



Early Adopter and Fast Follower Applicant Handbook

Version 1.2, Date 16/02/2026

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How to use this handbook

This document serves as a guide to support applicants applying for match-funding through the Early Adopter and Fast Follower Stream of the Water Innovation Implementation Programme. As well as providing an overview of the Programme, the handbook contains all the information you will need apply, including guidance on:

- What support and funding is available
- Who can apply and what is expected from applicants
- How to submit an application
- How applications will be reviewed and approved

You can read each section independently, but we recommend that you read the entire guide (along with the full [Terms and Conditions](#)) before you enter the Implementation Programme.

For more information and supporting documents about the Water Innovation Implementation Programme, refer to the [Water Innovation Implementation Programme webpage](#).

If you've read the guide and you still have questions, contact the team at innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com.

Who's involved

The Water Innovation Implementation Programme is being delivered collaboratively by Ofwat and Isle Utilities, with support from Arup.



Ofwat, the Water Services Regulation Authority for England and Wales, is a non-ministerial government department established in 1989, when the water and sewerage industry in England and Wales was privatised. Ofwat regulates the water sector in England and Wales. [Read more about Ofwat's duties on their website](#).



[Isle](#) are a global consultancy, partnering across the water system to accelerate the water environmental transition.

Our [services](#) and [platforms](#) help de-risk the development, commercialization, and adoption of technologies, creating value and accelerating innovative solutions.



Dedicated to sustainable development, [Arup](#) is a collective of designers, consultants and experts working globally. Founded to be humane and excellent, we collaborate with our clients and partners using imagination, technology, and rigour to shape a better world.

With a community of over 1800 water professionals, Arup is leading global thinking across key areas like innovation, resilience, net zero carbon and sustainable water management.

About the Water Innovation Implementation Programme

Why innovation implementation?

In recent years, the water sector in England and Wales has entered a richer period of experimentation, catalysed by the Ofwat Innovation Fund, having invested around £190 million to 109 collaborative projects, involving more than 250 partners from utilities, supply chain, academia and beyond.

These investments have created a strong pipeline of proven tools, technologies, and approaches, and have significantly boosted collaboration and learning across the sector. The next step is to move from “trials to transformation” with implementation at the core of this movement, supporting successful innovations to go beyond creating impact at local project level and into business-as-usual, adapted and scaled across multiple company contexts, asset types and regions. By focusing now on implementation, and by enabling fast-followers and early-adopters, the sector can turn this portfolio of funded projects into sustained improvements that deliver better long-term outcomes for customers, communities and the environment across England and Wales.



In February 2025, Ofwat announced the Water Innovation Implementation Programme would be established to drive a transformative, sustained, and measurable increase in

the implementation of innovation in the water sector of England and Wales. Through the programme, £40 will be made available to deliver activities across two key streams:



The Early-Adopter and Fast-Follower stream will provide match-funding to help companies de-risk the initial implementation of innovative solutions that have been proven through rigorous testing and validation, whereas the Implementation Enablers stream will fund activities that address cross-cutting adoption barriers that slow or block innovation across the sector.

The Early Adopter and Fast Followers Programme

Implementing new solutions at scale is one of the most challenging stages in the innovation lifecycle. Even after successful trials, first-of-a-kind deployments can be held back by residual risk, funding hurdles and practical barriers such as culture, capability and access to practical knowledge. Across England and Wales, many water companies have delivered promising innovation pilots and demonstrators which have the potential to progress into routine operations across different regions, asset types and company contexts, but are yet to do so.

The Early Adopter and Fast Follower Programme is designed to close this implementation gap. It will provide 50:50 match-funding to help water companies implement proven innovations at scale, with programme contributions covering up to 50% of total project costs, capped at £1 million per project. This co-funding model ensures strong company commitment while tackling shared barriers through common tools, frameworks and routes to adoption. By enabling Early Adopters to lead the way and support Fast Followers to replicate successful solutions, the Programme will accelerate the roll-out of innovations that improve service, resilience, affordability and environmental outcomes across England and Wales.

How it will work

Projects will be structured around an Early Adopter who will lead the first implementation, and a group of Fast Followers who will implement the same solution after the initial deployment.

For an Early Adopter application to progress to award, at least two other water companies must opt-in to implement the same solution as Fast Followers. This ensures that every project is relevant across multiple companies and that the plan for implementation is genuinely replicable across the sector.

The Early Adopter will complete the first implementation, sharing knowledge, lessons learned and practical support with the Fast Follower cohort, who will then implement the same solution in their own organisations.

A worked example of how this will look in practise has been provided below:

1. **Early Adopter application submitted and checked**
 - Company A applies to be the Early Adopter for *Innovation X*.
 - The delivery team checks the application against eligibility and minimum quality requirements.
 - If the application is eligible but does not meet minimum quality requirements, feedback is provided, and Company A is invited to refine and resubmit.
2. **Sharing with the sector and Fast Follower applications**
 - Once the application meets the required standard, Company A's proposal (including the business case and implementation plan) is shared with representatives from other water companies via an Implementation Review Forum.
 - Other companies are given a three-month window to review the material and submit their own Fast Follower applications for match-funding.
 - Fast Follower applications from Companies B, C and D are received and reviewed by the delivery team to confirm they meet the programme requirements.
3. **Award to Early Adopter and initial implementation**
 - Company A is awarded funding to deliver the Early Adopter implementation of *Innovation X*.
 - Funding for Companies B, C and D is confirmed in principle but not yet released.
4. **Early Adopter completes implementation and shares learning**
 - Company A completes the implementation of *Innovation X*, capturing key lessons and performance data through the Programme's monitoring process.
 - These insights are used to refine guidance and support materials for the Fast Followers.
5. **Fast Follower implementations and support**
 - Companies B, C and D are then awarded funding to complete their own Fast Follower implementations of *Innovation X*.
 - Company A receives additional "top-up" funding to provide practical support to the Fast Followers (for example, through workshops, troubleshooting sessions or shared documentation).
6. **Sector-wide learning and benefits realisation**
 - Companies B, C and D capture lessons learned via the Programme's monitoring process.
 - Insights from all four companies are combined into an external implementation report for the wider sector, highlighting key challenges, success factors and outcomes of implementing *Innovation X*.
 - Companies A, B, C and D provide post-project updates on the success of implementation and confirm benefits realised against their business cases.

This collaborative structure is designed to demonstrate repeatability, accelerate adoption, and ensure value for customers, communities and the environment.

Trialling this approach

The Early Adopter and Fast Follower Programme is a new and ambitious way of allocating match-funding that has not been tried before in the water sector. There has already been strong interest in how this model can work in practice, and we want to use this opportunity to learn what supports water companies and their partners most effectively to implement innovation at scale. We will run a robust and transparent process to assess applications and award funding, while remaining open, fair and consistent throughout.

At the same time, we are deliberately treating this as a learning exercise. We may make periodic adjustments to aspects of the programme – for example, refining guidance, processes, or tools – where feedback and experience show that changes would improve accessibility, clarity or impact. Decisions regarding the future design of the programme will be made prior to the end of the current trial period (31st March 2027) to allow a smooth transition into the next phase of delivery.

