

EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account: Guidance

Funding is available *for researchers at all career stages* to support activities that are intended to accelerate or amplify the impact arising from EPSRC-related research.

Context

In recognition of the often long lead time between research ‘discovery’ (research outcomes) and related impacts, the EPSRC has awarded Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) grants to 33 universities since 2012, including the University of Oxford. The IAA provides support for activities that will reduce that lead time, and help to accelerate the impact (beyond academia) from past, current or future research that falls within [EPSRC’s research areas](#). The previous tranche of funding runs from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2021 and is worth £6.9m, with part of the total being allocated to strategic initiatives and part to small grants for Oxford researchers. Early Career Researchers or newly qualified Doctoral Graduates intending to apply for Impact Workshop or Doctoral Impact funding respectively **must** discuss their proposal with a research facilitator and the IAA prior to submission.

The University’s EPSRC IAA has an additional £1.7m available to support small grants and strategic projects from 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2022 (spend must be completed by 31 March 2022).

The application deadline for grant support to the EPSRC IAA is Wednesday **7 October 2020 by 12:00 noon**.

If all funding is allocated in the current call, the next EPSRC IAA call could be in **April 2022**.

Summary of grants available

The Oxford IAA provides four main types of small grant support (for more information, see page 2):

Partnerships: grants to accelerate impact through increased engagement of Oxford researchers with end-users of the research in non-academic organisations. We are particularly keen to encourage Early Career Researchers (this includes doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers at any stage of their career) to be involved in visits, short secondments, collaborations through this scheme.

Impact workshops: grants to support the coordination and delivery of impact-focussed meetings and workshops.

Impact/Technology fund: This fund has two grant categories; *Impact Delivery Grants* to transfer knowledge, whose take-up will provide benefits to users but will not necessarily generate a financial return to the University (e.g. applications for NHS and other public bodies, NGOs, etc.). *Technology Development Grants* to develop new technologies to the point where they are suitable for follow on support from other sources (e.g. Oxford University Innovation (OUI) translational funding) or for commercialisation (e.g. capital investment for spinning out, licensing deals etc.).

Doctoral Impact Scheme: This fund aims to support and encourage new DPhil graduates to maximise the impact of their (or related) research beyond academia through engagement with non-academic partners in industry, healthcare, government agencies, third-sector organisations, charities, local and regional government, etc. Guidance for Doctoral Impact Scheme is separate and available [here](#).

Implications of the Covid-19 pandemic: Applicants should ensure they have factored in the impact of the Covid pandemic when they plan their projects, e.g. due to restrictions on people movement, or limited access to facilities or resources. Applicants should be aware that while the IAA wants closer engagement with non-academic partners, and end users to be interested in the end-product, their proposals will need to balance this against the limited time and cash available to non-academic partners. [Section updated 19 Aug 2020]

Partnerships

One of the most effective ways to exchange knowledge can be through the movement of people. The IAA Partnerships scheme is designed to be flexible and to promote interaction between Oxford researchers and research users in non-academic organisations (e.g. industry, public sector, third sector, government, etc). The scheme supports activities to build relationships between the University and external partners and promote a culture of innovation.

Partnerships involving part-time working with an external organisation (e.g. one day a week over a period of three, six or twelve months) or full time secondments are welcomed, depending on the needs of the project. It should be made clear in the application what time will be spent at the external organisation and how the project will be managed when not on-site. A Partnership may also lead to a Technology Fund grant application. Please note that graduate students¹ are also eligible to be seconded, with the support of their supervisor. Please see the [EPSRC IAA Doctoral Impact Scheme](#) for information on partnership opportunities for recently graduated DPhil students. Partnerships that also link to the [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#) and [Oxfordshire Science and Innovation Audit](#) focus areas are very much encouraged.

Partnership projects are typically six to twelve months long and around £30k-£75k in value (or if higher, provide good justification). Calls will be announced on a regular basis until all of the available funding has been allocated.

Partnerships that may be supported include, but are not limited to:

Outward: Outward secondment of researchers/academics to establish or strengthen connections with external research users by transferring knowledge or technology from EPSRC-related research.

Pre-application: Enable PIs to work directly with users to inform the design of an EPSRC research grant proposal, thereby ensuring research questions and/or the format of research outputs are more relevant to users.

Pre-proof of concept: Enable researchers to work with users to identify key gaps or challenges that need to be addressed to enable further utilisation of EPSRC-related outputs and draw up a plan to tackle them.

Inward: Inward secondment from industry or other organisations can be supported, although salary costs for non-University staff cannot be requested.

Letters of support from the partner organisation are welcome at the time of application, although not necessary. However, awards will be conditional on receipt of a satisfactory letter of support which clearly details that what the partner will contribute to the project is in line with the information provided in the application.

Impact workshops

This stream of funding aims to support academics and researchers to coordinate and deliver impact-focussed meetings and workshops. Impact meetings/workshops should include engagement with non-academics or non-academic organisations (industry, healthcare, government agencies, third-sector organisations, charities, local and regional government, etc.), and should seek to give rise to further knowledge exchange, translation or partnership activities. Up to £5,000 per meeting/workshop is available, with the potential to apply for up to a further £10,000 to support follow-on activities (subject to funding availability; separate application).

