FlexFund – Planet: FAQs

What is the FlexFund for?

Our inclusive FlexFund is specially designed for co-creation with various users and stakeholders, enabling them to shape the technology innovation, and co-develop technology. These funds are staged to promote an innovation ecosystem from early to mid – late phase (depending on their TRL/SRL) and to de-risk investments at an early stage in the development and assessment cycle. The framework is designed to strategically advance scalable innovations, from the lab-scale to demonstrators, through to application and exploitation across the value chain.

The **FlexFund** mechanism will be equally accessible for project activities driven by technical, social, environmental and economic research needs, ensuring environmental sustainability research and innovation is appropriately resourced.

What are the different levels sizes of funding available?

Three phases are available:

- MINI: up to £30k
- MIDI: up to £50k
- MAXI: up to £100k

When is the deadline for submissions?

18 June, 5pm

What is the expected duration of projects?

6 – 12 months

What happens after my application is received?

Each application undergoes peer review by three members of the GBC Core Team. Their comments are passed to a Funding Assessment Panel (comprising members from our Strategic Advisory Board) for a final funding decision. The project lead will be notified of the outcome.

What are the possible outcomes from the Funding Assessment Panel?

Proposals will be ranked according to the following:

- A – fundable
- B – potentially fundable but further clarification required
- C – not fundable

Proposals that are ranked 'B' will be offered the opportunity to respond to feedback from the Funding Assessment Panel, with responses judged by the Leadership Team. Project leads will then be notified of the outcome.

What is the main focus of this funding call?

This funding call sits under our *Planet* theme, which aims to lead the UK transformation to a planet positive chemicals industry, moving toward net-zero or negative greenhouse gas emissions measured across the following areas:

- **Decarbonisation** - demonstrated pathways to reduction of industrial emissions
- **Circular Resource Flows** – demonstrated increase in circular material flows / industrial symbiosis
- **Environmental Benefits** – demonstrated environmental net gain or biodiversity benefits

We are looking for applications that support the translation and validation of high-potential research to benefit the wider environment, leading to the creation of skills, jobs and wealth.

Are projects/processes that do not involve carbon (no input or output), but is green production through recycling, eligible for the call?

Yes. Carbon emissions are only one of the targets; the call's scope includes the sustainable recycling and reuse of materials leading to environmental benefits.

What is the total budget for this call?

The total pot available for this call is £500k. The number and scale of projects funded depends on the mix of mini, midi, and maxi proposals received and their relative competitiveness.

Can industry partner(s) claim for their costs?

Yes, industry partners can have their costs funded through subcontracting, however, the lead applicant must be from a higher education institution or an eligible organisation. This follows the standard UKRI (EPSRC and NERC) framework and terms & conditions – please refer to these T&Cs for further information.

What can/can't the funding be used for?

The funding is intended for project-specific human resources, consumables, and subcontracting.

- **Eligible:** Staff who are directly performing the research (technical staff, research associates, or research assistants) under Directly Incurred (DI) costs.
- **Ineligible:** It cannot fund studentships, although a student can be hired as a research assistant if they are working outside their study time according to institutional guidelines.
- **Rate:** All awards are paid at 80% of the Full Economic Cost (FEC).

Do applications to MAXI funds (£100k) require an industrial collaborator to match an additional £100k?

Yes, a MAXI project requesting £100k requires a matching £100k from an industry partner. This match is required to demonstrate industry interest as projects move toward higher Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) and translation.

Can industry-oriented research institutes (such as Warwick Manufacturing Group, WMG) be partners?

Yes, they are considered an eligible institution for this call provided they are a part of a higher education institution.

Can we claim for PI staff time?

PI staff time is only eligible if it is costed under Directly Incurred (DI) terms, meaning the PI is actually performing the research work themselves. If the PI is only supervising the research team, those costs are considered Directly Allocated (DA) and are not eligible.

Are you allowed to be involved in more than one bid?

There are no formal restrictions on involvement in multiple bids. However, it is suggested that it may be more effective to concentrate on a single, high-quality project that fits the remit and demonstrates strong impact.

Can ECRs submit applications?

Yes, the call supports early career researchers. PDRAs based at an eligible higher education institute can submit applications, which will be judged by an expert panel using standard UKRI peer review criteria based on quality.

Are travel and conference costs eligible?

Travel costs are eligible providing they are a) reasonable and in proportion to the size of the award and b) used **only** for project-specific travel/activities (i.e. travel to partner sites).

Conference travel/costs are not eligible.