Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin

We hope these Frequently Asked Questions will be helpful to potential applicants for the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin (strand 1).

If you have a query which is not covered below, or if any of the answers provided are unclear or if you need more information, please contact Innovate UK Customer Support Services. You can reach them by email at support@iuk.ukri.org or by calling the competition helpline on 0300 321 4357. Our phone lines are open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays). We also have an automated virtual assistant on hand to answer frequently asked questions about Innovate UK, this service is available 24 hours a day, every day.

Contents

Background................................................................. 1
Eligibility ........................................................................... 3
Application ....................................................................... 12
Business Idea ................................................................. 16
Assessment and Selection process ...................................... 17
Award ................................................................................ 19
Additional resources and support ...................................... 24
Other Questions .................................................................. 25

Background

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
One of the greatest assets we have in the UK is the incredible diverse talent available. However, this diversity is not currently reflected in the UK innovation sector. For the UK to thrive as an innovation nation, we must unlock the power of innovation talent and skills in every part of the UK and throughout society.

The Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award is a two strand pilot competition with the aim to empower today’s untapped innovators and businesses to increase investment in diverse talent across the UK. This competition will aim to level the playing field and unlock potential for innovation by supporting and funding innovators from groups that are currently underrepresented and/or overlooked in innovation.

The focus of the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award is to attract innovators with different backgrounds and experiences. We will be looking for a diverse group of innovators that with our help, can turn their great ideas into successful businesses. The competition will be open to a range of innovators, those who are just beginning their career, through to those expanding their business.

This competition is split into two strands:

- **Begin** – a grant amount of £5,000 and a living allowance (this strand)
- **Build** – a grant amount of £50,000

Innovate UK wants to support untapped talent across the UK. We are looking to find people with exciting, breakthrough innovative businesses or ideas driving positive economic, environmental, and societal change.

We particularly encourage women and young people to apply to the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award, building on the success of the Women in Innovation and Young Innovator programmes. In addition, we want to attract and support underrepresented innovators from a variety of backgrounds or experiences. This also includes intersectionality, recognising the way multiple characteristics interconnect and can worsen inequities.

For the purpose of this competition, Innovate UK considers the following groups of people as underrepresented in the innovation ecosystem:

- disabled, including and not limited to mental health conditions, learning disabilities, neurodiversity and physical disabilities
- ethnic minority groups
- LGBTQIA+

• non-binary and all marginalised genders
• people with primary caring responsibilities
• people from low socioeconomic backgrounds
• people from non-traditional educational routes into innovation
• women
• younger (aged 18 to 30) and older (aged 60+) people

This is a pilot competition and who Innovate UK considers as underrepresented is based on Innovate UK and ecosystem evidence. The underrepresented groups will be regularly reviewed, and where necessary updated.

Note: you can identify with one or more of the underrepresented groups to be eligible; if you are aged 31-59 and you identify with another of the listed underrepresented groups of people, you are eligible for the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award.

Eligibility

Q. Is there any age restriction on the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award Begin competition?

A. You must be aged 18 by the competition close date. So, for example, a 15 year old will not be eligible for the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Awards yet. There are no upper age restrictions for the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Awards.

For the purpose of this competition, Innovate UK considers younger (aged 18 to 30) and older (aged 60+) people as underrepresented in the innovation ecosystem. If you are aged 31-59 and you identify with another of the listed underrepresented groups of people, you are eligible for the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award.

Q. Who can apply to the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award Begin competition?

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
A. This strand is open to innovators with great ideas. The award is focused on an individual, rather than a business. Every Begin award holder will receive a £5,000 grant, a living allowance contribution of £10,000, and tailored business support. As part of the programme, you must be available for and prepared to undertake a 12 month project. Award holders cannot have received any funding from Innovate UK previously.

Applicants must identify as sharing a characteristic that is currently considered by Innovate UK as underrepresented in the innovation ecosystem.

You can only apply for one strand. It is your responsibility to ensure you submit your application to the correct strand for your project. You will not be able to transfer your application and it will not be sent for assessment if it is out of scope. If you submit more than one eligible application, only the first submission will be sent for assessment.

Q. What does Innovate UK mean by ‘underrepresented in Innovation’?

What is the definition of ‘underrepresented in innovation’ for this competition?

