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**University of Cambridge EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account**

**Early-stage Commercialisation Fund 2022**

**Guidance and Assessment Criteria**

Call opens: 20th September 2022

Call closes: 21st November 2022 at 16.00

Total Project Award: Up to £100,000

Project Length: Max. duration 9 months (Starting between 9th Jan and 28th Feb 2023)

**Background**

The IAA Early-stage Commercialisation Fund aims to enhance the commercial exploitation of Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) [research areas](https://www.ukri.org/publications/epsrc-list-of-research-areas/). This funding helps bridge the gap between academic research and commercialisation by supporting the early stages of commercialisation of technologies, to make ideas more attractive for further commercial investment.

**Who can apply?**

Applications are welcomed from Principle Investigators employed in any University department to develop ideas that fall within [EPSRC’s remit](https://www.ukri.org/publications/epsrc-list-of-research-areas/). The project must be based on identifiable intellectual property which already exists before the start of the project which is ready for exploitation, for example a patent application or a considerable body of software. Please note that, in contrast to previous EPSRC IAAs, previous/current EPSRC funding is **NOT** a requirement.

Applications from Early Career Researchers with PIs as co-applicants are encouraged.

**What activities can be funded?**

Projects should focus on formulating a robust business idea with strong potential to secure commercial support from venture capital or seed funds. Successful applications should; demonstrate the potential to significantly increase the probability of commercialisation; be based on a ‘proof-of-concept’ model and/or aim to demonstrate technical viability alongside the preparation of a robust business plan.

Awards will be made on the basis of individual project needs up to a maximum of £100,000 over a maximum of 9 months duration, starting no earlier than 9 Jan 2023 and no later than 28 Feb 2023. The assessment panel may decide to part-fund any application at their discretion.

Approximately 3 projects will be funded in this call.

Project holders must ensure that their research is compliant with the [University’s Policy on the Ethics of Research Involving Human Participants and Personal Data](https://www.research-integrity.admin.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.research-integrity.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/uoc_ethics_policy_july2020_0.pdf) and that any ethical issues are identified and brought to the attention of the relevant approval or regulatory body. Where ethical approval is required this must have been granted before the work begins. See the [University’s Research Ethics pages](https://www.research-integrity.admin.cam.ac.uk/research-ethics) for further details.

**Eligible Costs**

Permitted activities under the grant include funding for staff, subcontracting to external parties (e.g. for market research or prototype development), purchase of consumables and equipment. The award will cover **100% of directly incurred costs only** but will not cover PI costs, student fees, patenting costs, estate costs, or indirect costs. The cost of any single item of equipment cannot exceed £10,000. A Full Economic Costing (fEC) using X5 must accompany your application. This should be obtained via your department before submission and must remain in draft form (not submitted in X5) to avoid double-counting of funds. Please ensure that adequate time is left for this process.

For a complete list of eligible and ineligible costs, please refer to the [IAA Terms and Conditions](https://www.research-strategy.admin.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.research-strategy.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/impact_acceleration_account_terms_and_conditions_160922.docx).

**Working with external partners**

Where a project involves a Third Party, applicants should consider what types of agreements may be required (for example collaboration agreements, non-disclosure agreements, material/data transfer agreements and/or other types of contract) when applying for any Impact Acceleration Award. More details of what you should consider and template agreements can be found on the [IAA website](https://www.research-strategy.admin.cam.ac.uk/impact-acceleration-accounts) or contact iaa@admin.cam.ac.uk for further support and advice.

Award applicants will receive support from the Research Operations Office on contract negotiations and if relevant, Cambridge Enterprise to ensure appropriate protection of IP.

**Advice for this call**

Applications should focus on development, commercialisation and impact, not on research. Applications which read like research grant proposals will not be successful. Instead applications should describe projects which clearly comprise development and commercialisation activities directed towards commercial impact.

Before applying for this funding it is expected that effort will have been made to understand the market, and as a result to define a project which aims to meet market needs. In some cases the work of the project will be necessary to help define market requirements. Any aspects of the market which are not understood should be pointed out in the application, together with a plan to fill the gap.

