EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) Proof-of-Concept Funding, April 2020

GUIDANCE NOTES

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

1.1 Source of fund: EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA)

1.2 Total funding available: The EPSRC IAA Steering Committee will make decisions on the allocation of funding between streams based on the quality of proposals received

1.3 Maximum size of award: indicative range £20,000-25,000

1.4 Duration: April 2020 – end March 2021 (Maximum duration, projects can be shorter however no extension to funding will be possible due to EPSRC funding rules)

1.5 Deadline for applications: 12noon, Friday 15th May 2020

1.6 Overarching aim of the fund: to provide the resources necessary to progress initial concepts for intellectual property in the fields of engineering and physical sciences through to commercial viability with a strong emphasis on engagement with external partners.

1.7 Restrictions:

Note that the following costs are not eligible:
- staff buyout for lead applicants, except for research-only staff who are fully funded on external contracts (see further details below);

- the commercial exploitation of work already being undertaken, or intellectual property protection;
- research activity;
- capital equipment;
- studentships or fee waivers for students;
- start-up funds for new staff.

Funds will be allocated to specific projects, and not devolved to departments for internal distribution.

1.8 Contact for guidance:

Chris Charlton-Mathews, Sciences Faculty Impact Manager

Email: chris.charlton-mathews@york.ac.uk

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND

About provider

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) is a United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) funder.

The EPSRC's mission is to:
- Promote and support research and training in the field of engineering and physical sciences;
- Advance and disseminate knowledge and produce scientists to improve the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the UK;
- To promote public awareness and engagement with the research that the EPSRC supports.

EPSRC funding is divided among research areas aligning to 12 themes:

- Digital economy
- Energy
- Engineering
- Global uncertainties
- Healthcare technologies
- Information and communication technologies (ICT)
- Living with Environmental Change (LWEC)
- Manufacturing the future
- Mathematical sciences
- Physical sciences
- Quantum technologies
- Research infrastructure

The EPSRC allocates awards of Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) funding to universities to support knowledge exchange and translational activity arising from EPSRC-funded research.

About purpose

Projects funded by this scheme should seek to produce outputs which directly support substantial translational funding applications in the field of engineering and the physical sciences.

Funds are available for projects which have the potential to be developed into commercial opportunities, or projects of demonstrable interest to external organisations. The aim is to develop an offering for end users of the research, whether that be the development of a specific piece of technology or the packaging of knowledge in such a way as to make it usable by practitioners and/or end beneficiaries. Funded projects will be expected to engage with industry or non-academic partners, either in co-development of the project or in order to establish a relationship by the end of the project timescale.

Applications involving external and industrial partners are especially encouraged, but it should be noted that partner costs will not be eligible for funding from this scheme.

Projects should consist of well-defined activities, and must have a clear objective to advance a concept or technology with a view to demonstrating value to external partners. This could include:

- creation of a demonstrator model to allow engagement with external collaborators;
- proof of concept beyond initial lab-scale demonstration;
- development of a project with external collaborators which will allow research findings to be developed into usable materials;
- pump-priming of a potentially sustainable concept;
- development of a social enterprise aimed at engaging users with activities or projects emanating from research.

Projects at feasibility or proof-of-concept stage are particularly encouraged, but projects at any stage of development will be considered, particularly if they can demonstrate the early stages of a business case, an exploitation route or a route to impact.

Success criteria and the selection panel

1. **Potential Impact**
- How significant might be the impact of your project, if translation progresses to a successful end point (what sectors benefited, quantification of benefit to economy or cost saving, beneficial environmental impacts, etc.)?

2. **Feasibility**
- Is the project plan feasible?

- Is the overall concept a plausible translational opportunity, based on the evidence provided in the application?
- Does the project team have the relevant skills and background to complete the project?

3. Probability of sustainability
- Is the planned work likely to generate key results that support a substantial translational funding application?
- What has been done so far (interaction with potential funders, establishing collaborative arrangements etc.) to prepare for a translational programme?

4. Intellectual property (IP) and exploitation
- Is the work based on existing York IP and if so, to what extent might its value be increased?
- Is it likely that the work will create new intellectual property that supports a proprietary position for York with respect to exploitation?
- Will exploitation rely on intellectual property that York does not have the right to use?
- Does the application describe a clear and plausible pathway to exploitation?
- If the proposed work or its later translational development and exploitation require participants external to the University, have these relationships already been developed and to what extent?