A. Innovate UK wants to support untapped talent across in the UK. We are looking to find people with exciting, breakthrough innovative businesses or ideas driving positive economic, environmental, and societal change.

We particularly encourage women and young people to apply to the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award, building on the success of the Women in Innovation and Young Innovator programmes. In addition, we want to attract and support underrepresented innovators from a variety of backgrounds or experiences. This also includes intersectionality, recognising the way multiple characteristics interconnect and can worsen inequities.

For the purpose of this competition, Innovate UK considers the following groups of people as underrepresented in the innovation ecosystem:

- disabled, including and not limited to mental health conditions, learning disabilities, neurodiversity and physical disabilities
- ethnic minority groups
- LGBTQIA+
- non-binary and all marginalised genders

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
• people with primary caring responsibilities
• people from low socioeconomic backgrounds
• people from non-traditional educational routes into innovation
• women
• younger (aged 18 to 30) and older (aged 60+) people

This is a pilot competition and who Innovate UK considers as underrepresented is based on Innovate UK and ecosystem evidence. The underrepresented groups will be regularly reviewed, and where necessary updated.

Innovate UK is unable to advise on your eligibility regarding the above list; you must self-identify.

Note: you can identify with one or more of the underrepresented groups to be eligible; if you are aged 31-59 and you identify with another of the listed underrepresented groups of people, you are eligible for the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award.

Q. Will you use the data I share in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) survey to check that I have a characteristic that Innovate UK considers as underrepresented?

Will my EDI survey be used in the funding decision process?

A. No. The EDI survey will not form any part of the competition or decision making process. Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be used to monitor the diversity of applicants.

Innovate UK will use the personal data you give us to:

• identify any under-represented groups, investigate the reasons for this and take appropriate and effective steps to improve representation
• publish aggregated and anonymised data as part of our commitment to transparency and supporting access and inclusion

We'll store your data securely and handle it in line with UK data protection legislation and good practice, including restricting access to identifiable information. You can let us know at any time that your preferences have changed with respect to how we handle...
and store your data. If you would like to know more, including how to exercise your data protection rights, please see our privacy notice.

Q If I’m not eligible for this competition, what other opportunities are there for me?

A. There is support available to those that are ineligible who want to develop their innovative idea. To view other opportunities, visit the Innovation Hub and the Innovation Funding Service. You can also contact Innovate UK, Innovate UK KTN or Innovate UK EDGE directly, who can then advise on available support.

Q. I’m aware that Innovate UK has been running the Young Innovators Programme since 2018, is the Begin strand of the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award replacing the Young Innovators programme?

A. We are building on the legacy and success of the Women in Innovation and Young Innovators programmes. These programmes have laid the foundations for our work on equality, diversity, and inclusion and they have enabled us to build communities of changemakers, driving real impact in solving some of our biggest challenges.

The Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award will open the door to a wider range of underrepresented innovators with great ideas. This initiative is going to be bigger, more flexible and accessible, giving our communities of innovators more options to better suit their needs. We are widening the door to invite even more ambitious entrepreneurs with great ideas to engage with us at key stages on their business journey.

We know that great innovative ideas can come at any age, and so Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin Strand is open to diverse innovators aged 18 and over.

Q. If I just have an initial idea, can I apply?

A. Yes. You don’t have to have a business to apply. If you have an early-stage business or are ready to turn your idea into a business and meet the eligibility criteria, we look forward to receiving your application.
For Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin, we are looking for business ideas that are innovative, so they must:

- Address a problem
- Be different
- Be significantly better than what is currently on offer, including from existing businesses

Innovate UK will be holding a briefing event to discuss the scope of this funding opportunity. If you are unsure whether you are eligible to apply, please attend the event on the 11 June 2023 from 10am. If you are reading this content after the briefing event, you can watch the recording.

You can also view the online guidance for applicants or contact Innovate UK Customer Support Services with any eligibility questions you might have.

**Q. If I am further on my journey and already have a business, can I apply?**

A. Yes. You can enter with a registered SME business or with just an innovative idea. There are no time limits on how long an existing business has been operational for before entering the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin strand. However, if your business has been operating for some time and is looking to grow and scale, then our Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Build strand competition might be more suitable for you.

We are looking for Innovators who clearly explain how they will benefit from the full package of funding and support on offer and who can describe how this will add value to them and their business if they have one.

We are looking to fund a portfolio of business ideas and will select a portfolio of award winners who are located throughout the UK.

