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 EPSRC's research areas. 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.

Grants available

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

Secondments: 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 apply for this scheme.

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 will not necessarily generate a financial return to the University (e.g. applications for NHS and other public bodies, NGOs, etc.).

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 in non-academic organisations.

Full time secondments as well as partnerships involving part-time working with an external organisation (e.g. one day a week over a period of three, six or twelve months) 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 secondment may also lead to a Technology Fund grant application. Please note that graduate students are also eligible to be seconded, with the support of their supervisor; please see the **EPSRC IAA Doctoral Impact Scheme** for more information. Secondments that also link to the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund and Oxfordshire Science and Innovation Audit focus areas are very much welcomed.

Secondment projects are typically six to twelve months long and around £30k-£75k in value.

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.

Letters of support from the secondment 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.

Technology Fund

Technology Fund Grants are typically six to twelve months in duration and around £75-100k in value.

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 Secondment 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, e.g.: 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; i.e. thought has been given to the full translational pathway. Partner engagement can vary from merely advisory to co-development of outputs, whichever is more beneficial for the project.

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. Further information is available from Dr Ana Serra Barros (Research Services).

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 Dr Ana Serra Barros (Research Services), and 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
- Single items of equipment over £10k, estate costs or indirect costs

How to apply

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 Committee before the deadline.

Please note that case for support templates 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.

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.

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.

If you have a proposal that spans the disciplinary remits for the EPSRC and ESRC, subject to funding availability it may be possible for it to be considered for co-funding from Oxford's EPSRC and ESRC IAAs. Applicants 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. 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.

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)*