**Growing Kent and Medway: Collaborative Research and Development**

## Description

This competition is delivered on behalf of the [Growing Kent and Medway](https://www.growingkentandmedway.com/) (GKM) consortium, led by the National Institute for Agricultural Botany (NIAB). It is funded by the UKRI Strength in Places Fund to invest up to £2 million in innovation projects.

These projects will be to stimulate an uplift in the region’s economy through inclusive and innovation-led growth.

The aim of this competition is to support business focused innovation. Specifically, it aims to support transition to net zero, and deliver improved productivity and sustainability in horticultural food and drink production.

It focuses on:

* horticultural production including the production of novel, high value compounds from plants
* fresh produce packaging
* food and drink processing
* enabling technologies that underpin the supply chain

Your proposal must demonstrate the potential to positively impact on the economy of the Kent and Medway (K&M) area.

In applying to this competition, you are entering into a competitive process. This competition closes at 11am UK time on the deadline stated.

## Funding type

Grant

## Project size

Whilst there is no maximum on total eligible project costs, you must request a grant of no less than £50,000 and no more than £350,000 for your project.

## Who can apply

Any awards given to primary agricultural producers are subject to the green box exemption under the WTO Agreement on Agriculture. Please see further guidance on green box subsidies here [WTO Guidance for support in Agriculture.](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/agric_e/agboxes_e.htm)

Applicants receiving this type of support must ensure that there is minimal to no distortion of trade and comply with the requirements of [Annex 2 of the Agriculture Agreement](https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/14-ag_02_e.htm#annII).

**Your project**

Your project:

* must claim a grant between £50,000 and £350,000
* can start by 1 May 2023
* must end by 31 May 2025
* must last between 12 months and 24 months
* must carry out at least 75% of its project work in the Kent and Medway (K&M) area
* must intend to exploit the results from or in the K&M area

You must only include [eligible project costs](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/costs-we-fund/) in your application.

Under current restrictions, this competition will not fund any procurement, commercial, business development or supply chain activity with any Russian or Belarusian entity as lead, partner or subcontractor. This includes any goods or services originating from a Russian or Belarusian source.

If your grant funding request, geographical area or duration falls outside of our eligibility criteria or the green box subsidy exemption, you must provide justification by email to [support@iuk.ukri.org](mailto:support@iuk.ukri.org) at least 10 working days before the competition closes. We will decide whether to approve your request. If you have not requested approval or your application has not been approved by us, you will be made ineligible. Your application will then not be sent for assessment.

**Lead organisation**

To lead a project your organisation must:

* be a UK registered business of any size
* collaborate with other UK registered businesses, research organisations, [public sector organisations](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/innovation-apply-for-a-funding-award#funding-rules) or charities
* include a minimum of 2 organisations in the consortium
* intend to exploit the results from or in the K&M area

The lead organisation must collaborate with at least one of the following research organisations or research and technology organisations in the K&M area:

* NIAB
* University of Greenwich
* University of Kent
* Canterbury Christ Church University

[Academic institutions](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/#contents-list) cannot lead or work alone.

**Project team**

To collaborate with the lead, your organisation must be one of the following UK registered:

* business of any size
* academic institution
* charity
* not for profit organisation
* public sector organisation
* research organisation (RO) and research and technology organisation (RTO)

Each partner organisation must be invited into the Innovation Funding Service by the lead to collaborate on a project. Once accepted, partners will be asked to login or to create an account and enter their own project costs into the Innovation Funding Service.

The lead and at least one other organisation must claim funding by entering their costs during the application.

Your project can include partners that do not receive any of this competition’s funding, for example non-UK businesses. Their costs will count towards the total project costs.

**Subcontractors**

Subcontractors are allowed in this competition.

Subcontractors can be from anywhere in the UK and you must select them through your usual procurement process.

You can use subcontractors from outside the K&M area but must make the case in your application as to why you could not use suppliers from the K&M area.  
  
You can use subcontractors from overseas but must make the case in your application as to why you could not use suppliers from the UK.  
  
You must provide a detailed rationale, evidence of the potential UK contractors you approached and the reasons why they were unable to work with you. We will not accept a cheaper cost as a sufficient reason to use an overseas subcontractor.  
  
All subcontractor costs must be justified and appropriate to the total project costs.

**Number of applications**

If a business leads a project, it can collaborate on a further two projects.