**Q. Can I still be a student and apply?**

A. Yes, students that are 18 and over can apply if they meet the other eligibility criteria. The sole applicant must:
• identify with a community that is currently considered by Innovate UK as underrepresented in the innovation ecosystem
• be a UK resident, carry out all project work in the UK, and exploit the results from or in the UK
• be able to commit on average 15 hours per week to working on your funded project
• not have received any Innovate UK award

Q. I am an international student living in the UK, am I eligible for this competition?

A. To be eligible for an award you must be a UK resident who has the right to work in the UK or will have the right to work in the UK for the duration of the award. All project work must be done in the UK

Note: we are unable to advise on individual cases with regards to whether a potential applicant will have the right to work in the UK. Please check your right to work.

Q. My friend and I are developing this business idea together, does that make me ineligible for this award?

A. No. The Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin competition is open to sole applicants only. The awards are for individuals, but this does not prevent you from working on the project with others (one or multiple co-founders, friends, business partner(s) before, during, and after the programme). You will need to decide who is going to be the sole applicant and take part in the programme if successful. If it is unclear who the sole applicant is within your submission, you may be made ineligible, and your application will not be sent for assessment.

More than one innovator working within the same organisation can apply, however if you are both successful in the same competition you will need to decide who will take the award as we will not support both applications from the same business. It is important that you consider the additional added value of what this will mean if your co-founder has already been successful in a competition.

Note: You will not be able to change the lead applicant at any point once you have submitted your application and the competition has closed. If you are successful, you

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
will not be able to change the recipient of the award and it may result in your funding being revoked if you are unable to complete the 12 month programme.

Q. Given the NI protocol, will Northern Ireland applications be eligible?

A. Yes. We welcome and encourage applications from Northern Ireland as well as all nations and regions of the UK. Grant funding in this competition is awarded as Minimal Financial assistance (MFA) and De minimis where applicable. This allows public bodies to award up to £315,000 to an enterprise in a 3-year rolling financial period. If you are unsure about your obligations under the Subsidy Control Act 2022, you should take independent legal advice. We cannot advise on individual eligibility or your legal obligations.

Q. Can I apply if I have previously received De minimis or Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) funding?

A. Yes. As long as you have not exceeded the allowance you are allowed under De minimis or MFA rules within the current 3 year period. You must declare any previous funding received under De minimis & MFA through the declaration form provided at application stage.

You are not eligible to apply if you have previously received any Innovate UK funding.

Q. If I have a mentor with another organisation already, does this go against my application?

A. No. You are eligible to apply if you are receiving support from other organisations.

Q. Am I eligible to apply if I have received a previous Innovate UK grant for the same (or a different) business idea?

A. No. You can’t have received any other Innovate UK funding prior to applying to the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin competition.

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
Q. Am I eligible to apply if I have been previously awarded or funded for my business through other opportunities outside of Innovate UK?

A. Yes. As long as you clearly state the added value in your Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin application. In your application, you will be asked to declare any previous funding you have received. This will form part of the financial checks ahead of Innovate UK making a formal grant offer. This grant is given under De minimis or Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) rules, to establish your eligibility, we need to check that our support added to the amount you have previously received does not exceed the MFA or De minimis limit of £315,000 in the ‘applicable period’.

You can use a previously submitted application, if you did not receive any Innovate UK funding for it, and you meet all the eligibility criteria for this competition. However please note at Innovate UK you are only allowed to apply twice with the same idea/project application.

Q. Am I able to apply for other Innovate UK grants if I am awarded the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award funding?

A. We advise you to check the eligibility criteria of each competition to ensure you are eligible. It is important to note that you cannot receive funding for the same project twice.

Q. We are writing a Smart Grant application for our innovation. Are we able to also submit an application for the same innovation via this competition?

A. You can submit an application to both competitions, however you cannot receive other Innovate UK funding for the same project. If you are successful for more than one grant with the same project, you will be required to select which award you would like to proceed with. We advise you to check the eligibility criteria and application process of each competition to ensure you are eligible and that your application is suitable.

Q. Can I apply if I operate a charity?

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
A. Yes, but only if your charity has a registered business arm or business side, and this has been operating for a year or more. This would need to be registered as a company on Companies House. If your charity does not have a business operation, then you would not be eligible to apply.