Key dates

Programme information released	16 th December 2025, 1.00 pm
Launch webinar	2 nd March 2026, 12.00 – 1.00 pm
Applications accepted	2 nd March 2026 – 31 st March 2027 1.00pm

What we are looking for

We are calling on the water innovation community to move beyond isolated pilots to systematically embedding proven solutions into business-as-usual. Together, we must accelerate adoption, align and share routes to scale, and ensure that innovation investment translates into visible, measurable benefits for customers, communities and the environment across England and Wales.

What support is on offer

Funding amounts

This Programme provides match-funding to help water companies implement proven innovations at scale. For the initial launch and trial period, **up to £15 million** is available.

Each applicant can request **between £100,000 and £1 million in match-funding** to support implementation, with flexibility to consider smaller projects that meet the other criteria. There is a £5 million cap per innovation on the total match-funding that can be awarded across the Early Adopter and all Fast Followers. In addition, the Early Adopter can request up to £50,000 to provide structured and practical support to a cohort of Fast Followers – this does not need to be included in the £5 million cap. A worked example of how this cap could apply in practice is provided below.

Early Adopter requests £1m to support the implementation of Innovation A, and an additional £50,000 to support a cohort of up to 5 followers for 6 months following the initial adoption.

Five other companies are interested in Fast Following the implementation of Innovation A and have individually requested the following amounts:

- Company 1 – requests £900k to support implementation of Innovation A
- Company 2 – requests £850k to support implementation of Innovation A
- Company 3 – requests £800k to support implementation of Innovation A
- Company 4 – requests £750k to support implementation of Innovation A
- Company 5 – requests £700k to support implementation of Innovation A

In total (across the Early Adopter and all Fast Followers), **£5m of match-funding and £50,000 of support funding** is provided to support the implementation of Innovation A in the UK water sector.

To help avoid duplication of effort and understand interest from potential Fast Followers, we will run periodic expressions of interest (see the section on [Expressions of Interest](#) for further details). Where multiple companies wish to act as the Early Adopter, or where Fast Follower demand exceeds the thresholds, we will follow the fair and transparent resolution process set out in the section on [Managing Multiple Applications](#).

Funding can support a range of eligible costs as outlined in the table below:

Category	Eligible Costs	Ineligible costs
Capital expenditure (equipment, infrastructure and installations)	• Purchase of new equipment, hardware and associated components required to implement the solution (e.g., sensors, control systems, treatment units, servers). • Modifications to existing assets or networks that are necessary to deploy the innovation (e.g.,	• Routine asset renewals or like-for-like replacement of existing equipment. • Major capital programmes that would

Category	Eligible Costs	Ineligible costs
	small-scale civil works, pipework modifications, kiosk installation, minor building works). • Installation, commissioning and integration of new equipment into existing systems, where these costs are part of the capital project. • Licences for software that forms part of the implemented solution and can reasonably be treated as a capital asset (e.g., multi-year enterprise licences linked to the project deployment).	proceed regardless of the project. • Vehicles, land purchase or large-scale estate development.
Operational costs directly related to the implementation	• Consumables or media required specifically for the new solution during the implementation period. • Incremental energy, water, waste disposal or other utility costs directly attributable to the implementation (e.g., running a new treatment step during the implementation period). • Temporary operational costs incurred to run parallel systems during transition (e.g., running both legacy and new systems for a defined period). • Data storage, hosting, cloud services or software subscription fees required to operate the solution during the implementation period.	• Ongoing, steady-state operational costs beyond the implementation period. • Stockpiling consumables for use beyond the implementation period • General site operating costs that would be incurred anyway (e.g., routine maintenance, standard staffing levels, overheads).
Staff time dedicated to delivery	• Time for project management, coordination and reporting. • Engineering, operational and technical staff time required to design, configure, test and embed the solution at participating sites. • Time for procurement, legal and commercial colleagues where this is directly related to setting up contracts or frameworks for the solution. • Time for data, IT, cyber security and information governance staff required to integrate systems and ensure compliant deployment. • Internal change management, communications and Training Leads directly supporting adoption.	• Staff time should be recorded alongside day rates or FTE costs and must be additional effort linked to the project, not general BAU activities. Additional information to support FTE costs and day rates may be requested. • Senior leadership time is only eligible where there is a clear, time-bound role in governance, decision-making, advocacy or amplification activities for the specific project.
Consultancy or contractor costs required for deployment	• Specialist technical consultancy for detailed design, integration, site surveys, modelling or optimisation required to implement the solution. • Contractor costs for installation, commissioning, configuration and testing at project sites. • Independent assurance (e.g., safety, quality, IT/OT, environmental) required to satisfy internal and regulatory requirements for implementation. • Legal, commercial or procurement support from external advisors where this is necessary to put in place new and/or different commercial arrangements outside of current capability or capacity.	• General strategy consulting not directly tied to deploying the specific solution. • Business development or sales activity for suppliers beyond the participating companies.

Category	Eligible Costs	Ineligible costs
Training and change-management activities necessary for adoption	• Design and delivery of training programmes for operational, technical and support staff (including “train-the-trainer” models) required to use and manage the new solution. • Development of training materials, manuals, SOPs, e-learning modules and user guides specific to the innovation, providing these are shared with other companies. • Workshops, coaching and change-management activities that help embed new ways of working (e.g., process redesign sessions, cross-functional adoption workshops).	• Training and change-management costs should be clearly linked to the specific solution and its implementation within the project period. • Routine corporate training or generic leadership development is not eligible. • All costs must be project-specific and clearly linked to implementation outcomes.

What’s expected of successful application?

If your application is successful in receiving funding, your team is expected to:

- Sign a funding agreement and commit to use the funding received for the purposes set out in your application;
- Undergo screening and due diligence processes as required by the delivery team;
- Participate fully in the monitoring and evaluation process and activities required by Ofwat and the delivery team – see more detail below;
- Engage with communication opportunities to promote your participation in the Water Innovation Implementation Programme as requested by Ofwat and the delivery team.

Monitoring & sharing learnings

The delivery team will monitor your application’s progress throughout the lifecycle of the project’s delivery - this may be through meetings, surveys, written reporting, or other reasonable requests for information.

A simple and practical monitoring framework has been established to help implementation delivery teams stay aligned, track progress, and capture learning throughout their innovation implementation project. The framework includes six core review points, which will be scaled according to size and duration of the project. Each review point will include an update of spend to date and the project will demonstrate appropriate use of funds, providing rationale for any deviation from the original implementation plan. The minimum expectation will be:

Monitoring Point	Purpose	Timing
Project Inception	To confirm shared understanding and readiness before implementation accelerates.	On project commencement
Mid-Project Update 1	Midpoint sense-check to surface issues early and adjust if needed	30% – 50% of project timeline complete
Mid-Project Update 2	Review progress towards outcomes and confirm path to successful delivery – present to steering group	60 – 70% of project timeline complete
Pre-Close Review	Ensure a smooth and confident transition to closure or handover. Assess whether all relevant learnings and benefits have been effectively captured and incorporated into Fast Follower delivery plans where necessary.	Final 10% – 15% of project timeline
Post-Close Follow-Up	Quickly assess whether benefits are emerging and identify further learning for Fast Followers and/or Enablers stream. If there is a significant change or reduction in confidence level that makes a material difference to business case viability or outcomes, a decision to hold funding for Fast Followers may be made.	Within 1 month of project closure
Sustainable Outcome Review	Update in terms of whether implementation has realised the expected benefits and outcomes detailed in the business case.	6 months – 12 months after project closure (agreed with project)

Specific monitoring requirements and review cadence will be agreed with the project team at the Project Inception. Additional monitoring points will be required for Early Adopters to ensure learnings and support are being appropriately provided to fast followers.