Applicants are encouraged to be creative in their approach to this funding stream, but activities that may be supported include:

- Identifying challenge areas with non-academic organisations;
- Activities to develop a Responsible Innovation approach, e.g. support towards broader deliberation, dialogue, engagement and debate in an inclusive way;

¹ Student Bursary or Fees are **not eligible** IAA costs

- Bringing together academic groups to develop solutions to known external problems, e.g. future calls for ISCF, GCRF, etc.;
- Visits/meetings to develop new collaborations with non-academics or non-academic organisations.

Impact workshop funding is available on a rolling basis until 30 November 2021, or once all of the funding available has been allocated. All impact workshop activities must be completed by 31 March 2022. No extensions are possible.

Impact/Technology Fund

Impact/Technology Fund Grants are typically six to twelve months in duration and around £75-100k in value (or if higher value, provide good justification). Calls will be announced on a regular basis until all of the available funding has been allocated.

Technology Development Grants

There is often a gap between the end of EPSRC research grant support and the point at which a technology is sufficiently robust (de-risked) to qualify for OUI translational funding, to attract capital investment for spinning out, or to license the technology to interested commercial entities. IAA Technology Development Grants are intended to bridge that gap.

Projects must be linked to the development or refinement of existing research outputs. Activities that may be supported include, but are not limited to:

- Proof of concept studies;
- Prototyping or demonstrators;
- Scale-up testing and development work;
- Generation of additional data to demonstrate the credibility of a technology (but not further research into the development of that technology);
- Access to resources or proprietary IP from an industry partner without the need to compromise ownership or control over University IP.

Existing research outputs are likely to be characterised by a high degree of uncertainty or risk but the aim of any proposed IAA project should be to de-risk the technology and advance it closer to the point where it is suitable for support from other sources and/or commercial exploitation. *Technology that is advanced enough to seek support from OUI translational funding will not be supported.* Projects must have a clear impact plan or 'roadmap' and the relevance of the proposed IAA-funded work within that roadmap should be explained: projects should address specific questions or explore identified issues, and applicants should have a broad sense of what the next steps might be if this stage is successful. *Purely speculative projects are unlikely to be supported.*

For platform technologies that have numerous potential applications, applicants may wish to seek an external partner (or partners) to provide focus and clarity to the proposed project. Plans beyond the IAA project may involve a broad range of applications, but given the size of grants and length of projects, IAA Technology Development Grant proposals should have a clearly defined focus. Applicants are advised to [contact OUI](#) to discuss their technology and the steps required for commercialisation/licensing, **before** applying for the IAA scheme.

Impact Delivery Grants

Some research outputs do not lend themselves to impact through direct commercial exploitation, but may have great potential to deliver benefits for third-party users. For example, many software outputs are open source, and therefore fall outside the remit of schemes designed to promote the commercialisation of research outputs. But in their 'raw' state, they may not be suitable for take-up by industry or other users: there may be a need for training materials, or for the development of new user interfaces.

Impact delivery grants support projects designed to address specific barriers to impact. Preference will be given to projects where there is a clear market and/or barriers have been identified in consultation with potential users.

External partners and IP

External partner engagement

IAA Technology Fund projects often benefit from engagement with external partners as this increases the chance of realising and/or creating impact (IAA Partnership projects or Doctoral Impact projects always require at least one external partner). External partners may be end-users of the technology/knowledge, manufacturing companies, government agencies, or charities and third sector organisations, amongst others. Projects may benefit from involvement with more than one partner, and partner engagement can vary from merely advisory to co-development of outputs, whichever is more beneficial for the project. For example, engaging a manufacturing company to enable development of the technology to take manufacturing processes into consideration and an end user partner to ensure the technology is what end users need/want; thus, ensuring that thought has been given to the full translational pathway.

Where applicants have chosen not to engage an external partner for their IAA Technology Fund project, it should be made clear in the application why there would be no added value from doing so. Where projects do have an external partner, it should be clear why the partner is not paying for the project and what they will contribute.

Where the partner is an existing or prospective spinout, there must be a strong and clear case that the proposed project is a new stream of work and not additional development of the initial technology that was licenced to the spinout. It should also be clear that the spinout is the most appropriate company to support this particular project. A clear statement of how conflict of interest will be managed must be included. Applicants can expect the assessment panels to give additional scrutiny to IAA projects that involve University spinout companies.

If applicants would like additional guidance and support on how to engage or select an industrial partner please contact the [MPLS Industrial Research Partnership team](#) or the [MSD Business Development team](#).

