

The University of Huddersfield Impact Acceleration Account

Proof of Concept: Application Guidance

Aim of the Proof of Concept

Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) funding sits in between discovery research (i.e., as generally supported by Research Councils) and later-stage business development support/ commercialisation (i.e., support from Innovate UK via KTP). Proof of Concept projects support the early-stage translation of University of Huddersfield's research into commercial and/ or societal benefit, through collaboration with (non-academic) external partners.

Activities supported through the Proof of Concept scheme include;

- Collaborative scoping exercises.
- Viability testing in partnership with external organizations.
- Scaling up testing and development through collaborative efforts.
- Engaging end-users in collaboration to inform policy changes.
- Developing early-stage prototypes collaboratively.
- Contributing to new or improved professional practices through collaborative initiatives.
- Developing new standard operating procedures through collaboration.
- Collaboratively creating new techniques and processes.
- Creative collaborative productions: creative works that translate research themes into engaging and impactful formats (Cannot be general Public Engagement).

Applicants must clearly demonstrate significant impact potential, including academic and commercial benefits, and where applicable, a clear route to commercialisation. For projects with commercial aims, researchers should be in a position to rapidly progress their IP through, for example, joint bidding with an interested end-user (e.g., via KTP or IUK Collaborative R&D schemes), licensing of the technology, or creation of a joint-venture or spin-out company.

Project partners are required to contribute a direct cash contribution to the project.

Multidiscipline and cross-school projects are highly encouraged, and IAA applicants can apply for funding from the AHRC IAA, ESRC IAA and EPSRC IAA where projects sit in the remit the relevant council(s).

Applications to this scheme must be for standalone IAA activities, where any outputs, outcomes and impacts from the work, can be clearly attributed to the IAA Programme.

Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts

The success of the IAA Programme is measured through the outputs, outcomes and impacts of each awarded IAA project.

- **Examples of Outputs include** academic publications, licensing agreements, technical reports, new guides, new educational tools, development of a framework, new prototype(s).
- **Examples of Outcomes include** spin-out or joint ventures, improved or new professional practice, press releases, enhancement of cultural assets, engagement at non-academic events (e.g., workshops), academic career progression, patents, policy papers, trade magazines, consumer publishing, "grey literature"; in print, audio, or visual media.
- **Examples of Impact include** investment into R&D, cost-savings, profits, larger customer/ consumer base, policy influences/ changes and/ or impacts (internal and external), job retention and/or creation (within the project partner), changes to organisational culture, behaviour and/or practice, environmental/ sustainability impacts, and social, regional and/ or economic impacts (e.g., improved access to education and healthcare, reduced crime rates, environmental conservation efforts & cultural preservation initiatives).

Eligible Criteria

IAA projects must sit within the remit, portfolio and priorities of either the [AHRC](#), [ESRC](#) and/ or the [EPSRC](#). For EPSRC funded IAAs, projects must meet at least 50% of the EPSRCs priorities. Funds must be sought from the relevant research council(s) on the application form with justification of how the project meets the themes of the council(s) that they have selected.

Eligible partner organisations:

- UK-based companies or, the UK based site of an international company.
- Public Sector (e.g., local authority)
- Charities or third sector organisations

When there is clear evidence of the aim for inward investment during or beyond the project's lifespan, non-UK-based companies may be eligible (e.g., establishing a UK site/ job creation).

Please contact the [IAA Programme Manager](#) if you have any queries about eligibility.

Duration: Proof of Concept projects are typically between 6 to 12 months long, although this may be longer if there is a significant direct financial contribution from the project partner. IAA funds must be spent by the project end date, and no later than IAA Programme deadline, the 31st of March 2025 for AHRC & EPSRC funded projects, and 31st March 2028 for ESRC funded projects.

Budget: The **maximum** IAA financial contribution for the Proof of Concept is **£25k**. The budget should be based on actual costs of the project. All costs must be broken down and justified in the application form. Project partners are expected to financially contribute towards the project, at a **minimum** of 10% of the IAA funds requested. Where partners are unable to make a direct contribution, it should be justified in the the budget section of the application.