Q. Does a start-up loan count as public funding or any other grants received?
A. Yes

Q. Are Charitable Community Benefit Societies with a revenue model eligible?
A. Yes

Q. The application mentions Companies House; if you don’t have a registered business and associated Company Registration Number (CRN) what do you type?
A. You don’t need a Companies House registration to apply, this can be left blank. To start an application without a registered business, please follow the steps below:

Once you have clicked on start a new application or accept an invitation, if you do not have an account, you will be required to 'create an account’. Once you have selected this option, click on your organisation type, you will then need to complete the following steps

- Put your name or organisation in the box and click search
- Scroll to the bottom of the page, click on the “find out what to do” link under the 'my organisation is not registered on companies house’
- Click on the “enter its details manually” link at the bottom of the exemptions list
- You only need to fill in your organisation name (this can be your company name or your own name) and your address (business or personal) then click save and continue
- Confirm your organisation, save, and continue

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
• Fill in the details to create your account, name, email address, password etc. then select create account

You will then receive an email asking to verify your account, please do this to start your application. Please check junk and spam for the verification email. If you do not receive an email, please get in touch with Innovate UK contact Customer Support Services.

Q. Does the product have to solve a social problem, or can I solve any business problem – e.g. improving sales processes?

A. We are looking for business ideas that are innovative. What do we mean by innovative? Specifically, we mean, they must address a problem, they must be different, and they must be significantly better than what is currently on offer. It could be a societal, social, environmental, health, or economic problem.

Q. Can we be an Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award holder while having a job?

A. Yes, you can be part of the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin while working, many of our award holders work while they receive an Innovate UK funding. Before applying, it is important to consider if you would be able to deliver the project and commit for the full 12 month duration whilst working. We would also encourage you to make sure you clearly state the added value of the award in your Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin application.

Application

Q. I have not applied to Innovate UK before, are there any resources or support available for people that have not applied before?


In addition to this we are arranging a series of [drop-in sessions](https://bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award) including specific workshops for grant writing and video support, and dedicated Q&A drop-in sessions.
Innovate UK KTN has a wide network, deep sector expertise, and can connect you to people and organisations to help accelerate your ideas and project. Innovate UK KTN have guidance for completing and submitting a grant application.

Innovate UK EDGE focus on growing innovative businesses and ensuring that projects contribute to their growth and may also be able to offer advice.

If you have any specific questions to support your application, please contact Customer Support Services.

Q. Is there a deadline for applications?
A. The Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin competition will close on the 6 September 2023 at 11:00am precisely. Extensions to this deadline cannot and will not be granted under any circumstances, even in the situation where, let’s say you have technical issues 10mins before the application deadline.

Q. Where can I apply?
A. On the Innovate UK Innovation Funding Service. The deadline for the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin competition is 6 September 2023 at 11:00am.

Q. What would you recommend I focus on in my application? What do unsuccessful applicants typically miss or get wrong?
A. To fit the competition, your project must address a problem, be innovative, meet the eligibility criteria, and have a realistic plan. Unsuccessful applicants typically leave the application to the very last minute, don’t fill the forms correctly, have lots of missing information, forget to include their video link, don’t provide sufficient evidence in the application, or don’t follow the instructions. Please also make sure you address every bullet point mentioned in each question.

We encourage you to submit your application well ahead of the deadline and to proofread it several times before doing so. You might also consider having a trusted friend, family member, or advisor take a look at it before submitting to ensure that it is as complete and comprehensive as it can be.

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
Innovate UK KTN has a wide network, deep sector expertise, and can connect you to people and organisations to help accelerate your ideas and project. Innovate UK KTN have guidance for completing and submitting a grant application and Innovate UK has online guidance for applicants.

Q. The application requires a short video. Will the production value of it be judged in any way (e.g., editing, sound effects, etc.)?

A. No. The assessors will be scoring your videos (for Question 10) based on the content of your answer to all elements of the question, it is not scored on editing, background music, or story telling abilities.

You must use YouTube to record your video and then provide a link in your application (and the access password if required). It must be no longer than 3 minutes; if your video is over 3 minutes long, only the first 3 minutes will be used to assess your application.

If the assessors cannot view your video or it is hosted on a platform other than YouTube, the assessors will be unable to assess this question and your application will be ineligible. The video must remain available until 1 January 2024.

Requests for extensions due to problems uploading a video will not be accepted.