The following guiding principles have been adopted to ensure the monitoring and evaluation process is streamlined and supports projects to be outcome focused through implementation while ensuring funding is being used appropriately.

- **Time efficient:** short check-ins and brief written updates only.
- **Useful over perfect:** Focus on insights and actions, not detailed documentation.
- **Adaptive:** Reviews help identify changes needed for smooth delivery for Fast Follower cohort, and any key insights to be shared with the wider sector and beyond.
- **Team-centred:** Designed for the project team's benefit, not just governance.
- **Fast feedback:** Encourage small, regular adjustments to stay on track.

Sharing learning is key to the Implementation Programme, as such, the monitoring requirements will include an aspect of sharing learning about what has and hasn't worked, both during the lifetime of the project as well as in the months that follow.

Spotlight learnings may be published throughout the lifetime of the project to support dissemination of learning and more general communication of the programme. We will work with applicants to prepare these materials and to ensure that no sensitive information is disclosed.

Evaluation

Ofwat may commission a full independent evaluation of the Water Innovation Implementation Programme and applications will be expected to participate fully in the evaluation process and activities as requested.

Eligibility criteria

Who can apply?

The Early Adopter and Fast Follower programme is open to all water companies in England and Wales (including [WaSC and WOCs](#)¹, [NAVs and Infrastructure Provider Project Licenses](#)) that wish to implement a proven innovation not yet adopted by the sector.

For your organisation to be eligible you must meet the full eligibility criteria that can be found here. Minimum eligibility criteria are as follows:

- The applicant must be a licensed Water Undertaker, or a licensed Water and Sewerage Undertaker as defined [here](#)
- You must agree to comply with our Terms and Conditions.
- Applicants must not have conflicts of interest that could rule out participation. Details of any conflicts will be required at application stage, but attention will be made to existing technology vendor relations, planned or ongoing scale-up efforts that cross over with this funding and other financial interests that may cause real or perceived conflicts.

Companies must submit applications as either an Early Adopter (the lead applicant) or as a Fast Follower in response to an application from an Early Adopter.

Match funding requirements

A maximum of 50% of each applications' total costs will be provided by the Early Adopters and Fast Followers programme. Applicants must provide the remaining total of the total project costs. The match contribution can be made up from a combination of:

- **Financial contributions:** These can be from both non-regulated funds, or those made up from charges to water companies (such as operational budgets and allocated business plan spend). This reflects the lower level of risk required for implementation and the intention for projects to deliver tangible value to existing outcomes and targets.
- **In-kind contributions:** These are non-cash resources that are essential for the project's delivery and have a measurable monetary value. Allowable contributions must be auditable, valued at the true market rate, and directly support the application's objectives. Examples in-kind contributions include staff time (salaried FTE / day rates), asset or facility use (based on rental value),

¹ Water and sewerage companies (WaSCs) and Water companies (WoCs).

and existing equipment/software use (valued at market rate). In-kind contributions should not exceed 10% of the total cost to implement and additional justification may be requested if this threshold is exceeded. More detailed guidance on in-kind costs can be found in the previous [Costs table](#).

We welcome and encourage any commitment that exceeds the minimum 50% contribution. This can be in the form of additional financial (cash) or additional in-kind contributions such that the funding may be spread further and wider among applicants. However, this is not mandatory, does not form part of any award criteria and will not influence the outcome of the assessment or award process.

Intellectual Property Rights

As this Programme is focused on implementing solutions that have already been developed and robustly tested, rather than funding early-stage research and development, it is not generally expected that funded projects will generate significant new intellectual property. However, if it is expected that any new IP is to be developed, applicants must ensure that its treatment fully complies with the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) provisions set out in the [Programme Terms and Conditions](#).

Apply to the Early Adopters and Fast Followers Stream

Register an Implementation Representative

To receive information about Early Adopter applications and to be offered the opportunity to submit Fast Follower applications, each eligible organisation must nominate a single Implementation Representative as its main point of contact with the delivery team.

The Implementation Representative will be invited to attend quarterly Implementation Review Forums, where updates will be shared on new applications, Fast Follower opportunities, funding awards and emerging implementation learning.

Each organisation may register one Implementation Representative. This person must be currently employed by an eligible water company in England and Wales (including [WaSC and WOCs](#)², [NAVs and Infrastructure Provider Project Licenses](#))

To register an Implementation Representative, or to check whether your organisation has already done so, please email innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com mailbox.

Prepare for your application

Express your interest

To help build a pipeline of innovations ready for implementation, we will be running periodic expressions of interest. These will be for the following purposes:

- To understand which companies would like to be the early adopters for different innovations
- To understand, from the list of early adopter innovations, how many other companies are interested in being Fast Followers

Completing an expression of interest does not commit you to submitting an application, however we may reach out to you for more information about when you might likely submit this and if you require any support. If you are interested in being the Early Adoption of more than one innovation, please complete the EOI for each solution, however, during the trial period each company may only receive Early Adopter funding for one project. Please use the form link below to let us know if you are interested in submitting an Early Adopter application for an innovation:

² Water and sewerage companies (WaSCs) and Water companies (WoCs).

Attend our events

We also encourage all interested applicants to attend one or more of a range of events over the application period in support of your application. These include:

- **Launch webinar on 2nd March 2026, 12 – 1 pm:** for potential applicants and suppliers to learn more about the Early Adopter and Fast Follower programme, its aims, and the application process, and to ask your questions to the delivery team. [Register for the Launch webinar here](#). This session will be recorded and uploaded to the website.

Read the FAQs

Find answers to commonly asked questions on the [Water Innovation Implementation Programme website](#). If you have any further questions which are not answered here, then please get in touch with the team on innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com.

Additional Support

We recognise that this is a new Programme and that some of the information requested may be unfamiliar to applicants. If you would find it helpful to talk through the requirements or your draft responses, you can book a 1:1 support session with a member of the delivery team (up to 1 hour) using [this link](#). These sessions are intended to help clarify the guidance and application materials.

Submit your application

All applications should be made by completing our application form which can be accessed via the [Water Innovation Implementation Programme website](#). There is no fixed application window for the programme, however the initial trial period will end on **31st March 2027**.

The application form must be completed by a single organisation.

It features:

- Questions about your organisation, so we know who you are and can check you are eligible.
- Questions about your planned implementation, which will be screened and assessed before sharing with the Implementation Representatives for Fast Follower Consideration.

