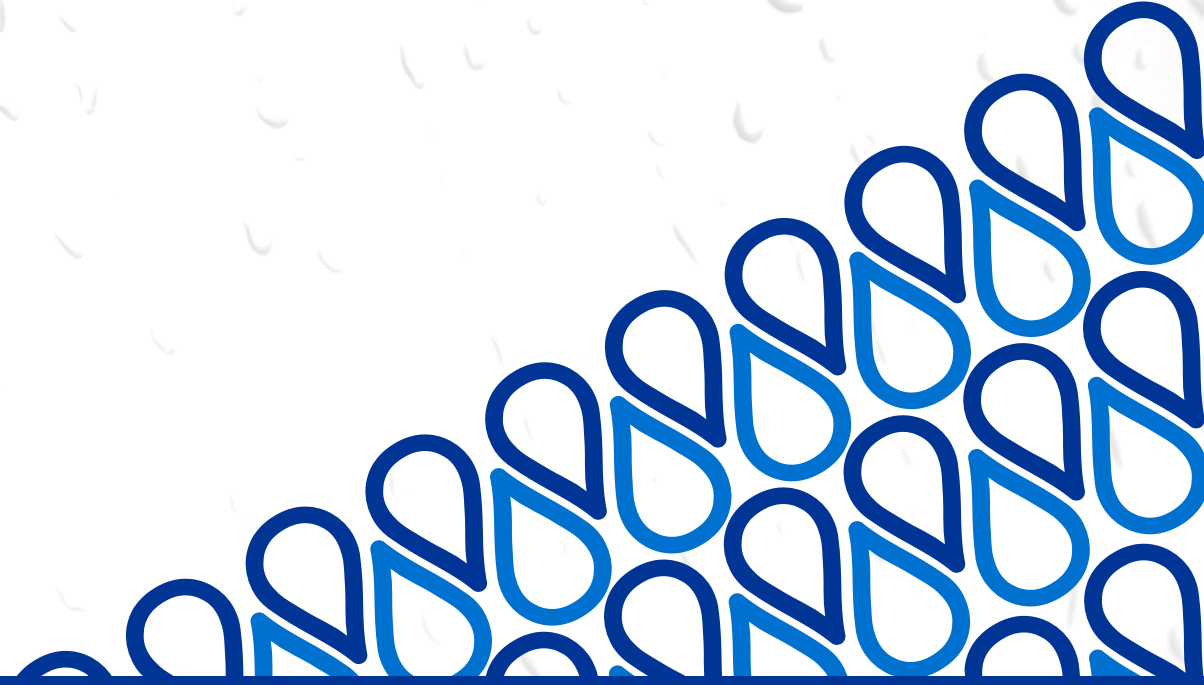




**Water Innovation
Implementation
Programme**

Launch Webinar & Live Q&A



Delivery Team – Who We Are



Water Services Regulation Authority, has oversight of the Water Efficiency Lab (as part of Water Efficiency Fund).

Key programme team



Marc Hannis
Innovation Principal



Jeannette Henderson
Innovation Principal



Administers the Water Innovation Implementation Programme on behalf of Ofwat. First point of contact for all enquiries.



Nick Blamire-Brown
Associate Director



Caroline Wadsworth
Commercial Director



Elizabeth Court
Senior Consultant



Delivery partners for Water Innovation Implementation Programme activities.



Dave Morris
Associate Director



Jill McBoville
Principal Consultant

Who you will hear from today

Marc Hannis

Innovation Principal



ofwat

Nick Blamire-Brown

Associate Director



The logo for 'isle' features a stylized network of colored dots (green, blue, orange, purple) connected by lines, with the word 'isle' in lowercase black text below it.

Dave Morris

Associate Director



ARUP

What we'll cover today

1

Introduction to the **Water Innovation Implementation Programme**

2

Implementation Enablers

- Programme Overview
- Our first challenge
- How to enter

3

Early Adopters & Fast Followers

- How to enter, funding amounts and entry requirements
- What's expected of successful entrants
- Assessment process & assessment criteria
- Entrant support

4

Q&A (via Menti)

- Scan the QR code
- Or go to **Menti.com** and use code: **#6215 1290**



Innovation Fund Overview



Marc Hannis
Innovation Principal

The Ofwat Innovation Fund is a £600m initiative across 2020–2030 to transform the sector through innovation so that the sector can better meet the needs of, and create long-term value for, customers, society and the environment.



