

# West Midlands Innovation Fund 25-26

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Overview of Health Innovation West Midlands

As the lead agency for healthcare innovation and transformation in the West Midlands, we are focused on the priorities of our local systems and wider region, while joining forces with fellow Health Innovation Networks to make an impact nationally.

We facilitate the design, evaluation and delivery of changes which improve healthcare services, increase productivity and lead to economic growth in the West Midlands.

Our impact locally will help to drive change nationally, through the national Health Innovation Network of 15 regional HINs. HINs tackle national problems with local understanding; and local problems with national expertise.

### The Innovation Fund

There are three regional funds covering North, Central, and South and each will be hosted by a leading institution working in partnership with Health Innovation West Midlands (HIWM) to support impactful innovation in health and care. The fund offers grant-based funding of up to £50,000 (per application/project) to support the spread and adoption of innovation across the region.

Projects must be a form of applied research. Ideally, Health Innovation West Midlands would like to support projects already tested in a real world setting with demonstrable positive outcomes for patients. Those projects which have already undergone Real World Evaluation/Testing with the potential for adoption and spread, are likely to be looked on favourably. However, projects with other forms of applied research may be accepted and marked on merit e.g. feasibility studies, safety testing in a controlled environment.

### **1. What is the purpose of the fund?**

The fund will support the adoption and/or spread of innovation into regional health and care providers, supporting national, regional and local strategic priorities. The Fund will:

- Result in measurable, impactful change in the delivery of health and care through innovation
- Provide a robust evaluation and evidence of the innovation's effectiveness, enabling insights and learnings to be shared across the system
- Support increased awareness, interest, and adoption of innovation among health and care providers.
- Act as a funder of last resort, to minimise the possibility of duplication

## **2. What activity is covered by the fund?**

To apply for funds, the proposed funded activity must meet the following criteria:

- a. Support one of the four Health Innovation West Midlands Strategic Priorities:
  - i. Health Infrastructure
  - ii. Health Inequality
  - iii. Integrated care
  - iv. Productivity & Workforce
- b. Support one of the three national shifts:
  - i. Analogue to Digital
  - ii. Hospital to Community
  - iii. Treatment to Prevention
- c. Include a clearly defined innovation (process, service, pathway or product)
- d. Result in sustainable change that has a clear plan for post funding continuation
- e. How the proposed solution impacts on the health and care system and how will the system need to be changed (including people, processes and culture) to deliver systemwide benefits.
- f. A commitment to involve members of the public, patients and /or staff in the design, delivery, evaluation and management of the activity.
- g. A commitment to actively engage in tackling healthcare inequalities, and in supporting diversity and inclusion, by including communities where the proposed innovation will make the biggest impact.
- h. Methods for evaluating the impact of the proposed activity.
- i. A commitment to make steps towards contributing to the overall NHS Net Zero / carbon reduction targets.

## **3. What activity is not supported by the fund?**

- Business as usual activity
- Activity without an identifiable innovation
- Activity whose primary focus is non-applied research
- Activity which does not include a recognised health and care provider

- Activity which does not support national, regional or local health/care priorities

#### **4. Who is considered to be the lead organisation?**

The lead organisation should be the organisation that is able to have the funds transferred to them and will have a contract with one of the leading institutions i.e. Aston University, Keele University or South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust (SWUFT) and will be in a position to inform HIWM of milestones that have been achieved throughout the duration of the project.

#### **Lead applicants must:**

- Have an identified lead, responsible for all reporting and financial processing of grant claims/payment
- Provide timely reports against the submitted milestone plan
- Provide an end of activity report assessing the outcomes, impact and benefits of the chosen innovation activity, and include a case study document using the Fund template

#### **5. Does the lead organisation need to complete the application form?**

Whilst the completion of the application form is a collaborative approach with the project teams involved, the lead organisation will have overall oversight, accountability and responsibility for signing and submitting the form.

#### **6. Who needs to be included in the application?**

Each application must include at least one local health and/or care service provider as a collaborator. You must also provide the name, job title, and contact email address of a senior leader (Director level or equivalent) from the lead organisation, confirming their support for the proposal. Please ensure that email addresses are shared only with the explicit consent of the individuals concerned.