A copy of the application form and associated templates will be available to download from the [Water Innovation Implementation Programme Website](#) once applications are open. Once complete, applications must be submitted to the Water Innovation Implementation Programme mailbox: innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com.

Before submitting your application, please ensure that:

- You have read and understood the Early Adopter & Fast Follower [Terms and Conditions](#) and Implementation Programme [Privacy policy](#);
- Your team meets the eligibility criteria.

We are aiming to make sure the application process is as accessible, efficient and practical as possible. If you have any challenges with the application process or there are any reasonable adjustments that would support you to enter, catering for any additional needs you have, please contact us at innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com

Application Guidance

The Early-Adopter and Fast-Follower Programme application form is split into three key sections:

1. **Implementation readiness** – demonstrating that all outstanding technical risks have been addressed and that the innovation has been proven through previous activity (including evidence of thorough testing in a relevant operational environment).
2. **Intended benefits** – outlining the expected value of implementation, including financial, environmental, operational and customer benefits.
3. **Project planning & commitment** – setting out the implementation approach, key activities, milestones and costed budget, and demonstrating commitment to long-term adoption so that the solution becomes embedded in business-as-usual rather than remaining a short-term pilot.

Applicants seeking to be Early Adopters will also need to include a separate, costed plan for supporting Fast Followers, explaining how they will help others implement the same solution (for example through shared project management, technical support and structured knowledge transfer).

Application Section	Type	Purpose	Early Adopter	Fast Follower
Applicant Information	Unassessed	To gather information required to manage the application and check eligibility	✓	✓
Evidence of readiness	Assessed	To demonstrate that all outstanding technical risks have been addressed, and innovation has been proven through previous activity	✓	
Intended benefit case		To demonstrate that there is significant benefit to be unlocked by implementing the innovation	✓	✓
Planning and commitment		To demonstrate that there is a robust plan and commitment for implementing the solution, ensuring it is embedded and supported in the long term	✓	✓
Fast follower support proposal		To demonstrate that you will provide adequate support to a Fast Follower cohort, ensuring they benefit from the skills and knowledge developed through your own activities.	✓	

The following sections break down the requirements for each part of the application form, providing examples of the type of content we expect to see. These examples are illustrative, not exhaustive, and applicants should use their judgement to include any additional information that strengthens their case. A detailed breakdown of application questions and requirements can be found in the [Appendix](#).

Section 1: Evidence of readiness

We are looking to understand whether the innovation is genuinely ready to move from development into implementation, building directly on a previous testing and validation activity.

Strong applications will clearly show that the solution has been fully tested, is technically robust and can be deployed safely and reliably in real operational environments. Applicants should draw a clear line from previous activities to the specific innovation outputs now being taken forward (for example tools, methods, datasets, platforms, process changes or hardware). We expect evidence that the solution has been trialled in relevant contexts, with performance demonstrated against the success measures used in the original work.

We are also looking to understand how learning from previous work has been embedded to minimise technical risk and support effective implementation.

Applications must demonstrate:

- A clear reference to previous development, testing and validation work including key outputs that are now being implemented
- Robust evidence that the innovation has been successfully trialled or proven in relevant operational environments, with quantitative results against agreed metrics
- A clear explanation of current maturity (for example using technology, commercial or implementation readiness levels) and why it is sufficient for wider roll-out
- Assurance that the solution meets all relevant regulatory, safety, quality, cyber and environmental requirements, and can integrate with existing systems, asset standards and business processes
- A concise summary of the main technical, commercial and regulatory risks previously identified, how they have been addressed or mitigated, and justification for any remaining low-level risks and how these will be managed during implementation.

Section 2: Evidence of benefit

We are looking to understand the overall value that will be unlocked by implementing the innovation at the proposed scale, and whether the expected benefits clearly outweigh the total costs.

Strong applications will start from a clear problem statement aligned with sector priorities (for example leakage, storm overflows, water quality, customer experience, vulnerability or carbon reduction) and show how the innovation supports regulatory obligations, performance commitments and PR24/AMP8 strategies. They will then present a transparent, evidence-based business case that quantifies benefits for customers, communities and the environment, alongside a clear view of total CAPEX and OPEX costs.

Applications must demonstrate:

- Clearly identify the scale of implementation proposed (for example number of customers, assets, sites or regions) and the total cost of delivering the solution at that scale
- Specify the amount of financial support requested from the Water Innovation Implementation Programme, alongside any match-funding or internal contributions
- Provide a concise, plain-English summary of the proposal that could be used in public-facing communications, helping customers understand what will be done and why it matters
- Quantify expected benefits for customers, communities and the environment using evidence from previous trials and/or internal data (for example service reliability, resilience, affordability, carbon reduction, reduced spills or improved ecosystem health)
- Present a clear financial case that compares baseline and post-implementation performance, sets out simple payback and unit-cost metrics, and makes underlying assumptions transparent and credible
- Explain how the innovation will be embedded into business-as-usual, replicated across sites or regions, and deliver sustained value through AMP8 and beyond, supported by a fair and sustainable commercial model

Section 3: Evidence of planning and long-term commitment

We are looking to understand whether there is a robust, realistic plan for implementing the innovation and a firm commitment to adopting it as part of normal operations, rather than as a short-term pilot.

Strong applications will present a clear roadmap for delivery that sets out what will be implemented, where, when and by whom. This should be supported by a structured workplan, aligned with the Implementation Plan Template (Appendix B), that covers mobilisation, design, deployment, integration, testing, training, change management and handover. We expect a phased timeline with milestones and decision points, a transparent budget and clear governance arrangements.

We are also looking for convincing evidence that the sponsoring organisation and problem owners are committed to sustaining the solution beyond the funded period, with alignment to wider strategic plans (such as AMP8/9, resilience, and customer strategies). Strong applications will also set out how benefits will be monitored, evaluated, and reported, and how learning from implementation will be shared to support others.

Applications must demonstrate:

- A structured implementation plan with distinct work packages, activities, roles and responsibilities (including partners), supported by a realistic timeline, milestones, dependencies and success measures
- A robust resourcing and governance approach, showing how delivery will be overseen, decisions will be taken, and risks will be monitored and managed
- A detailed and proportionate budget that breaks down costs by activity and shows efficient and transparent use of programme and customer funds
- Practical plans for training, change management, support, and handover to ensure the solution is embedded into business-as-usual, rather than remaining as a standalone project
- A proportionate monitoring and evaluation approach that sets out how anticipated benefits will be evidenced and reported, and how insights and lessons learned will be shared within the organisation, with Fast Followers (where relevant) and with the wider sector
- Acknowledge key risks and dependencies affecting benefit realisation (such as supply chain, IT integration or approvals) and explain how these will be actively managed.
- Clear evidence of long-term commitment to adoption, such as alignment with corporate strategies and investment plans, internal prioritisation, and arrangements for ongoing maintenance, licensing, support, and continuous improvement.

Additional requirement for Early Adopter applications – support to Fast Followers

For Early Adopter applications, we are also looking to understand how you will support a cohort of Fast Followers to implement the same solution and benefit from your experience.