The fund aims to achieve this objective by driving impact in three key areas:

Aim 1

Accelerating the creation and roll-out of innovative products, services and concepts

Aim 2

Growing the capacity and capability of the sector to innovate

Aim 3

Embedding a culture that values, encourages and supports innovation

As of June 2025, we have awarded over £200m to 109 projects

We see innovation as key to meeting the challenges of the future and we are working to create the conditions in which innovation can thrive. This includes:

- Making ££ available to develop innovative solutions/approaches.
- Identifying the regulatory barriers to innovation and engaging colleagues (internal and external) to reduce those barriers.
- Looking across the whole innovation ecosystem in water – how can we support innovation?



2025-2030 – doubling of the Fund to £400m

The Ofwat Innovation Fund has doubled and so has the scope and ambition of the programme.



Annual competitions between 2025-2030, ~£250m funding



At least two competitions between 2025-2030, ~£15m funding

NEW

Water Innovation Missions

Water companies coming together to collaborate on solutions to specific sector-wide 'strategic challenges' (£40m over 5 years)

NEW

Implementation Fund

Accelerating the scaling of projects to deliver impact and addressing barriers to this scaling (£40m over 5 years)

NEW

Cross-sector Programme

Exploring joint working/funding approaches with other sectors for solutions requiring cross-sector effort (£40m over 5 years)

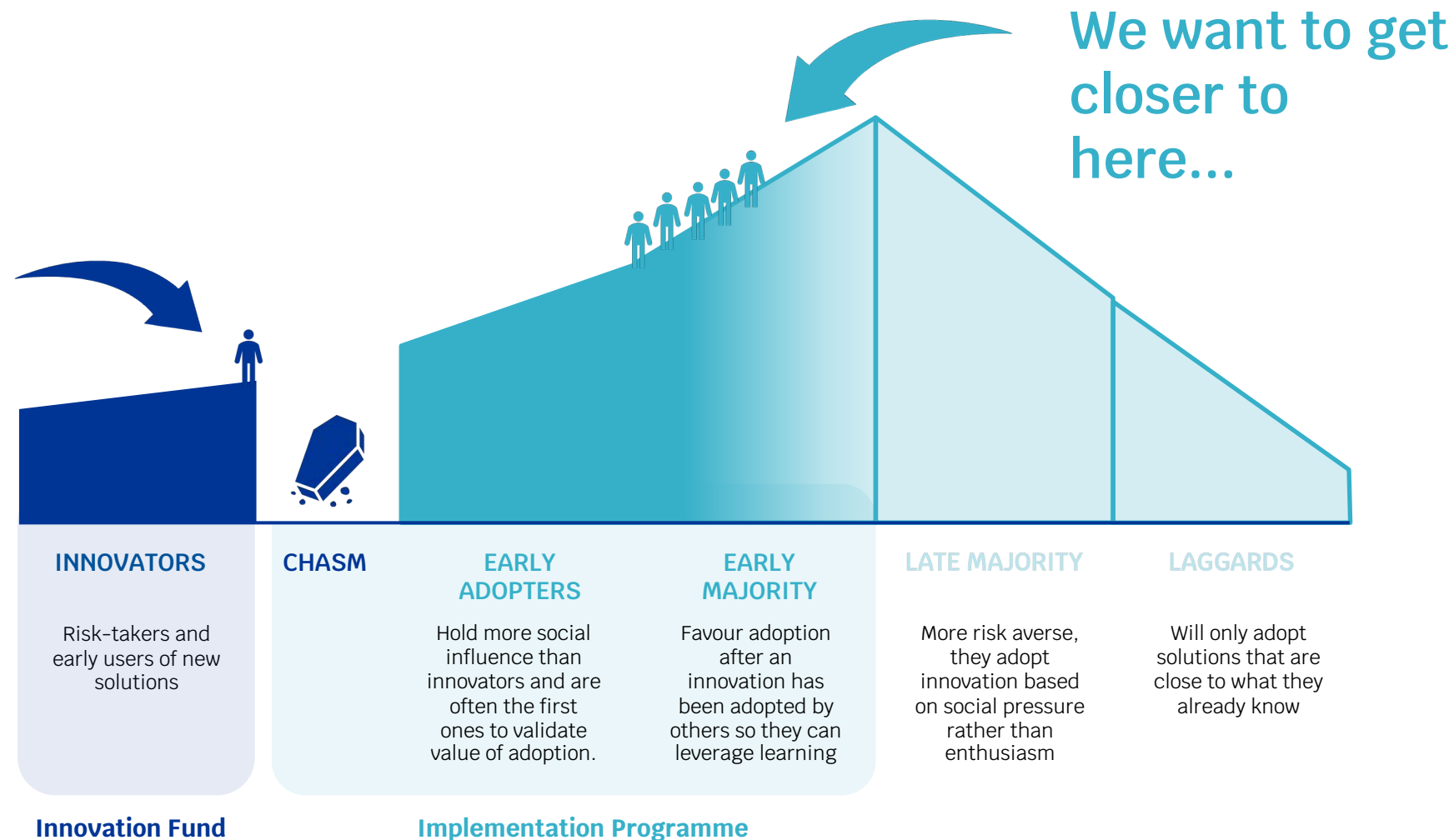
Evaluation: Impact and VfM study of 2020-2025 Fund that will inform approach at PR29



