**UK Futures Programme**

**Frequently Asked Questions – Skills for Innovation in Manufacturing**

These questions and answers are specific to the ‘Skills for Innovation in Manufacturing’ competition. These should be read in conjunction with the [Programme level](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/330521/Programme_Level_FAQ.docx) FAQs.

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| **Question** | | **Answer** |
| 1 | Is there a minimum % of matched investment that we are expected to put into the project? | No there is no minimum amount of investment required but you need to be able to show that the employer contributions are appropriate to the type of project. |
| 2 | Does our investment need to be cash or can it be in kind? | It can be in kind, in cash or both but again needs to be appropriate to the type of project. |
| 3 | I am a small employer can I put in a single proposal on my own or do I need to join a consortium? | Both are fine - You can put in a single proposal on your own, or as part of a consortium application, whichever you would prefer. But individual applications much show evidence of wider engagement with other businesses and potential for impact beyond their organisation. |
| 4 | Would a 1 nation based project be acceptable? | Yes, the Programme and all the competitions we run will be open across the UK (unless stated otherwise for further competitions).  As well as UK-wide applications, those focussed on one country, a particular region, city or other local area are welcome, providing the learning gathered would be relevant to businesses throughout the UK. |
| 5 | Could two separate bids be made? | If the applications are related we would be expecting the "whole story" to be presented in one application. If the projects are unrelated we would welcome two separate applications. |
| 6 | Can I put in a bid to conduct research on the issues in these sectors? | Bids for research are out of scope for this competition. We are inviting applications for developing solutions, piloting solutions, and scaling up solutions to the issues identified within the competition brief. |
| 7 | How will you be looking to measure the success of the projects? | The main success measures for projects are better outcomes for business (e.g. sales, productivity, profit, staff recruitment, retention and utilisation). These will be monitored through the projects and through the evaluation of the competition. |
| 8 | How will you evaluate the impact that the projects have made? | Integral to this approach is an ethos of testing, which will require projects to have methods in place to enable continuous learning. As projects develop, insights will need to be fed back to improve ongoing development and delivery, and shared with others to maximise the benefits of the learning. We will also evaluate the impact at the end of the competition through a competition evaluation. |
| 9 | Would you recommend or prefer a specific range of partners within project team? | You (or the organisation leading the proposal) are best placed to know who should be involved in your project. Whoever you think will strengthen your proposal, you should include them in your proposal - from our point of view, it is important that the organisation leading the proposal has identified why particular partners are involved and has a strong rationale for what they will add to the project. All projects should be led by employers with a range of employers engaged throughout the project. |
| 10 | How many partners should be in the proposal? | There is no fixed number of partners. It is a matter of making sure that the partners involved in the project make a valuable contribution. We are looking for quality over quantity. |
| 11 | What is the duration of the project? | We envisage that the successful projects will commence in June 2015 and will run for up to 12 months. |

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| 12 | Will we need to submit monthly progress reports to UKCES when the projects are up and running? | No, the monitoring arrangements will be light touch, and agreed with your relationship manager who will be in regular contact with you throughout the project. Progress reporting is quarterly. We are much more focussed on co-creation and supporting your projects through development. |
| 13 | The impact of the project I am considering might not be seen within the 12 months that the project will run for. Will I be penalised for this? | Not at all, we expect that some of the measurable impact of these projects may take longer to be seen. As such we envisage conducting evaluations at a later date once the projects have concluded. |
| 14 | I have already begun testing some ideas on improving skills and progression within my business, would I still be eligible to submit a proposal to upscale these pilots? | Absolutely, if your solution is already showing signs of impact to your workforce this will only strengthen your proposal. |
| 15 | I have a couple of innovative ideas that I would like to test but I’m not sure they will work; can I still submit a proposal? | Yes, the UK Futures Programme is all about testing out solutions to see what works, what doesn’t, and why. If the potential for impact is there we will welcome these kinds of proposals. |