If you cannot upload your video to YouTube, you must contact support@iuk.ukri.org at least 10 days before the competition closes for advice.

Your application will be ineligible if you submit your application without a video.

If you need additional support, we do provide reasonable adjustments for people who have a disability or a long-term condition and face barriers applying to us. Read more on how we are making our application process more accessible and inclusive for everyone.

You must contact us as early as possible in the application process. We recommend contacting us at least 15 working days before the competition closing date to ensure we can provide you with the most suitable support possible.

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
Q. Do I have to include any personal information in my application or video question?

A. No. There is no expectation to declare any personal information in your response to any of the questions. We encourage applicants to share as much or as little about your background / journey / experiences as you feel comfortable with. We understand that it can be uncomfortable to share personal details; applicants are not required to include special category or sensitive information in their application.

Q. What if I don’t want to be publicly linked to the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award and its target groups?

A. We want to ensure that there are no barriers to any eligible applicant applying for this competition. It is important to note that you will never be asked to publicly disclose your association to the groups currently considered by Innovate UK as underrepresented in the innovation ecosystem at any stage of the competition process or award programme. If successful, you will have the opportunity to opt out of being featured in competition marketing.

Q. I’m keen to apply – where can I find the support I need as a disabled innovator?

A. We welcome and encourage applications from people of all backgrounds and are committed to making our application process accessible to everyone. This includes providing support, in the form of reasonable adjustments, for people who have a disability or a long-term condition and face barriers applying to us. Read more on how we are making our application process more accessible and inclusive for everyone.

You must contact us as early as possible in the application process. We recommend contacting us at least 15 working days before the competition closing date to ensure we can provide you with the most suitable support possible.

You can contact us by emailing support@iuk.ukri.org or calling 0300 321 4357. Our phone lines are open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

Q. Does the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award have a helpline?

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
A. If you need more information, you can contact Innovate UK directly for all competition enquiries via email at support@iuk.ukri.org or call the competition helpline on 0300 321 4357. Phone lines are open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

Q. Can I edit my application once submitted?

A. Yes. You can reopen your application once submitted, up until the competition deadline. Please note that you must resubmit the application before the competition deadline.

Business Idea

Q. Is the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin competition specific to a type of business or sector?

A. This competition will support SMEs, early-stage businesses or those with a business idea. We are looking to support award holders from diverse and underrepresented communities, located across the UK, and working on a wide range of business ideas, types, sectors, products, processes, and services.

Q. Can I apply with a business idea which I previously submitted to other competitions?

A. Yes. You can use a previously submitted application if you did not receive previous Innovate UK funding and you meet the eligibility criteria for this competition. Before doing so, please read through the additional details under the previous applications section of the application form.

If you received feedback on your previously submitted application, we do encourage you to take it into account before submitting the same idea for this funding opportunity. However, please note that it is most likely that different assessors would review your new application and therefore there is no guarantee your application will score higher even if all feedback is addressed.

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
Please note, you are only allowed to apply to Innovate UK twice with the same idea/application.

Q. Can I apply with multiple ideas?
A. We encourage you to work through one clear business idea and area, planning it out carefully to give you the best possible opportunity of being funded. This will help you outline your game plan, think through the risks, and identify the impact of the award. Submitting multiple ideas is not advisable. If you’re struggling to choose one to focus on, we’d recommend thinking about what you want and can achieve in 12 months as well as what the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award package of support will realistically enable you to do.

Q. I think I have a great idea, but I'm not confident it can be done – who should I speak to?
A. We will be holding a briefing event to discuss the scope of this competition. It is essential that all applicants watch the recording of the applicant briefing. In addition to this we are arranging a series of drop-in sessions.

If you have a query which is not covered in the briefing event, or if any of the answers provided are unclear or if you need more information, email Innovate UK Customer Support Services at support@iuk.ukri.org or call the competition helpline on 0300 321 4357. Our phone lines are open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

There is also an automated virtual assistant available 24 hours a day, every day, to find answers to the most commonly asked questions about Innovate UK.

Innovate UK EDGE focus on growing innovative businesses and ensuring that projects contribute to their growth and may also be able to offer advice.

Assessment and Selection process

Q. Who are we looking to fund?

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
A. This pilot programme aims to level the playing field and unlock potential for innovation by supporting and funding innovators from communities that are currently underrepresented in innovation.