Why do we need to support implementation?

We are currently stuck here...

The journey from innovative new solution to widescale adoption is challenging and can take time that early-stage companies simply can't survive. This can result in us sticking to the tried and tested solutions of times past, rather than embracing what is new and often better



The Water Innovation Implementation Programme



Water Innovation Implementation Programme

Aim

To accelerate the speed and scale by which successful innovations are implemented by the water sector in England and Wales

Easing the journey

Initial funding package
£10m

Implementation Enablers

Projects that enable the sector to better implement innovation

Directly drives systemic and lasting change by **funding activities that address known barriers to implementation**

Implementation in action

Initial funding package
£15m

Early-Adopter & Fast-Follower

We will provide partial funding for the implementation of innovations from other Ofwat Innovation Fund projects.

Directly supports the increased scale and speed by which fund innovations are adopted **by de-risking early implementation activity through partial funding**

Our test and learn approach



Our funding models are a new and ambitious way of allocating funding that has not been tried before in the water sector.

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.

2nd Mar 2026

31st Mar 2027

Trial Period

Continued Programme

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.

Implementation Enablers



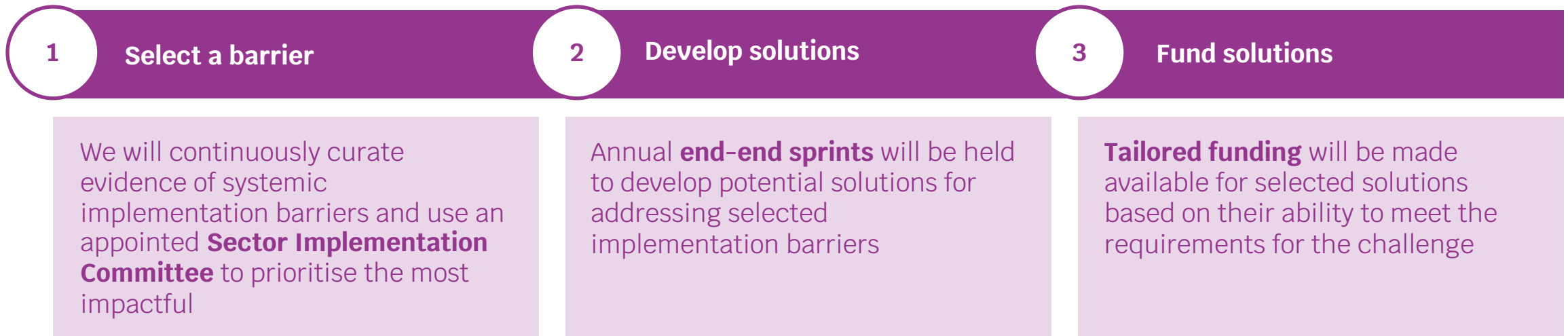
Nick Blamire-Brown
Associate Director

AIM

The aim of this stream is to **create the conditions in which implementation can thrive**.

How will it work

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.



Committee Role

A new **Sector Implementation Committee** will meet quarterly to identify and prioritise barriers to implementation.

The Committee will:

- Support identification and prioritisation of innovation implementation barriers in the UK Water sector
- Help define the most appropriate solution development pathways for selected barriers (such as targeted sprints or calls to industry).
- Review and provide feedback on developed solutions in order to inform funding decisions.

