



Innovate UK - Accelerated Knowledge Transfer 5 Pilot for FE (AKT5) Frequently Asked Questions

This document only relates to AKT 5 and may be updated throughout the duration of the competition.

This FAQ document covers the following areas:
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Please note that Business Partners cannot apply directly for an Innovate UK AKT award.

All applications must be led and submitted by a UK Knowledge Base.

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KNOWLEDGE BASE PARTNER

Which Knowledge Bases are eligible to apply for Innovate UK – AKT5?

Any Knowledge Base that is defined as a further education (FE) college with a registered principal address in either Northern Ireland or Wales. You will find a list of Knowledge Bases already approved to participate in KTP here: <https://www.ukri.org/councils/innovate-uk/guidance-for-applicants/guidance-for-specific-funds/knowledge-transfer-partnership-guidance/find-your-local-knowledge-transfer-adviser/#contents-list>

If you are not already approved as a Knowledge Base to participate in KTP, you will still be eligible to apply for an Innovate UK AKT award. You can enter your information in IFS by following these prompts:

1. Start account creation
 - Click Start a new application or Accept invitation.
 - Select Create an account when prompted.
 - Choose your organisation type.
2. Search for your organisation
 - Enter your organisation name (in the Companies House search box.
 - Click Search.
3. Select the non-Companies House option
 - Scroll to the bottom of the search results page.
 - Click the link: "Find out what to do" under "My organisation is not registered on Companies House".
4. Enter organisation details manually

I can't find the open competition, how can I apply?

As the competition has limited eligibility, only institutions that meet the criteria and have been approved to apply will receive an access link after the competition has opened.

What cost model should be used by the Knowledge Base in applying for an Innovate UK - AKT grant?

Knowledge Bases should follow the [KTP cost model](#) for Associates, Knowledge Base Supervisors and Additional Associate Support costs. Note however the 90% grant rate for this competition. Where the Knowledge Base institution uses fEC, they will be required to attach an up to date fEC letter with their application. Where the knowledge base does not use fEC, they are required to attach a non fEC exemption certificate. This must be valid on the date of competition Funders Panel.



Please carefully review the Innovate UK – AKT Costing Guidance document, which will be posted [here](#). Rules may change for specific AKT competition rounds. Please ensure that you refer to the correct guidance for the AKT round that you are participating in.

Can a Knowledge Base apply for more than one Innovate UK - AKT grant?

Yes, a knowledge base is allowed to submit up to three (3) applications for AKT5. However, applicants should explain how they will be able to effectively deliver multiple projects. Should we receive a higher volume of applications than capacity, we may take the number of applications from each knowledge base into consideration.

Can one Knowledge Base Supervisor be present in two applications?

Yes, however, this will be a matter for the Knowledge Base institution. NB. Involvement of a single Knowledge Base Supervisor in 2 Innovate UK AKT projects would require a minimum of 0.5 days per week (i.e., 0.25 days per project per week).

Can the Knowledge Base Supervisor be allocated more time to the project?

Academic supervision will typically be delivered at 0.5 days per week, with a minimum of 0.25 days per week. Any additional supervision time will need to be justified in the application and should represent the best means of delivering the project.

Can the Knowledge Base cost in more than One Academic Supervisor?

Typically, it is expected that only one academic will be supported via the grant.

What criteria is there for the Supervisor? Do they have to be an academic?

The Knowledge Base should be content that the Supervisor has the requisite knowledge, experience, and capability to supervise the project. They need not necessarily be academic staff but must be employed by the knowledge base.



BUSINESS PARTNER

What exactly do you mean by Business Partner and who is eligible?

We use the term 'Business Partner' for businesses, charities or charitable businesses. They must be registered in the UK and for the purposes of AKT5, must be registered in the same primary location as the knowledge base (either Northern Ireland or Wales). There is no upper limit on the size of the organisation.

Can a Business Partner be involved in more than one Innovate UK - AKT project?

Yes, within reason, however, applicants should explain how they will be able to effectively deliver multiple projects.

If the Business Partner was supported through a project in last year's pilot, are they eligible to apply again?

Yes, this is a stand-alone competition, so long as this is a new project, they will be eligible to apply.

Can Business Partners with an existing live KTP apply?

Yes - however the Innovate UK - AKT team will need to be convinced that the company has the capacity to support any additional activity to the KTP project.

What financial contribution is made by the Business Partner?

The Business Partner must commit to a minimum 10% contribution to the total project costs, which must be in cash. Additionally, they must provide resources to cover their own costs and any additional project costs over £35,000 for a 3 month project or £70,000 for a 6 month project. The Knowledge Base is responsible for recovering the 10% contribution and any other costs from the business partner.

Can a business use a grant acquired from elsewhere as their match contribution?

No. Public money cannot be used to match Innovate UK - AKT funding.

What other contribution is the business partner expected to make?

