

Launch Webinar Questions:

Question theme	Questions	Response
Eligibility	Are NAVs and water retailers able to enter?	As a water retailer or small water company (sometimes referred to as New Appointments and Variations or NAVs), you are eligible to enter Discovery.
	Does it apply to Scottish companies / is it UK only?	Whilst we are open to both domestic and international organisations, to be eligible, organisations must be a UK incorporated entity and hold a UK business bank account upon entry. The benefit of the innovation must be for customers and the environment in England and Wales.
	Can entrants work with Scottish Water?	Yes, you can partner with Scottish Water, however the innovation must benefit customers and the environment in England and Wales.
	Do innovations have to be implementable for Water Municipalities or can they be for industrial/agricultural end of pipe treatments and water re-use.	We welcome entries from all sectors provided the entry demonstrates how the solution will benefit water customers, communities and the environment in England and Wales.
	Is the challenge open to the wastewater sector?	Yes, the Challenge is open to the Wastewater sector. Wastewater, sludge and bioresources are key areas of interest.
	Could it be a charity registered bank account?	Yes, provided the lead entrant is an incorporated charity (a legal entity) and holds a UK business bank account.

	Is the Water Discovery Challenge open to innovations from research institutes and universities? You said water companies are not eligible to apply, but can you clarify they can be a partner of a lead entrant?	Most universities in the UK are incorporated charities, or incorporated by Royal Charter and therefore eligible, but we advise you to check with your institution directly as they would know the specifics of your organisation's legal status. Organisations that have worked or are working with water companies in England and Wales are welcome to enter the Water Discovery Challenge. Funds received through Discovery should not be paid to water companies during the Finalist Stage as partnership or supplier agreements. This is because regional water companies in England and Wales will play an important role in supporting the delivery of the challenge by providing Finalists and Winners with mentoring support. Discovery is particularly interested in supporting innovators who are yet to be connected to the water sector, so if you are already collaborating with a water company, you may wish to also consider entering the 7th round of the Water Breakthrough Challenge, opening in September 2026. Please sign up to our newsletter to keep up to date with the Water Breakthrough Challenge.
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	Are there are particular documents that need to be in place to pass the eligibility criteria – the context is a new company just having received investment?	To be eligible, organisations entering must: • Be a UK incorporated entity • Hold a UK business bank account upon entry • Comply with the terms and conditions • Not be a regional water or wastewater company in England and Wales A “UK Incorporated Entity” includes any private limited company, limited liability partnership, incorporated charity and Community Interest Company which is incorporated in part of the United Kingdom. Sole traders and unincorporated partnerships are excluded. Potential entrants are encouraged to ask if in doubt. Subsidiaries of international organisations are welcome.
	Can two companies jointly apply? If so, do both have to be incorporated in the UK?	Entrants are welcome to form partnerships of organisations/consortia, but you can also enter as a single organisation. It is not mandatory to enter as part of a partnership or consortium. All formal agreements, including the Winner’s Award Agreement, will be held solely with the lead entrant organisation that submitted the bid. While we encourage collaborative entries, the lead organisation remains the primary point of contact and is responsible for the delivery of the project and the management of any partners or sub-contractors. The lead entrant must be a UK incorporated entity and hold a UK business bank account.

	Are you looking at building consortiums to deliver these projects	Whilst not a requirement for entry, collaboration is encouraged throughout the programme. Partnerships ensure knowledge sharing and help to build a credible pathway to adoption in the sector. As above, all formal agreements, including the Winner's Award Agreement, will be held solely with the lead entrant organisation that submitted the bid. While we encourage collaborative entries, the lead organisation remains the primary point of contact and is responsible for the delivery of the project and the management of any partners or sub-contractors. The lead entrant must be a UK incorporated entity and hold a UK business bank account.
Entry	Who should lead: SME, HEI, or RTO? Can multiple entries be submitted by the same company for different projects? In the slides you mention "teams". Some other competitions focus on small teams of 2-3 companies. Does discovery have any preference for team size? Is 1 valid?	Any UK incorporated entity can lead the entry. The lead should be the organisation best placed to drive the project toward commercial adoption. Please see the entrant eligibility criteria and terms and conditions for more information. You can submit as many entries into the challenge as you like, providing each entry is for a different initiative. We will ensure that we progress a diverse portfolio of entries in terms of entry themes, types, entrants and geographic location. There are no limitations on team size. As part of the entry form you will be asked to outline the team's capacity, capability and commitment to deliver (criteria 3). Here you will outline why you believe your experience and expertise will support the successful delivery of the entry.

	Will there be any workshops/contact support to help with crafting an application? Is there a list of key challenges the water sector face for people not familiar with the sector? We unsuccessfully applied it the first round of Discovery. Can we apply for the same project in round 2, and are there any differences between the rounds? Do you want new innovation or ongoing innovation?	Yes, please register for the Entry Clinic webinar on 18th March. Yes, this can be found at the end of the Innovator Handbook. You can learn more about these challenges from the videos on our website and the webinar on 12th March. Yes, you can reapply to the Discovery Challenge again. Please note that solutions that have already received funding as part of the Water Discovery Challenge 1 are not eligible for entry in this round. While organisations that were previously successful are welcome to apply again, their submission must be a new and distinctively different solution. You can enter with a pre-existing initiative or project but please note that we are particularly looking for early-stage innovations (TRL 3-6) that are new to the water sector.
Innovation Maturity	At application stage, what level of maturity are you expecting- are validated concepts/ hard evidence a prerequisite or is the focus more on delivery plan?	To help you understand if your initiative fits into what we're looking for, we specifically would like to welcome entries at the more mature part of level 2 and less mature part of level 3 on the Innovation Maturity Framework. This is loosely equivalent to Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 3-6 if your solution is technological, but all types of innovation are welcomed.