Eligible costs:

- Research Assistant/ Research Fellow salary (Directly Incurred staff)
- Travel & Subsistence (for University of Huddersfield staff only)
- Consumables (must be itemized and justified)
- Other (may include vouchers for participants/ end user incentives)

The IAA cannot cover overhead costs or costs of Directly Allocated staff (e.g., permanent academic staff), therefore, these must be covered (waived) by the school.

Completing your application form

The University can fund a limited number of Proof of Concept projects, therefore, calls will be competitive and applications will be reviewed by a funding panel who will score the project based on how it meets the application criteria.

- **Applications must be academic led** (i.e., the PI must be a University of Huddersfield academic/ Early Career Researcher).
- Your application must be written to a **non-specialist audience**. The funding panel will include colleagues from across the institution, outside of your research field.
- Applications will be anonymised, therefore, please ensure you only include names of the academics (PI, Co-I, and researchers) on the first page of the application.
- Only include links to previous publications on the first page in the section provided. **Do not include links to publications throughout the application** as they will be removed to ensure anonymity. Instead of names and gender pronouns, **please refer to 'PI', Co-I or 'Researcher' throughout the application**, and do not include links to publications or webpages that refer back to the applicants.
- **Each external partner organisation(s) involved with the project must provide a letter of support.** Letters of support must include a monetary value and breakdown of in-kind support (e.g., facilities, staff time for supporting the project, consumables etc), and any direct financial contribution to the project.
- Depending on the stage of your project/ research, **you may be required to complete an Invention Disclosure Form alongside your application.** The Invention Disclosure Form (IDF) is the first step in the process of identifying and assessing intellectual property developed by the University of Huddersfield. An IDF should be submitted when something new and potentially useful has been conceived or is in-development, been designed or invented. The IDF can be downloaded from the [IAA website](#) under 'Resources'.

Word limits: If you exceed the word limit of a section by 10% or more, your application will be rejected.

Your application will be scored on:

- **How your project meets the themes and priorities of the AHRC, ESRC and/or EPSRC:** As per the requirements of the UKRI, IAA projects must sit within the criteria of the relevant research council (AHRC, ESRC or EPSRC). Cross-research council projects are actively encouraged where a project meets the criteria of more than one of the research councils.
- **Impact & Outcomes:** anticipated outputs & outcomes must be identified in the application. The project must demonstrate a clear pathway to impact e.g., societal impact, environmental impact, commercialisation etc. Quantifying impact in your application where possible will improve your score e.g., potential cost-savings to the partner organisation.
- **Follow-on:** The nature of IAA funding is to support the early-stage impact creation; therefore, it is expected that the project will lead to further developments, collaborations and/ or follow-on funding. Your application should have clear next steps, after the IAA project has finished. If the next step is to apply for further funding, including details of this in your workplan will strengthen your application.
- **Value for Money:** The IAA funds must be used to support projects with clear demonstratable impact. Projects that demonstrate the justification of costs and the value for money will score higher. Projects with direct funding contribution from external partners will be seen as higher value for money and demonstrate that the external partner is committed to building a long-term relationship with the University, with potential future funding opportunities. In-kind contribution from the partner, will also be considered under value for money, e.g., where the partner is covering the costs of facilities, either at the partner, or an external facility. Large companies, who will financially benefit from the outcome of the project, are expected to contribute more than the 10% minimum requirement.
- **Collaboration:** The application should clearly demonstrate that this is a collaborative project with a non-academic external project partner. This should be demonstrated throughout the application, and particularly in the workplan, by ensuring that tasks include where the work will take place (e.g., at the University or at the organisation) and who will be leading each task. The In-kind collaboration from the partner will also demonstrate their support towards the project. You should work with the external partner to complete the application form.

