



Entry Clinic

18 March 2026



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Q&A

Ask your questions via
Slido #D2EntryClinic



What we'll cover today

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Discovery Challenge

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The Water Discovery Challenge

Aims and the Innovator Journey

Slido Code D2EntryClinic

Aims of the Challenge

**Accelerate
the discovery,
development and
adoption of
promising innovations
by the water sector in
England and Wales.**

**Deliver benefits
to customers,
communities and
the environment**

**Directly support
organisations with
innovative propositions
and facilitate their
engagement with
water companies in
England and Wales**

Innovator Journey



Slido Code D2EntryClinic



Spotlight

The fund award and
mentoring package
(What you can win)



Finalist Stage: Funding award

Up to 20 teams of the most promising innovators will be awarded up to £100,000 to develop their innovation, with a range of expert support and access to mentoring from water companies.

The funds can only be used to support reasonable costs related to developing the innovation, as described in Entry Form criteria 3.

The Finalist stage funds must be committed between July 2026 and the **beginning of the Winner's Award stage in April 2027**.

100% of the project cost can be covered by the award.

10 Winners will be awarded up to £550,000 each as well as a similar package of non-financial support and mentorship as the Finalist phase.

**Finalist
Award**
up to
£100,000
(Up to 20 teams)

**Winner
Award**
up to
£550,000
(Up to 10 teams)

Finalist Stage: Mentorship programme

Finalists will receive support to strengthen and accelerate the development of their innovation.

A key part of this will be the water sector-led mentoring programme, with allocation of a mentor from a regional water or wastewater company in England and Wales.

Mentors will work directly with Finalists, providing:

- bespoke support and guidance
- feedback on Finalists' innovations and demand within the sector
- insights into the water sector
- signposting to other stakeholders or useful resources.

In the Finalist stage, mentors will be allocated based on the skills needs that you identify in your entry form.

At the end of the Challenge, if you are successful in the finalist and winners' phase you will have worked directly with the water companies for ~ 13 months.

Finalist Stage: Expert Support

A bookable package of tailored expert support is made available to successful Finalists, enabling them to significantly strengthen and accelerate the development of their innovation.

1 to 1 Expert support will be made available to Finalists:

- Technical experts from the water industry
- Experts in IP management
- Experts in pitching
- Experts in business and commercial development

Finalists can book up to 8 hours of support during the Finalist Phase and are able to select whichever expert is most relevant to them

