



Implementation Enablers Overview

Version 1.2, Date 26/02/2026

Contents

About this Overview	3
Who's involved.....	3
About the Water Innovation Implementation Programme	4
Why innovation implementation?	4
The Implementation Enablers stream	5
What support is available?.....	5
How it will work.....	5
Establishing a Sector Implementation Committee	6
Barrier identification and prioritisation.....	6
Solution development	7
Solution selection and support	7
Monitoring and evaluation	8
Trialling this approach	8
How can I get involved?	9
More information and support	10
Feedback and Learning	10

About this Overview

Welcome to the Implementation Enablers Overview. This document will provide you with more information about how this stream of the Water Innovation Implementation Programme will run and how you can get involved.

More information about the Programme's second stream, the Early Adopter and Fast Follower stream can be found in the [Early Adopter and Fast Follower Handbook](#).

If you have read this document and have more questions, please 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 in 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 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, up to £40m will be made available** to deliver activities across two complementary streams:



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

For more information and supporting documents about the Water Innovation Implementation Programme, please visit [our website](#).

The Implementation Enablers stream

While the Early Adopter and Fast Follower stream focuses on supporting specific implementations, the Implementation Enablers stream is designed to tackle the shared barriers that slow or block innovation adoption across the water sector. These may include issues such as data-sharing constraints, capability gaps, misaligned processes or cultural factors that make it harder for proven innovations to move from demonstration into business-as-usual.

The aim of this stream is to create the conditions in which implementation can thrive. It will do this by identifying priority barriers, working collaboratively across the sector (and beyond) to develop solutions, and supporting targeted activities that unlock benefits for customers, communities and the environment across England and Wales.

What support is available?

Initially, up to £10 million will be allocated through the Implementation Enablers stream, however this will be regularly reviewed with the potential to make more funding available as the programme develops. Funding will be allocated through different mechanisms depending on the barrier being addressed, following an agile approach to best support the nature of different solutions selected.

Support may include, for example, the design and testing of shared tools, frameworks, guidance, data standards, training approaches or collaborative processes that address systemic barriers to implementation. The exact form of support will vary, reflecting the barrier in question and the approach identified by the sector as the most effective route to a solution.

How it will work

The Implementation Enablers stream has been designed as a collaborative and flexible mechanism to address sector-wide barriers. Activities will be organised around three core stages:



Together, these stages will enable stakeholders with lived experience of implementation barriers to shape priorities, co-design solutions and help create an environment where innovation implementation is nurtured and enabled.

Establishing a Sector Implementation Committee

To provide strategic oversight and sector input to the Implementation Enablers stream, the Programme will establish a Sector Implementation Committee. The primary role of the Committee is to inform decision-making by identifying and prioritising the most pressing cross-sector barriers to implementation and reviewing potential solutions to ensure they will deliver the intended benefits.

The Committee will meet quarterly and will be composed of members representing a diverse range of stakeholder groups in the water sector, including but not limited to, water companies, regulators, industry bodies, supply chain and contractors. The membership and composition of the Committee may change throughout the course of the Water Innovation Implementation Programme to ensure it reflects a balance of expertise, programme and sector needs throughout the Programme. To ensure the committee provides robust decision making whilst remaining agile, it will be limited to a maximum of 12 appointed members at a time.

The Committee will consider evidence gathered through barrier identification exercises and learning from the Early Adopter & Fast Follower stream to advise on which barriers should be taken forward for focused activity (such as solution development sprints). Once potential solutions have been developed, the Committee will review these against agreed principles such as impact, feasibility, and sector-wide relevance. It will then make recommendations to Ofwat on where funding or other support would be best placed, recognising that final funding decisions rest with Ofwat.

In addition, Committee members will play an important role in championing the Programme, helping to build awareness, encourage participation and support the adoption of successful solutions across the sector.

Information on how to express interest in joining the pool of potential Committee members is set out in the [How Can I Get Involved](#) section of this guide.

Barrier identification and prioritisation

Innovation in the water sector rarely follows a straight line from idea to implementation. Even strong solutions must navigate a complex mix of institutional, technical, financial and cultural constraints. Through the design of the Water Innovation Implementation Programme, stakeholders from water companies, regulators, contractors, solution providers and industry experts have already helped identify a long list of barriers across organisational and sector themes.

The new Sector Implementation Committee will meet quarterly to review this evidence, consider emerging insights (including learnings from the Early Adopter and Fast Follower stream) and maintain an up-to-date view of the most pressing, systemic barriers. Each year, the Committee will select at least one priority barrier to address through a focused sprint (or other relevant activity) with a cross-sector consortium.

The Implementation Enablers stream is intentionally flexible. Barriers and their relative priority may change over time as the Water Innovation Implementation Programme progresses and the sector landscape evolves. The Committee will therefore revisit and refine the barrier list regularly, building a shared understanding of where effort is most needed.