Membership

We will appoint members from a diverse range of stakeholder groups in the water sector, including but not limited to, water companies, regulators, industry bodies, supply chain and contractors. To help inform the selection of barriers and solutions, members should have:

- a strong understanding of the UK water sector landscape and the challenges that exist when implementing innovation.

Appointed membership and composition may change throughout the course of the Programme to ensure it reflects a balance of expertise, programme and sector needs throughout the Programme.

If you would like to put yourself, or someone else, forward to join the committee please let us know by emailing **innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com**

Our first implementation challenge



Barrier

Lack of resilient UK-based facilities capable of undertaking full Regulation 31 (Reg 31) testing

At present, UK capacity to undertake full Reg 31 testing is limited. There are no UK-based facilities that provide these services. In the past, even when labs have existed there has been a capacity constraint which has resulted in long and unpredictable waiting times alongside higher-than-ideal costs.

These pressures affect both innovators and water companies. Start-ups and established suppliers face delays and additional costs when bringing new products to market, while water companies may struggle to implement more sustainable, efficient, or customer-focused solutions at the pace required.

Sprint activity from Summer 2025 has helped to select and define this challenge

The total award budget for the call is up to **£3 million** across two stages:

Stage 1:

Successful Stage 1 applicants will each receive up to £50,000 to develop a detailed delivery plan including a feasibility assessment for the proposed solution.

Stage 2:

Delivery plans will go through assessment and sector review by an appointed Sector Implementation Committee. Successful delivery plans will be eligible for awards of up to £1 million each to accelerate implementation, with a total budget of up to £3 million for this challenge.

Who can enter?



The scheme is open to applications that will help improve Reg31 laboratory testing availability and address this critical barrier identified by the sector.

Eligible	Ineligible
Proposals that address the barrier described	Proposals that do not address the barrier described
UK registered companies with a UK bank account	Non-UK registered companies
Must agree to permit disclosure of selected information (e.g. detailed delivery plan)	Not willing to disclose selected information (e.g. detailed delivery plan)
Must agree to the terms and conditions and be able to sign funding agreement	Not willing to agree to programme terms and conditions or funding agreement
Must be led by a single entity but can include named partners if they are collaborative in their proposed delivery model	Multiple entities not working in partnership

We are open to what this could look like. Approaches might, for example, explore:

- Collaborative or sector-aligned models that ensure fair and transparent pricing
- Networks of laboratories that provide resilience and flexibility across locations and organisations
- Facilities developed in partnership with water companies, universities, research institutes or other organisations, while fully maintaining independence and rigour in testing and accreditation

2nd Mar

Stage 1 - Applications

Applications Open

Stage 1 applications are open for submission from today. Applicants are required to provide information about:

- The proposed approach to increasing testing facility capacity
- Relevant experience of proposed delivery organisations
- Indicative operating model
- Proposed steps for Stage 2

1st May

Stage 1 - Assessment

Stage 1 Review

Stage 1 applications will be reviewed by a panel of the Ofwat, DWI and the programme delivery team

29th May

Stage 1 - Award

Delivery Plan Development

Winning Stage 1 applicants will be notified and awarded funding to develop detailed delivery plans for the implementation of their solution.

The deadline for completion of delivery plans will be shared with successful applicants at award but is expected to be roughly **3 months in duration**

Stage 2 - Assessment

Stage 1 – Application Questions



Overview of Approach

- What is your proposed approach?
- How will the proposed approach address the identified barrier?

Relevant Experience

- What experience will you draw on to ensure your proposed approach successfully addresses the Challenge Statement?

Indicative Operating Model

- What is your proposed operating model and how does this differ to existing models?
- How will you ensure any developed capability will remain sustainable over the long-term

Stage 2 details

- What next steps would you take to build confidence in your plan to achieve this objective if you were awarded Stage 1 funding?
- If successful, how would you use £1m to accelerate the implementation of your proposal to address the challenge statement?

