Funding Call Webinar Q&A

Can the total cost of the proposal exceed £100,000 with in-kind contributions from an industry partner?

Yes, this is fine. The full economic cost amount is £100,000, with £80,000 being provided by pro² (80% fEC) but it's fine to increase this with additional funding from industry partner(s). It should be noted that under the fEC system of costing research, 80% of the total cost is provided by the funder and the remaining 20% is provided by the awardee's institution. This means that successful applicants would receive up to £80,000 with the remaining £20,000 provided by the applicant's institution. This should be reflected in the budget section of your application.

Are applicants based outside the UK eligible to apply?

No, not directly. The award holder must be based at a UK institution eligible for UKRI funding. However, overseas applicants are still able to take part in a pro² funded project by collaborating with a UK academic partner, e.g. through a secondment or subcontract.

Must the industry partner(s) be based in the UK?

No, industry partners can be based in any country, but they must collaborate with an eligible UK academic partner. What's most important is that there is a truly collaborative relationship between the academic and industry partner, and that the proposal is relevant to the pro² call.

Can there be multiple industry and academic partners on one proposal?

Yes. There must be a minimum of one industry and one academic partner per proposal, but it's fine if there are more. Applicants should consider what's best for the project, however, as some proposals may benefit from more partners than others.

Must all of the partners named in the proposal be eligible for UKRI funding?

At least one of the academic partners must be eligible for UKRI funding, so that an award can be offered. Additional partners who do not meet the eligibility requirements may be included in the proposal via other means, e.g. a secondment or subcontract.

Should the academic or industry partner lead the project?

For financial purposes, the academic partner must lead as they will be in receipt of funding and responsible for financial reports as the award holder. However, industry partners may lead the project in other ways, such as idea generation or day-to-day management of the project, depending on what best suits the individual project. We are supportive of innovative models of collaboration between academic and industry partners.

Is the assessment process the same as the one used by Innovate UK?

The Innovate UK assessment process is slightly different from the one used by UKRI, but both have a panel assessment process. UKRI typically separate the review from the panel, whereas the pro^2 Steering Group will conduct both panel and the review, using criteria we have outlined in the funding call.

How does pro^2 define a digital device?

A digital device would typically be electronic and have a microcontroller, but we may be open to other possibilities, including analog, although this is less common. pro^2 recognises two main categories for digital devices: conventional and non-conventional. The former typically has a circuit board within a hard case, whereas non-conventional devices might be made from alternative materials, such as wearable devices made of fabric and conductive thread. The challenge of 'replicability' as related to this funding call may be different depending on the type of device, e.g. whether it is conventional or not, or how developed the prototype is. In the case of less conventional devices, replication may not necessarily be about a move to full-on production but rather being able to replicate on a smaller scale. When drafting a proposal, it's important to make note of what is novel in the solution to the replicability challenge, regardless of the type of device.

What Technical Readiness Level (TRL) or Manufacturing Readiness Level (MRL) are you looking for in this call?

For those unfamiliar with these terms, a low TRL score means that a piece of technology isn't ready yet for market. You can see how UKRI defines the TRL scale on their website. Typically, the belief is that devices in the prototyping stage have a low TRL and those in the production stage have a high TRL. However, pro^2 recognises that there are significant challenges in the production stage, especially for low to medium volume manufacturing. Applicants should consider this key question: Is there a solution to a problem in the production process that would help many other people to better produce digital devices? What pro^2 is looking for in this call are great, novel solutions to production challenges, regardless of the TLR/MLR score for a particular prototype. Proof of concept products may also be within the scope of the call.

Does an applicant need to have a prototype to replicate? Should the prototype be virtual or physical?

No, the applicant should be providing solutions for how prototypes can be replicated more broadly, rather than looking to simply replicate their specific prototype as the basis for the project. If by replicating your device you can demonstrate a useful and novel way for others to replicate devices, then this may be eligible for the funding. This applies to both virtual and physical prototypes. The call isn't just about reproducing devices; it's about finding better, more innovative ways of doing so. What pro^2 would like to see are novel solutions for improving the production process of digital devices.

Are there any limits to an applicant being part of more than one project?

No, there aren't any limitations.

Are there any limitations to a successful applicant applying for subsequent funding from pro^2?

No, there aren't any limitations.

If the proposed solution to a particular production challenge only has a narrow application and/or is mainly of use in low to medium volume production, does this make it less relevant to the pro^2 funding call?

Not at all. In fact, the pro^2 team has a strong interest in looking for novel solutions to production challenges that affect low to medium volume manufacturing. This is because high volume manufacturing doesn't face the same kinds of challenges as low to medium volume, and often the large organisations carrying it out are less likely to widely share knowledge and solutions. Therefore, we would be especially interested in funding projects which seek solutions for low to medium volume manufacturing.