There are challenges involved in the management of commercial projects within a University research environment. IAA funding is not available to support continuation of research and clarity around how the project will be managed to avoid that is important. It is also important to be realistic about what will be achieved in the timeframe of the project and how the project will be monitored to ensure that it remains focused on the commercial objectives.

**Application process**

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact their departmental Knowledge Transfer Facilitator or [Cambridge Enterprise](https://www.enterprise.cam.ac.uk/contact/) for advice before submitting an application. If your department does not have a Knowledge Transfer Facilitator, please contact either the IAA team iaa@admin.cam.ac.uk or Cambridge Enterprise enquiries@enterprise.cam.ac.uk.

Proposals must be submitted via the [IAA Application Submission System](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=RQSlSfq9eUut41R7TzmG6Um5XGCpZXFAgeAqq3WDOLVUMFFJWFVDN1NGMEFFRDFSMVA4UlNJVkw3Ti4u). Please provide:

* Outline details of the project in the IAA Application Submission System
* A completed [application form](https://www.research-strategy.admin.cam.ac.uk/epsrc-impact-acceleration-account-iaa), including the signature of the HoD
* A copy of the **draft** project costing X5
* A letter of support from any external partners (if applicable)
* Any additional documents, such as a Gantt chart showing the intended project timeline, as appropriate

**Please note the submission system only accepts PDF documents**

Applications need to be approved and signed by the Head of Department via the application form. You should ensure that you are aware of any earlier departmental closing date for Head of Department signature.

Proposals submitted after the published deadline will not be assessed.

**Assessment process**

All applications will be reviewed by a cross-disciplinary selection panel drawn from academics and professional services teams with the appropriate technical and commercial experience.

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

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| **Criteria** | **Guidance** |
| **Clarity of impact objectives** | Clarity of the impact (not research) objectives and proposed impact activities, including how impact will be measured/evidenced. |
| **Clarity of plan** | Clarity and coherence of the plan to achieve impact objectives, including, management, timeframe and milestones. Suitability, level of engagement, and degree of support offered by the partner organisation, where applicable |
| **Articulation of need** | Clarity of description of the research base on which the project builds, the need being addressed and/or justification of why impact objectives have been identified.  |
| **Commercial potential** | Benefits to customers, market size, market accessibility, competition. Input from potential customers, licensees or investors should be provided if possible. Letters of support from potential partners will strengthen your case. How the project will be sustained beyond IAA funding e.g.: sources of leverage/future funding |
| **Value for money**  | The extent to which the proposal makes the best use of resources. |
| **Sustainability** | The extent to which the project outlines plans for potential next stages (including further sources of funding) and/or explains how the project fits within a larger programme of work.  |

**Timeline**

The funding should support projects of up to 9 months. The funding dates for this call are:

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| **Call opens** | **Call closes** | **Project start** | **Final report** |
| 20th September 2022  | 21st November 2022 at 16.00 | No earlier than 9 January 2023 and no later than 28 February 2023  | Within 1 month of project completion |

Proposed projects should not start any earlier than 9 January 2023to allow sufficient time for fund allocation and activation. All expenditure should begin no later than 28 Feb 2023. Project start dates are subject to appropriate agreements with any external partners being in place – if there are any delays as a result of Third Party agreement processes the start date may be postponed.

No-cost extensions will be available for projects that can make a strong case that additional time is needed to realise impact. All requests for extensions must be made through the IAA team.

**Monitoring and Reporting**

As a condition of the award, progress review meetings must be held every 3 months with either a member of the IAA Team, a member of staff in Cambridge Enterprise or your Departmental Knowledge Transfer Facilitator, or equivalent, to monitor project progress and identify any additional support needs.

Grant-holders will be allowed to amend projects plans after the award in order to respond to unexpected developments or challenges. Any changes should be made in conjunction with the IAA team.

Project holders and their departmental grants/finance officers must ensure that all expenditure is posted against projects within 2 weeks of the end of the project. Further financial reporting will be requested at project close.

All project holders will be required to complete an online survey at the end of their funded period.

If you have any questions regarding this EPSRC IAA call, please contact Dr Amaya Camara-Campos, Research Strategy Office, iaa@admin.cam.ac.uk.