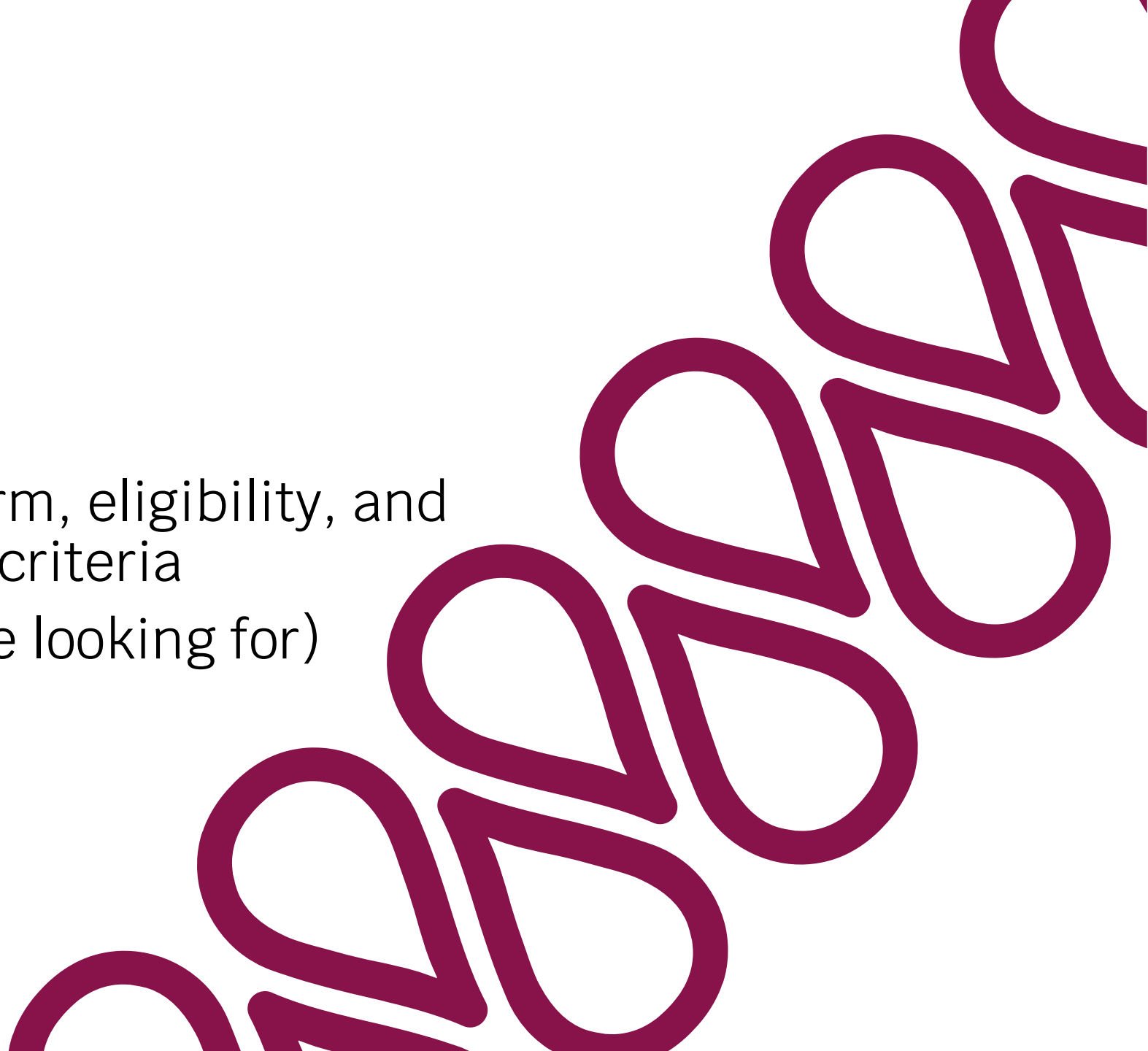
This expert support is designed to complement the sector-led mentoring, providing specific, on-demand support



Spotlight

The entry form, eligibility, and
assessment criteria

(What we are looking for)



What we are looking for



Innovations of any kind: process, people, technology or digital that are ready for concept proofing, testing, early feasibility studies, development and verification in the water sector.

Specifically, Innovation Maturity Level 2-3, equivalent to TRL 3-6.



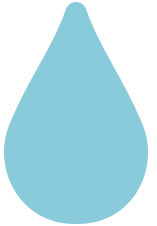
Innovation that will benefit customers, communities and the environment across England and Wales.



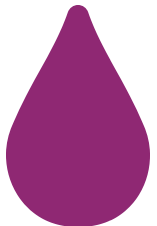
Initiatives from all sectors and all types of organisations, domestic or international.



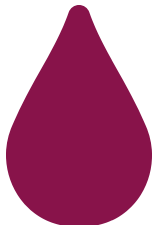
Eligibility Criteria



Unassessed questions



Assessed questions: General Information



Assessed questions: Assessment Criteria-specific questions

To be able to enter, your organisation must comply with the following requirements:

- ✓ 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

I'm a water retailer or small water company (NAV) in England and Wales. Can I enter?

Yes.

I'm already working with a water company on another project. Can I enter?

Yes, if you comply with the eligibility requirements.

I'm a university. Can I enter?

Maybe – check your legal status.

Can a water company partner with me on an entry?

No. Water Companies are not allowed to be partnered on an entry to the Discovery Challenge

Still not sure if you are eligible?

1. Check with your Legal team.

2. Get in touch at **waterinnovation@challengeworks.org**

The Assessment Criteria

1

Positive impact for water customers, communities, and the environment (40%)

2

Innovation enablers and innovative solutions (25%)

3

Capacity, capability, and commitment to deliver (15%)

4

Ability to succeed, to be sustainable and/or gain wide adoption across the water sector (20%)

1. Positive impact for water customers, society, and the environment (40%, 40 points available)

Under this assessment category, we are looking to **understand the benefits an innovation seeks to deliver for customers, communities, and the environment**. We ask entrants to describe what kind of impact they envision their initiative could have and why that impact is important.