5. Value for money and added value
- Are the costs acceptable in relation to the planned work and the outcomes likely to be achieved?
- Will funding/resources be contributed from outside the University?
- Is the application an identified Impact Case Study?

Each of the five criteria will be scored on a 0-5 scale, leading to an overall score which corresponds to one of the following descriptors. Feedback on applications will be informed by these descriptors, and short qualitative feedback statements (but not numerical scores) will be shared with applicants.

0-4 This proposal is scientifically or technically flawed
5-8 This proposal does not meet one or more of the assessment criteria, or is a request for funding outside of the remit of the various research priming schemes
9-12 This proposal meets all assessment criteria but with clear weaknesses
13-17 This is a good proposal that meets all assessment criteria but with minor weaknesses
18-21 This is a strong proposal that broadly meets all assessment criteria
22-25 This is a very strong proposal that fully meets all assessment criteria

The selection panel will be drawn from relevant members of the academic community, the Business Development team, and other colleagues in Research & Enterprise; details will be published shortly. Additional external participants will be drawn from industry and the investment community to supplement the panel.

SECTION 3: APPLICATION CRITERIA

3.1 Am I eligible to apply?

The Internal Main Applicant must be a current member of University staff either on a Teaching & Research Contract within the ART category, or on a specific Research contract and considered to be an "independent researcher". This is usually defined as being grade 8 and above; exceptionally, a colleague employed at grade 7 would be considered independent if they have been named as PI or equivalent on a research grant or significant piece of work. Instances that are not clear cut should be considered on a case-by-case basis by the relevant DRC Chair in conjunction with the member of staff's line manager. Information about the member of staff's ability to act in this capacity should be included in the DRC Chair comments, where relevant.

If the main applicant is on a fixed-term contract, with a contract end date before the end of the project or very shortly afterwards, a further project supervisor who will take over and oversee completion of the project should also be named.

Staff on support contracts may act as co-investigators, but this would normally be an exception.

There is no formal limit on the number of applications an individual can submit, either as lead or as co-applicant. Submissions must be approved by the DRC Chair (see 4.3).

3.2 Can costs for current employees be covered by this grant?

Unlike many priming grants, costs for existing staff time **can** be included. However, estates and indirect costs **cannot** be included to ensure as much of the money as possible is spent directly on relevant activity. All costs will be paid at 100%.

Reasonable costs for staff time should be included to enable them to participate in activities that would not otherwise occur e.g. to buy them out of teaching responsibilities by paying for teaching replacement. A brief explanation of staff costs should be included in the Justification of Resources.

Where it is proposed to fund staff who are already on paid contracts with the University, a detailed explanation must be provided as to how it is possible for the individual to devote time to this project while also delivering on the commitments of the contract they have been engaged on.

Where this Proof of Concept funding is requested to provide salary to extend the contract of, or employ for a short period, a fixed-term member of staff, the potential employment law implications of such a contract should be fully appreciated by the Head of Department. Advice can be sought from the relevant HR Manager.

3.3 Is my project eligible?

Projects must aim to develop a translational concept, within EPSRC remit, to the point where a successful application for substantial translational funding can be anticipated.

If you have any concerns about the suitability of your project, please contact Chris Charlton-Mathews (Faculty Impact Manager) to discuss your proposal. Chris may also recommend a conversation with James Kitson (Head of Commercialisation). Their feedback may highlight issues that you need to address to make your application competitive.

3.4 What are the key requirements for my application?

Applications must include:
- A clear description of the translational concept and the possible impact/s, if realised.
- A summary of the evidence that currently supports i) the translational concept and ii) the weaknesses in that body of evidence.
- A project plan and commentary on the significance of the results intended to be obtained.
- An appraisal of current and in-development (if known) alternative approaches.
- A summary of existing and anticipated intellectual property relating to the concept.
- A plan for translation and exploitation, after completion of the project.
- Costing for the work to be undertaken.

3.5 What can be funded?

Areas for expenditure within a project may include:

- Consumables, where these are solely and necessarily used for the project.
- Employment of casual staff (including summer students provided the project results do not form part of their thesis), where it can be shown this is the most effective way to undertake the work. This might include short-term employment of a post-doc.
- Purchase of small equipment under £10k or the use of research facilities.
- Costs pertaining to market analysis/research or freedom to operate searches.
- Costs relating to the development of collaborations with other institutions or partners.
- Costs for attendance at suitable trade shows or industry conferences.
- Travel costs directly related to the project, but not for attendance at conferences except where that forms an explicit part of the preparatory work for the proposed project.
- Support for alternative modes of developing research projects such as workshops, seminars, away days or sandpits.

