

NESCA Reviewer scoring guidance June 2025

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1. Alignment of proposal, understanding of need, and background research

Based on the background research and need, the letters of support, and the project description, how do you rate the understanding of the need for this project and the social/technical quality of the proposed work?

Key Assessment criteria:

- Full understanding of the need
- Scope of the proposal aligns with the call and themes
- Advancement of the [SRL/MRL/TRL](#) level of the proposed work (if applicable)
- Strong links to long-term regional resilient space communication goals
- The quality of the original research i.e. High quality or of strategic importance versus research that is non-competitive and non-transformative.

Score (Integers only)	Level	Description
9 or 10	Excellent Quality	<p>There is a full understanding of the need for this project, policy change or the market. Beneficiaries or customers are identified, and the opportunity is clear. The state of the art is considered in depth.</p> <p>If appropriate to the level of development of the innovation: stakeholders/customers have been involved, strong letters of support are provided.</p> <p>Proposed work is based on original research that is of high quality strategically transformative, representing a significant advancement in its field. SRL/MRL/TRL levels are clearly defined and appropriate and demonstrate advanced development for meaningful progression.</p> <p>Scope of the proposal aligns seamlessly with the call's objectives, ensuring it addresses key priorities effectively.</p>

7 or 8	High Quality	<p>There is a good understanding of the need for this project, policy change or market, beneficiaries or customer types, and the opportunity, the market size has been estimated. The state of the art is broadly discussed, If appropriate to the level of development of the innovation: a few stakeholders/customers have been approached, and a letter of support is provided.</p> <p>The proposal is underpinned by high-quality research that is of strategic importance and offers substantial value. SRL/MRL/TRL levels are suitable and support the advancement of the proposed work, though they are not as advanced as in top-tier projects.</p> <p>There are strong and evident links to regional space resilient communication goals, indicating potential for positive contributions.</p> <p>Scope of the proposal aligns well with the call, addressing most key priorities effectively.</p>
5 or 6	Acceptable Quality	<p>There is some understanding of the need for this project, policy change or market. Beneficiaries customers/stakeholders have been identified, but not approached, when this might be expected for the level of development. Some other examples of competing technologies are mentioned</p> <p>Proposed work is supported by research that is competent and relevant but lacks a strong competitive or transformative edge. SRL/MRL/TRL levels are defined but may need further development or refinement to achieve their intended goals.</p> <p>Proposal demonstrates moderate alignment with regional space goals, though the connection could be stronger.</p> <p>While the scope fits within the call's parameters, it addresses priorities in a less comprehensive or impactful manner.</p>
3 or 4	Moderate Quality	<p>There is limited understanding of the need for this project, the policy driver or market and customers, and the market size is not understood.</p> <p>No beneficiaries, customers or stakeholders are identified when this might be expected for the level of development. The state of the art may be touched on, but there is limited analysis or understanding.</p> <p>Proposal is based on research that is of limited strategic or competitive value, providing minimal innovation or advancement. SRL/MRL/TRL levels are poorly developed, loosely applicable, or insufficient for achieving significant progress.</p> <p>Links to regional space goals are weak and lack substantive evidence of potential impact.</p> <p>Alignment with the call's scope is partial, addressing only a few priorities with limited relevance or focus.</p>
1 or 2	Poor Quality	<p>Proposed work is grounded in research that is non-competitive and non-transformative, offering little to no advancement in its field. SRL/MRL/TRL levels are either absent, undefined, or entirely unsuitable for the proposed work. Proposal demonstrates no meaningful links to regional space goals, failing to address key decarbonisation challenges. Scope is misaligned with the call, providing little relevance or alignment with its objectives.</p>

2. Suitability of partners and level of co creation and Knowledge Exchange

Based on the description of internal/external collaborators (see Project Overview, Project HR, and Project Collaborators sections), how well does the proposal demonstrate co-creation with project stakeholders? (see letters of support if applicable)

Key Assessment criteria:

- Suitability and involvement of partners to provide resources to facilitate knowledge exchange and/or technical support towards regional space growth
- Partner commitment in terms of the value of cash and/or in-kind support.
- Opportunities for additional follow-on projects/activities with external partners

IMPORTANT NOTE – For Spinouts, consider the letter of support from the user/customer and IP Section to consider how the market need and route to market have been explored through effective prior engagement. Replacing future partnership with past exploration and engagement with non-academics.

