The Research England Call and project delivery timescale was notably compact. Key features of this were the short lead time for project start dates (once the award was confirmed) and the overall (6 month) delivery window.



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