For more information on the priority barriers selected for each year of the Programme, please visit [our website](#).

Solution development

Once a priority barrier has been agreed, the Water Innovation Implementation Programme will work with stakeholders to identify and develop potential solutions. The specific approach will depend on the barrier, but may include:

- **End-to-end sprint activities** – structured, time-bound processes that move rapidly from problem discovery to solution concepts, bringing together experts and practitioners from across the sector to design practical responses.
- **Targeted calls to industry and partners** – inviting organisations with relevant ideas, tools or experience to propose approaches for tackling the barrier and to identify who is best placed to lead or contribute.

These activities are intended to surface focused, actionable solutions that address real-world challenges and can be adopted across the sector, rather than creating standalone reports or one-off pilots.

The Water Innovation Implementation Programme will hold activities to address the prioritised barriers throughout the duration of the Programme to ensure that solutions addressing these barriers to implementation are driven by experts and stakeholders across the sector and will provide the long-lasting change needed to impact the challenges to innovation implementation in the water industry.

Solution selection and support

Potential solutions emerging from these activities will be developed to a level that allows the Sector Implementation Committee and Ofwat to judge whether, and how, the Implementation Enablers stream should support them. The Committee will review the options and recommend those that best:

- Address the agreed barrier
- Offer clear, tangible benefits for customers, communities, the environment and the sector
- Are practical to deliver within the scope and resources of the Water Innovation Implementation Programme.

Ofwat will then make the final decision on whether to award funding, and at what level. Funding may support further design, prototyping, testing or roll-out of the chosen

solution(s), depending on what is needed to address the barrier effectively. Not all organisations involved in solution generation will necessarily receive funding.

Monitoring and evaluation

Once funding has been awarded, the delivery team will work with appointed leads to agree a proportionate approach to monitoring and evaluation. The aim is to track delivery against agreed activities and milestones, understand whether the intervention is effectively addressing the prioritised barrier, capture learning, and use this insight to inform future Implementation Enabler activities and the wider Water Innovation Implementation Programme.

The monitoring arrangements and frequency will be tailored to the nature, scale and risk of each activity and agreed in advance of delivery. Depending on what is most appropriate, this may involve regular check-in meetings or progress calls, short written updates or evidence of outputs and outcomes.

Where it is justified by the size or novelty of an intervention, a more formal evaluation may be commissioned to assess impact in greater depth and to identify how solutions can be sustained or scaled. All funded organisations will be expected to cooperate with monitoring and evaluation activity, share relevant information and outputs and support the Water Innovation Implementation Programme's wider learning objectives.

Trialling this approach

In line with the wider Water Innovation Implementation Programme, the Implementation Enablers stream has been deliberately designed as a learning exercise. It will run as a trial until 2030, during which time new barriers are likely to emerge and the sector's needs may shift. For this reason, this stream is designed to be reactive and flexible to the needs of the barriers identified, but in particular to the needs of the sector as the Programme progresses.

This Overview identifies the overarching theme and process of the Implementation Enablers stream, but the specific activities carried out over the course of the Programme will be driven by the sector to best meet these needs. Any 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.

How can I get involved?

Throughout the Water Innovation Implementation Programme there will be a range of opportunities to get involved in the Implementation Enablers stream. We are keen to hear perspectives, learning and ideas from across the water sector and beyond. You can engage in several ways:

1. **Express interest in the Sector Implementation Committee**

We are looking to establish a pool of people who can sit on the Sector Implementation Committee at different points in the year to support barrier identification, prioritisation and solution selection. If you are interested in being considered for this pool, or would like to find out more, please contact us at innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com

2. **Share barriers to innovation implementation**

You can contribute to the barrier identification and prioritisation process by sharing specific barriers that you or your organisation has experienced. To do this, please complete the [Barrier Identification Form](#).

3. **Take part in solution development activities**

Throughout the delivery of the Implementation Enablers stream, we will run solution identification and development activities—such as sprints, workshops and calls to industry—to explore how best to address the prioritised barriers. These will be open to a wide range of stakeholders. Please stay updated on [our website](#) and Ofwat social media and newsletter announcements to see upcoming events and calls to industry.

We will announce barriers, activities and ways to get involved on the [Water Innovation Implementation Programme website](#) and through Ofwat social media and newsletter announcements, so keep an eye out for upcoming opportunities and events. If you have any questions, please reach out to us at innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com.

More information and support

Please review the [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) on our website if you have any questions. If you still have questions after doing so, please email us at innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com.

Feedback and learning

We welcome and support feedback, so if you have any feedback or concerns relating to the Water Innovation Implementation Programme, or the Water Innovation Fund, please feel free to contact us directly at innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com or submit your feedback or concerns anonymously [here](#).

If you would prefer to contact Ofwat directly, you may do so by emailing innovation@ofwat.gov.uk. Ofwat also has a range of materials available relating to [whistleblowing](#) and [making a complaint](#).