

## The University of Huddersfield Impact Acceleration Account

### Proof of Market: Application Guidance

#### Aim of the Proof of Market

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 Market projects support the early-stage market validation to assess opportunities, and to ensure there is a clear need for a new technology/ process, and to determine whether it will be successful in the given market. Projects must follow on from university research, to understand whether there is commercial potential of the research through understanding the market competition.

Proof of Market projects sit between preliminary research, and prototype/ product development. Academics are advised to complete this activity before applying to the university's Proof of Concept IAA scheme.

#### Proof of Market may support:

- Preliminary assessment and evaluation of IP disclosures coming from university research.
- Initial assessment of the market size, potential and likely routes to market for a potential new product/ prototype.
- Market testing and competitor analysis (potential, competition, and opportunities).
- Understand end-user needs and establishing relationships with key stakeholders/ future project partners to collaborate with on future knowledge exchange projects.
- Business modelling.
- IP searches and strengthening cases for patent protection.

Please note that the IAA cannot support any costs relating to Intellectual Property protection including but not limited to registering, maintaining, or supporting patents or property rights.

#### 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.

For Proof of Market applications, a project partner is not always necessary (e.g., if the project is working on identifying potential future partners), however, if there is a partner involved, eligible organisations are as follows:

- 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).

**Duration:** Funds must be spent within 9 months of the 'project' start date on your award letter, and no later than the IAA Programme deadline, the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2025 for AHRC & EPSRC funded projects, and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028 for ESRC funded projects

**Budget:** The **maximum** IAA financial contribution for the Proof of Market is **£5k**. The budget should be based on actual costs of the project. All costs must be broken down and justified in the application form.

**Eligible costs:**

- PI salary\*/ staff buy-out **OR** salary of a Research Assistant.
- Travel & Subsistence for University of Huddersfield staff
- Other (e.g., vouchers for participants/ end-user incentives)

The IAA funding may be used to commission expert advice from sector specialists on best commercial development strategy for a business idea. This should be included under the 'Other costs' budget, and you will need to justify why an expert is needed.

\*Maximum 10% FTE for permanent staff, and any staff buy out must first be approved by line manager/ School dean/ Director

### Completing your application form

- **Applications must be academic led** (i.e., the PI must be a University of Huddersfield academic/ Early Career Researcher). For projects where a fixed-term member of staff is the KE Fellow/ PI (e.g., Research Fellow/ ECR), a permanent academic member of staff must be listed as a co-investigator.
- 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 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'.
- It may be helpful to use the Business Model Canvas when thinking about the activities you plan to do for market validation of your idea/ product/ process etc.

**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 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. Although not applicable for this IAA activity, 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.

### 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, Masters 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](mailto: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, 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](mailto:iaa@hud.ac.uk)
- If applicable, complete the Invention Disclosure Form (downloaded from the IAA website)

**Feedback:** For Proof of Market submissions, we aim to provide feedback on your application within 3 to 4 weeks of receiving application forms.

### 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:
  - PI
  - School Approver
  - Partner Organisation
- Letter of support from partner organisations (if applicable)
- Invention Disclosure Form (if applicable)