The **Stage 1 Application Form** and **Guidance** can be found on the Water Innovation Implementation Website

Early Adopters & Fast Followers



Nick Blamire-Brown
Associate Director

Early Adopter & Fast Follower Stream



AIM

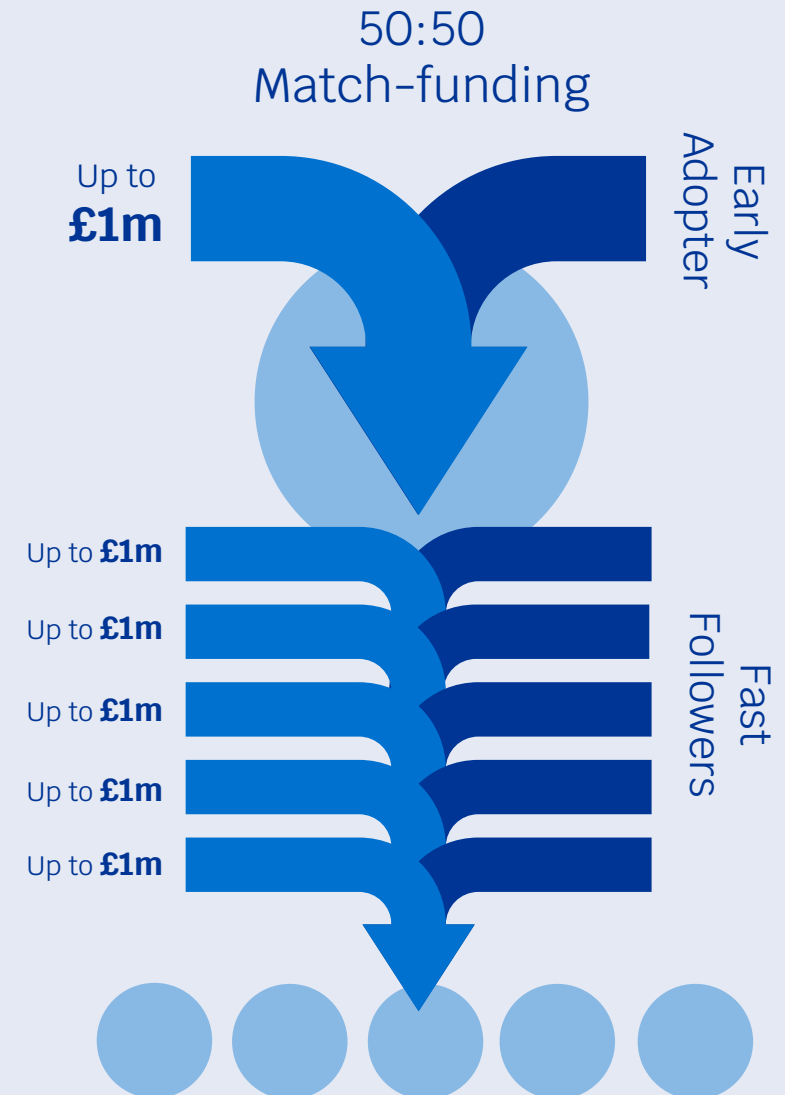
The aim of this stream is to **de-risk the early implementation of proven solutions.**

How will it work

Projects will be structured around an **Early Adopter** and a group of **Fast Followers**.

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.

To progress to award, at least **two, and up to five Fast Followers** must opt-in to also implement the solution after the initial deployment by the early adopter. This ensures that every project is relevant across multiple companies and that the plan for implementation is genuinely replicable across the sector.





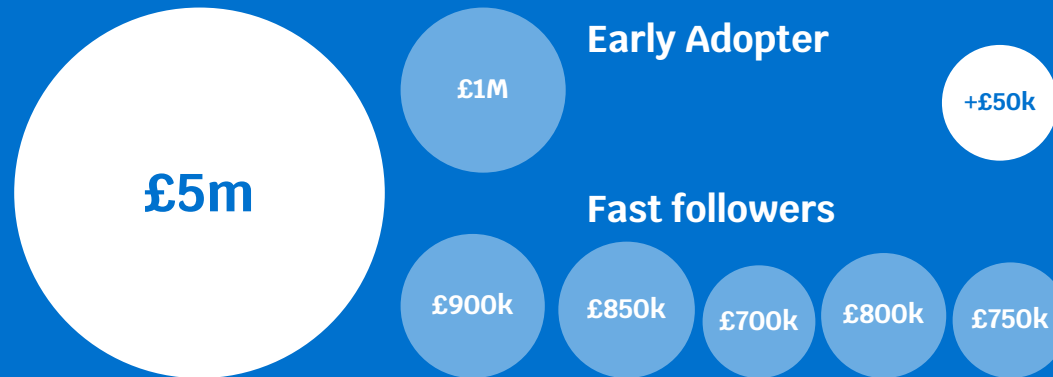
What funding is available?