| 16 | I ideally would like to do some more research before I develop ideas / solutions is that ok? | As part of this competition we would specifically like to see development proposals rather than research based proposals. You could build ‘research’ into the development of a solution and test this through the development. |
| 17 | Do I have to test and share my learning with wider employer groups? | Yes, all successful applicants will be expected to attend the Innovation Labs and share their learning. |
| 18 | Can I fill in the PDF application form and submit that by email? | No, the application form needs to be filled in and submitted online. You need to register to gain access to the online application form. By all means use the PDF whilst compiling your application but email applications will not be accepted. |
| 19 | Can a college or intermediary submit an application? | Yes, intermediaries, such as universities or colleges, are welcome to be included in proposals because we understand that intermediary bodies may be critical to assist businesses (particularly micro and small businesses) in developing and delivering skills solutions. |
| 20 | Will the webinar videos be available online anywhere? | Yes the webinar videos are available on YouTube here:   * What is the UK Futures Programme?   UKFP Commissioner lead, Scott Waddington:  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rxauYNgX_U&list=PLBKSiHxV0EKYnMXNtOtyIdJEK2tQ2uBhT>   * About the Skills for Innovation in Manufacturing Competition   Commissioner lead, Paul McKelvie:  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HY1INURoIi4>   * About the Skills for Innovation in Manufacturing application   Competition lead, Paul Casey:  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X077Yo7ZXuI&list=PLBKSiHxV0EKYnMXNtOtyIdJEK2tQ2uBhT&index=3> |
| 21 | Is it possible to send participants the relevant links please? | [Competition Brief](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukces-futures-programme-skills-for-innovation-in-manufacturing-competition-brief)  [Competition Press Release](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1-million-available-to-help-uk-manufacturing-firms-develop-skills-to-maximise-value-of-innovation)  (Registration for the) [Online Application Form](https://adobeformscentral.com/?f=yCLxX4qks6VcaEJdkldJSg)  [Complete Application Guidance Document](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukces-futures-programme-application-form) |
| 22 | How can we raise any future questions with you? | If you have any further questions please feel free to contact us on the following email address [Enquiries.FuturesProgramme@ukces.org.uk](mailto:Enquiries.FuturesProgramme@ukces.org.uk) |
| 23 | What would be considered public sector contributions? | The public sector contributions we refer to are from UKCES. You can also provide other sources of public funding such as funding from other government departments. |
| 24 | Is there a limitation in terms of numbers of employers for the business? | No there is no limitation on the amount of employers / employees that can be involved in the project. |
| 25 | What are the core criteria my application will be judged against? | Proposals will be assessed against the core criteria of:   * Strong employer leadership/engagement; * Innovation (in reference to the solution proposed itself); * A clear path from problem-to-solution which demonstrates the potential for impact; * Testing and sharing learning with the UKCES and other projects receiving investment through the competition; * Public and private investment – this can be cash, in-kind or both. |
| 26 | How much testing will I have to do? I know what I want to implement and just want to get on with it? | The Futures Programme is about learning ‘what works’, this is to benefit both the broader Programme but also individual projects. Testing what you are doing along the way, rather than waiting until the end, can give you a better project with a more sustainable future, because you can adapt as you go.  The [Testing and Shared Learning Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukces-futures-programme-guidance-document-testing-and-shared-learning) suggests that there are likely to be 3 areas you would want to look at:   * The end product you are developing (e.g. new job roles – testing how best to change task organisation or shift patterns); * The methods you use (e.g. the way changes are communicated to staff to achieve high engagement) and * The logic chain you will apply (e.g. how the improved pathways will improve retention).   So, whilst you may know what you want to do, we would be looking to ensure you had tested those ideas beforehand in your application, or would want to see how you might test through the project itself. It need not be complex, but ensuring a process of reviewing and testing with an appropriate audience and reviewing or revising what you do as appropriate. |
