C-PIC Innovation Fund, Call 1 (Spring 2025)

FAQs

How many rounds of funding will there be?

C-PIC will make £2M available over course of the programme, which runs until 2029. We will have two calls a year, in the spring (February/March) and in the autumn (September/October). Some calls may have a particular focus, e.g. a thematic/application area, based on feedback from our community and user needs. You can be the first to hear about future funding opportunities, and input into future calls by joining our free C-PIC Membership.

Do I have to have an industry partner?

If your proposed project is a Technology Readiness Intervention (TRI), you need to have at least one industry partner, who must provide a letter of support. If your proposed project is a Market Readiness Intervention, an industry partner is not required.

What is the difference between a Technology Readiness Intervention and a Market Readiness Intervention?

Technology Readiness Interventions are collaborative projects with an industry partner, to advance the maturity of a technology, e.g. developing a technology demonstrator/prototype for use in a particular application area. These are likely to appeal to applicants in R&D and innovation. Market Readiness Interventions (MRIs) aim to establish what the market demand/opportunity is for a technology, e.g. market scoping reports, testing a product idea and the validity of business plan, assessing the supply chain etc. MRIs are likely to appeal to entrepreneurs or those looking to start-up. We provide examples of types of projects in both categories within the call document.

Can industry apply for funding?

For Call 1, applications must be led by a UKRI eligible research organisation. The source of the funding is EPSRC and therefore standard EPSRC eligibility rules apply. Industry cannot be directly funded. Industry can participate as project partners, or act as specialist subcontractors (for example, packing companies, prototype development etc) to deliver elements of the proposed work, subject to the procurement rules of the lead research organisation.

Does my industry partner have to be UK based?

Industry partners should have a UK presence. Whilst the industry partner letter of support does not have to come from a UK-based office, we will want to see the benefits of the proposed project for the UK clearly stated throughout the application.

I have an early-stage collaborative research project with industry, is this within scope?

The C-PIC Innovation Fund aims to accelerate the industry adoption and commercial exploitation of silicon photonics technologies, moving from the lab into real world applications. It is not intended to fund discovery research or seed research collaborations. You will need to make a strong case in your application that your project is closer to translational work than basic research. We provide examples of the expected outputs of C-PIC Innovation Fund projects within the call, and you are advised to think carefully about whether they are realistic for your proposed project before you apply. It may be that applying later in your collaboration would be a better fit to our funding scheme.

I am costing the project in Worktribe and can't find C-PIC/CORNERSTONE

The CORNERSTONE Photonics Innovation Centre (C-PIC) is an EPSRC funded Innovation and Knowledge Centre led by the University of Southampton. It is the University of Southampton that will issue the funding and the award letter.

How does 80% funding work, does the remaining 20% come from industry partners?

C-PIC will fund 80% of the Full Economic Cost of Innovation Fund projects. Your employing organisation must agree to find the 20% balance of the Full Economic Cost for the project from other resources, according to standard EPSRC costing. Contributions to the project from industry partners (cash or in-kind) should be in addition to the 20% contribution from the lead research organisation.

Do I need support form my organisation to apply?

Yes. Your employing organisation must agree to find the 20% balance of the Full Economic Cost for your project from other resources. Therefore, you will need to make them aware of your intention to apply and secure their backing before you do so. We do not require a letter of support from your employing organisation.

What are the IP terms for collaborative projects?

Intellectual Property is to be negotiated between the lead research organisation and industry project partner(s); if you are successful in being awarded funding, you must put in place a written collaboration agreement with any project partners/collaborators, which should include provisions on IP ownership, use and publication. Please note that as a condition of the award, you will be asked to provide a non-confidential synopsis of the project for publication and public dissemination, and to contribute to case studies. For our full Terms and Conditions, please read our template award letter.

How will my project be assessed and when will I know the outcome?

Your project will be assessed by the C-PIC Innovation Fund panel. The panel will comprise representatives from our Scientific and Commercial Expert Working Groups, and at least two independent members, including one member of our Compliance Board. EPSRC will be invited to attend the panel meeting to observe. Prior to the panel, proposals will be checked for eligibility by the C-PIC Impact Manager and C-PIC Programme Manager. All proposals will be assessed according to the assessment criteria stated in the call document. We aim to inform applicants of the outcome within one month of the application deadline.

Do I have to be working with CORNERSTONE and using the foundry service to apply?

No. There is no requirement to be working with/previously worked with CORNERSTONE, nor to use the CORNERSTONE foundry service. Your project does not have to include Photonic Integrated Circuits (PICs) so long as you explain how it will translate silicon photonics technology from research labs into industry.

Can I submit more than one proposal?

There is no cap on the number of proposals you can submit, nor any rules on resubmission. However, if you are considering submitting more than one proposal, you should be mindful that we hope to fund a broad range of projects, and that one of our assessment criteria is 'capability to deliver', which may be impacted by being involved in multiple projects.

I work in an organisation that is part of C-PIC, can I apply?

Yes. The application and assessment process are the same for applicants from the University of Southampton and Glasgow, as it is for applicants from other research organisations. If a C-PIC Investigator is named on your proposal, they will not participate in the assessment of your proposal or any other proposals in that round of funding, due to conflict of interest.