Score (Integers only)	Level	Description
9 or 10	Excellent Evidence of Co-creation	The proposal demonstrates high levels of co-creation, with partners clearly providing resources and support to facilitate knowledge exchange and technical contributions toward regional Space sector. Partner commitment is robust, evidenced by clear commitment set out in the Letter of support, as well as substantial cash or in-kind contributions. It outlines significant opportunities for follow-on projects or activities with external collaborators.
7 or 8	Notable Evidence of Co-creation	The proposal shows a well-structured collaboration with partners actively involved in providing resources and technical support for regional space sector efforts. Partner commitment is clear and meaningful, with solid cash or in-kind contributions. There is notable potential for additional follow-on projects or collaborative activities.
5 or 6	Moderate Evidence of Co-creation	The proposal demonstrates moderate co-creation, with partners contributing to knowledge exchange and some technical support. Partner commitment is present but less substantial, with modest cash or in-kind contributions. Opportunities for follow-on projects or collaborations are identified but lack full clarity or scope.
3 or 4	Minimal Evidence of Co-creation	The proposal shows minimal co-creation, with limited partner involvement in knowledge exchange or technical support. Partner commitment is weak, with low or unclear cash or in-kind contributions. Opportunities for follow-on projects or external collaborations are vague or poorly defined.
1 or 2	No Evidence of Co-creation	The proposal provides no evidence of co-creation, with no clear partner involvement or contributions toward knowledge exchange or technical support. Partner commitment is absent or undefined, and there are no discernible opportunities for follow-on projects or collaborations.

3. Achievability of Outcomes and Regional Impact (DOUBLE-WEIGHTED for Lift Off Funding)

Based on the Summary for Potential Impact, Project Overview, the Project Benefits, and Project Outcomes sections, to what extent will the proposed project generate a significant impact on the North East Space economy and society

Key Assessment criteria:

- Potential for innovative impact and knowledge exchange, including policy and practice
- Potential to transform and/or create innovative, novel improvements to technologies/techniques/methodologies/tools/policies regionally.
- Potential to attract follow-on funding for additional regional projects/activities
- Reasonable timelines for the realisation of project outputs, outcomes, and impact described in the proposal

- Size of regional and/or national/international user or customer base
- Approach to disseminating project outputs and outcomes

Score (Integers only)	Level	Description
9 or 10	Very High Impact	<p>Proposal shows exceptionally strong and direct links to long-term regional space goals, contributing to impactful outcomes.</p> <p>The partners and their roles are described in detail, and their benefits and impacts are explained. How the Impact in the North East will be realised is detailed and is highly likely to occur. The long-term impacts are described, and credible pathways to achieving them.</p> <p>It demonstrates an exceptional potential for innovative impact and knowledge exchange, significantly advancing policy and practice. Poised to deliver transformative improvements to technologies, methodologies, or policies, with strong alignment to regional needs. A clear and feasible plan to attract follow-on funding, coupled with reasonable timelines for achieving well-defined outputs and outcomes.</p> <p>Targets a defined regional and/or national/international user base or beneficiaries, supported by a comprehensive engagement or dissemination strategy that ensures widespread engagement and adoption of its results.</p> <p>The project outcomes are fully described, and the route to achieving them is planned.</p>
7 or 8	Notable Impact	<p>Substantial potential for innovation and knowledge exchange, with a clear pathway to influencing policy or practice</p> <p>The role of the partners is explained and how they will benefit from the project.</p> <p>Impact in the North East is explained and is credible. Long term impacts are considered, with a plan to achieve them.</p> <p>Outlines meaningful advancements in technologies, methodologies, or tools relevant to regional priorities.</p> <p>Plans for follow-on funding are strong but may require some refinement.</p> <p>Project outcomes and routes to achieving them are detailed, but timelines for outputs and outcomes are reasonable, although slightly ambitious. Has a sizeable user base and a robust dissemination plan that effectively communicates its results to relevant stakeholders.</p>
5 or 6	Moderate Impact	<p>Project outcomes are outlined, but no clear plan to realise them is provided. Partners are discussed, but it isn't clear what their role is or how they benefit from participating. There could be an impact in the North East; however, achieving this requires more work. Long-term impacts are mentioned, with some explanation of how they might be achieved.</p> <p>Demonstrates some potential for innovative impact and knowledge exchange, but its influence on policy or practice may be limited. Proposed improvements to technologies or methodologies are moderate and lack transformative qualities. Plans for follow-on funding are outlined but lack detail or feasibility. Timelines for outputs and outcomes appear achievable but could face delays. The user base is moderately sized, and the dissemination strategy, while adequate, may not reach all key stakeholders.</p>
3 or 4	Low Impact	<p>Project outcomes are missing or not detailed, there's little or no plan on how they will be realised. It is unclear why the partners are involved and what they will do. Impact in the North East is tenuous or highly unlikely. Long-term impacts need more explanation or are not detailed at all.</p> <p>Exhibits limited potential for innovative impact or knowledge exchange, with minimal prospects for influencing policy or practice. Proposed improvements to technologies or methodologies are incremental and lack regional relevance. Plans for follow-on funding are weak or unclear. Timelines for outputs and outcomes are poorly defined or unrealistic. The user base is small, and the dissemination strategy is underdeveloped, limiting engagement and impact.</p>
1 or 2	Negligible Impact	<p>Project outcomes are missing or not detailed, there's little or no plan on how they will be realised. It is unclear why the partners are involved and what they will do. Impact in the North East is tenuous or highly unlikely. Long terms impacts need more explanation or are not detailed at all.</p> <p>Lacks potential for innovative impact or meaningful knowledge exchange and has no clear connection to policy or practice. Offers no significant improvements to technologies or methodologies. There is no viable plan for follow-on funding, and timelines for outputs and</p>

