

NESCA Innovation Funds Application Guidance

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1. Introduction

The Place Based Impact Acceleration Account (PBIAA) is an EPSRC scheme providing four years of funding to support a programme of impact activities within a research and innovation cluster. This PBIAA is designed to foster activities around resilient communications in space within and for the North East Region and will support the translation of university research to accelerate placed based impact. NESCA is one of ten PBIAAs awarded [EP/Z536301/1] in the second round of the scheme and is led by Northumbria University, in collaboration with Durham and Newcastle Universities ('the consortium'), along with regional civic and industrial partners.

1.1 Key Facts

1. Apply for Impact Acceleration Funding for innovation and policy projects within resilient space communications, leading to impact within the North East region.
2. Applications must be led by a staff member from Northumbria, Newcastle or Durham University.
3. Projects should include a non-academic partner
4. Projects from 3 - 18 months, depending on the selected innovation funding stream.
5. Funding for research translation only. No fundamental research can be funded by this call.

1.2 Key Dates

- 25th Nov 2025: [Expression of Interest](#) opens
 - 2nd February 2026: Expression of Interest closes¹
 - 2nd March 2026: Full application closes (11 am)
 - w/c 30th March 2026: Expected notifications of awards
 - May – August 2026: Projects should start
 - Round 3 opening for EOIs 25th June 2026
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2. Who can apply

2.1 Applicant eligibility

Projects must be submitted and led by an Academic or ECR staff member on the payroll at one of the partner Universities - **Northumbria, Durham, Newcastle**.

Projects should include non-academic partners². Eligible project partners can be industrial, civic, standards agencies, trade bodies, NGOs, charities, and research trade organisations from the North East region³.

Applications led by, or with a significant proportion of team members drawn from, early career researcher communities (including post-doctoral researchers and researchers on fixed funding/term contracts) are welcomed and encouraged.

PDRAs may be the Project Lead (PL) on the project. However, they must have an Academic Co-Lead (Co-L) named on the project.

Academic staff holding permanent contracts can be PLs and Co-Ls however, they should not normally cost their time within these projects and will be expected to be as match-fund (except PDRAs or equivalent, subject to no duplication with other funding streams).

Funds can be used to support existing staff employed by the University or to recruit new members of staff if necessary to meet the skill requirements of the role, provided this can be achieved within 3 months of expected start date.

Projects can be carried out on a full-time or part-time basis, within the prescribed project time span, depending on the nature of the work, but must be justified and explained within the work plan. Projects may involve one or more researchers. Any staff funded on the project who are not working full-time on the project must retain timesheets.

Projects may include non-academic organisations from outside the region. However, they must clearly demonstrate how the partnership and outcomes of the project will benefit and have a positive impact on the North East region. For example (but not limited to):

- bringing together expertise from two industrial partners, one within the region, to benefit both through three-way knowledge exchange.
- an outside region partner that will bring much-needed expertise to an in-region project.
- the non-region industrial partner commits to attend and contribute to NESCA events, roadshows and sandpits to bring their knowledge into the region for the benefit of North East organisations.

10% of the innovation programme funds, for each NESCA innovation Fund calls, will be ringfenced for joint proposals with non-consortium UK-based HEIs named as a Co-L within the proposal. These collaborations must still demonstrate how this will lead to impact in the North East region.

All applications must be approved and signed-off by the PL's Head of School/Department to ensure that the applicant can apply for funding in line with their employment contract and existing workload commitments.

3. What we're looking for

3.1 Scope

Regional Space sector growth - Projects must support and contribute to the growth of the North East Space-based economy through the following pathways:

1. The development of new and enhanced technologies accelerating the commercialisation of research innovation;
2. New non-academic partner engagement in the sector, particularly from adjacent sectors which could be a vector of space sector growth;
3. Influence policy and/or further develop expert capabilities.

Proposals must align with the NESCA themes and achieve a clear pathway from research outputs to impact in the North East region ([see Appendix 1 for example KPIs](#)).

Projects should be at least 50% within the EPSRC's remit, building upon previous research, but need not link to prior EPSRC funding.

Multidisciplinary reflective, innovative approaches are encouraged.

Project outputs must have the clear potential for commercial or societal benefits and must demonstrate this within the Project Benefits and IP management sections of the main application form.