Assessors will be looking to understand the following:

- **What is your solution?**
- Does the innovation address a **relevant need for the water sector in England and Wales?**
- Does the innovation have the **potential to deliver positive benefit for customers, communities and/or the environment?**

A strong entry should be able to explain how their proposition addresses a need or opportunity within the water sector and what kind of impact it could have.

2. Innovation enablers and innovative solutions (25%, 25 points available)

Entrants should explain how your innovation and ‘innovation enablers’ (new ways of working) differ from the sector’s ‘business as usual.’ Entrants should highlight what makes their solution novel and how it improves upon current alternatives.

Assessors will be looking to understand the following:

- Is the innovation **new for the water sector in England and Wales?**
- Is the innovation **better than current alternatives?**

Entries should be able to explain **how the initiative is new and innovative within the water sector.** This could include experimentation with new solutions or approaches, adapting innovations and practices from other sectors or applying proven approaches that haven’t been tried at scale. **Proposed solutions may draw inspiration and/or talent from other sectors.**

3. Capacity, capability, and commitment to deliver (15%, 15 points available)

This criteria evaluates your team's capacity to deliver. Here we are looking for you to outline your commitment, roles, and the specific expertise that will ensure your project's success.

Assessors will be looking to understand the following:

- The delivery team's experience, skills and capabilities.
- The timeline and delivery plan envisioned by the team
- How the team will spend the funds awarded should they be successful

Entries should describe the roles and responsibilities of their team members and clearly set out why this experience and expertise will support the successful delivery of the entry. Entries should be able to describe how the £100,000 will be used, and what activities the funding will support, proposing a high-level timeline along with the spend.

4. Ability to succeed, to be sustainable and/or gain wide adoption across the water sector (20% – 20 points available)

In this assessment criteria, entrants will be assessed on the innovation's feasibility and viability within the England and Wales water sector, including any foreseen risks. Strong entries will set out a compelling and realistic vision for scaling the solution across the industry.

Assessors will be looking to understand the following:

- Is the innovation likely to be **feasible and viable in the water sector**?
- Is the innovation **technically possible** and does it have the **potential to be financially sustainable**?
- Does the innovation have the **potential to be widely adopted across the water sector in England and Wales**?

Entries should demonstrate that they have considered potential opportunities and challenges along with any anticipated risks, outlining mitigation measures, while also identifying areas of support required aligned with their scale-up ambitions and associated risks.



Spotlight

The entry process

(How to enter and the support available)



- ✓ Entries must be submitted using the online entry form in **Submittable**
- ✓ The entry form can be saved as a draft before submitting
- ✓ Word document version downloadable from our entrant support page on our website
- ✓ All entries must be submitted by **8 April 2026 at 1 pm (BST)**



Live Webinars

This is our third live webinar we have run for Discovery 2. Recordings for this session, the launch, and the sector introduction are all available on our entrant support page.



Discovery webinar series

From opportunities for innovation, to water and sewage treatment and distribution, reusing resources, delivering for customers and climate change challenge. There are a host of on-demand webinars available on our website



Online and downloadable materials

Innovator Handbook, Entry Form Questions, FAQs...

What happens after you submit your entry?



Eligibility Screening	Assessment	Sector Review and Due Diligence	Ofwat Decision	Finalists' Announcement and Award
- Entrants must meet the eligibility criteria as set out in the terms and conditions. - When entries close, an eligibility screen will be conducted to ensure entries all meet the eligibility criteria. Note: We may request further information from you.	- Entries will be assessed against the four criteria. - In the case where greater than 150 eligible entries are received into the Challenge, entries that are assessed to perform poorly against the first and or second assessment criteria may not be assessed against the remaining criteria. - Feedback will not be provided to entrants.	- Following assessment, a shortlist of entries will be reviewed by sector reviewers, (from water companies in England and Wales). - Entries with a strong negative response from Sector Reviewers may be discounted at the discretion of Ofwat. - Alongside the sector review, a due diligence screen will take place. Note: We may request further information from you.	20 Finalists will be selected. - Whilst scoring will form part of the Finalist Selection process, in making its decision on whether to put forward an entry as a Finalist, Ofwat will also consider the opinions of the sector reviewers and will seek to ensure that a diverse portfolio of entries is selected.	- Entries should expect to be notified if they have been successful in being awarded funding by the start of July 2026. - Successful entrants will receive a Finalist Award Agreement which will need to be signed before they progress in the Challenge
April	April-May	June	Early July	Mid July

Q&A

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