The business should dedicate its own staff and necessary resources to facilitate the Innovate UK AKT project and work in partnership with the Knowledge Base institution and the Associate. The exact nature of this will need to be discussed and agreed by the project partners before the application is submitted. The Innovate UK - AKT grant does not support any costs incurred by the company during delivery of the project.

Is there any flexibility around the requirement for the Business Partner to have 4 FTE's?



No, we believe that a Business Partner with 4FTE's or more will be better able to contribute and support the project.

Regarding 4 FTE's, what if the business has contracted workers working full-time on the business, not actually employees?

The Business Partner must have a minimum of 4 FTEs in its employment.

Can start-ups use the funding to explore an opportunity before looking into a full project?

Yes, so long as they meet the eligibility requirements outlined in this document.

Can 2 SMEs apply jointly for the project?

No. Innovate UK - AKT is restricted to one Knowledge Base working with one Business Partner.

Can UK based Organisations apply where the impact will be delivered overseas?

Impact must be delivered within the UK, preferably within the region where the Knowledge Base and Business reside (Wales or Northern Ireland).



ASSOCIATE

Can the Associate be part-time if the project runs for longer than 3-months?

The Associate can be part-time BUT projects will be for 3 months OR 6 months. Other durations are not permitted for this competition. Additionally, up to two Associates can work on the project, up to a maximum of 1 FTE in total.

Does the Associate have to spend time at the Business Partner's premises?

It is expected that the project team (all partners, as defined in the application form) will meet at least every two weeks. Ideally, these meetings should occur at both the Knowledge Base institution and the Business Partner premises, but they can also take place remotely. Spending some time at the Business Partner premises is desirable, but not mandatory.

Do you have to name the Associate on the application?

No, Associates must be employed by the Knowledge Base and be suitably skilled to deliver the project but there is no requirement to identify an associate prior to application nor to openly advertise the position. All of the partners must be content with the associate(s) delivering the project. Note that the associate(s) should be available to start project delivery **within 6-weeks** from the date of issue of the GoL.

Does the Associate have to be based in the UK?

The Associate will need to be in the UK and will be employed by the Knowledge Base Partner.

Can we build in Visa costs for the Associate?

Visa costs are not an eligible cost in this competition.

Can the Associate already work for the business?

An Associate from the business would be ineligible as the Business Partner must cover their own costs. Associates cannot be seconded from the Business Partner to the Knowledge Base partner.

Can a KTP Associate who is already working for the Business Partner be the Associate on an Innovate UK - AKT project?

The KTP Associate role is a full-time position so they cannot participate in a KTP project and an Innovate UK - AKT project at the same time. However, if an Innovate UK - AKT project starts as the KTP contract comes to an end, the KTP Associate could potentially segway directly into an Innovate UK - AKT project, provided the Knowledge Base HR processes allow for this.

Can an Innovate UK - AKT Associate become a KTP Associate?



Not directly, but a successful AKT Associate would be welcome to apply for any relevant KTP Associate role. Knowledge Bases are reminded that a demonstrably open and fair recruitment process is required under the terms of a KTP grant.

Are there any eligibility criteria for the Associate?

The Associate must be employed by the Knowledge Base on a temporary or permanent basis during the lifetime of the project. The Associate must be appropriately skilled to deliver the project. The minimum requirement is a Level 4 qualification (or equivalent qualification) or relevant significant experience. The associate cannot be a student placement, unless they are a post graduate.

Can someone who has already been an Innovate UK – AKT Associate do so again, i.e., if they were employed on a project during last year's pilot?

Yes, this is permitted.

Can we use a student to deliver part of the Innovate UK – AKT role?

Yes, provided there is a mechanism for them to be employed/paid by the Knowledge Base and they can be recruited within the Knowledge Base's HR processes.

Can the company find the Associate or does this need to be the Knowledge Base?

The Associate must be employed by the Knowledge Base partner. It is expected that applicants will be interviewed by the knowledge base and the business, who must both agree to the appointment of the selected candidate.

Could an academic act as an Associate?

Yes, as long as the available grant (maximum of £35,000 or £70,000) will 'buy' enough time for the academic to deliver the project. Note that the Associate and the Supervisor cannot be the same person.

Could an Associate be home-based or in a hybrid work arrangement?

Yes, however, this should be made to be clear in the application and, in particular, the provisions for maintaining good communication between the project team must be described.

PRE-AWARD GUIDANCE for AKT5

How do we apply online?

All applications must be submitted via the [Innovation Funding Service](#) (IFS).



Is there guidance and advice on project costing?

Please carefully review the Innovate UK – AKT5 Costing Guidance document, which will be posted [here](#), in advance of the competition opening.

Do we need an IP agreement?

It is not anticipated that IP will be generated within an Innovate UK - AKT project, however, if either party wishes to put an IP agreement in place, it should be in place before the application is submitted.

Is there a document similar to a Joint Commitment Statement for AKT?

A separate JCS is not required for Innovate UK – AKT applications. However, in submitting applications, applicants will be required to work together as a partnership and to deliver on the commitments made in the application around partnership working.