Note: Applications that read like research grant proposals redrafted for the NESCA call are unlikely to be successful. NESCA awards are not for the continuation of research. All projects must build upon completed research translated for a non-academic outcome, leading to impact. The basic underpinning research should have already been funded and completed, and demonstrable outputs should have been realised.

Proposals must be innovative and clearly describe how inclusive relationships with the non-academic stakeholders will be leveraged to realise the regional impact demonstrating a participatory approach to Impact Acceleration.

Projects must include a non-academic partner, evidenced by a letter of support⁴. Letters should be signed, dated, and on the partner's headed paper. Partner organisations should confirm that they will actively be engaging on the project, for the North East region, and that they intend to contribute to its delivery as described in the submitted application, if the award is successful. Due Diligence on partners is the responsibility of the submitting University -- see the later section on Trusted Research and Due Diligence.

Projects must demonstrate co-creation between academia and non-HEI partners and include in-kind/cash contributions from partner(s).

3.2 NESCA Themes (with non-limiting examples)

- **Technologies:** e.g. EM spectrum materials-structures-devices, device fabrication, system integration, integrated sensing and communication and room-temperature quantum LEDs.
 - **Space Sustainability:** e.g. space law/policy/governance, in-orbit servicing, operations.
 - **In-space Opportunities:** e.g. Low-latency (LEO), interlinks (LEO/GEO).
 - **Terrestrial Applications:** e.g. Earth observation, climate/disaster management, healthcare, energy, and finance.
 - **Smart & Resilient Networks:** e.g. Data analytics, machine learning, smart networking, and on-board AI edge processing.
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4. Funding available

NESCA will support projects that encourage innovation through the following two streams of funding:

Which NESCA Funding Stream is Right for My Project?

Compare Launch-pad and Lift-off funding

LAUNCH-PAD	LIFT-OFF
<p>Proving Feasibility</p> <p>Validate concept and build partnerships</p> <p>TRL 2-4 £1-15k Up to 6 months</p> <p>CHOOSE LAUNCH-PAD WHEN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Need to prove concept works ✓ Building new partnerships ✓ Validating "is there a need?" ✓ No prototype yet <div style="border: 1px solid #0056b3; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>BEFORE YOU APPLY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary talks with users/partners • Initial understanding of need • Partner commitment & letters • Consult IP/TTO/BD team <p><small>Note: You lead engagement. Consultants support specialized tasks.</small></p> </div>	<p>Advancing to Impact</p> <p>Progress proven concepts to deployment</p> <p>TRL 3-7 £15-65k 6-18 months</p> <p>CHOOSE LIFT-OFF WHEN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Feasibility proven – validated ✓ Partners committed (15%) ✓ Have designs/prototype ✓ Advancing to deployment <div style="border: 1px solid #008000; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>BEFORE YOU APPLY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validation data proving feasibility • Partners committed (15% confirmed) • Clear advancement pathway • IP/TTO team develop IP section <p><small>Note: TTO/IP input mandatory for commercialization.</small></p> </div>
<p>At TRL 3-4? Choose based on readiness:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc;"> <p>→ LAUNCH-PAD if:</p> <p>Still proving feasibility • Building partnerships • Validating need • Partners building commitment</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid #ccc;"> <p>→ LIFT-OFF if:</p> <p>Have validation data • Partners committed with confirmed contributions • Ready for demonstration</p> </div> </div>	

A. Launch-pad Fund

£1 – 15k per project | TRL 2-4 | Duration up to 6 months

Launch-pad Fund: Early-stage feasibility and partnership development

Seed funding for projects at the exploration stage (TRL 2-4). Use Launch-pad when you need to prove your concept works, establish partnerships, or validate market/policy need. You're asking: *'Could this work?'* or *'Is there demand?'*

Starting point: An idea or early concept requiring validation

Expected outcome: Feasibility evidence and partnership commitment to progress to Lift-off or external funding

Funding for higher-risk activities, including feasibility studies, early-stage prototyping and proof-of-concept, while the project can also be focused on policy development.