Businesses can only lead on one application. If a business is not leading a project they can collaborate on any number of applications.

Academic institutions, charities and not for profit RO or RTO can collaborate on any number of applications.

## Previous applications

You can use a [previously submitted application](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/before-you-start-an-application/#contents-list) to apply for this competition. A previously submitted application is a proposal Innovate UK judges as not materially different from one you have submitted before. It can be updated based on the assessors' feedback.

We will not award you funding if you have:

* [failed to exploit](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/before-you-start-an-application/?&_ga=2.233780958.1156065990.1661156488-404390041.1639048509#contents-list) a previously funded project
* an overdue [independent accountant’s report](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/before-you-start-an-application/#contents-list)
* failed to comply with grant terms and conditions

## Subsidy control (and State aid where applicable)

This competition provides funding in line with the UK's obligations and commitments to Subsidy Control. Further information about the UK Subsidy Control requirements can be found within the [EU-UK Trade and Cooperation agreement](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/948093/TCA_SUMMARY_PDF.pdf) and the subsequent guidance from the department of [Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complying-with-the-uks-international-obligations-on-subsidy-control-guidance-for-public-authorities) (BEIS).

Innovate UK is unable to award organisations that are considered to be in financial difficulty. We will conduct financial viability and eligibility tests to confirm this is not the case following the application stage.

EU State aid rules now only apply in limited circumstances. Please see our [general guidance](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/funding-rules/#contents-list) to check if these rules apply to your organisation.

**Further Information**

If you are unsure about your obligations under the UK Subsidy Control regime or the State aid rules, you should take independent legal advice. We are unable to advise on individual eligibility or legal obligations.

You must at all times make sure that the funding awarded to you is compliant with all current Subsidy Control legislation applicable in the United Kingdom.  
This aims to regulate any advantage granted by a public sector body which threatens to, or actually distorts competition in the United Kingdom or any other country or countries.

If there are any changes to the above requirements that mean we need to change the terms of this competition, we will tell you as soon as possible.

## Funding

Up to £2 million has been allocated to fund innovation projects in this competition. Funding will be in the form of a grant.

If the majority of your organisation’s work on the project is commercial or economic, your funding request must not exceed the limits below. These limits apply even if your organisation normally acts non-economically.

For industrial research projects, you could get funding for your eligible project costs of up to 40% regardless of organisation size.

For more information on company sizes, please refer to the [company accounts guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/life-of-a-company-annual-requirements/life-of-a-company-part-1-accounts#micro-entity). This is a change from the [EU definition](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en) unless you are applying under State aid.

If you are applying for an award funded under State aid Regulations, the definitions are set out in the [European Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en).

**Research participation**

The research organisations undertaking non-economic activity as part of the project can share up to 40% of the total eligible project costs. If your consortium contains more than one research organisation undertaking non-economic activity, this maximum is shared between them.

Of that 40% you could get funding for your eligible project costs of up to:

* 80% of full economic costs (FEC) if you are a Je-S registered institution such as an academic
* 100% of your project costs if you are an RTO, charity, not for profit organisation, public sector organisation or research organisation

## Your proposal

The aim of this competition is to support business focused innovation in Kent and Medway. This is to support the transition to net zero, deliver improved productivity and sustainability in horticultural food and drink production. This can include the production of novel, high value compounds from plants.

[Growing Kent and Medway](https://www.growingkentandmedway.com/) want to stimulate socially inclusive innovation so individuals can contribute and benefit from economic growth in the Kent and Medway area.

Your project must:

* provide solutions that tackle new or emerging needs
* demonstrate a realistic potential to support business growth, scale-up, and job creation
* deliver benefit to the region as well as further afield

Your activities can solve challenges at any point in:

* horticultural production including the production of novel, high value compounds from plants
* fresh produce packaging
* food and drink processing
* enabling technologies that underpin the supply chain

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

**Portfolio approach**

Innovate UK and Growing Kent and Medway will review and fund a [portfolio of projects](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/innovate-uk-funding-general-guidance-for-applicants#how-your-application-is-assessed), across a variety of technologies, social value consideration, geographic sub-regions, markets, technological maturities.

