

Northern Accelerator CCF, Pre-incorporation Funding Awards Guidance for Applicants

1) Introduction

Northern Accelerator is a collaboration between Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside Universities to grow capacity and activity in the commercialisation of opportunities arising from high quality research. There are a number of initiatives under the Northern Accelerator umbrella. One of these provides funds to support promising new research outcomes to test their commercial viability. The programme managers encourage applications from researchers who are new to research commercialisation as well as more experienced colleagues.

The purpose of the Pre-incorporation funding is to assist in the development of commercialisation projects (that may have the potential to progress through spinout formation). This will, in effect, produce a pipeline of possible investment propositions for the Venture North fund.

Whilst the review panel will not be overly prescriptive, in terms of the disciplinary alignment of projects, in considering whether or not they should be funded it may be useful for applicants to understand the general target markets that will serve as thematic focus for Venture North. Applicants are asked to reference alignment with these markets in their applications where possible.

The markets in question are:

- **Health and Ageing** - Thesis: "Improve healthy life expectancy, expand length of working life, improve health inequity, digitise longevity economy"
- **The Caring Economy** - Thesis: "Over 10M people in UK are patients, providers or family care-givers. Major flaws in delivery models, unpaid care and lost productivity"
- **Future Work** - Thesis: "Over 15M British office workers working from home (vs. 1.5M in 2019), service jobs to follow, largest geography of work shift in 100 years"
- **Lifelong Learning** - Thesis: "Challenges to the value of traditional learning models, coinciding with explosion in need for continuous learning at all stages of life"
- **Home-as-a-service** - Thesis: "Pressure and opportunity to adapt homes to new family structures, healthy ageing, remote work via new service model"
- **Future Cities** - Thesis: "A race for towns and cities to become talent magnets via human-centred regeneration strategies"
- **Climate Technology/Circular Economy** - Thesis: "Generate economic growth while reducing absolute and per-capita use of materials and resources, and achieving Net Zero carbon"

2) Value of award

The fund is available for Feasibility Awards up to £10,000; and Proof of Concept Awards between £10,000 and £50,000.

Potential commercial opportunities are able to apply and be granted multiple awards under this scheme however the cumulative value will be taken into account to assess the level of detail required at application stage and will not exceed £100,000.

3) Number of Awards

The exact number and ratio between Feasibility and Proof of Concept awards will be adjusted in line with demand over the life of the initiative and will be managed by the programme management team. For context Northern Accelerator has funded 87 projects to date with an overall value of around £3.5m and in previous calls we have approved around 44% of applications.

4) Focus

Northern Accelerator's purpose is to bring a suite of support opportunities to help promising research outcomes reach commercial markets. Examples of activity are given below. This is not a definitive list, however, please note if their activities appear to be an extension of the existing research without a tangible commercial goal the application is not likely to be successful.

Example of activities that **Feasibility Awards** can be used for include (but are not limited to):

- understanding market requirements;
- meeting potential commercial partners;
- demonstration projects for potential partners;
- travel and accommodation to attend trade events in the promotion of commercial outcomes.

Examples of the **Proof of Concept** activities are:

- the development of a prototype device;
- delivery of demonstration projects for commercial partners;
- trial trading activity to assess market demand;
- travel and accommodation to meet potential commercial partners or attend trade events;
- buy out of academic salary time for project specific activities;
- purchase of minor equipment and consumables needed to prove concept

The initiative will specifically not fund:

- 'Blue sky' research
- Longitudinal and life course research or longer term public health studies
- Applied research for companies
- Purchase of significant equipment or capital assets
- Patent costs

5) Treatment of Intellectual Property (IP) within Northern Accelerator

Northern Accelerator takes confidentiality and IP ownership seriously.

Confidentiality

Members of the Northern Accelerator review panel will be subject to a confidentiality agreement. Panellists will be representatives from partner institutions or external participants with expertise in innovation/technology transfer and knowledge of relevant sector(s). External panellists will have signed Non-disclosure agreements. Whilst you are always advised to keep the number of people to whom you disclose your invention / commercial project there will be no breach of confidentiality from submission to the fund.

Funding Impact on IP Ownership

All IP brought to Northern Accelerator remains the property of the institution bringing the IP. Pre-incorporation funding provided by Northern Accelerator will not change the IP ownership. This is not an equity-based investment by Northern Accelerator, it is support funding to help you and your university bring more commercial projects to fruition. Your relationship with your university regarding benefit sharing will be documented in your university's IP Policy.