Activities supported by the Launch-pad funding:

This funding aims to establish and strengthen long-term collaborations between businesses and academics by fostering early-stage knowledge exchange and strategic alignment. It provides seed funding to achieve early-stage translation ([TRL 2-4](#)) to build relationships and prove technical or commercial feasibility to support the translation of ideas and technology, supporting activities such as:

- Knowledge exchange and cluster/network building.
- Prototyping and generating early performance data to prove application to industry/market need.
- Market discovery and validation through direct engagement with potential users, partners, and end-users.
- Customer discovery activities to understand market need and commercial opportunity.
- Workshops and sandpits to initiate new academia-industry collaborations and promote adoption of new technologies/approaches.
- Scoping exercises and feasibility studies to explore potential innovations.
- Showcases to facilitate knowledge exchange between academia and external organisations.
- Thematic knowledge exchange and public engagement to support NESCA's community and ecosystem growth.
- Policy-influencing activities to strengthen engagement with external partners.

Specialist external support: Where needed, projects may include targeted external expertise for specialized tasks such as regulatory assessment, competitor analysis, or commercial evaluations. External support should complement applicant-led engagement with users and partners, not replace it.

Before applying: Applicants should have:

- Conducted preliminary discussions with potential users, partners, or commercial beneficiaries to confirm that the need/opportunity exists
- Initial understanding of market need
- Partner commitment and letters of support
- **Consulted with your institution's Technology Transfer/IP/Business Development team** to discuss IP position and commercial potential

Launch-pad applications should deliver one or more of the following types of outcomes:

- Public engagement and knowledge exchange leading to a change in understanding.
- Promote knowledge exchange and drive place-based impact, contributing to increased partnership working with non-HEIS and policy development in resilient communications and space.
- Early-stage commercialisation activities.
- Follow-on knowledge exchange or commercialisation funding application.
- Support skills and capacity building, supply chain development, job retention, and attract regional investment in space-resilient communications.

Launch-pad applications should demonstrate:

- The relevance and need for the proposed activity within the North East space sector.
- Preliminary engagement with potential users, partners, or commercial beneficiaries.
- Commitment from all partners and a clear rationale for collaboration.
- Initial understanding of market need and the novelty of the technology or solution.
- Potential for impact and its significance to industry or society.

- A strong follow-on activity plan showing how Launch-pad will progress the innovation toward deployment.
- Clear knowledge exchange and innovation outcomes.
- Well-defined, measurable outputs, outcomes, and impacts (See Appendix 1 for examples).

Launch-pad requirement for contribution from external partner:

A direct financial contribution is welcome but not expected. A 15% In-kind contribution should be sought and included in the letters of support.

B. Lift-off Fund

£15 – 65k per project | TRL 3-7 | Duration 6-18 months

Lift-off Fund: Advancing proven concepts toward impact

Sustained funding for projects with established feasibility (TRL 3-7). Projects must advance by at least 1 TRL. Use Lift-off when you have a validated concept and committed partners, and you're advancing toward commercialisation or implementation. You're asking: *'How do we make this work?'* or *'How do we deploy this?'*

Starting point: Proven feasibility with evidence of viability and confirmed partner commitment. *For TRL 3-4 projects: must have validation data and clear advancement pathway to TRL 5+*

Expected outcome: Working prototype/demonstration, licensable IP, policy implementation, or commercial pathway

Projects requiring sustained funding to deliver a [defined impact](#).

Funding for advancing the commercialisation of research technologies, policies or partnerships. Existing concept designs, specifications, or early prototypes should be available.

Activities supported by the Lift-off funding:

- Projects must achieve advancement of TRL levels by end of the project
- Projects should aim to achieve [TRL 4-7](#).
- Funded activities must deliver tangible outcomes, such as technology demonstrations, policy implementation, licensable technologies, spinouts, and process/product development new to the partner or the market.
- Follow-on funding may support larger technical development programmes co-developed with end users to achieve commercially identified milestones, these are typically 12-18 months in duration.
- Activities that prove technical and/or commercial feasibility including proof of concept studies, prototype development and testing (e.g. evaluation of prototypes or 'demonstrators') and scoping exercises to ensure the technology is designed to meet user demands from the outset.
- Policy scoping or policy projects should strengthen engagement with external partners, even where the immediate goal is not commercialisation.

Specialist external support: Where needed, projects may include targeted external expertise for specialized tasks such as business model development, regulatory compliance support, route-to-market planning, or commercial champion support. External support should enhance applicant-led development work, not replace direct engagement with users and stakeholders.