Applications must:

- Describe a clear, structured, and accessible support offer for Fast Followers (for example onboarding sessions, design reviews, configuration support, training, secondments or lessons-learned workshops)

- Explain which activities will be delivered centrally by the Early Adopter and what will be carried out locally by Fast Followers, including any assumptions about the number and type of participating companies
- Show how learning (including challenges and course corrections) will be captured and shared consistently through tools such as templates, SOPs, data models, case studies and communities of practice
- Present a realistic resourcing plan and a transparent breakdown of costs specifically associated with supporting Fast Followers, distinct from the Early Adopter's own implementation costs, noting that the programme will cover support costs up to £50,000.

Assessment process

What is the process?

The below process outlines the journey for applicants and their applications, including key review stages with defined criteria for progression and feedback mechanisms to ensure only the best quality submissions reach final award.

Stage	Description
1. Early Adopter Application Submitted	The Early Adopter submits their completed Application Form and supporting materials via the Implementation Programme mailbox. Applications must include all required evidence and declarations as outlined in the Programme Guidance.
2. Screening and Assessment	The programme delivery team will review the submission to confirm eligibility and assess the completeness and quality of materials provided. If any part of the submission does not meet the requirements set out in the Programme Guidance, feedback will be issued to the applicant, who will be given an opportunity to revise and resubmit their materials within a defined timeframe.
3. Application Shared with Appointed Implementation Representatives	Once an application has passed initial screening, the materials will be shared with representatives from all water companies in England and Wales via a quarterly Implementation Review Forum. These structured forums, provide companies an opportunity to collectively review and discuss Early Adopter proposals, identify potential Fast Followers, and share feedback or emerging learning.
4. Fast Follower Applications Submitted	Water companies wishing to Fast Follow an approved Early Adopter proposal must complete a simplified version of the Application Form for their own organisation. A three-month window will be open for Fast Follower applications following circulation of the Early Adopter proposal with Implementation Representatives. If no Fast Follower applications are received within this period, feedback will be collected from at the next Implementation Review Forum and provided to the Early Adopter, who may revise and resubmit their proposal for a future round.
5. Screening and Assessment	The programme delivery team will assess all Fast Follower submissions to confirm eligibility and ensure that the quality and scope of materials align with Programme requirements. As with Early Adopter applications, feedback will be issued where revisions are required. A minimum of two eligible Fast Follower applications is required for the implementation to be considered for funding award.
6. Final Decision and Award	Once at least two eligible Fast Followers have been confirmed, the Early Adopter application (and corresponding Fast Follower applications) will be considered for funding. Ofwat, supported by the programme delivery team, will review all materials and ratify the final funding decisions. Funding for successful Early Adopters will be awarded following formal confirmation. Fast Follower funding will be allocated but held pending successful implementation and validation of the Early Adopter's deployment.

How will applications be assessed?

Applications will be assessed to ensure they meet minimum eligibility and quality requirements.

Once an application is received, it will first undergo eligibility checks. Eligible applications will then be reviewed by the delivery team to confirm that the information provided is sufficiently clear, complete and robust for other companies to consider committing their own match-funding as Fast Followers. If an application does not meet these minimum quality requirements, the delivery team will provide feedback and invite the applicant to make improvements before resubmission.

Applications that pass this initial screening will be shared with representatives from other water companies via the next scheduled Implementation Review Forum. While these companies will not be asked to formally score applications, they will consider whether they wish to submit Fast Follower applications. At least two Fast Follower applications are required for an Early Adopter application to progress to award.

The Implementation Representatives will convene to discuss applications and may be asked to provide feedback where an application does not secure the required Fast Follower cohort. In line with other elements of the Ofwat Innovation Fund, Ofwat will make the final decision on whether an application will receive funding.

A detailed breakdown of the minimum quality requirements for each assessed question can be found in the [Appendix](#). Feedback will be provided at appropriate stages to ensure transparency and help applicants strengthen their submissions.

How we will manage multiple applications

It is only possible for a single company to act as the Early Adopter for a given solution. If we receive multiple Early Adopter applications for the same innovation, we will apply the following principles:

- **Previous project lead has first refusal.** If the implementation relates to previous project activity led by one organisation, the lead company of previous work will be offered the Early Adopter role.
- **Where neither applicant was the previous lead.** The previous project lead will be invited to provide feedback to the delivery team on which company is best placed to lead the Early Adopter implementation.

If more than the standard threshold of five companies wish to join a Fast Follower cohort, we will use the following approach:

- **More than five companies, combined funding ≤ £5m.** We will consider the benefits of a larger cohort against the impact on the Early Adopter's ability to provide effective support. Where this is deemed acceptable, we may allow more than five Fast Followers. Ofwat reserves the right to make the final decision.
- **More than five companies, combined funding > £5m.** Priority will be given to companies that partnered on previous activity relating to the innovation. If, after this prioritisation, more than five companies still remain, five will be selected at random to form the Fast Follower cohort.

Maintaining a balanced portfolio

Early Adopter Expressions of Interest will also be used to help maintain a balanced portfolio of implementations across water and wastewater applications. By understanding the emerging pipeline, the delivery team will use the Implementation Review Forums to discuss priorities and explore which innovations may be most appropriate to pursue first. This will help ensure that available funding supports a broad mix of projects and maximises value for customers, communities and the environment. Ultimately, Ofwat will make the final decision on which implementations are funded and which companies receive match-funding support.

Ensuring the approach provides equitable access

The Programme is designed to provide fair access to all eligible water companies, recognising that organisations differ in their capacity and capability to lead large-scale implementations. We recognise that some companies may be less able to act as Early Adopters, but still have a strong interest in implementing proven innovations and benefiting from shared learning.

To support this, two Fast Follower places for each Early Adopter project will be reserved for companies serving fewer than 3 million customers, where there is interest in participating and programme requirements are met. This is intended to ensure that smaller companies are able to benefit from the Programme's match-funding, support offer and implementation learning alongside larger organisations, and that the resulting portfolio reflects the needs of customers and communities across England and Wales.

These principles are intended to ensure a fair, transparent and manageable process while maximising the value of the Programme.

Feedback and learning

As this Programme is being run in a trial phase, feedback from applicants and delivery partners is an essential part of how we will learn and improve. Insights gathered through this round will help us refine future guidance, processes and tools, and will inform the full review of the Programme before decisions are made about any extension or changes after 31 March 2027.

If you have any feedback or concerns relating to the Implementation Programme, please contact us at innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com or submit your comments anonymously [here](#). We welcome feedback from applicants at any stage, including through surveys sent out after applications are received to the programme.

Appendix

A – Application Form Question Guidance

Unassessed questions

The following unassessed questions are included in the application form to manage your application.