6) Application

6.1) Application Process

Applications should be developed with the support of technology transfer representatives (for clarity this would be Business Development Managers at Newcastle University). Completed applications should be sent to northern.accelerator@durham.ac.uk by the closing date. Applications will only be accepted if submitted by a TTO representative from one of the partner universities.

Applications should be submitted as PDF documents (converted from Word, as opposed to a scanned image from hard copy) and the following naming convention should be used...

<University abbreviation>,<Lead Academic>,<Funding type>App,<Short Title>,<Date>.pdf, for example:

- DUR, A Smith, Feasibility App, Design for portable water filtration unit, 15-04-21.pdf
- NCL, B Jones, PoC App, Novel diagnostic for skin cancer, 30-03-21.pdf
- NTH, C Williams, PoC App, Modified polymer coating for photovoltaic panels, 18-04-21.pdf
- SUN, D Taylor, PoC App, Testing of AI interface for smart vehicles, 21-04-21.pdf
- TEES, E Brown, Feasibility App, Deep data analysis for real-time decision support, 27-04-21.pdf

NB: If document names are too long it creates an issue when saving the file.

For a discussion about making an application for a Feasibility or Proof of Concept Award, please contact your technology transfer representative. If you aren't sure who this would be you can contact your university's Northern Accelerator lead as follows:

Durham University

Tim Hammond
Director Commercialisation & Economic Development
Research and Innovation Services
E: tim.hammond@durham.ac.uk

University of Sunderland

Nickola Gray
Strategic Projects and Funding Manager
Enterprise & Innovation
M: 07748 334 903
E: nickola.gray@sunderland.ac.uk

Newcastle University

Lizzie Withington
Company Creation Manager
M: 07572 705619
E: Lizzie.Withington@newcastle.ac.uk

Teesside University

Omar Al-Janabi
Innovation, IP & Commercialisation Manager
Research and Innovation Services
M: 07778 448954
E: O.Al-Janabi@tees.ac.uk

Northumbria University

Chelsea Brain
IP Commercialisation Manager
Research and Innovation Services
M: 07468 700880
E: chelsea.brain@northumbria.ac.uk

Once a call has closed your application will be checked for compliance and distributed to a review panel, comprising invited innovation/technology transfer experts and representatives from partner universities, to score in accordance with the guidance. A meeting of the review panel, held for moderation of the scoring, will then be followed by a funding decision panel at which those projects that will receive funding will be confirmed. A summary of the scoring schedule is available at <https://www.northernaccelerator.org/our-support/pre-incorporation-funds/>

6.2) Calls for Applications

The current schedule for applications for Northern Accelerator Pre-incorporation funding is shown below for guidance however please note that the project team reserve the right to amend this schedule in accordance with changing budgetary and project management needs.

Call	Application Deadline	Outcome Notified	Awards issued
1 st Call	5 th July 2021	w/c 26 th July 2021	w/c 2 nd Aug 2021
2 nd Call	5 th Nov 2021	w/c 6 th Dec 2021	w/c 13 th Dec 2021
3 rd Call	9 th May 2022	w/c 13 th June 2022	w/c 20 th June 2022

Please take this timetable into account when considering the proposed duration for your project.

Note: All activity, including financial processing and reporting, on pre-incorporation projects must be completed no later than 31st May 2023. We will be unable to agree any extensions beyond this.

6.3) Decisions

You will be contacted with the outcome decision at the email address you put on the form. There are two possible outcomes for each application:

- Accepted – this means that your project will be funded;
- Rejected – this means that your project will not be funded however you are eligible to rework the application and reapply (once only).

All applicants will receive feedback from the review panel.

6.4) Application Form

The following notes are supplied as a guide to the completion of your application. We understand that the depth in which you can complete this application form will vary dependent on how advanced your thinking is, what sort of support you are requesting and whether or not you are at feasibility stage or proof of concept stage (this has been factored into the scoring criteria). Please complete as much as you can and then discuss with your technology transfer representative.

Please note: in the final submission your application form should reflect the word limits given for each section. Any applications received that significantly exceed these limits risks that section not being scored.

Each section will be scored independently in accordance with the following criteria and you should ensure the information provided for each addresses the key points of that particular section

Description	Not at all convincing	Some reservations	OK	Convincing	Highly convincing
Score	1	2	3	4	5

In stating how much funding you are requesting for the project you will need to provide a breakdown of the proposed budget. A template is provided to assist you to consider all of the relevant costs associated with the project. You can add additional rows where required (by hovering the cursor over the left hand side of the table).