Before applying: Applicants should have:

- Validation data proving feasibility
- Partners committed with 15% cash or in-kind contribution confirmed

- Clear advancement pathway toward demonstration/deployment (TRL 3-4 projects must show route to TRL 5+)
 - **Worked with your institution's IP/TTO team to develop the IP section of the application**
- Lift-off applications should deliver one or more of the following types of outcomes:**
- Promote knowledge exchange and drive place-based impact, contributing to SME growth and policy development in resilient communications and space.
 - Lead to a spin-out company, new IP, licensing agreements, follow-on translational funding, or advancing collaboration with industrial partners (e.g. UKSA NSIP call, Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) or an industry-funded PhD studentship).
 - Support skills and capacity building, supply chain development, job creation, and attract regional investment in space-resilient communications.
 - Demonstrate readiness for proof-of-concept funding, where the underpinning research has been completed with demonstrable outputs.

Lift-off applications should demonstrate:

- A clearly established commercial opportunity or policy development need, evidenced through partner engagement.
- Novel and translational approaches addressing a validated market need.
- A genuine commercial or policy development opportunity with market potential, supported by evidence.
- Industry or civic need and commitment, demonstrated through a relevant partner providing cash or in-kind contributions.
- A clear potential to support the growth of the North East space-based economy and community.

Note: For Proof-of-Concept projects, matters relating to IP management and dissemination of project results should be discussed with your university's IP Commercialisation or Technology Transfer Office.

For Lift-off applications, a member of your TTO (or IP Commercialisation) team should work with you to develop your application's IP section for all commercialisation projects.

Lift-off requirement for contributions from external Partners:

A project partner with a committed 15% cash or In-kind contribution is expected.

The non-HEI partner(s) should provide cash or in-kind support commensurate with the commercial opportunity. For commercialisation projects, the contribution from the partner must be discussed with your University TTO or IP team. Only projects working towards spin-out may submit a proposal with no external partner, and the case should be made as to why a partnership is not appropriate. In such cases, there must be evidence of partnership or support from relevant organisations, e.g. customers or civic bodies, to provide adequate commercialisation support, as evidenced by a letter of support.

If existing university spinouts are the industry partner, the project must not be developing IP already licensed to the spinout.

TRL Guidance Note: Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) measure maturity from basic principles (TRL 1-2) through prototype development (TRL 3-5) to deployment (TRL 6-9). If your project spans TRL 3-4, the key differentiator is purpose: Launch-pad proves feasibility with new partnerships; Lift-off advances validated concepts with committed partners toward demonstration/deployment. Contact TTO / IP Management team if unsure which scheme is appropriate for your project.

5. What we will fund

Applicants should cost their proposals in accordance with their Partner University guidelines. Proposals should be costed using Directly Incurred (DI) costs without Indirect or Estates costs. All proposals must have received institutional approval before submission.

5.1 Eligible costs:

- RA/PDRA Technician/Professional support salary costs for staff employed on Northumbria, Durham or Newcastle University payroll
- RA/PDRA/Technician/Professional support salary costs for staff employed on a partner HEI payroll in a collaborative project with either Newcastle, Durham or Northumbria University as the lead applicant.
- Reasonable travel, accommodation, and subsistence costs are covered in accordance with the awarding university's expenses and financial regulations policies (or equivalent).
- Consumables directly related to the project are eligible for funding but must be fully justified.
- Equipment must be under £10,000 including VAT (according to EPSRC guidelines).
- Salaries for partner university staff costed for less than 100% of time (e.g., PDRA, technician, etc.) are contingent upon the staff member completing a monthly timesheet and the PL/staff member retaining records and producing these in case of audit (please refer to UKRI's terms and conditions).
- Other costs, such as registration costs at events, production of professional materials, room bookings, catering, etc., are eligible if relevant to the project.
- Outsourcing and professional fees, including consultants or external companies/individuals to deliver a specific piece of work for the project, following institutional financial regulations and needing to be justified. External consultants are appropriate for specialized tasks requiring professional expertise beyond the research team's capabilities, such as:
 - Regulatory assessment requiring legal or technical expertise
 - Business model development requiring commercial structuring expertise
 - Commercial evaluations and route-to-market planning
 - Product design or technical development requiring specialized skills

External support should complement applicant-led engagement with users and partners, not replace it.

Applicants should provide a project costing with their proposal, which must be prepared in conjunction with the relevant research finance office at their university. You should provide full financial details of the project, including salary costs, travel and subsistence costs, additional consumables and any other fees associated with the project.

Awards will only cover the direct costs associated with the project. VAT must be included in the figures as the Universities cannot reclaim VAT from this project.