We want to support innovators who are at a critical stage with their business idea, where an award will enable them to take an important step forward. The funding should help them make a real difference to innovation in the UK, including in and beyond their sector or innovation area. All awardees should clearly explain how they will benefit from the full package of funding and support on offer and describe how this will add value to them and their business.

We are looking for innovators from diverse communities, who have the potential to be leaders and role models to inspire other innovators.

Q. How do you select the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award holders from the many applications you will be receiving?

A. We follow a very detailed and thorough process working with a team of experienced independent assessors. Every aspect of each application is carefully reviewed and evaluated against a common list of criteria and multiple assessors review the same application to ensure that the outcome is as consistent and fair as it can be.

We want to fund a variety of projects across geographical areas. We call this a portfolio approach. The portfolio approach is undertaken by Innovate UK after the independent scoring by assessors.

Innovate UK operates a minimum quality threshold, where anyone scoring below a set amount will not be considered for funding.

The assessors will not have access to your Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) survey information at any time. Your EDI survey will not be used in the decision making process. The EDI survey data will be used to measure the outcomes of the competition, not to determine application success on an individual level.

You can find more information about the standard assessment process in this outline video about how Innovate UK assessors assess.

Q: How many applications in total will be funded?

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
A. Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, is investing up to £6.2 million this year across the two strands of the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin and Build. We aim to support 225 awards across the two strands.

Innovate UK reserves the right to adjust the funding allocations between the two competition strands.

Q: Do we have interviews or panel assessment?
A: No. We will only have an external independent assessment stage.

Q. On the application, we are asked to supply “Applicant location”. Are there any locations that are automatically not eligible?
A. Your organisation must be a UK registered micro, small or medium-sized enterprise. If you do not have a registered business, you will need to use your home address which must be in the UK. We will take a portfolio approach in our funding decision to ensure we have representation of businesses working across the UK.

Q. Many grants take applicants’ locations into consideration, are there any quotas when it comes to where we’re based in the UK?
A. No. There are no quotas. We are looking to fund a portfolio of business ideas. We will select a portfolio of award winners who are located throughout the UK.

Q. When will I know if I have been successful with my application?
A. You will be informed by Innovate UK of the outcome of your application on 6 October 2023. You will be able to access your feedback on the same date via the IFS system.

Award

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
Q. What is the (time) commitment required for the grant?

A. Your project must:

• start on 1 December 2023
• end on 30 November 2024
• last 12 months
• have a total grant funding request of £5,000

You must be able to commit to:

• working on average for 15 hours per week on your Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin project, including some weekday time to meet with your Innovation Champion
• attend two Cohort Development Sessions
• providing at least four days over the duration of the award to be a role model to inspire others

Q. How and when will the £5,000 grant be paid?

A. The grant is paid on agreed dates (claim periods); there will be 3 claim periods through the 12 month project. If you are successful, these dates will be shared with you once your project has been set-up.

In total, every Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin holder will get £15,000 (£5,000 grant plus £10,000 living allowance)

This will be divided into three instalments:

• 50% (£7,500) in December 2023
• 40% (£6,000) at the mid-point June 2024
• 10% (£1,500) in September 2024

Claims will need to be agreed with your Monitoring Service Provider and Innovation Champion, who we will allocate to you.

You will need to provide evidence to your Monitoring Service Provider to show how your grant was spent over each claim period before your next claim can be submitted.

Q. Do I need to have a business bank account to apply?

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
A. No. You do not need to have a business bank account already set up to apply, however, to be paid the grant you will need to set one up if you are successful as Innovate UK are unable to deposit grant funding into a personal account.

**Q. Are there any bank accounts Innovate UK will not accept?**

A. The bank account must be in the name of the participant, from a UK high street bank, have a cheque and credit clearing facility and be regulated by the PRA. Online accounts are eligible as long as they meet these criteria.

Fintech accounts are not eligible; common examples include Tide, Revolut, Prepay Solutions.

Note: Starling and Metro have a quick account set up process.

**Q. Do you have to provide any evidence of the 15 hours per week?**

A. No, we do not track every hour as such, however your Monitoring Service Provider and Innovation Champion will measure and monitor your overall engagement and attendance over the course of the programme. The important thing is how you invest yourself in the programme and progress with your project within the 12 months. We advise you to work closely with your Monitoring Service Provider and Innovation Champion to make the most of everything that is on offer.