Question Category	#	Question	Question Guidance
A	Main Contact Details	i Name of main contact	You must designate one person as the main contact. This person will be the primary point of contact with the Water Innovation Implementation Programme team. This is the person who we will contact for all matters relating to your application. Please ensure that the information provided below relates to the same person.
		ii Main contact job title	
		iii Main contact organisation	
		iv Main contact's work email address(es)	
		v Main contact's work telephone number	
B	Application Details	I Funding Agreement	Please confirm you have reviewed the template Funding Agreement and that your organisation will sign this if your application is successful in receiving funding.
		ii Application type	Please select whether your application is being made as an Early Adopter or as a Fast Follower.
		iii <i>[Fast Followers Only]</i> Which water company is leading the Early Adoption?	Please write the name of the water company leading the Early Adoption. This must be one of the licensed regional water-only and water and wastewater companies or newly appointed water and wastewater companies (NAVs) in England and Wales.
C	Funding	i What is the total cost of implementing your chosen solution at the scale outlined in this application?	Please provide the total cost of the implementation in £ GBP in nominal (today's) prices. This should include all costs associated with carrying out the implementation of your chosen solution, not just those that are being covered by the match-funding from the Water Innovation Implementation Programme.

Question Category	#	Question	Question Guidance
			These figures should be inclusive of inflation allowances and applicable taxes which are not recoverable, reflecting the actual costs of the implementation. Where taxes are fully recoverable, such as VAT, costs should be shown net of the recoverable amount. Taxes that are not recoverable should be included, for example, customs duties payable on goods imported into the UK.
		ii How much funding are you requesting from the Water Innovation Implementation Programme?	Please provide the funding amount requested from the Water Innovation Implementation Programme in £ GBP in nominal (today's) prices, excluding any financial contributions.
		iii How much additional funding are you requesting to support a fast-follower cohort?	Please provide the total amount of additional funding that is required to provide the Fast-Follower support activities as outlined in <i>Question 3.2.1</i> . The total cost of this support should not exceed £50,000.
		iv What is the value of any in-kind contribution	Please provide the value and source of any in-kind contributions in £ GBP in nominal (today's) prices and the source of any financial contributions. The total contribution made by in-kind costs should not exceed 10% of the total cost to implement. If this threshold is exceeded, then additional justification for why this is the case should be provided.
		v Please provide a breakdown of what sources you are using to provide the minimum match-funding requirement of 50% of the total implementation cost	The cost breakdown should clearly highlight the source of financial contributions (e.g., operational budgets, non-regulated funds or allocated capital spend) and non-financial contributions as outlined in in the previous question
D	Intellectual Property Rights	i Please confirm that your application will continue to comply with the IPR terms as outlined in Section 4 of the Terms and Conditions	Yes / No
		ii If the activity funded through this application is likely to result in the development of any Foreground IPR, please explain how you will comply with the IPR positions as outlined in section 4 of the terms and conditions	Please refer the terms and conditions of the funding route where the innovation originated from and provide justification for how you will comply with these to manage any foreground IP developed through the funded implementation activity.

Question Category	#	Question		Question Guidance
E	Monitoring & Evaluation	i	Anticipated start date	Please state the date you anticipate your project will start. We expect applications awarded funding to the Early Adopters and Fast Followers stream of the Water Innovation Implementation Programme to start within 3 months of being notified of the award. However, we recognise that some applications may require a longer mobilisation period, and this may be assessed and agreed to on a case-by-case basis.
		ii	Anticipated end date	Assuming the project starts on your anticipated start date, please state the date you anticipate project delivery being complete. Please note this should include any dissemination activities as set out in your project plan.
		iii	Where did you become aware of the solution and its readiness for implementation?	Please state where you became aware of the solution and its readiness for implementation. For example, this could be from a previous Ofwat Innovation Fund project or from your organisation's own innovation activity

Section 1 – Evidence of Readiness

Under this assessment category, we are looking to understand whether the proposed innovation is ready to move from a trial, pilot and/or development phase into implementation, building directly on a previous work. Applications should clearly show that the solution is technically robust, appropriately validated, and suitable for deployment in real operational environments within the water sector in England and Wales.

Strong applications will demonstrate a clear line of sight from previous testing and validation activity to the proposed implementation, supported by evidence from relevant trials, testing or early deployments. We are looking for applicants to show how technical risks have been identified and addressed, how learning from previous work has been embedded, and why the current level of maturity is sufficient for wider roll-out, while providing assurance that regulatory, safety, quality, cyber and environmental requirements can be met.

General Information

These questions are not assessed against a scoring criterion and do not contribute to scoring of the application and ultimately, the award of funding. They are more for assessors to build a wider understanding of context of the proposal.

#	Question	Question Guidance	Word Count
1.1.1	Innovation name	Please include a short, unique and descriptive name to reference your application. This may be used in public-facing communications if the application is successful.	20
1.1.2	Innovation description	Please provide a concise summary of your application in jargon-free, plain English. This may be used in public-facing communications if the application is successful and should help a customer-facing audience understand what you propose to do and the benefits you hope to deliver.	100
1.1.3	Application references	<i>[Optional]</i> Please feel free to include a reference list of any sources of information you have used to support your application	NA

1.1.4	Visuals and diagrams	<i>[Optional]</i> You can attach <i>up to three</i> images and/or diagrams relevant to your application. Please clearly reference any visuals in your answers below.	NA
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Assessed Questions

The following questions are included in the application form, relating to the assessment criteria below.

#	#	Question	Question Guidance	Word Count
1.2	1.2.1	What evidence is there to show that the innovation is ready for implementation? Applicants must demonstrate that all outstanding technical risks have been addressed and innovation has been proven through rigorous prior testing	To be ready for implementation a solution must have been rigorously tested in an environment relevant for its application in the water sector in England and Wales. Please provide evidence to show that the solution has undergone rigorous testing and that technical risks associated with the innovation have been minimised as far as reasonably practicable. Where technical risks remain, provide justification for implementing the solution despite these risk The application must clearly demonstrate that their proposed solution is fully validated, technically robust, and ready for implementation by drawing a direct line to testing and validation activity carried out in a relevant environment for its wider application. They will concisely summarise previous work conducted and describe the specific innovation outputs (tools, methods, datasets, process changes, platforms, or hardware etc.) that are now being taken forward. Compelling evidence will show that the innovation has been successfully trialled in relevant operational environments, with quantitative performance results benchmarked against the original success metrics. The applicant will articulate the current maturity of the solution, explaining why its Technology, Commercial or Implementation Readiness Level is sufficient for wider roll-out, and provide assurance that it meets all regulatory, safety, quality, cyber and environmental requirements. They will also demonstrate proven operational robustness, explaining how the solution integrates with existing systems, asset standards and organisational processes.	700
	1.2.2	What learning from previous work will be applied to ensure the solution is implemented effectively?	Please provide a summary of key learnings from previous project work that will be applied to ensure that further technical risks don't materialise, and that the implementation will be implemented effectively. The application must demonstrate how learning previous work has been fully embedded to ensure effective implementation. This includes summarising the technical risks and uncertainties identified previously and presenting clear evidence of how these have been tested, mitigated or closed out, along with explanation of any remaining low-level risks and how they will be managed into the future.	300