Portfolio consideration will include:

* sub-regional balance
* sub-sector balance, for example: horticulture, viticulture, Agri-food tech
* its place in the value chain, for example: cultivation, harvesting, processing, manufacturing, packaging, distribution and business model innovation
* balance of research partner participation

## Specific themes

Your project must focus on one or more of the following:

* moving towards net zero carbon emissions targets
* minimising waste and maximising recycling
* improving resource use efficiency and sustainability
* increasing productivity
* resilient food production, for example: supply chain resilience, nutritional security
* precision technologies, for example: sensor technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), internet of things (IoT), robotics
* addressing current and future labour shortages, supply or demand driven, within the K&M agri-food sector

## Research categories

We will fund industrial research projects, as defined in the [guidance on categories of research](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/categories-of-research-and-development/#contents-list).

## Projects we will not fund

We are not funding projects that:

* do not demonstrate the potential to positively impact on the economy of the K&M area
* fail to commit to delivering social value
* have a focus on animal or fish-based production systems and animal or fish derived food and drink products
* grow plants with the primary purpose of producing animal feed
* are dependent on export performance, for example giving a subsidy to a baker on the condition that it exports a certain quantity of bread to another country
* are dependent on domestic inputs usage, for example giving a subsidy to a baker on the condition that it uses 50% UK flour in their product

## Before you start

You must read the [guidance on applying for a competition on the Innovation Funding Service](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/general-guidance/your-application/#contents-list) before you start.

**What we ask you**

The application is split into 3 sections:

1.Project details.

2.Application questions.

3.Finances.

## 1. Project details

This section provides background for the assessors and is not scored.  
  
**Application team**

Decide which organisations will work with you on the project. Invite people from those organisations to help complete the application.

**Application details**

Give your project’s title, start date and duration.

**Project summary**

Describe your project briefly and be clear about what makes it innovative. We use this section to assign experts to assess your application.

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.  
  
**Public description**

Describe your project in detail, and in a way that you are happy to see published. Do not include any commercially sensitive information. If we award your project funding, we will publish this description. This could happen before you start your project.

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

**Scope**

Describe how your project fits the scope of the competition. If your project is not in scope it will be immediately rejected and will not be sent for assessment. We will give you feedback on why.

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

## 2. Application questions

The assessors will score your answers to questions 7 to 14, questions 1 to 6 are not scored. You will receive feedback for each scored question.

You must answer all questions. Do not include any website addresses (URLs) in your answers.

**Question 1. Applicant location (not scored)**

You must state the name and full registered address of your organisation, any partners and any subcontractors working on your project. We are collecting this information to understand the geographical location of all applicants.

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

**Question 2. Social** **value (not scored)**  
How will you engage in delivering social value in the Kent and Medway (K&M) area?

Provision of social value:

Before you answer this question, refer to the social value guidance provided in the ‘[Background and Further Information](https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition/1283/overview/585a9009-2168-40ff-a8f8-c61ca6da04e1#supporting-information)’ section of the competition brief.

Detailed guidance around social value activities and levels of expected commitment can be found at [GKM social value guidelines.](https://www.growingkentandmedway.com/funding/grant-funding/r-d-collaborative-grants/)

In your answer you must:

* confirm that you will commit to delivering social value (failure to commit to delivering social value will mean that your project is ineligible for funding)
* state the level of time that you are willing to commit to delivering social value and list the project partners who will be involved in this delivery
* describe your plans for delivering social value

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

**Question 3.** **Net zero targets (not scored)**

How does your project contribute towards achieving net zero carbon emissions targets?

Your answer can be up to 150 words long.

**Question 4.** **Project location (not scored)**

Where is the work on your project being undertaken?

You must confirm:

* where in the K&M area you intend to undertake the work
* what work will be carried out in the K&M area

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

**Question 5. Awareness of funding opportunity (not scored)**

How did you become aware of this funding opportunity?

Using the list below, state through which channels you heard about this competition. You may list as many that apply.

* Innovate UK portal
* KTN
* Growing Kent & Medway (GK&M) website
* GK&M promotion or events
* LinkedIn
* Facebook or Instagram
* Twitter
* other

Your answer can be up to 100 words long.

**Question 6.** **Project focus (not scored)**

What is the focus of your project or innovation?

Using the list below, state your primary focus, and if applicable, any additional focus:

* minimising waste and maximising recycling
* improving resource use efficiency and sustainability
* increasing productivity
* improving resilience in the food chain
* developing precision technologies
* solving the labour challenge

Your answer can be up to 100 words long.