1. Inventor / Team (Score 1-5, Weighting: 4)

The inventor / team is an important contributing factor in the successful commercialisation of research outcomes. IT IS IMPORTANT IN YOUR RESPONSE TO THIS SECTION THAT THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE ARTICULATES HOW THE TEAM'S EXPERIENCE RELATES TO THE PROJECT ACTIVITY AND OBJECTIVES. Questions it would be helpful for you to answer are:

- Where has the initial drive come from to pursue a commercial impact?
- Does the team talk to industry regularly and understand what the potential end-users require from a new solution?
- If the invention/ new commercial opportunity is to be commercialised by an intermediate party such as a pharmaceutical company do links exist with those industries?

2. Project Activity (Score 1-5, Weighting: 4, Max 500 words)

This section gives you the opportunity to describe what you are going to undertake if you are awarded funding. You should add narrative context to the costings that you have supplied and explain how this investment will enable your proposal to move towards a commercial outcome.

3. IP Strength (Score 1-5, Weighting: 2, Max 300 words)

We are interested to understand what IP issues you are already aware of and what IP your proposed project may produce or rely on.

Are you aware of any existing products, patents or published papers that are the same or very close to your concept? Do you require support to look into this area?

If you have patented the technology, let us know the date and title of the patent.

4. Technological novelty (Score 1-5, Weighting: 2, Max 300 words)

This section is seeking to elicit how novel the concept is. Describe the new technology, what it does and why that is good. Also, discuss the state of the art in academic research terms. Novel developments where there is not a lot of similar IP are likely to score well.

5. Competition and Competitive Advantage (Score 1-5, Weighting: 2, Max 300 words)

This section enables you to describe any current existing solutions that your invention is hoping to address. How does what you are suggesting offer additional advantage that could have commercial application?

6. Addressable market size (£m) (PoC only) (Score 1-5, Weighting: 2, Max 300 words)

This section will not be included in the marking for a feasibility study application but where you are aware of any information please include it for completeness and context.

Please give some figures to indicate the size of the market that can be addressed by this new technology where this is known. It is unusual for a new technology to address an entire industry sector (total market); more often a segment within an industry represents the "addressable market".

7. Route to market - development partners or potential development partners identified (Score 1-5, Weighting: 4, Max 300 words)

Your route to market describes how your customers acquire your product or service and how you sell your product or service.

If you have been in discussion with a potential end user or development partner you should mention that here. If not, please identify who you would consider as key customers, or key customer groups.

8. Viable next steps to commercialisation (Score 1-5, Weighting: 2, Max 500 words)

This section gives you space to describe your commercialisation plans following Feasibility award or Proof of Concept award.

Please give bullet pointed activities with timescales attached. In this section please identify whether you believe this idea could be destined as a spinout business or a licence deal.

9. Additional Information (not scored)

This section provides space for you to mention any other information that could have a bearing on the success of the commercialisation plan and you believe is important for the panel to be aware of.

Appendices may be used, however you should only provide appendices where they offer relevant information additional to that which you are able to provide within the completed application form. Where appendices are attached they should be referenced in the text under the relevant response section of your application. Filenames for appendices should follow the same naming convention as the main application.

Please note for most purposes (e.g. market analysis) it is adequate to offer a summary rather than submit a great deal of primary data.

Budget

Details of the budget for your project should be provided as an appendix to your application. Please make efforts to ensure the submitted budget is as accurate as possible e.g. by using your institution's proposition development and costing system if applicable. The budget presented should relate clearly to your proposed project activity.

Please read the 'Guidance Note on Overheads' available at <https://www.northernaccelerator.org/our-support/pre-incorporation-funds/> before preparing your budget submission.

7) Concluding Remarks

This funding is provide for research commercialisation.

All commercialisation projects are different and the panel will be tasked with reviewing a wide range of applications. Presentations will not be required in the normal process.

Please note that:

- if successful your institution will need to retain full evidence of spend to support your claim for the grant money awarded;
- it will be a condition of the grant that you agree and commit to provide a full report on the results and outcomes of the project and on the subsequent steps to commercialisation within 3 months following the delivery period of the grant; and
- the programme board reserve the right to change the application and award process as a result of lessons learnt and budgetary constraints during the delivery period.

It is best to talk as early as possible to your university representative if you are interested in applying for this funding.