5.2 Ineligible activities/costs:

- New, fundamental research (TRL 1).
- Academic supervision (Investigator DI or Investigator DA -- see previous exceptions).
- Non-Specific Public Engagement activities and science communication. This means non-specific public engagement activities and science communication. However, NESCA will support public engagement where interaction is key to informing the research impact, such as user engagement as a critical pathway to achieving societal and/or economic impact.
- Any costs relating to intellectual property protection, including but not limited to registering, maintaining, or supporting patents or property rights.

- Undergraduate or postgraduate activities/training, e.g. core PhD training including stipend, training, tuition, bench fees or master's training.
- Items of equipment with an individual value of £10,000 or more (items of equipment over £500 must be detailed in the justification of resources).
- Standard IT equipment (i.e. laptops, i-pads, etc...)
- Indirect costs, estates, or infrastructure.
- Projects outside the scope of the NESCA programme (or call).
- Broader activities and institutional culture change relating to impact.
- Impact activities that should already have been anticipated and supported through standard routes, e.g. impact activities costed as part of research proposals.
- Duplication of other sources of funding that can be used more appropriately for the impact activity within remit of Research Council, e.g. institutional IAA funds, CLASP/IPS.
- Projects that can be funded by other mechanisms are not eligible.
- Directly subsidising commercial R&D.
- Contributions to KTPs.
- Teaching replacement costs
- External non-HEI partner/user salary costs cannot be funded by the NESCA grant. In-kind or cash contributions should cover salary costs or costs for access to external partner facilities or provision of essential consumables/OEM parts evidenced for the project; where this is not the case, they can't be a partner and must be listed as a supplier and following institution procurement rules must be followed, and evidence of this must be provided within the justification of resources section and treated as contractor costs.
- Non-academic organisations cannot be recipients of NESCA grant funding.
- No double funding -- if applying for two sources of funding for similar work, if successful through NESCA the other application must be immediately withdrawn i.e. Northern Accelerator (or vice-versa).
- Funds cannot be used for purely academic conference attendance. Note that costs associated with attendance at workshops/conferences will be only considered where 75% non-academic audiences will be present, there is clear outcomes of knowledge translation, and the outcomes must be detailed in the justification of resources section of the application.

5.3 IP, subsidy control and partners

5.3.1 Recommended Intellectual Property requirements

These recommendations are subject to local agreements at your University (please ensure to seek clarity from your TTO/IP Team -- Northumbria University applicants MUST follow the steps below)

- The industry partner must not seek a pre-negotiated right to any academically generated foreground project IP.
- Under some circumstances, it may be acceptable for the partner to receive a non-exclusive licence to use any data generated by the project for internal research and development purposes, where this explicitly excludes any rights to, or capacity to, prevent exploitation of the data by the academic party.
- The company partner may have a right to negotiate for access (at a fair market price) to the academic party's IP, but terms cannot be agreed upon until the project is completed
- Any other terms must be discussed with your TTO/IP Team and due consideration of subsidy control made.

5.3.2 Subsidy Control

The submitting organisation must ensure at all times that any NESCA grant funding awarded to you is compliant with the Subsidy Control Act 2022. You must inform the NESCA Project Manager of any other public funding applied for or awarded against the eligible costs covered by the grant. We will immediately suspend the Grant and may require you to repay Grant funding if you are found to have received aid that is deemed to be in breach of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. No subcontract or other agreement with a Third Party can be made which would constitute a breach of the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

Please speak to your Research Office, TTO Team or Legal Services team, as they will advise and make judgements on subsidy control on a case-by-case basis. These matters must be considered within any collaboration agreement with your partners following the award. If existing university spinouts are the industry partner, the project must not be developing IP already licensed to the spinout.

5.3.3 Partners' Letters of Support

Partners can be end-users or collaborators. Eligible project partners can be industrial, civic, standard agencies, trade bodies, charities, and research trade organisations from the North East region. Where they are from outside of the region clear justification and details on how their involvement in the project will lead to impact for the region must be stated (see guidance above).

It is expected that non-academic partners will each make a 15% match funding contribution to EPSRC PBIAA projects, such as NESCA. However, the cash or in-kind contribution should be appropriate to the size and type of the partner organisation, and deviations from the 15% will be in exceptional circumstances and should be explained. Non-academic partners will need to demonstrate their commitment to the project, and applications should detail how participants will work together to achieve the aims and objectives of the project.