outcomes are vague or unattainable. The user base is negligible, and the dissemination strategy is absent or ineffective, severely limiting any potential for regional or broader impact.

4. Quality of Project Plan

Having assessed the Project Overview, Project description, project plan, milestones risk management plan and Project Intellectual Property Management sections.

What is the overall quality of the proposal and, how robust is the applicant's proposed strategic plan for commercialisation and/or social development?

Key Assessment criteria:

- Quality of project plan - clear plan / realistic timescales/ risk mitigation/ ability to evidence
- Resilience of the Intellectual Property strength, ownership, and plan
- Market opportunity and route(s) to market
- Regional/national socio or economic benefit

Score (Integers only)	Level	Description
9 or 10	Comprehensive Strategic Plan	The project has a detailed and well managed plan. The Project Management methodology is described. Detailed project plan is provided with work packages explained and clear roles for the team. Credible Project Milestones are provided. The Risk Register is completed with credible mitigation and contingency plans. There is confidence the plan will be run well and completed on time. The proposed strategy demonstrates exceptional resilience in intellectual property strength, ownership, and a clear, well-defined plan. The market opportunity is compelling, with well-articulated and practical routes to market. It outlines substantial regional socio-economic benefits, ensuring broad and impactful outcomes.
7 or 8	Robust Strategic Plan	The project has a well managed plan. Project Management process is explained. The project team and their roles are outlined. Plan details the task and timeline. Project Milestones and Risk Register have been completed. The plan is good, will likely complete on time. Strategy is strong, with clear intellectual property ownership and a well-structured plan, though not without minor gaps. Market opportunities are significant, with feasible and practical routes to market. The regional socio-economic benefits are evident and meaningful, though not maximised.
5 or 6	Somewhat Robust Strategic Plan	The project plan requires more work. No Project Management approach is mentioned. The team is briefly mentioned. A simple Milestones and Risk Register require more rigour in their assessment, key risks are missing. The plan is functional and may finish in time. Strategy shows moderate intellectual property strength, with ownership and plans that are defined but lack full detail or resilience. Market opportunities are identified but not fully validated, and routes to market are less developed. The socio-economic benefits are present but limited in scale or clarity.
3 or 4	Weak Strategic Plan	There is not enough detail about the project plan. The team is not mentioned. Only a few milestones and risks are provided and not well assessed. It is unlikely the project will finish in time. Strategy lacks sufficient intellectual property strength or clarity in ownership and planning. Market opportunities are poorly articulated, with vague or impractical routes to market. Regional and national socio-economic benefits are minimal, lacking clear pathways for impactful contributions.

1 or 2	Insufficient Strategic Plan	There is not enough detail about the project plan. The team is not mentioned. Only a few milestones and risks are provided and not well assessed. It is unlikely the project will finish in time Strategy fails to demonstrate intellectual property strength, ownership, or a coherent plan. Market opportunities are absent or undefined, with no viable routes to market. Regional and national socio-economic benefits are negligible, offering no tangible outcomes or potential impact.
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5. Justification of resources

Based on a review of the Project Finance, Project Human Resources and Ethics, and the Project Aims, Objectives, Workplan and Risk sections, does the project present good value for money and is timely project completion likely given the resource allocations?