	1.2.3	Describe how your proposed implementation goes beyond all previous work to date with this innovation, including any earlier trials or deployments in the water sector in England and Wales.	Applications must explain what is genuinely new or different about this implementation compared with current practice in England and Wales. Briefly describe how the problem is typically addressed today and reference any similar solutions you are aware of (within your own company or elsewhere). You should set out clearly what makes your proposal novel – for example, applying a previously trialled tool at a much greater scale, using it in a different asset type, catchment, or customer context, combining multiple outputs in an integrated way, or introducing a new operating or commercial model. Where relevant, refer to previous work conducted and explain how this implementation moves beyond what has already been done, rather than repeating previous activity.	500
	1.2.4	Explain why your proposed implementation could not reasonably proceed at the same scale, pace or scope without support from the Water Innovation Implementation Programme, clearly setting out the barriers that prevent you and/or others from funding it through business-as-usual budgets.	Applications must set out why this implementation would not happen – or would only happen on a much smaller or slower basis – without support from the Water Innovation Implementation Programme. Be specific about the barriers that currently stop you and/or other companies from funding this through normal AMP or operational budgets. These might include high perceived risk relative to current incentives, uncertainty in the benefits case, misalignment of costs and benefits across different parties, lack of internal capability or capacity to lead the first large-scale deployment, or the need for shared infrastructure, data or standards that individual companies cannot fund alone. Explain how programme support will overcome these barriers and unlock wider sector value (for example by de-risking the approach for others, generating shared learning or guidance, or enabling a step-change in scale or pace).	300

Section 2 – Evidence of Benefit

Under this assessment category, we are looking to understand the scale and nature of the benefits that will be unlocked by implementing the innovation at the proposed level, and whether these benefits justify the total costs of the project and the amount of funding requested. Applications should set out a clear and well-evidenced problem statement and show how the solution contributes to sector priorities and business plans for water customers and the environment in England and Wales.

Strong applications will present a transparent and proportionate business case that quantifies expected benefits for customers, communities and the environment, alongside a clear view of total CAPEX and OPEX (TOTEX). We are looking for applicants to show how benefits have been evidenced from previous work, how they will scale through implementation (including replication across sites or regions), and how the proposed commercial model will support sustained value creation beyond the funded period.

General Information

These questions are not assessed against a scoring criterion and do not contribute to scoring of the application and ultimately, the award of funding. They are more for assessors to build a wider picture and context of the project, aiding the understanding of our judges and assessors when assessing your application.

Assessment Criteria	#	Question	Question Guidance	Word Count
All	2.1.1	To what scale will the chosen innovation be implemented with the funding requested?	Under this question, we are looking to understand the scale of implementation you will achieve with the funding requested. Applications must clearly quantify the reach of the innovation, the breadth and depth of adoption and the expected duration of implementation. They will show that the proposed scale is ambitious yet realistic, proportionate to the funding requested, and that there is a credible route to further replication or scale-up beyond the funded period.	350

Assessment Criteria Questions

The following questions are included in the application form, relating to the assessment criteria below.

#	#	Question	Question Guidance	Word Count
2.2	2.2.1	What benefits for water sector customers, communities and the environment will be realised by implementing the chosen solution?	Please describe the current baseline and ‘do nothing’ (or ‘do minimum’) position, and then set out the main benefits that implementing this solution will deliver for water sector customers, communities, and the environment, indicating who benefits, in what way, at what scale and over what timeframe. Wherever possible, quantify these benefits and make a clear comparison between outcomes with and without the project. The application must clearly demonstrate that implementing the solution delivers materially improved outcomes compared with continuing on the current trajectory. It will briefly describe the baseline and expected evolution of service, risk, cost, carbon and environmental outcomes in the absence of the project, and then present a concise but robust description of the incremental benefits associated with implementation. Compelling applications will quantify benefits or provide indicative ranges, explain who they accrue to (for example specific customer groups, communities or environments), and draw an explicit contrast between the “with project” and “without project” positions, thereby evidencing a strong strategic case for change.	500
	2.2.2	Set out clear SMART objectives for the implementation of this innovation, showing how each objective will contribute to realising the benefits described in 2.2.1.	Please set out a concise set of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) objectives that describe what will be delivered through this implementation and how success will be assessed, clearly linking each objective to one or more of the benefits described in 2.2.1. The application must show that there is a clear and coherent framework for turning the strategic case into deliverable, trackable results. It will define a small number of outcome-focused objectives that state what will change, how progress will be measured, why each objective is realistic within the scope, resources and timeframe of the project, and by when it will be achieved. Strong applications will make explicit linkages between the objectives and the benefits set out in 2.2.1, demonstrating that achieving these objectives will directly contribute to improved outcomes for customers, communities and the environment and providing a practical basis for monitoring performance over time.	500
	2.2.3	Please complete all tabs in the Implementation Business Case Template, clearly demonstrating that the intended benefits outweigh the	Please attach the completed business case to your application email alongside this application form and other completed appendix material. Appendix A includes the template that must be used by applicants and outlines all the key areas that are required, including the expected value of implementation and financial, environmental and customer benefits. Note: Guidance on what is considered an eligible cost is included in the Application Handbook. Applications must present an implementation business case that transparently sets out total CAPEX and OPEX costs (TOTEX), distinguishing between one-off and recurring expenditure, and present clear quantifiable benefits.	NA

#	#	Question	Question Guidance	Word Count
		cost of implementation <i>(Appendix A – Business Case Template must be used)</i>		
	2.2.4	What assumptions have been made and how will remaining uncertainties be managed?	Please provide a list of assumptions with supporting justification for how these uncertainties will be managed and report during the implementation. Applications must set out clear, specific assumptions, supported by evidence or rationale and explain how each assumption will be monitored and what contingency actions will be taken. Applications should describe how updates on key assumptions and risks will be captured and reported through project governance and learning processes during implementation and explain how remaining uncertainties will be actively managed to ensure the benefits confidently outweigh the costs.	300

Section 3 – Evidence of Planning & Commitment

Under this assessment category, we are looking to understand whether there is a clear, credible plan for implementing the innovation and a firm commitment to embedding it into business-as-usual. Applications should explain what will be delivered, where and by whom, and how implementation is aligned with wider organisational strategies and investment plans.

Applicants are expected to set out a structured implementation roadmap with clearly defined work packages, responsibilities, timelines, budgets and governance arrangements, alongside practical plans for change management, training and as frictionless as possible handover. We are looking for applicants to demonstrate that the relevant problem owners are committed to sustaining the solution in the long term, and, for Early Adopter applications, that there is a clear approach to supporting Fast Followers to implement the same innovation and benefit from shared learning.

Assessment Criteria Questions

The following questions are included in the application form, relating to the assessment criteria below.