We request that a letter of support is submitted with the application. The letters should be on company-headed paper, signed by a senior member of the partner organisation with the authority to sign them, and dated within six months of the proposal submission date.

The letters of support should provide a background to the project partners' expertise and why they are interested in supporting this project, and what role they will play.

Letters should also highlight the project's commercial and/or social value proposition. For example:

- What is the market or societal need for this work.
- Where do you feel the real market opportunity lies for this technology or policy change?
- How would this technology fit with your current technology portfolio?
- How would the policy or process change add value to the North East region.
- The partner letters may also cover how they are supporting the development roadmap. For example, they may cover how they are assisting to bring this device/technology to market or supporting the policy adoption and the estimated timescales.

All partner contributions should be quantified, including:

- In-kind support (materials, facilities, processing, scientist/technicians support).
- Time to attend meetings and review research/project outcomes.
- Financial support to the project.
- Advice/technical/commercial/IP guidance/policy or sector knowledge.

5.3.4 Trusted Research and Due Diligence

Trusted Research (TR) and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)

Trusted Research and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) underpins all work that NESCA will conduct. Expertise and clear escalation points will be built into the application process and ongoing monitoring of projects by awardees and the lead institution will take into account EPSRC expectations for trusted research - <https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/good-research-resource-hub/trusted-research-and-innovation/>

It is not anticipated that applicants/HEI recipients of funding will be involved with partners or organisations owned/controlled by overseas entities, but due diligence conducted by the responsible party (i.e. the applicant) should highlight any evidence of this so a decision can be made by the funding panel on a case-by-case basis.

All parties involved in projects must transparently consider and address trusted research considerations and implement appropriate mitigations where relevant.

Applicants must fill out the [Trusted Research checklist](#) as part of their application. Trusted Research will not be part of the initial assessment, but a final decision will be made by the Funding Panel as to whether they believe funding the activity will be consistent with [UKRI guidance](#). As part of their responses, applicants should consider and detail whether any relevant legislation applies to their proposed partners or their work including:

- Export Control Order (2008)
- The National Security and Investment Act (2021) (NSI),
- Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)
- The Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS)
- Whether the work is of a sensitive or [high-risk](#) nature.

Within the [checklist](#), you will be asked to consider how any relevant legislation applies to your work. Answers to the checklist should also include how the applicant intends to apply the appropriate mitigations to any inherent risks within their work throughout their project's lifecycle.

Whilst collaboration with international partners is not anticipated under this programme, there is potential for international parties to access information or technology through third-party relationships or activities undertaken as part of awarded projects. HEI award recipients are responsible for completing due diligence and ensure they are not in breach of any legislation mentioned above by collaborating with international partners or sub-contractors which may be in scope of such legislation; this will be set out clearly in the terms of award.

If there is collaboration with entities owned or controlled overseas, activities must only proceed following further consultation with applicant university's in house trusted research expert, and, if required, an assessment of whether key legislation applies including Export Control, NSI or ATAS.

Successful award holders will receive further resources and guidance on Trusted Research training through NESCA, including an appropriate checklist to monitor the project on an ongoing basis.

6. How to apply and application process

Applicants must complete an [Expression of Interest \(EOI\)](#) to gain access to the online application system as soon as eligibility has been confirmed. Subject to eligibility check, applicants will then be given access to the full online application form, which also contains a link for uploading letters of support as PDFs, the [TR Due Diligence Checklist](#) and any supplementary diagrams or tables (max one 2-page PDF).

Applications can only be submitted using the online application system following an approved EOI. An offline copy of the full application form and all supplementary information can be [found here](#)

It is recommended that the PL should discuss their draft application with the NESCA Professional Support staff within the applicant's University for technical mentoring and guidance. This is the EPSRC IAA Team (Durham and Newcastle), the Business Development or IP/TTO Team at Northumbria and Newcastle University or the NESCA Programme Manager/Impact Team at Northumbria University if developing a policy/societal only project. Please email NESCA@Northumbria.ac.uk to be put in touch with the correct team if you are not certain who to approach.

Application Process:

1. Peer Review:

Proposals will be anonymised and peer-reviewed by reviewers from the NESCA Peer Review College, which will include academic and non-academic reviewers from Industry, Civic partners or IP/Tech Transfer Office (TTO). Reviewers apply the NESCA scoring guidance and award scores for each element of the application.