Non permitted activities and costs

In addition to the standard UKRI ineligible grant costs, IAAs cannot be used to fund:

- New, fundamental research (e.g., experimental, or theoretical work primarily to gain new knowledge of underlying phenomena and visible facts, without any direct practical application or usage)
- Impact activities that should already have been anticipated and supported through standard routes, e.g., impact activities costed as part of basic research proposals, CDTs
- Non-Specific Public Engagement activities and science communication (*However, IAAs will support public engagement where interaction is key to informing the research impact such as user or patient engagement as a critical pathway to achieving societal and/or economic impact*)
- Undergraduate activities, core PhD training including tuition or bench fees, master's training.
- Any costs relating to Intellectual Property protection including but not limited to registering, maintaining, or supporting patents or property rights.
- Equipment with a value of £10,000 or more
- Overheads (Estates & Indirect costs)
- Contribution to KTPs
- Marketing/launching a developed product

Application Process

- Costing your project: Please contact iaa@hud.ac.uk to request a costing for your project. Costings must be completed before the final approvals and sign off. Costings should be sent along with application form to the school approver when requesting approval.

- For projects with an external partner, you must obtain a letter of support from the partner organisation(s), signed by the relevant authority.
- Applications should be completed, and signed by the PI and school approver (i.e., the Dean) and emailed to iaa@hud.ac.uk
- If applicable, complete the Invention Disclosure Form (downloaded from the IAA website)

Feedback: For Proof of Concept submissions, we aim to provide feedback on your application within 3 to 4 weeks of the call closure date.

If the submission is successful, the project must not start until an agreement is in place with the project partner(s). There is a framework agreement in place for IAA projects, which will be sent to project partners by the IAA Programme Manager. If you wish to share this agreement template with the partner in advance of the submission, please request this from iaa@hud.ac.uk.

Reporting Requirements

After completing your project, you are required to complete a report on the outputs, outcomes, and impact. You will also be asked to report on any follow-on activities e.g., funded projects, future collaborations etc. Partner organisations will also be required to report on the project outputs, outcomes, and impact.

The reports will be based on the reporting requirements of the IAA to the UKRI and will be sent by the IAA Programme Manager within 3 months of the project end date. The University is required to complete annual reports to UKRI based on the institutions IAA deliverables and KPIs, therefore, you will be asked for follow-up reports when required to ensure that we report all impact created as a result of our IAA programmes.

As part of our annual UKRI IAA report, we must submit case studies based on successful IAA activities, therefore, you may be asked to provide input ad-hoc to other reporting requirements.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

EDI practices are embedded within the University of Huddersfield's IAA programme to ensure fairness and inclusivity and to make sure that IAA award holders reflect the diversity of the current researcher environment.

- All applications will be anonymised by the IAA Programme manager before they are sent for final oversight and review by IAA funding Panel and/or the IAA Management Group
- Applications will be scored based on a set criterion, and IAA activities of £10k and over will be reviewed by a funding panel.
- EDI data on IAA applicants will be collected by the EDI HR team, and an overview of the data monitored by the IAA Programme Manager and included in the annual IAA reports to UKRI.

Responsible Innovation

Responsible innovation is a process that takes the wider impacts of research and innovation into account. It aims to ensure that unintended negative impacts are avoided, that barriers to dissemination, adoption and diffusion of research and innovation are reduced, and that the positive societal and economic benefits of research and innovation are fully realised. For researchers, responsible innovation is a process that seeks to promote creativity and opportunities for science and innovation that are socially desirable and undertaken in the public interest. Research can not only produce understanding, knowledge, and value, but also unintended:

- Consequences
- Questions
- Ethical dilemmas
- Social transformations

Applicants should consider responsible innovation in their IAA projects.

Application Check list

- Completed Application form, including signatures of approval from:
 - Principle Investigator (PI)
 - School Approver (the Dean)
 - Partner Organisation
- Letter of support from the project partner organisation(s)
- Invention Disclosure Form (if applicable)