| 27 | What are we supposed to test and how? | * Think about what is innovative about the project - refer back to the innovation box. If it is innovative, it is risky and you are likely to want to test it as it develops more. * The innovation might be a product or it might be a method - a new way of doing things. * We also ask you to test you theory of change (from the logic chain), which if you pick the right things to test, should happen fairly naturally.   There are also two dimensions:   * Testing products as you go along with the end users (and ensuring you capture a cross section of end users) * Testing / evaluating the final outcomes – have they changed the original problem (as in the logic chain)   We don't expect a detailed methodology, but some consideration of, and potential to resource:   * Who will you test with? * When? * What are you likely to learn from that and how it will feedback to the development of the project?   We have the testing plan template available on website - to show the type of thing we expect to develop as part of the contract negotiation process. |
| 28 | How are we expected to share what we learn? | We want you to work with us and share what you have learnt. You will do this via:   * Stage Completion Reports - to feedback on what they have done, what they have tested and what they have learnt. * Inception meeting * Innovation Labs * Extranet and other opportunities to share with other projects * End of competition reporting, potential to be case studies etc.   We want the Futures Programme to influence wider policy and practice, so in the application, you must show willingness (and resource) to achieve this. |
| 29 | How competitive is the Futures Programme, what are my chances of being awarded funding? | This is difficult to answer. The number of projects that will be successful in gaining funding will be limited to the overall budget of £1 million for this competition. We are looking for a number of projects which will enable us to test and learn from solutions that address the challenges outlined in the Competition brief. The opportunity of being awarded funding depends on how many applications are received and the quality of the applications and ideas. The better the quality of your application and idea, the better chance you will have of being awarded funding. |
| 30 | My bid also contains employers from outside the manufacturing sector, are these employers allowed to be part of my proposal? | Yes, but there must also be demonstrable support from employers in the manufacturing sector. |
| 31 | Can an organisation apply multiple times, either with different unique proposals or with different partners? | Yes. An organisation can make multiple applications or be part of multiple applications. |
| 32 | Dates: it says the funding would run from June to June (15/16) but then refers to the fiscal year - when does the money need to be spent by? | Funding will commence in June 2015 and end in June 2016. The full money needs to be spent by the end of June 2016, with the majority spent by the end of March 2016. For example an application could request 80% of the funding to be spent from June 2015 to March 2016 with the remaining 20% to be spent between April and June 2016. Please note these are indicative percentages for illustration purposes. |
| 33 | Is the funding affected by State Aid rules? | Yes. It is up to competition applicants to determine whether their proposal is state aid compliant. To assist there are questions for applicants to consider in the competition application form (see Section 9, State Aid). The onus to comply with state aid regulations is with the competition applicant, not the UKCES. If an investment is made in your proposal and State aid rules are found to have been breached this could result in all funding being clawed back with interest. Applicants apply at their own risk and should take their own legal advice if in doubt. |
| 34 | What is the status/definition of ‘employer’? | Every competition under the UK Futures Programme requires strong employer leadership and engagement to be clearly evident in every application. Applicants are asked to identify the organisations taking part and what role they will play. The governance arrangements and project leadership are also required to be stated. Proposals can consist of individual employer organisations, groups of employers and legally constituted employer representative bodies. In this competition, a definition of an employer is an organisation whose main function is the production of products. The employer must employ people (or themselves) in this activity. The sector will be defined using Standard Industrial Classification codes ([UK Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities 2007](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/classifications/current-standard-classifications/standard-industrial-classification/index.html), Section C, Divisions 10-33)(description below).    An intermediary may submit a proposal on behalf of employers but it must demonstrate sufficient evidence that the proposal is being led by employers (as defined above). This may be in circumstances, for instance, where employers do not have the capability and/or resources to co-ordinate or administer the project. An intermediary may be a representative of the sector, but not an organisation involved itself in manufacturing (e.g. a Sector Skills Council) or it could be a public or private training provider (e.g. a university). |