#	#	Question	Question Guidance	Word Count
3.1	3.1.1	What is the proposed plan for implementing the chosen innovation? Please complete Appendix B – Implementation Plan Template	Applications must present a clear, detailed and credible plan for implementing their chosen innovation, demonstrating exactly what will be delivered, where, when and by whom. They must set out a structured workplan broken into logical work packages covering mobilisation, design, deployment, integration, testing, training, handover and evaluation. The plan will include a phased timeline with milestones and decision points, a clear explanation of site or asset selection, and a robust budget that fully breaks down costs by activity and type.	NA

	3.1.2	Describe your organisation's relevant experience of delivering similar innovation or implementation projects and provide evidence that you have the capacity and capability to deliver this project successfully.	Please summarise your organisation's relevant experience of delivering similar innovation or implementation projects and provide evidence that you have the capacity and capability to deliver this project successfully, including examples of comparable past projects and the proposed team and governance arrangements. The application must demonstrate credible delivery capability rooted in proven experience and adequate resourcing. It will highlight past projects that are comparable in scale, complexity or context, particularly those involving innovation deployment or operational change, describing the applicant's role, what was delivered, the outcomes achieved and any assurance or evaluation evidence. It will then show how this track record translates into current capacity and capability by outlining the proposed project team and key partners, the skills and governance structures that will be in place, and how sufficient time and resource will be secured and protected for the duration of the project. Any known gaps or constraints will be transparently acknowledged alongside clear plans for how these will be managed so that delivery confidence is maintained.	500
	3.1.3	Describe the key dependencies and enabling conditions that must be in place for this implementation to be successful.	Please identify the key dependencies and enabling conditions that must be in place for this implementation to succeed (for example infrastructure, systems, data, internal processes, partner commitments or regulatory approvals), describe their current status, and explain how any outstanding dependencies will be secured and managed. The application must demonstrate that critical dependencies have been realistically assessed and that there are robust plans for managing them. It will set out the main enabling conditions required for the solution to operate as intended and be adopted into business-as-usual, explaining why each is important. It will indicate whether these dependencies are already in place, planned and funded, not yet secured or outside the applicant's direct control. Strong applications will describe the practical steps to secure outstanding dependencies, how related risks will be monitored and mitigated through delivery, and any contingencies if key assumptions change, providing assurance that dependencies will not undermine implementation or long-term adoption.	350
	3.1.4	How will you ensure that the implemented solutions are adopted and supported in the long-term to continue delivering the intended value and benefits to customers, communities and the environment?	Please provide evidence that sufficient support will be given to the problem owner/owners who will derive value from the innovation being implemented are committed and given the necessary tools and resources to sustain the solution into the long-term. Applications must demonstrate a deep and long-term commitment to adoption beyond the funded period. They will show how the innovation aligns with strategic priorities such as AMP8/9 plans, resilience objectives and customer outcomes, and provide evidence of leadership support. Strong applications will also set out how benefits will be monitored, evaluated and reported, and how learning from implementation will be shared to support others.	350

For completion in Early Adopter applications only

#	#	Question	Question Guidance	Word Count
3.2	3.2.1	Identify the earliest milestone in your implementation plan at which Fast Followers could credibly begin their own implementations, and describe the specific conditions and evidence that must be in place at that point to ensure sufficient learning has been captured and benefit realisation risks are appropriately mitigated.	Please identify the earliest realistic milestone in your implementation plan at which Fast Followers could credibly begin their own implementations, and describe what will have been achieved by this point and the specific conditions and evidence that must be in place to ensure sufficient learning has been captured and benefit-realisation risks are appropriately mitigated. The application must demonstrate a thoughtful balance between moving quickly to unlock sector-wide value and providing sufficient assurance for others to follow. It will nominate a clear milestone or phase at which Fast Followers could start, and concisely describe the achievements expected by this point – for example, key design decisions agreed, core solution elements operating in a live environment, initial performance and benefits data available, and learning captured in shareable formats such as playbooks, specifications or templates. Strong applications will define explicit criteria and tests that must be met (for example thresholds for performance, operational practicality and confidence in the benefits case) and explain how any remaining risks will be managed so that Fast Followers can proceed with a high degree of confidence while not unnecessarily delaying wider implementation.	350
	3.2.2	What support do you plan to offer to Fast Followers, should they wish to follow your implementation?	Applications are required to demonstrate how they will provide adequate support to a Fast Follower cohort, ensuring they benefit from the skills and knowledge developed through the activities, results, and outputs of the funded project. Applications must set out a clear, structured and accessible support model that enables Fast Followers to benefit directly from the Early Adopter's experience, skills and learning. They will describe the scope of support to be provided, distinguishing between what will be delivered centrally and what Fast Followers will undertake locally, while explaining any assumptions about the number, type and context of participating companies. The proposal will outline a well-defined package of support activities, for example - onboarding workshops, design reviews, configuration guidance, training, secondments and lessons-learned clinics, each with explicit outputs such as templates, Standard Operating Procedures, data schemas or case studies. Strong applications will also show how insights such as failures and course corrections will be captured and shared consistently through structured learning events or communities of practice, ensuring all participants benefit equally.	350

Appendices & Templates Guidance

In addition to the entry form questions, applicants must complete and submit two supporting templates: a **Business Case (Appendix A)** and an **Implementation Plan (Appendix B)**. These serve different but complementary purposes. The Business Case makes the case for investment over the whole life of the solution, showing that the benefits outweigh the costs over an appropriate time horizon. The Implementation Plan focuses only on the implementation period that will be supported by the programme, setting out the activities, timetable and costs that will be incurred during this time. It is essential that you understand the distinction between these two documents, are consistent across them, and choose time periods that are appropriate for your proposed solution.

Appendix A – Business Case Template

The Business Case template should present a robust, whole-life assessment of the solution, showing that it represents good value for money compared to the current baseline. You should set out the expected whole-life costs and benefits across an appropriately defined time period that reflects the expected life of the solution (for example, the expected life of key assets, contracts or licences), and demonstrate that benefits outweigh costs over this period. As part of this, you should show a desirable payback period (typically less than 5 years). The Business Case is structured into four sections:

- **Economic Case** – the analytical heart of the case, where you quantify (where possible) whole-life costs and benefits and demonstrate value for money, including treatment of uncertainty, risk and confidence;
- **Commercial Case** – how you will procure and manage suppliers, including routes to market, key packages, lead times and how these align with delivery milestones;
- **Financial Case** – how the implementation and ongoing support will be funded and remain affordable over time, including budgets, funding sources, annual spend profiles, contingencies and any constraints or shortfalls;
- **Risk Management** – the critical risks and dependencies that could affect delivery or benefits and how these will be mitigated and monitored, typically presented in a risk register with likelihood, impact and severity.

When completing the Business Case, you should adjust the time period and assumptions to reflect the expected whole life of the solution, not just the period of programme funding, and ensure that the economic, commercial and financial arguments are coherent and consistent with each other.

Appendix B – Implementation Plan Template

The Implementation Plan template focuses only on the period covered by the proposed implementation that will be eligible for match-funding through the programme. This is the detailed plan for how you will deliver the implementation phase: it should set out all activities that will be undertaken during this period, when they will happen, who will be responsible, and the associated costs. The total costs in the Implementation Plan for the funded period should align with the funding request to the programme and the match-funding you will provide and will form the basis for project monitoring after funding is awarded.

You should use the Implementation Plan to provide a clear, phased view of the implementation period (e.g. mobilisation, design, deployment, optimisation, knowledge transfer), with milestones, dependencies and spend that can realistically be tracked and reported against.