The total available funding for the initial launch of the Early Adopter & Fast Follower is £15m

- Each applicant can request from **£100k - £1m** in match-funding to support the implementation of an innovation.
- **Up to £50,000** of additional funding will also be made available to the Early Adopter to provide support to Fast Followers

A maximum of £5m is available to support the implementation of an innovation across an Early Adopter and cohort of Fast Followers:



Match-funding requirements

A maximum of 50% of each applications' total costs will be provided by funding from 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).
- **In-kind contributions:** These are non-cash resources that are essential for the project's delivery and have a measurable monetary value.



Who can enter?



Applicants

The Early Adopter and Fast Follower programme is open to all water companies in England and Wales (including [WaSC and WOCs](#) , [NAVs and Infrastructure Provider Project Licenses](#))

- Companies must submit applications as either an Early Adopter or as a Fast Follower in response to an application from an Early Adopter.
- During the trial period (until March 2027) each company may only have a single active Early Adopter application
- There is no limit on the number of times each company can apply for Fast Follower funding

There is **no fixed application window** for Early Adopters, enabling companies to submit their applications when they are ready

Innovations

Funding is only available for the implementation of proven innovations. It **cannot be used to fund any further trials or solution development.**

The applicant must demonstrate:

1. Innovation is proven to work through rigorous testing in a relevant environment and supported by robust technical evidence
2. It is being implemented in a way that has yet to be achieved by Water Companies in England and Wales

Early Adopters & Fast Followers

How to apply



Dave Morris
Associate Director



What is required at entry?

As part of the application process, entrants will be required to share:

- A **completed application** form that answers the questions inline with guidance
- A **business case** that clearly outlines how the value expected from implementation outweighs the cost
- An **implementation plan** detailing activities and associated costs for implementation
- A **50% contribution** to overall implementation cost (include in-kind contributions)
- If you are applying as an Early Adopter – you will also need to outline the activities you will undertake to support the fast followers and associated cost of this.

Entrants will be provided the opportunity to present their entries to representatives from all other water companies in England & Wales to help identify and secure the required Fast Followers.

You **do not** need to have secured your Fast Followers before submitting an Early Adopter Application.

Calculating the cost of implementation

The following costs are considered eligible for match-funding support as long as they **directly relate to the period of implementation**:

- **Capital expenditure** covering equipment, infrastructure and installations
- **Operational costs**
- **Staff time**
- **Consultancy or contractor costs**
- **Training and change management**

A full list of eligible and ineligible costs is included in the handbook.



Application questions



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 Appendix A – Business Case	☒	☒
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 Appendix B – Implementation Plan	☒	☒
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.	☒	☒