Key Assessment criteria:

- Realistic allocation of time, cost, and resources, given the project, presents value for money and realistic outcomes.
- Understanding of project HR capability and availability of resources required to complete the project on time
- Description of the project risk(s) with mitigating action(s) appropriate and costed
- Project aim(s), objectives and workplan appropriate and costed

Score (Integers only)	Level	Description
9 or 10	Very Likely	The project demonstrates a well-balanced allocation of time, cost, and resources aligned with its scope. The resources required for the project are fully described. HR capabilities and resource availability are fully sufficient to ensure timely completion. Strong justification is made for why they are all required to meet the project outcomes. Where necessary funds are used to enable the team to fully participate in the project. The funding requested is only what is needed. The project impacts are significantly greater than the funds requested. The project provides excellent value for money. Risks are clearly identified with comprehensive mitigating actions. The aims, objectives, and workplan are robust and achievable
7 or 8	Likely	The project shows a strong allocation of time, cost, and resources, though minor adjustments may be needed. The resources required for the project are described. There is good justification made for why they are needed. HR capabilities and resources are adequate to meet timelines. Where necessary funds are used to enable team members to participate in the project. The project impacts are much greater than the funds requested. The project provides great value for money. Risks are identified with reasonable mitigating actions. The aims, objectives, and workplan are sound, though with some room for improvement.
5 or 6	Somewhat Likely	The project's time, cost, and resource allocations are broadly realistic but require refinement for better alignment. Most of the resources required for the project are outlined. Justification is made for why some are needed. HR capabilities and resources are present but may be insufficient in specific areas. The project provides some value for money. Risk identification is incomplete or lacks detailed mitigation plans. The aims, objectives, and workplan are outlined but may face challenges
3 or 4	Somewhat Likely with high uncertainty	The project's resource allocations are misaligned with its scope, raising concerns about feasibility. The resources required are not well described or are not mentioned at all. There is little or no justification for the resources. HR capabilities and resource availability are uncertain, adding considerable risk to timely completion. Funds are not used to support

		the needs of team members. The project impacts do not exceed the funds requested. There is little or no value for money. Risk identification is weak, with few or unclear mitigation strategies. The aims, objectives, and workplan have significant gaps.
1 or 2	Very Unlikely	The project's allocation of time, cost, and resources is unrealistic and inadequate.. HR capabilities and resource availability are insufficient to achieve timely completion. Risks are poorly identified or lack mitigation strategies. The aims, objectives, and workplan are disorganised or overly ambitious

6. RRI & Sustainability

Based on the project overview, how effective is the project's approach in embedding Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) throughout its lifecycle?

Key Assessment criteria:

- **Anticipate:** Description and analysis of the impacts, intended or otherwise, that might arise (such as economic, social).
- **Reflect:** Description of the purposes of, motivations for and potential implications of the research, together with the associated uncertainties, areas of ignorance, assumptions, framings, questions, dilemmas and social transformations these may bring.
- **Engage:** Outline opportunities to dialogue, engage and debate in an inclusive way with all stakeholders.
- **Act:** Description of how stakeholder feedback will be used to influence the trajectory of the research and innovation process.

Score (Integers only)	Level	Description
9 or 10	Comprehensive Approach	Responsible Innovation is well considered, and credible plans made to tackle any issues arising. The project presents a thorough analysis of potential impacts, addressing both intended and unintended consequences, including economic and social dimensions. It clearly articulates the research's purposes, motivations, implications, and uncertainties while exploring critical dilemmas and potential social transformations. It establishes robust opportunities for inclusive dialogue and engagement with stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback is fully integrated to meaningfully shape the research and innovation trajectory.
7 or 8	Effective Approach	The project provides a detailed assessment of potential impacts, considering most intended and unintended consequences. It effectively describes the research's motivations, implications, and uncertainties, addressing some key dilemmas and transformations. The approach includes strong opportunities for stakeholder engagement and feedback mechanisms, which are likely to influence the research direction constructively.
5 or 6	Moderately Effective Approach	The project offers a satisfactory analysis of potential impacts but lacks detail on unintended consequences. Motivations, implications, and uncertainties are described but may not fully address assumptions or dilemmas. Stakeholder engagement opportunities are present but not well-developed. Feedback integration is outlined but has limited potential to significantly shape the research.
3 or 4	Mildly Effective Approach	The project provides a minimal analysis of potential impacts, focusing narrowly on intended consequences. Discussion of motivations, implications, and uncertainties is superficial, with little attention to assumptions or dilemmas. Stakeholder engagement opportunities are sparse and lack inclusivity. Feedback mechanisms are weak or unlikely to influence the research trajectory meaningfully.