Requests for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs should be guided by the [University's travel and expenses policy](#).

Note: no electronic intent to submit and SoR forms are required. Where needed, staff costings should be prepared using pFACT or Worktribe, but approval is at department level and not with RGC.

3.6 What cannot be funded?

- Patent costs and related fees
- Entire translational projects
- Administration costs

- External/industrial partner costs
- Support for students directly via the waiver of fees or the provision of studentships. Students may be employed as technical support on projects, but this must not form part of their studies
- Start-up funds for new staff
- Honorarium payments to visitors or fees for undertaking teaching
- Items of equipment costing over £10k, or groups of items that could be construed as a single item if purchased together
- Standard computing equipment

3.7 What are the limits of the scale and expenditure for my project?

Proof-of-concept projects are expected to be costed in the range £20,000-£25,000. There is no minimum level for project costings. Please email to enquire if you have a project that would exceed this guide range.

3.8 Is this grant being awarded at 80% FEC or 100% FEC?

All direct costs will be paid at 100% FEC. No estates or indirect costs can be included.

3.9 What should the duration of my project be?

Projects are expected to take a maximum of 9 months to complete. If you submit a project on which you have already done some preparatory work, eligible costs may be claimed within your bid provided they are in the award range (1 April 2017 onwards).

3.10 What information is required about IP and contracts, at this stage, and who should I ask for help?

Please detail how you have considered the Intellectual Property implications of your project and how it will be protected. Please detail any patents or agreements in place to date. Please also detail any disclosures that would prevent the protection of relevant IP. Please give details of any existing arrangements with third parties if relevant, including funders of work to date who may assert their rights to IP.

Should you have any questions, please contact a member of the IP and Legal Team.

SECTION 4: PRACTICALITIES

4.1 How will the call be disseminated?

The call will be issued by the EPSRC IAA Team (via epsrc-iaa@york.ac.uk) to Heads of Department, Departmental Research Committee Chairs, PVC Research, Associate Deans for Research, Research Champions and YRAF, for information and further dissemination.

4.2 How do I submit my application form?

Applications should be sent, ahead of the deadline, AS A SINGLE PDF FILE, with ALL required sign-off requirements completed to **epsrc-iaa@york.ac.uk**

Your email should be clearly marked as 'EPSRC IAA PoC Application'.

4.3 Whom do I approach for a permission to apply / "sign-off" requirements?

Applications require approval and comments from the DRC Chair of the principal applicant, and may require HoD approval if departmental resources are being committed.

4.4 How will I access the awarded funds?

Funds will be assigned to project-specific workorders shortly after the award is made. Project costs may be drawn against the workorder once you have been notified that it is ready to use. Funds may NOT be transferred to another Agresso code.

4.5 How will my funding be monitored and are there any practicalities I need to know about after the project finishes?

Expenditure will be monitored by the Research and Enterprise Directorate.

For projects lasting 6 months or more, a brief summary of progress must be submitted to the Business Development Team when half of the scheduled project duration has elapsed. Recipients must provide a summary upon completion and report on follow-on activity that derives directly from having undertaken the project.

Reporting requirements are subject to change and new requirements from the Funder (EPSRC). Applicants may be required to compile data for ResearchFish submission.

SECTION 5: ADVICE ON COMPLETING SECTIONS OF THE FORM

5.1 Section 2.3 – Proposed outcomes and impact of the project

Please explain what changes will happen as a result of the project. These could be policy changes, economic or commercial benefits, social improvements, environmental impacts, or other possible impacts. This section should explain which of these the project will lead to.

5.2 Section 2.4 – Measuring impact

This section should identify how an observer would know that the project had successfully delivered its intended outcomes - what metrics or indicators could one use to evaluate whether or not the project had done what it set out to do?

SECTION 6: TIMELINE

Timescales / deadlines	Activity
20th April	The call opens.
12 noon, Friday 15th May	Application submission deadline.
w/c 25th May	Selection panel video conference.
w/c 25th May	Outcomes to be announced.
w/c 25th May	Feedback sent out to applicants.
1st June	Start date for funding to be spent.
31st October 2020	Interim reporting deadline for projects over 6 months in duration. (NB flexible to reflect current challenges)
Varies according to project length, but no later than 31st March 2021	Funding to be spent by this date.
TBC	Final report date.