**Question 7.** **The business need or opportunity**

What is the business need or opportunity for your innovation?

Describe or explain:

* the main motivation for the project in terms of the business need, technological challenge or market opportunity, particularly in the horticultural food production and processing chain in K&M
* who would benefit from your innovation in the immediate and longer term
* the size of the target markets that your project addresses and any other potential secondary markets, backed up by market research references where available
* any work you have already done to respond to this need and how this project fits with your current product, service lines, offerings, or activities

Your answer can be up to 600 words long.

**Question 8.** **Approach and innovation**

What approach will you take and where will the focus of the innovation be?

Explain the idea and innovation your project will develop including:

* how your project responds to the need, challenge or opportunity identified
* the project outputs
* the key innovations or scientific technological evidence supporting your proposed solution
* how your innovation improves on the nearest current state-of-the-art or competitors’ products or services
* your freedom to operate
* your research approach

Your answer can be up to 600 words long.

You must submit a project plan or Gantt chart as an appendix to support your answer. It must be a PDF, can be up to 2 A4 pages long and no larger than 10MB in size. The font must be legible at 100% zoom.  
  
You can also submit one additional appendix to support your answers to this question. It can include diagrams and charts. It must be a PDF and can be up to 2 A4 pages long and no larger than 10MB in size. The font must be legible at 100% zoom. Do not include hyperlinks.

**Question 9.** **Route to market**

How are you going to grow your business as a result of the project?

Explain the route to market for your project outputs including:

* how near to commercialisation your project outputs are, and what extra steps need to be taken for them to be commercialised
* the structure and dynamics of the target markets and your current position in these markets, including your target customers or end users
* your proposed business model and route to market.
* how you are going to profit from the innovation, for example, increased revenues, productivity gains, transition to net zero in both the short and the long term
* how you will protect and exploit the outputs of the project to maximise your market potential

For the research organisation activity in the project, describe how you will:

* actively engage in knowledge dissemination
* use the results generated from the project in further research activities to support K&M’s local economy and society in general

Your answer can be up to 600 words long.

**Question 10.** **Wider impact**

What impact will the project outputs have beyond the project team, including customers, others in the supply chain, the broader horticultural and food sector, and society more generally?

Describe:

* the economic benefits from the project to the economy of K&M for example, job creation, increased productivity
* any expected societal impacts for example quality of life, social inclusion, nutritional security or improved employment opportunities
* any expected environmental impacts for example, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, reduced waste, reduced inputs.
* whether your project is likely to have any negative impact, for example, displacement of jobs or social exclusion, and how these will be minimised

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

**Question 11.** **Risk management**

What is your approach to the identification, management, and mitigation of risks to the successful delivery of your project?

Explain:

* what the main risks and uncertainties of the project are, including the technical, commercial, managerial, and environmental risks
* how you will manage and mitigate these risks throughout the project
* any project inputs that are critical to completion, such as resources, expertise, data sets
* any output likely to be subject to regulatory requirements, certification, and ethical issues, and how you will manage this

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

You must submit a risk register as an appendix to support your answer. It must be a PDF and can be up to 2 A4 pages long and no larger than 10MB in size. The font must be legible at 100% zoom. Do not include hyperlinks.

**Question 12.** **Project team and management**

Who is your project team and what is your capability to deliver the project and what other support you might need?  
  
Explain:

* the exact role of each partner and any current relationships between the partners
* why the project team has the right skills, experience, and access to facilities to deliver the project
* the resources, equipment and facilities needed for the project and how you will access them
* any roles you will need to recruit for, and how you will promote equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
* your approach to project management, identifying any major tools and mechanisms you will use to deliver project outcomes
* If applicable, the justification for inclusion of non-K&M based organisations in the project

Your answer can be up to 600 words long.

**Question 13.** **Funding requirements**

How has your project been costed and how will it be funded?  
  
You must:

* indicate the total eligible costs for the project and the balance of costs across the project partners
* provide a full breakdown of the costs and justify them
* clearly state the grant funding requested by each partner
* explain how each partner will finance their own contributions and co-investment to the project
* describe how this project represents value for money for you compared to what you would spend your money on otherwise
* indicate justification for subcontractor costs
* explain how this project represents value for money for the taxpayer

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

**Question 14: Added value**

What is the added value that can be achieved by this project being funded?  
  
