

## Innovate UK Women in Innovation Award 24/25

We hope these Frequently Asked Questions will be helpful to potential applicants for the **Innovate UK Women in Innovation Award**.

If you have a query which is not covered below, if any of the answers provided are unclear, or if you need more information, please contact Innovate UK Customer Support Services. You can reach them by email at [support@iuk.ukri.org](mailto:support@iuk.ukri.org) or by calling the competition helpline on 0300 321 4357. Our phone lines are open from 9-12noon and 2-5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays). We also have an automated virtual assistant on hand to answer frequently asked questions about Innovate UK and this service is available 24 hours a day, every day.

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## Additional Resources

### **Q 1. I am putting an application together for the Women in Innovation competition, are there any other resources or support available?**

A. Innovate UK and Innovate UK Business Connect hosted a formal briefing event on 14 May. This event outlined the scope and eligibility of the competition, gave advice on how to apply, and offered the opportunity to hear from inspiring previous award winners and business leaders. You can watch the recording and access more information about the competition on the [Women in Innovation Awards](#).

We are also organising four additional application support sessions aimed to:

- supplement the official Innovate UK guidance
- help understanding of the application questions
- answer to any questions you might have regarding the application process

Please see the full list of the four application support sessions below:

1. **Grant Writing Workshop** - Friday 31 May, 11am to 1pm
2. **How to make an effective video submission** - Wednesday 12 June, 10am to 11am
3. **Project Planning and Risk Management Workshop** - Friday 28 June, 11am to 1pm
4. **Women in Innovation - Applicant Support Q&A** - Thursday 4 July, 2pm to 3pm

You can [register for the Women in Innovation: Application Support Sessions](#).

### **Q 2. Are there any examples of previously successful projects that you are able to share?**

A. Yes. Innovate UK and Innovate UK Business Connect have created booklets and brochures to celebrate the Women in Innovation programme, showcasing the award winners. You can access them via the links below.

- [Awards 2016](#)
- [Awards 2018](#)
- [Awards 2020](#)
- [Awards 2021](#)
- [Awards 2022 – latest cohort](#)

You can also read the success stories of our remarkable [2020/21](#) and [2021/22](#) Women in Innovation awardees to learn about how their ground-breaking ideas are helping manage the world's greatest challenges.

## Eligibility

### **Q 3. Who can apply to the Innovate UK Women in Innovation competition?**

A. To be eligible for an award you must be a woman founder, co-founder or senior decision maker within a UK registered micro, small or medium (SME) business which has been registered on Companies House for at least 12 months by the competition closing date. Your project must start on 1 December 2024 and last for 12 months. Your business must be based in the UK, and you must do all your project work in the UK.

### **Q 4. What is the minimum age you can apply to the Women in Innovation competition?**

A. To be eligible for an award you must be aged 18 or above on the date of competition close.

### **Q 5. Why do you require companies to be registered on Companies House for a year?**

A. The aim of this competition is to fund and support a diverse portfolio of Women in Innovation Award winners who are at a critical stage with their business, where an award will enable them to take an important step forward. The funding we provide should help you accelerate the growth of your business and help you make a real difference to innovation in the UK including in and beyond your sector or innovation area. This competition is not looking to fund business as usual or a brand-new start-up company.

The award is designed to help women innovators achieve their vision for their business and become a leader in their field

### **Q 6. What does it mean to be a senior decision maker?**

A. To lead a project you must be a founder, co-founder or senior decision maker within a UK registered micro or SME business. A senior decision maker would be an appropriate director, CEO, FD, COO, or someone formally nominated by the board of directors to sign on their behalf.

### **Q 7. Can I apply if I operate a charity?**

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

### **Q 8. Do you have to be a UK citizen to apply?**

A. No, but you must be a UK resident and complete all project work in the UK.

### **Q 9. On the application, we are asked to supply “Applicant location”, are there any locations that are not eligible?**

A. Your organisation must be a UK registered micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME). Organisations located outside the UK will not meet the eligibility criteria.

We will take a portfolio approach in our funding decision to ensure we have representation of businesses working across the UK. We reserve the right to revoke your award if your business location changes ahead of your start date.

### **Q 10. My co-founder and I are developing this business idea together, does that make me ineligible for this award?**

A. No. However, the Women in Innovation competition is for single applicants only. Therefore, you need to decide who is going to be the lead applicant to take part in the programme if successful. If it is unclear who the lead applicant is within your submission, your application may be made ineligible.