#### **7. Who is eligible to apply for the fund?**

Applications can be made by any of the following:

- A commercial entity (company) who has developed / owns the innovation. It is expected that companies will be well established with a trading history of no less than 3 years. However, exceptions may be made for younger companies where the provider partners have identified the need for the innovation. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

- Social Enterprises and the Voluntary/ Community Sector established and operating in the West Midlands
- A (CQC registered) health and or care service provider based in the respective geography.
- An academic institution based in the West Midlands region

## **8. What is the amount of funding available?**

The maximum funding available is £50,000 per project with an expectation that most applications will be between £10,000 – £35,000. Please note that Innovation Funds are a grant and are therefore VAT exempt. If you are successful, you will be awarded a Grant Funding Agreement, and the lead organisation will need to be clear on your own internal financial treatment of this. All project costs should be indicated as NET cost incurred and a VAT charge at 20% may be applied, if applicable.

## **9. What will the costs cover?**

You will be asked to provide a line-by-line summary of the costs of the project in the spreadsheet supplemented to your application using the downloadable link at the beginning of the application form. The costs quoted must reflect actual costs at a “fair market value” and profit should not be included.

All costs such as directly incurred costs and overhead costs are eligible. Directly incurred costs are costs specific to the project and are charged to the project as the amount actually spent. These costs must be fully supported by an audit record in justification of a claim. These include labour costs for all those contributing to the project broken down by individual, material costs including consumables, capital equipment costs, sub-contract costs and travel and subsistence.

Overhead costs should be charged in proportion to the amount of effort deployed on the project. Calculate them using your own cost rates. They can include general office and basic laboratory consumables, library services or learning resources, administrative tasks, finance, personnel, public relations and departmental services, central and distributed computing and cost of capital employed.

Gross staff costs (including any relevant on-costs) can also be included in the bid / budget.

## **10. What costs are not covered?**

Pure marketing costs (such as LinkedIn Premium, website development, marketing brochures), costs to support basic research, development of research hypotheses, and experimental designs that have no practical commercial application.

Costs that are considered unreasonable will be rejected.

### **11. What happens if I do not utilise all my allocated funding, or the project fails to meet expected outcomes?**

Should any of the project fail to deliver as expected, future payments could be at risk, and previously disbursed funds could be subject to clawback. Negotiations with the lead partners would be entered into should this arise.

### **12. How can I expect to receive the funding?**

It is expected that claims will be made to HIWM and payment will be made by the respective leading regional institutions (Keele, Aston or SWUFT) in three payments using the following formula: Upon start of project of 20%, midway payment of 30%, final payment 50%. Each agreement will identify the milestones and outcomes required for payments to be assured; this will be agreed as part of the agreement negotiations.

### **13. What reporting can I expect?**

The deadline dates and content of monitoring reports will be detailed in the Innovation Award Agreement Progress Reports. Summaries of these will be shared with the Expert Review Panel for their consideration, indicating progress, levels of risk, and any issues of concern.

Prior to the final payment being made a comprehensive Final Report will be required. This should cover the following aspects:

- Evaluation of project outcomes vs. intended impact
- Summary of benefits realised
- Recommendations for replication or scaling
- Completed case study using the provided template

### **14. What support will be provided to successful applicants?**

Successful applicants will be supported by a designated Contract Manager from HIWM, who will oversee the contractual process, coordinate with the lead academic institution, and ensure that project milestones and payments are managed effectively.

In addition, HIWM's communications team will assist with promoting funded projects to raise visibility and share progress. Where appropriate, HIWM can also provide support for wider adoption and spread of the innovation across the health and care system, should this be of interest to the applicant.

### **15. Will HIWM be able to provide support to develop a video case study?**

Yes. If your project is selected to produce a video case study, HIWM's Communications Team will support you throughout the process. This includes:

- Coordinating logistics such as booking a suitable filming location
- Capturing and editing video footage
- Adding captions and branding elements
- Liaising with your organisation's communications team to ensure all necessary approvals and permissions are secured

A member of the HIWM team will contact you directly if your project is chosen for video case study development. The final video will be shared through HIWM's marketing channels to help showcase your innovation.

### **16. How will we assess applications?**

Each project will be assessed against the following predefined criteria:

<b>Innovation</b>	Is the innovation clearly defined, novel, and relevant to health and care challenges?
<b>Strategic Fit</b>	Does the project align with Health Innovation West Midlands priorities and national transformation goals?
<b>Impact</b>	Will the project deliver measurable, meaningful improvements in health and care outcomes?
<b>Sustainability</b>	Is there a clear plan for sustaining the innovation beyond the funding period, including environmental considerations and system integration?
<b>System Engagement &amp; Patient Public Involvement</b>	Are relevant stakeholders, including patients and the public, meaningfully engaged in the project?
<b>Feasibility &amp; Delivery Plan</b>	Is the project plan realistic, well-structured, and achievable within the 12-month timeframe? Does it include a clear strategy for adoption and spread?
<b>Evaluation</b>	Are there robust methods in place to measure outcomes, impact, and potential for wider adoption and learning from implementation?

