

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

(New or amended FAQs are highlighted in red)

Funding

1. Who is funding this competition?

The OfS and Research England are jointly funding this competition as we have a mutual interest in supporting knowledge exchange.

Together we deliver £210 million to support knowledge exchange activities through the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF). This budget contribution reflects the underlying mix of research and teaching-related competences of providers which drive knowledge exchange and the impacts it creates.

Beyond this funding, we are also working together to consider how to measure the impact of student involvement in knowledge exchange.

2. Can other organisations apply for this funding?

Other organisations can be partners in proposals, but the project lead must be a higher education provider that is eligible for both OfS and RE funding. Bids will need to demonstrate clearly what all partners will contribute to the project, the nature and scope of their involvement, the investment they are contributing and how the collaborations will work successfully, if funded.

3. Is co-investment a requirement?

There is no formal requirement. However, bids will be assessed against the extent to which proposals are supported by appropriate co-investment and funding from the higher education providers and other partners, as part of their commitment to the project. It is unlikely that a proposal will be funded without any co-investment; however, where there is no co-investment the reasons for this must be clearly addressed in the bid so that we can consider accordingly.

In-kind contributions are eligible as co-investment but must be fully costed so that we can understand the cash value of these.

4. Can bidders use HEIF as co-investment?

This is a decision for the provider. We do not ask about the source of provider contributions.

5. Is full economic costing required?

Bidders can use any costing methodology. All project costs (and the basis on which they are calculated) must be clear and understandable as these will be considered as part of the assessment process. All costs must be reasonable, particularly for the funding sought from us.

6. Is capital funding available?

Funding is not available for equipment and infrastructure costs.

7. Is there a maximum amount of funding or number of projects that will be funded?

There is £10 million available for this competition. We are seeking high-quality proposals and want to fund a range of projects covering different types of providers, places, subjects, sectors, student groups, and knowledge exchange activities.

8. When will successful projects receive the first tranche of funding?

The first tranche of funding for successful projects should become available in April 2020.

9. What type of evidence are you expecting in relation to the funding and resource that all partners and stakeholders are committing to the project?

Where projects involve partners, bidders should provide letters of support from the partners clearly demonstrating their investment and commitment. These letters should be collated into one document and submitted alongside the bid template.

10. What level of matched funding is expected?

This is dependent on the nature of the project. We do though expect HE providers to provide an appropriate level of co-investment to provide evidence of their commitment to the project and to share risks. If no co-investment can be provided then a clear rationale and explanation should be set out in the bid so that we can consider. Every project will be assessed on value for money.

11. What is the position regarding cash vs in-kind contributions?

Co-investment can be as additional cash outlay, and/or in-kind funding, depending upon the requirements of the project and the nature of the proposed activities. Any in-kind contributions should be made clear in the bid and costed out, so that we can understand the cash value of these.

Student engagement

12. Can all types of students be involved in projects?

Yes, as part of a coherent proposal where there are transferable benefits and good practice which can be shared across the sector.

13. Should we be aiming this project at any particular types of students?

All types of students can be involved, as part of a coherent proposal where there are transferable benefits and good practice to be shared across the sector. Bids should be clear about whether they are focusing on particular groups of students and the reasons why.

14. Can we include pre-entry students?

Yes.

15. Could we use the funding to work with graduates?

Yes, as part of a coherent proposal where there are transferable benefits and good practice which can be shared across the sector.

16. Can we include international students and partners in a proposal?

International partners can participate in a project but there must be clear benefits for home students too. The rationale for an international collaboration should also be clearly set out. Ideally, the partners will also be investing in the project themselves, in cash or in-kind.

Partners

17. What is the minimum number of collaborators?

There is no minimum of collaborators or partners, but the proposal must be coherent with all partners having a strategic interest in the activities. There must be full commitment to the project, and an appropriate amount of co-investment.

18. Could a provider from a devolved nation be included as a strategic partner?

Yes. However, funding can only be provided to higher education providers based in England and meeting the eligibility requirements. Therefore, any provider from a devolved nation involved in the bid could not receive any of this funding and would have to fund any commissioned activity separately.

Process

19. Can we seek funding for an entirely new activity, or must we demonstrate a track record in an existing area of activity?

Either approach is in scope. We are open to receiving bids which propose new projects, and proposals which build upon the success of existing activities.

If it is a new area of activity you must demonstrate through the bid why and how the activities will generate success, drawing upon underlying data or evidence as support. We need to understand why the provider is best placed to take forward any new activities including the contributions of partners. We will want to understand the likelihood of success, and the risks involved. Be clear about your plans for demonstrating and disseminating effective practice.

If building upon an existing initiative, you must demonstrate through the bid the additionality that the funding will deliver, in order to differentiate it from what you are currently providing.

20. How should a proposal evidence a track record of KE?

Bidders should include any clear and credible information that is appropriate to demonstrate evidence of their track record KE. We are aware that KE extends beyond HEIF i.e. it is about doing KE rather than just being funded for it. Bidders can provide evidence of their track record within the bid narrative through examples of activities and their impacts.

21. Will you consider funding projects at providers that don't have a track record of KE?

If a potential bidder cannot demonstrate a credible and clear record of delivering KE activities, they are unlikely to meet the eligibility criteria for bidding to the scheme. If they would potentially bring benefits to projects in their particular area of expertise then they could be a partner in a project.

22. Is there any difference between the requirements of the OfS and RE in considering the bids?

No. This is a joint competition for bids and all submissions will be assessed using the published criteria, aims and objectives, which was agreed by both the OfS and RE.

23. Who is on the panel?

The panel is chaired by Professor David Maguire, currently Vice Chancellor of the University of Greenwich. There are representatives from Innovate UK, enterprise education, NCUB, the OfS Board, the OfS Student Panel, the RE Council, and small, specialist providers active in KE.

24. How many bids can be submitted by a provider?

Eligible higher education providers can be involved in a maximum of two bids but may only act as lead provider for one bid.

25. Will you accept applications after the deadline of 1700 on 13 December?

No.

26. My bid has exceeded the page limit. What are the consequences?

Our assessors and the panel will reserve the right to stop reading proposals if they exceed the page limit.

27. When do projects have to complete by?

March 2022.

28. What monitoring requirements will be involved?

The project reporting will focus on progress against key objectives and milestones, financial accountability, and risk management. The end of project report will also seek information on the key outcomes derived from the project, even if these will run beyond the funding period.

As indicated in the bidding documentation, all funded projects must be involved in evaluation and dissemination activities undertaken by the OfS and RE. Further information on monitoring requirements will be set out in award letters for the successful projects.

29. How will you inform providers of bid outcomes?

We will inform bidders by email whether they have been successful during March 2020 and will issue award letters to all successful bidders.

30. I have contacted you with a query on this competition and not yet received a response. Is there a problem?

We will respond to all email and telephone queries as quickly as possible. Should you have any difficulties in contacting us, please contact OfS customer services in the first instance on 0117 931 7317.

We are committed to working together throughout this process and will ensure that you receive a full response to your question.