**Q. Can you tell me more about the support package that is offered alongside the grant?**

A. The non-monetary package of support will be delivered by:

- Innovate UK KTN
- Innovate UK EDGE
- PR Agency

The expert advice available includes, but is not limited to:

- media and communications
- branding
- business planning strategy

• growing your networks
• funding and finance options

Access to relevant world-leading facilities and equipment will also be provided where this is appropriate. As part of your award, you will receive press and media support to become a leading role model in innovation.

Q. When is the 12 month programme due to start?
A. The Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin programme will start for successful applicants on the 1 December 2023 and the support will be provided over a 12 month period.

Q. Can award winners delegate attendance at support sessions to others?
A. No. The sessions are dedicated to the individual Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin cohort, so the award holder must be the person attending them.

Note: You will not be able to change the lead applicant at any point once you have submitted your application and the competition has closed. If you are successful, you will not be able to change the recipient of the award and it may result in your funding being revoked if you are unable to complete the 12 month programme.

Q. What is a role model? What does it mean to be a role model?
A. A role model is a person perceived by others as setting an example of best practice which, if replicated, can enable the achievement of goals. A role model is frequently associated with undertaking activities, including but not limited to, mentoring, coaching, presentations, advice, and guidance. In this case, a role model will help encourage and inspire others to enter a career in innovation and promote diversity and inclusion in innovation.

Q. Why am I being asked to take part in role modelling activities as part of the award?

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
A. Greater representation from different backgrounds and experiences in business innovation has proven to have a positive economic and societal impact in the UK. However, to diversify businesses, we need to inspire and inform young people of the opportunities available to them through access to relatable role models, and hands-on experience.

Therefore, we are asking you to act as a relatable role model to inspire the next generation of innovators so that:

• talented entrepreneurs know about the opportunities
• businesses like yours have access to diverse talent in the future
• we co-create a more inclusive and representative innovation ecosystem that benefits everyone

This is building on the previous role modelling expectations from the Women in Innovation and Young Innovator competitions where our award holders inspired the next generation through support from Founders4Schools.

Q. What activities should I be thinking about to fulfil this role modelling commitment, and what support will be available?

A. Award holders will be asked to dedicate at least 4 days during the duration of their award to being a visible and relatable role model to inspire others into innovation.

Some examples of the activities you may complete are:

• passing on your knowledge, skills, and/or personal lived experiences through talks, panels, workshops, and media engagements
• supporting students, through careers talks, careers events and mentoring
• providing workplace experience to young people
• mentoring other innovators and entrepreneurs

Q. Will the 4 days of role modelling count in the 15 hours per week?

A. Yes. The 4 role modelling days can be included as part of the average 15 hours a week you will be expected to work on your project. You are welcome to count them separately also, but you will not be paid extra living allowance for hours spent outside of the 15 hours.

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
Q. Will I be paid extra for role model days/activities?

A. No. You will not be paid extra living allowance for hours spent outside of the 15 hours. The role model activities should be volunteered by the award holder.

Q. How can I learn more about and join the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award community?

A. You can visit the [Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award page](https://bit.ly/unlocking-potential). You can also:

- Sign up to our [newsletter](https://bit.ly/unlocking-potential) to keep up to date with upcoming funding opportunities, events, and news
- Catch up on the [Briefing Event recording or slides](https://bit.ly/unlocking-potential)

The Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award offers you a great way to get your innovation or business ideas off the ground fast. So, what are you waiting for? Start your application today and turn your innovative idea into the next big thing.

Additional resources and support

Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award - Briefing Event

Innovate UK KTN is hosting a briefing event providing information about the awards, eligibility criteria, the application process, and timelines on the 11 July 2023 from 10am to 12:30pm.

Find out more on the [Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award webpage](https://bit.ly/unlocking-potential).

WATCH RECORDING NOW


These workshops aim to:

- Break down the application process
- Give you tips and tricks
- Answer your questions
Other Questions

Q. Is the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award likely to be highly competitive? Is it worth my time to apply? I don’t know if this is the right time for my project. Should I apply anyway?

A. Generally, our funding rounds are highly competitive, we envisage high volumes of applications and predict that approximately 10% of applications will be successful for this competition. Please wait until your project is as strong as possible so you can make the best case for funding. Remember that if you’re unsuccessful you can only apply with the same project twice.