The awards are for individuals, but this does not prevent you from working on the project with others. You can work with one or multiple people before, during, and after the programme developing your business idea, but only one of you can apply as the lead applicant and receive the Women in Innovation Award.

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

## **Q 11. Is support available for those who are not eligible to apply?**

A. There are other options to explore if you do not meet the eligibility criteria, or you decide that the Innovate UK Women in Innovation Awards is not right for you at this time.

- Discover other opportunities through the [No Limits Platform](#) and [Innovation Hub](#)
- Learn how [Innovate UK Business Connect](#) can support you through networks, new connections, and deep sector expertise.
- You can also contact [Innovate UK](#), [Innovate UK Business Connect](#) or [Innovate UK Business Growth](#) directly for advice on available support.
- [Sign up for the Women in Innovation newsletter](#) for the latest news, events and opportunities

## **Other Funding**

### **Q 12. Am I able to apply for other Innovate UK grants if I am awarded the Innovate UK Women in Innovation Award funding?**

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

### **Q 13. I am writing a Smart Grant application for my innovation. Am I able to also submit an application for the same innovation via this competition?**

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

**Q 14. I am already a recipient of an Innovate UK grant, can I still apply?**

A. As long as you are not a Women in Innovation, Young Innovators Next Steps (Follow on Fund) or Innovate UK: Build award holder, you can apply with a new project to the Women in Innovation competition.

You are not eligible to apply if you have received other Innovate UK funding for the same project prior to applying as we do not allow duplication of cost or grant.

Before applying, it is important to consider if you would be able to deliver the project and commit for the full 12 month duration whilst working on any other project you are currently receiving Innovate UK funding for. We would also encourage you to make sure you clearly state the added value of this award in your Innovate UK Women in Innovation application.

Note: You will need to check that you are not exceeding your MFA amount.

**Q 15. I am a previous Young Innovator or Begin awardee. Can I apply for additional funding through the Innovate UK Women in Innovation competition for further development of the same project?**

A. Yes. If you are a recipient of the Young Innovator or an Innovate UK: Begin Award you are eligible to apply, as long as you have not also had a Young Innovator Next Steps (Follow on Fund) award.

Innovate UK will not duplicate grant costs so your project, innovation or technology must have moved on significantly from the Young Innovator or Begin submission.

## Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) and De minimis

**Q 16. Given the Windsor Framework, will Northern Ireland applications be eligible?**

A. Yes. We welcome and encourage applications from Northern Ireland as well as all nations and regions of the UK. Grant funding in this competition is awarded as Minimal Financial assistance (MFA) and De minimis where applicable. This allows public bodies to award up to £315,000 (300,000 euros for De minimis) to an enterprise in the relevant period. If you are unsure about your obligations under the

Subsidy Control Act 2022, you should take independent legal advice. We cannot advise on individual eligibility or your legal obligations.

**Q 17. Can I apply if I have previously received De minimis or Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) funding (previously referred to as Special Drawing Rights)?**

A. Yes. As long as you have not exceeded the £315,000 allowance (300,000 euros for De minimis) you are allowed under De minimis or MFA rules within the relevant period. You must declare any previous funding received under De minimis and MFA through the declaration form provided at application stage.

**Q 18. How can I check if previous grants I have received fall under De minimis or Minimal Financial Assistance rules?**

A. If you have received previous funding from Innovate UK, this information will be provided in your Grant Offer Letter.

You must check with the Public Authority that awarded your previous grants to confirm whether the grant awarded to you was classed as De minimis or MFA.

## Application

**Q 19. I have not applied to Innovate UK before, is there any resource or support available for people that have not applied before?**

A. Innovate UK has [online guidance for applicants](#).

It is essential that all applicants watch the [applicant briefing recording](#). In addition to this you can register for the [Women in Innovation application support sessions](#).

[Innovate UK Business Connect](#) has a wide network, deep sector expertise, and can connect you to people and organisations to help accelerate your ideas and project. Innovate UK Business Growth have [guidance for completing and submitting a grant application](#).

[Innovate UK Business Growth](#) focus on growing innovative businesses and ensuring that projects contribute to their growth and may also be able to offer advice.

If you have any specific questions to support your application, please contact [Customer Support Services](#).