<b>Financial Value</b>	Is the budget clear, justified, and reflective of fair and appropriate use of public funds?
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### **17. When is it expected for my project to commence and how long should my project run for?**

Projects are expected to commence between the 1st of December 2025 and 31st January 2026. We are looking for real-world innovation projects that align with national and regional priorities — and deliver measurable, sustainable impact within 12 months.

### **18. What is the application timeline?**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline Dates</b>
Applications open	1 <sup>st</sup> August 2025
Applications close	19 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
Assessment period	22 <sup>nd</sup> September-14 <sup>th</sup> October 2025
North Expert Panel Review	End of October 2025
Central Expert Panel Review	End of October 2025
South Expert Panel Review	End of October 2025
Intention to Fund and contracts issued	24 <sup>th</sup> October – 30 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
Activity start	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2025 – 31st January 2026

### **19. Can I complete more than one application?**

There is no limit to the number of projects that can be submitted, provided each one meets the outlined criteria. However, please note that only one application should be submitted per project.

### **20. Can General Practitioners apply?**

Yes, General Practitioners are eligible to apply for the fund.

### **21. Where can I find further information?**

The website will hold all the relevant details on the WM innovation fund. This is also where the application form will be housed. Visit the [Health Innovation West Midlands Innovation Fund](#) page for more details.

There will be a webinar held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 11:00-12:00 where there will be an introductory session and a question-and-answer session. The registration link to join is [here](#). The subsequent recording of the session will be accessible on the website along with additional guidance information on completing the application form

including timelines of the whole process from launch to funding intent letters and expectations of start of projects, and an FAQ document, which is being produced based on questions received.

For any questions not answered by the details on the website, feel free to email:  
[innovationfund@healthinnovationwm.org](mailto:innovationfund@healthinnovationwm.org)

## **Glossary**

**Innovation:** A new or significantly improved process, pathway, service or product that addresses a clear need or challenge within health and/or care settings. Innovation should demonstrate potential for meaningful impact, be feasible to implement, and show promise for sustainability and wider adoption.

### **Regulatory approvals:**

**CQC** – Care Quality Commission - The independent regulator of health and social care services in England. It monitors, inspects, and regulates services to ensure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety.



**CSO** – Chief Scientific Officer - The most senior advisor on health science in the NHS, providing leadership for the healthcare science workforce and influencing policy and innovation.

**Cybersecurity** - The practice of protecting systems, networks, and data in health and social care from digital attacks. It ensures the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of sensitive information.

**Data Quality Standards** - Frameworks that ensure data used in health and care is accurate, complete, timely, consistent, and relevant—critical for safe care, research, and decision-making.

**DPO** – Data Protection Officer - A role responsible for overseeing data protection strategy and ensuring compliance with GDPR and other data protection laws within an organisation.

**CIO** – Chief Information Officer - A senior executive responsible for the strategic use and management of information and technology in an organisation.

**DTAC** – Digital Technology Assessment Criteria - A framework that ensures digital health technologies meet standards for clinical safety, data protection, technical security, interoperability, usability, and accessibility.

**ISO** – International Organisation for Standardisation - A global network that develops and publishes international standards to ensure quality, safety, efficiency, and interoperability across industries.

**MHRA** – Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency - The UK regulator for medicines, medical devices, and blood components for transfusion, ensuring they are safe and effective.

**NICE** – National Institute for Health and Care Excellence - Provides national guidance and advice to improve health and social care in England, including clinical guidelines, technology appraisals, and quality standards.

**NICE EVA** – Early Value Assessment - A NICE initiative to rapidly evaluate MedTech innovations that address unmet needs, helping to accelerate access to promising technologies.

**NICE ESF** – Evidence Standards Framework - A set of evidence standards for digital health technologies (DHTs), helping evaluators and decision-makers assess their potential benefits and effectiveness.

**UKCA Marking** – UK Conformity Assessed = A certification mark that indicates a product meets UK regulatory requirements for sale in Great Britain, replacing the CE mark post-Brexit.

**CE Mark** – European Conformity - A certification mark indicating that a product complies with EU health, safety, and environmental protection standards.

**RWE:** Real world Evidence. This is the clinical evidence derived from the analysis of RWD. It helps to understand:

- How interventions perform in routine practice
- Long-term outcomes and safety
- Effectiveness across diverse populations
- Cost-effectiveness and service impact

**RWD:** Real-World Data. This refers to data collected from real-life settings outside of traditional clinical trials. Examples include:

- Electronic health records (EHRs)
- Claims and billing data
- Patient registries
- Data from wearables or mobile health apps
- Social care records