Explain:

* why you are not able to wholly fund the project from your own resources or other forms of private sector funding
* what would happen if your application was unsuccessful
* the difference that public funding would make to your project
* the likely impact of the project on the partners involved, including increased R&D activities or spending

Your answer can be up to 400 words long.

## 3. Finances

Each organisation in your project must complete their own project costs, organisation details and funding details in the application. Academic institutions must complete and upload a [Je-S form](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/innovate-uk-completing-your-application-project-costs-guidance/guidance-for-academics-applying-via-the-je-s-system).

For full details on what costs you can claim see our [project costs guidance.](https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/costs-we-fund/costs-guidance-for-non-academic-organisations/)

## Background and further information

**Delivering social value**

Growing Kent & Medway (GKM) works to deliver inclusive economic growth so that all communities in the region can contribute to, and benefit from, an uplift in regional prosperity. This is achieved through a range of engagement mechanisms.

The focus of this engagement is on raising awareness and advancing opportunity in horticulture, food and drink production and the enabling technology industries, for example, robotics, sensors and AI). For instance, social value could include raising awareness around career pathways or around nutrition and wellbeing through community engagement.

Beneficiaries of GKM grant funding programmes are asked to contribute towards these social value goals. As a condition of receiving grant funding, you will be asked to commit a certain level of time towards a social value activity within the region. The amount of time to be committed, will be dependent upon the size of grant received. Applicants who fail to commit to delivering social value will be ineligible for funding.

We recognise that some businesses may already have in place well established mechanisms to deliver corporate social responsibility, for example, volunteering days for employees. However, for others this may be a less familiar concept and it might be helpful to think about people, skills and place, which aligns strongly with the UK Government’s [levelling up agenda](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1095544/Executive_Summary.pdf).

It is not the intention of GKM to prescribe what you do, but some suggestions are available in our [social value guidelines](https://www.growingkentandmedway.com/funding/grant-funding/r-d-collaborative-grants/). You are asked to outline your plans under the ‘Social Value’ response in question 2 of the application form. This question is not assessed. However, GKM may wish to have follow-up discussions with you to ensure that quality and safeguarding issues are adequately addressed.

## Data sharing

This competition is jointly operated by Innovate UK, and National Institute for Agricultural Botany (NIAB), (each an ‘agency’).

Your submitted application and any other information you provide at the application stage can be submitted to each agency on an individual basis for its storage, processing and use. Any relevant information produced during the application process concerning your application can be shared by one agency with the other, for its individual storage, processing and use.

This means that any information given to or generated by Innovate UK in respect of your application may be passed on to specific Growing Kent and Medway project partners, National Institute for Agricultural Botany (NIAB), University of Greenwich, University of Kent and Locate in Kent) and vice versa.

Innovate UK and the specific Growing Kent and Medway partners identified above are directly accountable to you for their holding and processing of your information, including any personal data and confidential information. Data is held in accordance with their own policies. Accordingly, Innovate UK, and the specific Growing Kent & Medway project partners will be data controllers for personal data submitted during the application.

Innovate UK complies with the [requirements of GDPR](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/innovate-uk/about/personal-information-charter#privacy-notice), and is committed to upholding the data protection principles, and protecting your information The Information Commissioner’s Office also has a [useful guide](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/) for organisations, which outlines the data protection principles.

NIAB, University of Greenwich, University of Kent and Locate in Kent follow the requirements of the GKM consortium data sharing agreement which complies with all relevant UK Data Protection legislation and GDPR. Further detail of how data is processed is provided in the [GKM Privacy Policy](https://www.growingkentandmedway.com/privacy-policy/).

## Find a project partner

If you want help to find a project partner, contact the Growing Kent & Medway Team: [contact@growingkentandmedway.com](mailto:contact@growingkentandmedway.com)

## Support for SMEs from Innovate UK EDGE

If you receive an award, you will be contacted about working with an innovation and growth specialist at [Innovate UK EDGE](https://www.innovateukedge.ukri.org/?utm_source=innovateuk&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=competitionsifs). This service forms part of our funded offer to you.

These specialists focus on growing innovative businesses and ensuring that projects contribute to their growth. Working one-to-one, they can help you to identify your best strategy and harness world-class resources to grow and achieve scale.

We encourage you to engage with Innovate UK EDGE, delivered by a knowledgeable and objective specialist near you.