**Q 20. Is there a deadline for applications?**

A. The [Women in Innovation competition](#) will close on Wednesday 10 of July 2024 at 11:00am exactly. Extensions to this deadline cannot and will not be granted under any circumstances, even if you were to have technical issues 10 minutes before the application deadline.

**Q 21. Will the production quality of the submitted video be judged in any way? For example, storytelling and editing?**

A. No. The assessors will be scoring your video (for Question 5) based on the content of your answer to all elements of the question, it is not scored on editing, background music, or story telling abilities.

You do not need to be in the video, you are able to submit a black screen or slide deck with a voice over. The video does not need to be a costly production. It is simply an opportunity to give the assessors clarity in understanding your project.

You must use YouTube to record your video.

Ensure:

- your video is 'unlisted' in the privacy settings
- your video remains available until 1 December 2024
- you give the link and any passwords required in your written answer to this question

You can find more information on [how to create an unlisted video on YouTube](#).

It must be no longer than 3 minutes. If your video is over 3 minutes long, only the first 3 minutes will be used to assess your application.

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

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

If you cannot upload your video to YouTube, you must contact [support@iuk.ukri.org](mailto:support@iuk.ukri.org) at least 15 days before the competition closes for advice.

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

**Q 22. Do I have to include any personal information in my application or video question?**



A. No. There is no expectation to declare any personal information in your response.

**Q 23. I'm keen to apply - If I have a disability and I need additional reasonable adjustment support for completing my application, where can I find this?**

A. We welcome and encourage applications from people of all backgrounds and are committed to making our application process accessible to everyone. This includes making reasonable adjustments, for people who have a disability or a long-term health condition and face barriers applying to us.

You can contact us at any time to ask for guidance. We recommend you contact us at least 15 working days before this competition's closing date to allow us to put the most suitable support in place. The support we can provide may be limited if you contact us close to the competition deadline.

You can contact Innovate UK by [email](#) or call 0300 321 4357. Our phone lines are open from 9am to 12pm and 2pm to 5pm UK time, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays).

**Q 24. What would you recommend focusing on in my application? What do unsuccessful applicants typically miss or get wrong?**

A. To fit the competition brief, your project must address a problem, be innovative, meet the eligibility criteria, and have a realistic plan.

Unsuccessful applicants typically:

- leave the application to the very last minute
- don't fill the finance forms in correctly
- have lots of missing information
- forget to include their video link or forget to make the video link accessible
- don't provide sufficient evidence or detail in the application, or don't follow the instructions.

For additional application support, you can register for the [Women in Innovation application support sessions](#).

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

We cannot amend applications retrospectively; you must allow enough time to review your submission. Any edits to your application should be made in a timely manner prior to the submission deadline on 10 July 2024 11am. You must 'submit' your application in IFS again as it will not automatically submit following any edits.

### **Q 25. Can I apply with a business idea which I previously submitted to the last Women in Innovation competition or any other competitions?**

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

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

Please note you are only allowed to apply to Innovate UK twice with the same application.

## **Assessment and Selection Process**

### **Q 26. Who are we looking to fund?**

A. We want to support women who are at a critical stage, where the injection of support from an award will accelerate the growth of their business. The funding should help them make a real difference to innovation in the UK, including in and beyond their sector or innovation area.

We are looking for women who have the potential to be leaders and role models to inspire future generations of innovators.

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

**Q 27. How do you select the Women in Innovation award holders from the hundreds of applications you receive?**

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

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

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

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

**Q 28. When will I know if I have been successful with my application?**

A. You will be informed by Innovate UK of the outcome of your application on 22 August 2024.

**Q 29. How many applications in total will be funded for this competition?**

A. Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, is investing up to £4 million for this competition. We are offering up to 50 Women in Innovation Awards to women entrepreneurs within SMEs across the UK.

**Q 30. Is the Women in Innovation 2024/25 competition likely to be highly competitive? Is it worth my time to apply? I don't know if this is the right time for my project, should I apply anyway?**

A. The success rate will depend on the number of applications we receive, generally, our funding rounds are highly competitive. We envisage high volumes of applications and will be funding 50 awards for this competition. For the last round, we received over 900 applications and funded 50 awards.

We recommend waiting until your project is as strong as possible so you can make the best case for funding. Remember that you can only apply with the same project twice.