We recommend applicants consider that the application will be reviewed by at least one informed non-expert and ensure their application is tailored to this audience.

2. Review and decisions by Fund Panel (FP):

Completed applications and their review comments and scores will then be reviewed by the Funding Panel, which includes Academics from the partner Universities, Industry and Civic members, TTO/BD staff from the partner universities, and a Trusted Research Manager

3. Scoring and Ranking:

The FP through introducers will review and discuss all the applications and ranked scores by Funding Scheme, Type, and Career stage.

The panel will then rank applications as A (approved), B (fundable if underspend is available), and C (not fundable). Those ranked B will either be notified they are successful or unsuccessful depending on the availability of funds.

4. Notification of Results:

Applicants will normally be informed of the results within 6 working weeks of the closing date.

Award letters will be sent electronically. A copy of the award letter will also be sent to the NESCA PS staff at the Partner University and the identified contact in the Research Office. The decision of the Funding Panel and Chair is final.

5. Blind Review:

All proposals must be reviewed blind per the NESCA Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I) plan i.e. downstream processes will remove the names of PLs and Co-Ls from the proposal before it is tabled at the FP. Therefore, applicants should minimise the use of PL and Co-Ls' names within the body of the proposal as much as possible to avoid potential bias.

6. Support Letters:

A letter of support for the proposal should be included from all external Partners. This can be an email attachment, and the description and value of any in-kind or cash support provided must be clearly stated. Please reference the project title/Worktribe reference number, **but NOT the applicant's name or institution.**

7. Input from TTO/BDM:

All commercial applications should be discussed with a Technology Transfer Officer (TTO)/Business Development Manager (BDM)/IP Team or equivalent from the Partner University. Where the project includes commercialisation or creation of IP, they will provide an opinion on IP ownership, commercial potential, IP management approach (if applicable), and the route to market (if applicable).

8. **Reapplication Eligibility:**

If an applicant was previously unsuccessful, they may apply again so long as the comments from the reviewers have been acted on and addressed. The NESCA PM at the partner institution will check that there is a material change/improvement from the previous version before resubmission.

If an applicant has previously successfully applied to the NESCA, they are eligible to apply again as long as the project has progressed to a new stage and the original objectives were achieved, or the new project progresses as a significantly different research impact route.

7. How we will assess your application

All applicants should complete in-house RRI training or attend one of the NESCA online RRI webinars before completing the RRI section of the application form.

The application assessment will take into account (in no particular order):

- Background research and prior work, its quality, and the potential scope and likelihood for impact to be realised (i.e., new products or processes, jobs created or safeguarded, cost savings, increased profits, new policies, etc.).
- Reach and significance of the impact of the proposed project. A clear explanation of how funding will be used to achieve impact aligned with resilient space communications.
- The potential for impact in North East England, with evidence of external support and stakeholder demand.
- Strength of involvement of external partners: The degree to which stakeholder insight, connectivity, and capability are leveraged to realise project objectives in the region.
- Potential benefits to the universities involved, the project partners, external stakeholders and end users.
- Quality of the business case for the project, including:
 - evidence of demand from companies, stakeholders or end-users,
 - a definition of the requirement or need,
 - a plan of activities, outcomes and project milestones explaining how they will contribute to meeting that requirement or need,
 - a clear plan for follow-on activities and how they may be funded,
 - a well-defined vision for the products, processes or services being developed or technology to be created.
- Proposed project implementation including project plan, tasks, outputs, milestones and how their achievement will be measured. Defined outputs, outcomes, and impact and likelihood of achieving these.
- Potential for securing or leveraging additional funding or investment.
- Risks involved in the project and how they are assessed and mitigated. A high level of risk is not necessarily a bad thing if the potential impact is high.
- Value for money including justification of resources requested and contributions in cash or in-kind from partners. Clear and well justified use of funds.

- Implementation of good practice in responsible innovation, environmental sustainability and equality, diversity and inclusion. A clear description of how EDI principles will be embedded throughout the project lifecycle.

For further information, download the full [reviewer guidance](#)

8. Contact details

For help and advice on costings and writing your proposal, please contact your research office in the first instance, allowing sufficient time for your organisation's submission process.

