

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 from past, current or future research that falls within the EPSRC remit. Please note that previous research does not need to have been fully funded by the EPSRC, but must align with EPSRC research areas. The latest tranche of funding is worth £5.2m and will run from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2020.

Grants available

The Oxford IAA provides two main types of support:

Technology fund: grants to develop new technologies to the point where they are suitable for venture capital funding (either from the University or external sources), or to transfer knowledge, whose take-up will provide benefits to users but not generate a financial return to Oxford University.

Secondments: grants to accelerate impact through increased engagement with end-users of the research.

Technology Fund

Technology Development Grants

There is often a gap between the end of EPSRC support and the point at which a technology is sufficiently robust to attract venture funding. IAA Technology Fund grants are intended to bridge that gap, for research within the EPSRC remit.

Grants cannot be used to support additional research: 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
- Access to resources or proprietary IP from an industry partner without the need to compromise ownership or control over University IP.

Projects must:

- have potential to de-risk the technology and advance it closer to the point where it is ready for venture capital investment
- advance technology arising from EPSRC-related research
- not be at a stage where the University Seed Funds could provide support
- not be subsidising commercial R&D

Projects are likely to be characterised by a high degree of uncertainty or risk. Precise end-use applications or even broad market sectors may not be apparent yet. However, projects must still form part of a clear impact plan or 'roadmap': they 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 £75k in value.

Impact Delivery Grants

Oxford University Innovation's remit involves the realisation of research impact that will generate a commercial return to the University. Some research outputs do not lend themselves to direct commercial exploitation in this way, but may still have the potential to deliver financial 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 will 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

The EPSRC considers that one of the most effective ways to transfer knowledge is through the movement of people.

The IAA secondments scheme is designed to be flexible. Funds can be requested for:

KTS-style secondments: Outward secondment of researchers/academics to establish or strengthen connections with 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.

How to apply

IAA processes are intended to be light-touch. Please download the relevant application form 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.

Projects must commence on or after 1 April 2017 and be completed by 31 March 2020. No extensions are possible.

If you would like further information or to discuss a potential application to the IAA Technology Fund or Secondments scheme, please contact Dr Lizzie Peachey at elizabeth.peachey@mpls.ox.ac.uk.

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

Assessment process

Funding decisions are made by two multi-disciplinary panels with experience of realising the impact from research. The Technology Fund panel is chaired by Prof Kylie Vincent (Chemistry) and the Secondment panel is chaired by Prof Blanca Rodriguez (Computer Science). Please be reassured that all applications will be assessed in the strictest confidence.

Eligible costs

Grants will meet 100% of directly incurred / directly allocated costs (no indirect/estates costs). Equipment costs over £10k cannot be requested.

Cost	Secondments			Technology Fund	
	KTS-style	Pre-application	Pre-proof of concept	Tech development	Impact delivery
Researcher / PDRA salary **	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Travel & subsistence (<i>outwards</i>)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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)