## Women in Innovation Award

### **Q 31. Can you tell me more about the support package that is offered alongside the grant?**

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

- Innovate UK Business Connect
- Innovate UK Business Growth
- Marketing and communications professionals

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

- funding and finance options and how to access these
- media and communications, for example, branding
- developing new business models
- evaluating market opportunities
- finding new partners
- growth and scale up
- developing international collaborations and accessing global markets
- business planning strategy

### **Q 32. Am I able to use this grant to hire subcontractors?**

A. Subcontractors are allowed in this competition and must be selected through a participant's normal procurement process. Subcontracting costs must not exceed 50% of the grant funding amount. Subcontractors can be from anywhere in the UK.

### **Q 33. Is the award 100% funded?**

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

### **Q 34. How will I receive the money?**

A. If successful, the grant funding will be paid in two instalments:

- 90% upfront paid in December 2024
- 10% paid post project end, upon approval of the final claim, Independent Accountant Report (IAR) and Project Close Form (PCF)

The grant from Innovate UK will be paid into the award holders business bank account.

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

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

### **Q 35. Do I have to use the non-financial element of the award?**

A. Yes. This is an essential part of the support on offer. We want to know how you will make use of the full award package: financial and non-financial and this will be assessed under Question 8 on the application form: Plan for the award.

### **Q 36. Does the project supported by the scheme have to run for 12 months?**

A. Yes, the award will support activities over a 12 month period.

### **Q 37. Why am I being asked to take part in role modelling activities as part of the award?**

There is an urgent need to transform the skills and talent pipeline for innovation in the UK. Greater representation from different backgrounds and experiences in business innovation has proven to have a positive economic and societal impact.

We will be asking award winners to act as role models to:

- inspire and inform young people about the opportunities available
- ensure innovative businesses have access to diverse talent in the future
- co-create a more inclusive and representative innovation ecosystem that benefits everyone

**Q 38. What activities should I be thinking about to fulfil this role modelling commitment, and what support will be available?**

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

The types of activity that award holders are encouraged to get involved with include:

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

**Q 39. Will I be paid extra for role model days and activities?**

A. No. The role model activities should be volunteered by the award holder.

**Q 40. Is there a minimum time commitment expected of the lead applicant?**

A. There is no minimum time commitment in the competition specification. However, applicants must demonstrate that they can fulfil the aims of the competition. This is a major award, and we would expect applicants to devote sufficient time to deliver the activities set out in their applications.

As part of the support package, you will be provided a Monitoring Service Provider who you must meet with on a quarterly basis (once every 3 months) and an Innovation and Growth Specialist.

Part of the Women in Innovation Award will involve you committing to attending Development Days; there will be two sessions through the duration of your project. Dates and times of these sessions will be confirmed after the project start date.

You will also need to commit at least five days to role modelling within the 12 months of the award as stipulated in the competition brief.

## Other Questions

### **Q 41. I don't have much experience with Innovate UK grants; how should I get started?**

A. It can be difficult to know where to start when preparing to apply for any grant. Spend time thinking about the project you want to submit, research Innovate UK (the funder), and check that you are eligible for the competition being advertised.

Each competition has its own eligibility criteria and scope. These must be met by the organisations and proposals being made, to be considered for and to be successful in being awarded, the support on offer. Innovate UK runs many different competitions, and each will have different eligibility and scope requirements. Applicants must refer to the competition brief for specific guidance.

Innovate UK has online guidance for applicants. In addition to this we are arranging a series of drop-in sessions including specific workshops for grant writing and video support, and dedicated Q&A drop-in sessions.

[Innovate UK Business Connect](#) has a wide network, deep sector expertise, and can connect you to people and organisations to help accelerate your ideas and project. Innovate UK Business Connect have guidance for completing and submitting a grant application.

[Innovate UK Business Growth](#) focus on growing innovative businesses and ensuring that projects contribute to their growth and may also be able to offer advice.

If you have any specific questions to support your application, please contact [Customer Support Services](#).

### **Q 42. What is happening to the Innovate UK Begin and Build Award? Will another competition be running?**

A. The Innovate UK: Begin and Build Award was run as a pilot, and we are currently evaluating the outputs from this competition. We will embed the lessons learned from the pilot in future EDI competitions. Currently, we do not have any dates for a future competition for the Innovate UK: Begin and Build Award.