Management of intellectual property

Applicants should not refrain from working with external partners solely due to fears around protection of the IP; all the necessary contractual arrangements can and will be put in place to ensure that IP is appropriately protected. This may include confidentiality agreements for pre- and post-application discussions, collaboration agreements or secondment agreements, amongst others. The terms of any IP agreement will take into consideration the funding, the work being carried out by the parties and any relevant background IP introduced, and will always be in line with the University's approach to IP.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the relevant [Technology Transfer Manager at OUI](#) (if applicable) at the earliest possible stage, to discuss the proposed project and the intellectual property management plan.

Qualifying criteria

IAA grants cannot be used for:

- Basic research or to develop tools exclusively for use in further academic research;
- Direct subsidising of commercial R&D;
- Projects not aligned with EPSRC's [research areas](#);
- PI salary;
- Student Bursary or Fees;
- Single items of equipment over £10k, estate costs or indirect costs.

How to apply

IAA staff are happy to review and provide feedback on draft applications prior to final submission. Please submit your request in advance of the application deadline to epsrciaa@mpls.ox.ac.uk.

Applications should be made through the online Internal Research Awards Management System (IRAMS) which can be accessed at <https://irams.ox.ac.uk/>, using your Single Sign-On (SSO) details. Once you are logged in, please choose the correct scheme from the list to start your application. If required, IRAMS guidance in the form of quick reference guide (QRG) documents for applicants, departmental approvers and administrators can be found on [Research Support](#) pages. Please note that some departments may have set an earlier internal deadline, so please check with your local research support team and prepare your application well in advance of the date advertised above. Applications must be reviewed online by departmental approvers and, where approved, submitted for review by the EPSRC IAA Committee before the deadline.

Please note that submissions that clearly exceed the word limits indicated will **not** be considered. If applicants wish to include a letter of support at the time of application, it should be uploaded as part of the case for support template in a single document. Separate documents will not be accepted by email at the time of application.

Eligibility

The Committee welcomes applications from Early Career Researchers. PIs must be University employees holding a contract of employment and may be hosted by any department of the University. Researchers requesting costs for their own salary cannot be a Principal Investigator on the application. Researchers holding honorary or visiting positions are not eligible to apply. Applicants should clarify their eligibility with their departments, and departmental approvers are required to check eligibility of their applicants before advancing any applications.

If you have a potentially impactful project that falls within EPSRC research areas but does not fit with the schemes detailed in this guidance, please speak to your department's Research Facilitator in the first instance.

All projects must be completed by **31 March 2022**. No extensions are possible.

Please contact epsrciaa@mpls.ox.ac.uk or call (2)82462 with any queries.

Assessment process

Funding decisions are made by two multi-disciplinary internal panels with experience of realising impact from research. Applicants are urged to ensure that applications are written with clarity and a non-specialist audience in mind, and should be reassured that all applications are assessed in the strictest confidence. Decisions of the panel are final. Where the panel has declined to fund but made recommendations, applicants may resubmit once only, if the recommendations have been fully addressed. Please note that applications for funding for impact workshops/meetings will be considered by the Partnerships Panel.

Technology Fund Panel

Prof Kylie Vincent (Chemistry) – Chair
 Prof Eleanor Stride (Engineering) – Deputy Chair
 Prof Arzhang Ardavan (Physics)
 Prof Mauro Pasta (Materials)
 Prof Daniel Kroening (Computer Science)
 Dr Adam Workman (OUI Seed Fund Manager)

Partnerships Panel

Prof Blanca Rodriguez (Computer Science) – Chair
 Prof Ian Griffiths (Mathematical Institute)
 Prof Susie Speller (Materials)
 Prof Felix Leach (Engineering)

Quality assessment criteria (not listed in any priority order)

- Potential size of the impact - *could be financial or social*
- Risk involved in the project - *high risk not necessarily a negative if potential impact is large*
- Timescale to impact - *will this project reduce the lead time to impact?*
- Likelihood of impact
- Clarity of plan to achieve the project aims
- Good value? *Impact per £*

Timeline

Impact/Technology Fund, Partnerships Fund and Doctoral Impact Fund

- Call opens 11 August 2020
- Application deadline **7 October 2020**
- Panel meeting mid-November 2020 (Technology Fund)
- Panel meeting mid-November 2020 (Partnerships Fund)
- Applicants informed 15 December 2020 (tbc)
- Project completion 31 March 2022

Impact Workshops Fund

- Call opens rolling deadline
- Application deadline rolling deadline
- Panel meeting mid-November 2020
- Applicants informed 15 December 2020 (tbc)
- Project completion 31 March 2022

Eligible costs

Grants will cover directly incurred / directly allocated costs, but no indirect/estates/capital equipment/PI salary costs.

Cost	Partnerships				Technology Fund	
	Outward	Pre-application	Pre-proof of concept	Inward	Tech development	Impact delivery
Researcher / PDRA salary **	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Travel & subsistence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Project support costs	✓	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	✓	✓
Professional fees			✓		✓	
Outsourcing (e.g. prototyping)			✓		✓	✓
Bench fees (<i>inward</i>)	✓			✓	✓	✓
Staff infrastructure charge **	✓			✓	✓	

** For staff employed on Oxford payroll (will not fund salaries of user / partner staff)