Q. How many funding opportunities are there within the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award competition and how do they differ?

A. We have 2 strands of funding opportunities within the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award competition, the key differences are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Begin</th>
<th>Build</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ if you are ready to turn your idea into a business then this is the right opportunity for you</td>
<td>✓ if you are a founder, co-founder or senior decision maker within a UK registered micro or SME business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ if you have an innovative business idea within an existing early-stage business you are also welcome</td>
<td>✓ if your business has been active for at least 12 months by the closing date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ you must not have received any Innovate UK funding</td>
<td>✓ you may have received Innovate UK funding (exceptions are in the competition brief)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ £5,000 grant plus £10,000 living allowance making a total of £15,000</td>
<td>✓ every award holder in this strand will get £50,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
✓ you must provide at least four days of role modelling activities to inspire others

✓ you must provide at least five days of role modelling activities to inspire others

Q. Can I apply to both Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award strands (Begin & Build)?

A. No, you can only apply to one strand. It is your responsibility to ensure you submit your application to the correct strand for your project. You will not be able to transfer your application and it will not be sent for assessment if it is out of scope. If you submit more than one eligible application, only the first submission will be sent for assessment.

Q. Will there be another Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award competition, if yes when will it be?

A. We have not planned another round yet. We recommend you keep an eye on the Innovation Funding Service and sign up to the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential newsletter.

Q. Can a business outside of the UK submit an application to Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award?

A. No. Your organisation (or home address if no registered business) must be a UK registered micro, small or medium-sized enterprise.

Q. Does the lead applicant for the Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award: Begin competition need to be based in the UK?

A. Yes. Your business (or home address if no registered business) must be based in the UK and you must complete all project work in the UK.

Whilst we do not require you to be in the UK for the whole of the 12 month project duration, it is important to note that you cannot do any of the project work outside of the

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
UK and that we require the successful applicants to commit at least 2 days per week to the project.

**Q. Can a lead applicant on an Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award application be a co-applicant on another application for a different competition?**

A. This competition is for sole applicants only, however there may be other competitions that allow co-applicants (please check the eligibility for each competition on IFS before applying). Before applying to this competition, it is important to consider if you would be able to deliver the project and commit for the full 12 month duration whilst working on any other project you are receiving external funding for. We would also encourage you to make sure you clearly state the added value of this award in your Innovate UK Unlocking Potential Award Begin application.

We advise you to check the eligibility criteria of each competition to ensure you are eligible. You will also need to check that you are not exceeding your Minimal Financial assistance (MFA) or De minimis limit of £315,000 in the ‘applicable period’.

Note: You must not have received any Innovate UK funding to be eligible for this competition.

**Q. Am I able to use this grant to hire consultants or subcontractors?**

A. No. Subcontractors are not allowed in this competition.

**Q. What can the funding be used for?**

A. The funding will be provided under Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) rules or De minimis rules where applicable. You cannot use the award to match fund for other competitions as it is considered to be public funding and cannot be used to secure other forms of Subsidy or State aid. The award should help to strengthen your position to secure additional investment.

For additional information on de minimis funding you can visit:

https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/#contents-list

bit.ly/unlocking-potential-award
We are not funding projects that:

- do not meet the competition eligibility or scope
- do not intend to use the full package of support on offer
- have a negative impact on the environment or society
- have a detrimental effect on equality, diversity, and inclusion
- do not involve any research and development or innovation, for example, the creation of information-only websites
- involve exports or imports
- involve primary production in fishery and aquaculture
- involve primary production in agriculture
- include activities relating to the purchase of road freight transport
- are not allowed under De minimis regulation restrictions
- are not allowed under Minimal Financial Assistance
- are dependent on export performance – for example giving an award to a baker on the condition that they export a certain quantity of bread to another country
- are dependent on domestic inputs usage – for example if we give an award to a baker on the condition that they use 50% UK flour in their product.

Under current restrictions, this funding opportunity will not fund any procurement, commercial, business development or supply chain activity with any Russian or Belarusian entity as lead, partner, or subcontractor. This includes any goods or services originating from a Russian or Belarusian source.

Q. Is the £5,000 (or £15,000) award 100% funded?

A. Yes. We do not require match-funding because the funding is provided as Minimal Financial Assistance or De Minimis rules where applicable.