How will applications be assessed?

Please review the competition briefing session for more information around how applications will be assessed. The recording is available on the competition site.

How quickly will we be notified if our application is successful?

We anticipate issuing Grant Offer Letters by the 9th of June, 2026.

Can we build in costs for equipment hire?

The hiring of equipment is allowable under the consumables budget.

Are international Travel Costs Eligible?

International travel costs are not eligible.

Software is not an eligible cost, how about cloud services?

Cloud services are not an eligible cost.



POST-AWARD GUIDANCE for AKT5

Once we receive the Grant Offer Letter (GOL) how soon must the project start?

The project should start as soon as is practicable but must start within 6-weeks from the receipt of the grant offer letter. Project set-up and GOLs will be managed by Innovate UK in IFS.

Will there be an opportunity to request variations or project changes?

There will be no opportunity to request variations, revisions or project change requests in this competition.

What happens if we can't start within 6-weeks of receiving the Grant Offer Letter?

Your funding will be withdrawn.

Is it mandatory to attend a New Project Workshop?

Yes, all knowledge bases must have a minimum of one attendee (typically the project manager at the New Project Workshop.)

Can we substitute an Associate during the project?

The expectation is that the Associate will deliver the entirety of the project. If an associate is no longer available to deliver the entirety of the project, the project partners must select an alternative associate(s) that they are agreed upon. If an agreed suitable substitute cannot be found within a suitable timeframe, the project will be terminated.

Do we need to provide Innovate UK with the names of the associates working on the project?

On or before the first day of your project, you will be required to submit the associate(s) names and the project start date on the Innovate UK Business Connect - AKT competition portal [Good Grants](#).

If one or more associates is no longer available to complete the project, you should notify akt@iukbc.org.uk as soon as possible and they will arrange for updates to be made. The name of the agreed replacement associate(s) should be added to the competition portal, along with their start and expected end date working on the project. You will be required to confirm that the Business Partner is content with the choice of Associate(s).

How will projects be monitored?

Requirements around project monitoring will be clarified in the Grant Offer Letter. For 3 month projects, a final project review will be required. For 6 month projects, a mid point and a final project review will be required. Reporting will be undertaken on the Innovate UK Business Connect - AKT competition portal (Good Grants).



Can we request that the project is paused and or extended for any reason, for example, to allow an associate to be replaced?

Projects are not typically approved to be extended or paused.

How will Claims be paid?

Claims must be submitted within the GOL terms of the end of the project, following the Innovate UK claim process on IFS. Claims must be accompanied by a final report, case study and a presentation as set out in the GoL, on the Innovate UK Business Connect - AKT competition portal (Good Grants).

Innovate UK will process claims and Innovate UK Business Connect will process final reports.

NB. The Knowledge Base Partner is expected to recover the Business Partner contribution. Invoices for payment should be raised by the Knowledge Base at a time agreed with the Business Partner and prior to the submission of the final claim.



GENERAL QUESTIONS

What is the total value of the grant awarded?

The maximum grant that will be awarded will be £35,000 for three (3) month projects or £70,000 for six (6) month projects.

Will the local KTA support the application development?

No, applications should be submitted by the knowledge base directly. KTAs do not have a responsibility to support Innovate UK - AKT applications or review applications pre-submission.

Are there any limits on the scope of an Innovate UK - AKT project?

The project has to be innovative and have the potential to deliver value to the Partners. The scope is broad but should preferably align with the [Industrial Strategy](#).

Who is responsible for recovering the Business Partner contribution?

The Knowledge Base will be responsible for recovering the Business Partner contribution.

What are the expected outcomes of an Innovate UK - AKT project?

At the end of the project as a minimum we expect:

- A short report outlining the project activities and outcomes.
- PowerPoint presentation given by the associate to the business summarising the content of the report.
- Case study for publication.

Can we see the templates for the final report ahead of time?

Yes, Knowledge Bases will receive a toolkit via email when they accept their GOL. The toolkit will contain a template for their final report, along with template and examples to help report

What happens if the idea behind the project turns out to be a bad idea?

'Failing Fast' is a successful outcome for these projects. The value of such outcomes should be discussed in the final report.

Are Business Schools eligible to apply as the Knowledge Base Partner?

Yes - there are no restrictions on the eligibility of academic discipline accessed through this scheme.

What is the maximum associate salary that can be claimed?

The maximum grant that can be awarded is £35,000 for 3 month projects and £70,000 for 6 month projects and the money should be allocated to provide sufficient support to deliver

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what is outlined in the application. The maximum allowable associate salary per 12 months is £55,000. See the cost guidance for more information on how to calculate these amounts.

If you are not able to resolve your question, please submit your enquiry to
akt@iukbc.org.uk

Please read the Competition Guidance and Costing Guidance Documents thoroughly and review the Competition Webinar before emailing us with your query.

All competition details, guidance, and webinar can be found on
<https://iuk-ktp.org.uk/accelerated-knowledge-transfer/>