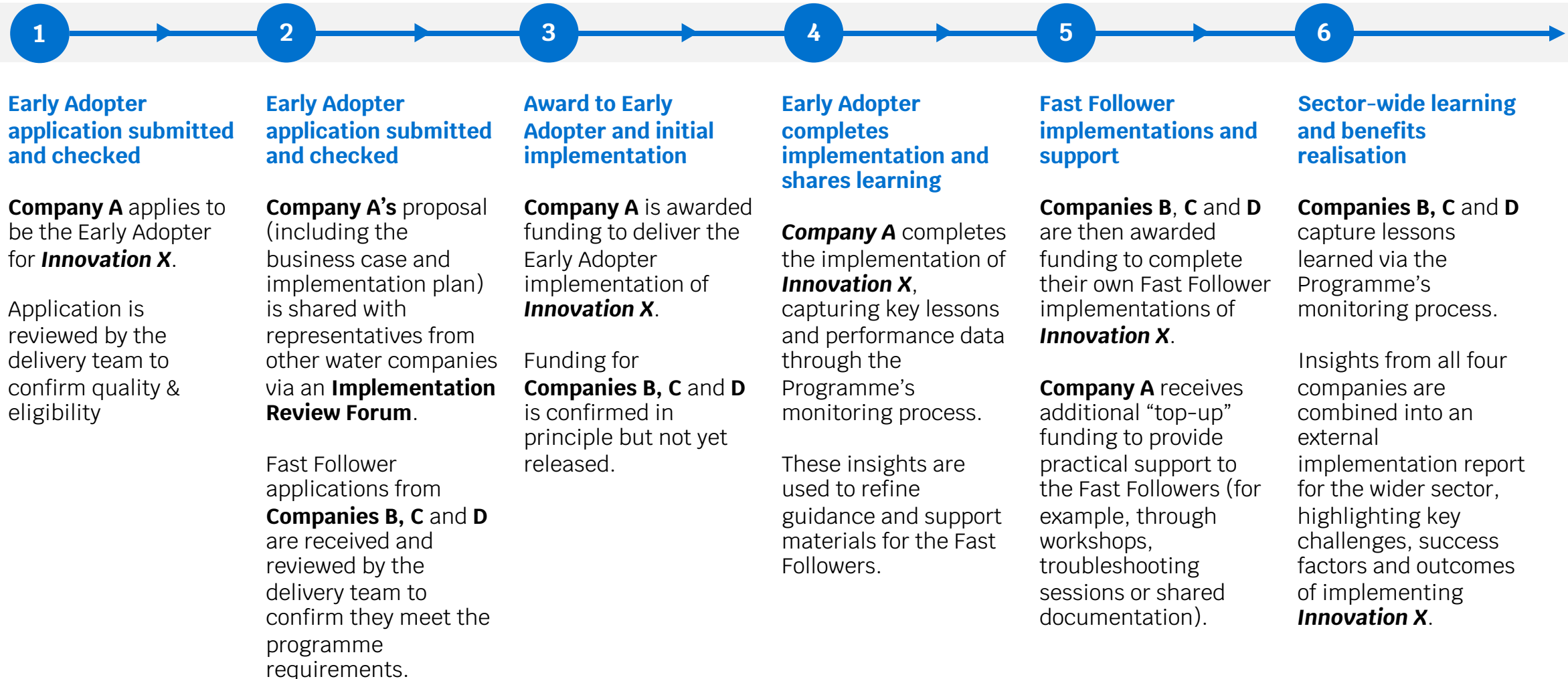
Application process



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. Feedback will be issued where revisions are required.
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 .
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 <u>within 3 months</u> .
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. Feedback will be issued where revisions are required.
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.



How will it work in practice?





What is the Forum?

Implementation Review Forums will be structured **quarterly meetings** attended by appointed Implementation Representatives to:

- Review and provide discuss Early Adopter applications
- Raise awareness of Fast Follower opportunities
- Receive and share emerging implementation learning

Implementation Representatives

Each organisation wanted to participate in the Early Adopter & Fast Follower stream **must register one Implementation Representative.**

This person must be currently employed by an eligible water company in England and Wales (including [WaSC and WOCs1](#) , [NAVs and Infrastructure Provider Project Licenses](#)). Appointed representatives should have:

- Experience or knowledge of implementing innovation in line with the needs of their organisation;
- Delegated authority to make decisions and represent the views of their organisation

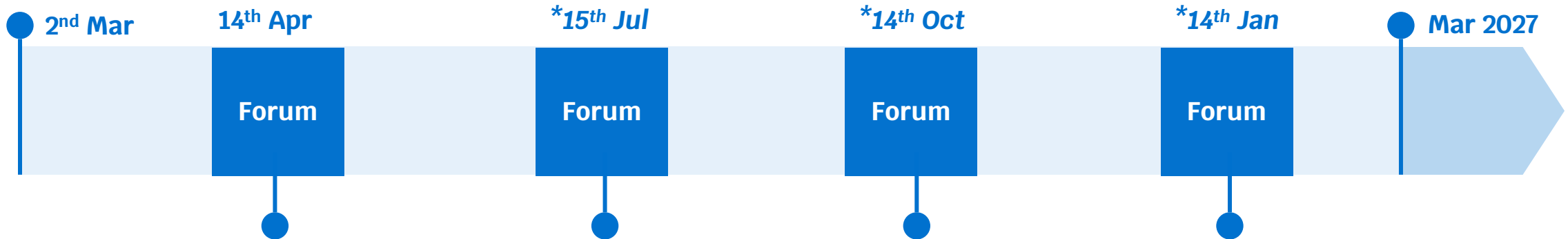
If you have not yet appointed an Implementation Representative, please do so by **Friday 27th of March** by emailing **innovationimplementation@isleutilities.com**



Timeline



**Applications
Open**



**Trial Period
Ends**

Implementation Review Forums

Implementation review forums will provide a regular touch point to share progress and discuss new proposals.