1 or 2	Insufficient Approach	The project fails to analyse potential impacts or consider unintended consequences. It provides little to no discussion of motivations, implications, or uncertainties and neglects critical dilemmas or assumptions. Stakeholder engagement opportunities are absent or tokenistic, and no mechanisms exist to incorporate feedback into the research process.
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7. EDI

Based on the project overview, how effective is the project describing its approach to embedding Equality Diversity and Inclusivity (ED&I) throughout its lifecycle?

Key Assessment criteria:

- Foster and sustain a culture that is inclusive and supportive
- Take action to eliminate barriers that hinder the advancement or engagement for project team members
- Opportunities for Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to develop their knowledge, skills and career.
- Take action to eliminate barriers that hinder the advancement of regional decarbonisation goals.
- Plan to ensure research and innovation outcomes are widely accessible to all stakeholders with a particular focus on gender and socio-economic factors

Score (Integers only)	Level	Description
9 or 10	Comprehensive Approach	Best practice in EDI and Sustainability is detailed. e.g. biases are considered in project design, users are central to device and system design. Support for the team is identified and implemented. Sustainable or minimal travel is considered. Use of materials, energy, and waste is considered and reduced where possible A well-structured and thoroughly embedded approach to EDI throughout its lifecycle. Fosters an inclusive and supportive culture, actively eliminating barriers to advancement and engagement for team members, including Early Career Researchers (ECRs). Includes specific, measurable actions to address barriers in growing the North East region's space sector and ensures that research outcomes are accessible to all stakeholders, with particular attention to gender and/or socio-economic disparities. The plan is holistic, strategic, and aligned with EDI principles at every stage.
7 or 8	Effective Approach	EDI and Sustainability plans are described. e.g. biases and end users considered during the design and development of the outcomes. Team consulted on their needs. Sustainability plans are credible. Effectively incorporates EDI into its lifecycle, promoting a supportive and inclusive culture. Outlines clear measures to reduce barriers for team members and provides opportunities for ECRs to enhance their skills and career progression. Actions to address barriers in growing the region's space sector are described, but may lack comprehensive detail. Has a strong plan to make research outcomes widely accessible, with some attention to gender and/or socio-economic factors. The approach is effective but could benefit from additional specificity.
5 or 6	Moderately Effective Approach	EDI and Sustainability are outlined. e.g. some consideration is made for bias or users in project and device design. The team's needs are mentioned. Sustainability plans need more rigour. Demonstrates moderate consideration of EDI, with general initiatives to support inclusivity and eliminate barriers for team members. While ECRs are acknowledged, opportunities for their development are limited or vague. Efforts to address barriers to growing the regions space sector are present but lack depth. The accessibility of research outcomes to all stakeholders, including gender and/or socio-economic considerations, is addressed in broad terms but lacks actionable detail. The approach shows potential but requires significant refinement to be fully effective.



3 or 4	Mildly Effective Approach	EDI and Sustainability thoughts are perfunctory. e.g. little consideration is made for bias, users are not considered in designs. The teams needs are not discussed. No Sustainability plans are described. Shows limited focus on ED&I, with minimal actions to foster inclusivity or eliminate barriers for team members. References to ECR development are brief and lack a defined plan. Actions targeting regional decarbonisation barriers are superficial or unclear. Accessibility of research outcomes is mentioned but not adequately addressed in terms of gender or socio-economic factors. The approach is weak and lacks the depth needed to meaningfully embed EDI throughout the project lifecycle.
1 or 2	Insufficient Approach	Fails to adequately describe or integrate EDI principles into its lifecycle. Lacks a plan to promote inclusivity, address barriers for team members, or provide opportunities for ECRs. Actions to address barriers to decarbonisation are absent or ineffective. Research outcomes are not designed to be widely accessible, with no consideration of gender or socio-economic disparities.