UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account: Guidance

Funding is available 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 the EPSRC remit. The latest tranche of funding runs from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2020 and is worth £5.2m, with part of the total being allocated to strategic initiatives and part to small grants for Oxford researchers.

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
- Single items of equipment over £10k, estate costs or indirect costs

Grants available

The Oxford IAA provides two main types of small grant support:

Technology fund: 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 commercial exploitation (e.g. capital investment for spinning out, licensing deals etc.), or Impact Delivery Grants to transfer knowledge, whose take-up will provide benefits to users but that it will not necessarily generate a financial return to the University (e.g. applications for NHS and other public bodies, NGOs, etc.).

Secondments: grants to accelerate impact through increased engagement of Oxford researchers with end-users of the research. We are particularly keen to encourage Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to apply for this scheme.

Technology Fund

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 either qualify for OUI translational funding or to attract capital investment for spinning out or to license the technology to interested commercial entities etc. IAA Technology Development Grants are intended to bridge that gap.

IAA activities must be linked to the development or refinement of existing research outputs. Activity that may be supported includes, but is 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 where the aim of any proposed IAA project is 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.

Technology Development Grants are typically of six to 12 months duration and around £75-100k in value. For platform technologies that have numerous potential applications, PIs may wish to seek an industrial partner(s) 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 Fund proposals should have a clearly defined focus.

Where projects have an industrial partner:

1. it should be clear why the partner is not paying for the project
2. the University needs to have intellectual property rights over the existing technology
3. the next steps (post-IAA project) should include a broader plan for commercialisation

PIs are strongly advised to contact Dr Ana Serra Barros (Research Services), and the relevant Technology Transfer Manager at OUI at the earliest stage, to discuss the proposed project.

Impact Delivery Grants

Some research outputs do not lend themselves to 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.

Secondments

One of the most effective ways to transfer knowledge can be through the movement of people. The IAA Secondments scheme is designed to be flexible and to promote interaction between Oxford researchers and research users.

Secondments do not have to involve full-time working with an external organisation; one day a week over a period of three, six or 12 months may be appropriate, 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 secondment may also lead to a Technology Fund grant application. Please note that graduate students can also be seconded, with the support of their supervisor. Secondments that also link to Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund focus areas, are very much welcomed.

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

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

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

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

How to apply

For queries regarding the IAA fund, schemes and application processes, please contact Dr Lizzie Peachey at elizabeth.peachey@mpls.ox.ac.uk. For queries regarding contractual arrangements and intellectual property matters, please contact Dr Ana Serra Barros (Research Services) at ana.serrabarros@admin.ox.ac.uk.

All projects must be completed by 31 March 2020. No extensions are possible.

Application forms can be downloaded from www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/internal-research-funding/impact-and-innovation-funding/iaa. Completed forms should be emailed to Dr Lizzie Peachey at elizabeth.peachey@mpls.ox.ac.uk by the deadlines stated on the aforementioned webpage. Please note that applications that clearly exceed the word limits indicated will ***not*** be considered.

If you have a potentially impactful project that falls within EPSRC research areas but does not fit with the IAA Technology Fund or Secondments scheme, please speak to your department's Research Facilitator in the first instance.

If you have a proposal that spans the disciplinary remits for the EPSRC and ESRC, it can be considered for co-funding from Oxford's EPSRC and ESRC IAAs. PIs are urged to make contact with Dr Lizzie Peachey at elizabeth.peachey@mpls.ox.ac.uk to discuss the application process.

Assessment process

Funding decisions are made by two multi-disciplinary internal panels with experience of realising impact from research. PIs 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, PIs may resubmit once only, if the recommendations have been fully addressed.

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)

Secondments Panel

Prof Blanca Rodriguez (Computer Science) – Chair
Prof Ian Griffiths (Mathematical Institute)
Prof Claire Vallance (Chemistry)
Prof Nicole Grobert (Materials)

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 £*

Eligible costs

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

	Secondments				*Technology Fund*	
Cost	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 (*inward*)	✓			✓	✓	✓
Staff infrastructure charge **	✓			✓	✓	

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