If you have questions related to IP Commercialisation, please contact your institution's IP/TTO/BD Team

If you have other questions and the answer isn't provided within this guidance related to this specific funding opportunity, please contact:

Nesca@northumbria.ac.uk

Or visit www.Northumbria.ac.uk/NESCA

9. Funding Conditions

9.1 Post-Award Requirements:

- Awardees will receive a formal award letter from Northumbria University which will set out the terms of the grant.
- Grant holders must ensure that a Collaboration Agreement (CA) is in place between HEI and Non-HEI partners, and this formalises all partners' IP position.
- Projects will be paid in arrears on the submission of completed financial claim forms and project monitoring reports within the periods set out in the offer letter.
- If successful, all projects must be ready to start within three months of date of the award letter
- The applicant University is responsible for ensuring a separate and appropriate collaboration agreement must be in place between collaborating partners in the awarded project.
- External collaborators must be vetted by the submitting partner HEI through a due diligence/risk review process before application, and evidence that this has occurred will be checked again before the project commences and funding is released. The Trusted Research checklist must be completed and updated should there be any changes to the status of the collaborating non-HEI partner.
- **If a no cost extension is required**, a request should be made to the NESCA Project Manager, NESCA@northumbria.ac.uk, accompanied by appropriate justification. Requests for extensions beyond the end of the PBIAA funding period (31st April 2029) will not be permitted.
- Successful applicants must inform the NESCA Project Manager, Nesca@Northumbria.ac.uk, if they are awarded funding from other schemes to support the same or similar activities.

9.2 Marketing and Communication

Successful applications will be required to:

- Provide information about their project for marketing and communication purposes (maintaining confidentiality of intellectual property where appropriate).
- Provide project updates, case studies and short films summarising the project and its impact for publication on the NESCA website, social media and for publication of the EPSRC.

- Attend NESCA showcasing events, roundtables, or sandpits to facilitate further regional impact and knowledge exchange and to foster future collaborative opportunities.
- All publications relating to NESCA funded projects **must** cite the NESCA EPSRC grant reference number: **EP/Z536301/1** and must include the **NESCA & EPSRC** logo and relevant branding on all online or printed materials (including press releases, posters, exhibition materials and other publications) related to activities funded by this grant.

9.3 Reporting requirements

All successful projects must participate in the collection of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) during and after project completion and will be expected to participate in future capacity building events and public engagement activities to share their experience and develop expertise.

The Project Lead (PL) of each funded project will be required to submit:

- For projects with a 7-month or more duration - a mid-term project update summarising the activities carried out to date, requesting any adjustments to budget headings, timelines or plans, indicating key risks and challenges and listing KPIs achieved to date.
- End of project report summarising progress against key tasks, deliverables and main achievements on the activities carried out, listing all outcomes and impacts achieved (or expected future impacts).
- Post project follow up -- A member of the NESCA Team could follow up for a period of up to 3 years after the project end to find out about outcomes and impacts achieved after the end of project report.
- By accepting the award, the applicants agree to respond to requests for additional information from the NESCA PM or their institutions NESCA PM, IP Team or Business Development Team.

For information, the outputs, outcomes, and impact measures that UKRI ask us to report on and NESCA-specific [KPIs are detailed in Appendix 1](#).

The NESCA Project Team or Innovation/Business Development teams at your University will monitor project progress both during the life of the project and post-project to allow the reporting of outcomes and capture of impact. This will include making non-confidential aspects available to assist with the development of case studies.

9.4 Data sharing

If personal data is to be processed (shared/viewed/stored etc) as part of a project, applicants will not be able to proceed lawfully without appropriate Data Sharing or Data Processing Agreements in place. Please take account of this if any personal data may be handled as part of this project - you can contact the Information Governance team at your University who can offer guidance as to any appropriate Data Sharing or Data Processing Agreements that may be necessary. Data agreements must be in place before any CA is signed.

Footnotes:

1. Speak to the NESCA Project Manager at your institution if the closing date has passed or email Nesca@Northumbria.ac.uk
2. Projects supporting a spin-out proposal, where collaboration would put IP at risk, will not require an external partner to apply, but should still provide a letter of support from a customer/end user/future buyer.
3. A useful list of North East Industrial companies can be found here <https://www.spacenortheastengland.com/space-directory>

4. Projects supporting a spin-out proposal, where collaboration would put IP at risk, will not require an external partner to apply, but should still provide a letter of support from a customer/end user/future buyer.