**The forum dates above are proposed and may be subject to change following the first Forum*



What we expect from successful applicants



If your entry 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;



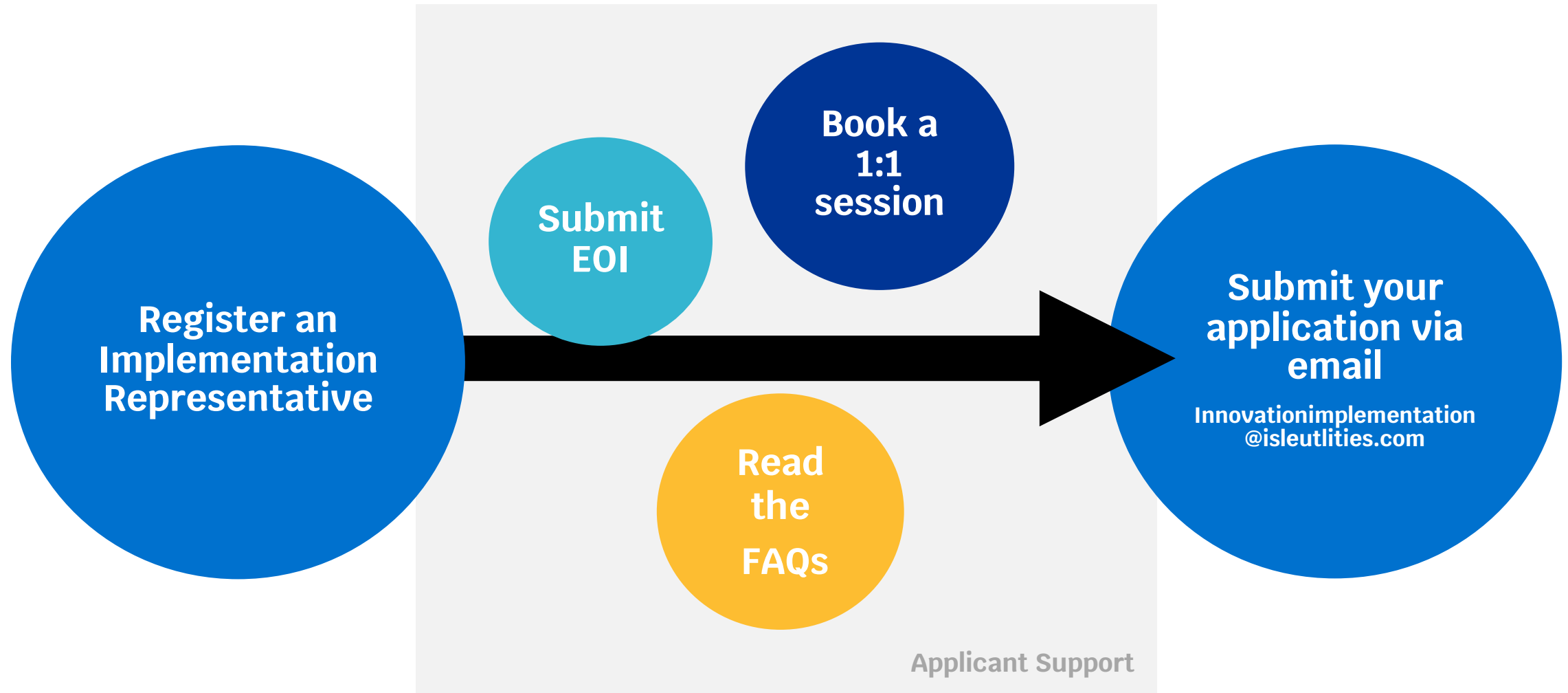
Participate fully in the **monitoring and evaluation process** and activities required by Ofwat and the delivery team;



Engage with **communication opportunities** to promote your participation in the programme as requested by Ofwat and the delivery team



Prepare you applications



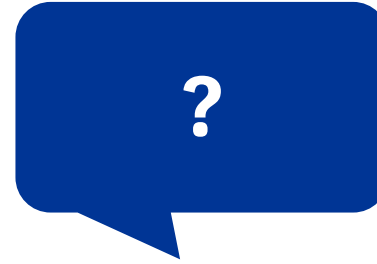
Q&A



Scan to join Menti

Add your questions in Menti, and upvote other questions you'd like answered.

We will answer offline any questions that aren't addressed in this webinar.



More questions?

Check out the FAQs and supporting documents:

<https://waterinnovation.challenges.org/implementation-programme/>

If you can't find an answer, contact us:

innovationimplementation@islutilities.com

Thank you!