		A key objective of Discovery is to support innovators to progress through this maturity framework, as well as preparing Finalists and Winners to further scale their solutions beyond the Challenge, for example by providing a pathway to working directly with water companies or entering future rounds of the Water Breakthrough Challenge through new partnerships.
Problem area	Would you look at projects that address the skills shortage? Based on your aims, is there a clear differentiator between your strategic challenges and your urgent ones? Is there an overview available?	We are seeking bold and ingenious innovations that can help solve the biggest challenges facing the water sector today and into the future. We're looking for innovations of any kind - process, people, technology - that align with TRL level 3-6. You can find a summary of the High Demand Challenge Areas in the Appendix of the Innovator Handbook.
Assessment	Is there any weighting based on impact and potential to be transformational? If so, are there any guidelines on how this will be assessed? Does the positive impact assessment relate specifically to UK adoption, or global?	You can find a summary of the Assessment Criteria and weighting on our website and in the Innovator Handbook. The innovation needs to demonstrate a positive impact for water customers, communities and the environment in England and Wales.

	Are the innovations supposed to benefit water companies exclusively or can they have more of an industry focus?	While your innovation must ultimately benefit the water sector in England and Wales, it is designed to be industry-focused and can even have cross-sector applications. We connect you with mentors who are from water companies. So, it is worth considering how your solution might be relevant to them.
Finalist phase	What is the main differences between stage 1 and stage 2 applications What data will be provided to successful applicants, that wish to use existing data to support their innovation project? Is this dependent on the partner org?	During the Finalist Stage, you will receive support and a template to create a detailed Development Plan, outlining how you propose to use the Winner's Award (up to £550,000) and support package to further develop your innovation. This development plan will be submitted for assessment against the criteria. Following sector review and judging, up to 10 Winners will be announced. You can find more information in the Innovator Handbook. As part of working with you mentor, they will be able to advise on the level of data and insight that they can provide to support the development of your project.
Awards	Why do you have an “up to £100k” option? Someone can technically request £100? Why? Why not have it as winners win 100k? Is this award 100% funded? ie what is the intervention rate in grant-speak Are there limits to the types of spendings that the grant funding can be applied for,	The Finalist Award must be committed by the start of the Winners’ Stage (April 2027) and entrants will need to demonstrate in their entry how the amount requested will be used, what activities it will support and a high-level timeline. Discovery is 100% funded up to the award-limit. Please refer to the t’s&c’s for further detail. In the Finalist Stage, funds can be used to fund any reasonable costs related to developing the innovation and organisations, including labour costs and working through suppliers and any

	for example only UK source materials, no personnel costs, only UK installs? What deadlines are imposed on the spending of the funding in both phases 1 and 2? The project timeline seems quite constrained for the Phase 2 funding.	direct costs often included within overheads, including for example office space, accountants and legal costs. We would not expect Finalists at this stage to fund unspecified overhead costs, except where these are supplier charges. The purpose of the award is to develop the innovation in the entry. Finalists are required to keep adequate financial records to demonstrate how the Finalist Award has been spent, which must be shared with Challenge Works and Ofwat at Ofwat's discretion For the Finalist phase the funding needs to be committed by the start of the Winners' phase in April 2027. For the Winners' phase, this funding will be required to be spent on defined activities as set out in a Development Plan, but there are no specific time restrictions relating to when the funding needs to be spent.
Innovator support	If successful, are projects allocated a mentor/ water company expertise or is there potential for discussion about who might be the best mentors and would be? At what capacity water companies can involve in this challenge e.g. project partners providing case studies?	Successful Finalists and Winners will work directly with water-company mentors who will provide feedback on their solution and insights on the water sector. Where possible mentors will be allocated based on relevant expertise and skills, using the information you have provided in the entry form. Water companies play two roles in the Water Discovery Challenge. They provide mentoring to finalists and winners and they also review a shortlist of entries as part of the Finalists' and Winners' assessment process.

	Can we use help from water companies outside England and Wales if we would like to use their equipment at pilot scale for initial feasibility trials?	You are welcome to work with partners outside of England and Wales on the development of your innovation. As a reminder, you must be able to demonstrate in your entry that the innovation will have a positive impact on the water customers, communities and environment of England and Wales.
Other	Is there a timeline for when the applications will open for the other challenges mentioned at the beginning of the presentation? Could you please remind me of the time frame (start and end) of the £550k projects. I.e. do these run in to 2028 or all the way to 2030?	Please refer to the Water Innovation Fund website and sign up to our newsletter for the latest information on all of our competitions. You can find the full timeline on the Water Discovery Challenge website and in the Innovator Handbook.