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Water Innovation Implementation Programme Launch Webinar-20260302_120056UTC-Meeting Recording

0:15
Good afternoon, everyone.

0:17
Welcome to this launch webinar for the Water Innovation and Implementation Program.

0:23
We're just going to give it about 30 seconds just as the final people are admitted to the call, and then we'll get started.

1:00
OK, right.

1:03
We've just let a few more people in and so we will get started with the webinar now.

1:10
Thank you for joining us today.

1:12
We're really excited to kick off this new new program, new streaming funding for the Offer Innovation Fund.

1:24
This is your delivery team program.

1:27
So the program is being funded by off what the regulator for the the Water Services Regulation Authority that has oversight over the water companies in England and Wales.

1:44
I'm Nick Blomer Brown.

1:46
I'm from a company called our Utilities.

1:48
We're the administrators of the this program specifically and we're supported by our partners Arab who helped with the delivery of the program.

1:58
And you can see some of the core delivery team here on the slide.

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2:02
These are the sorts of people that you could expect to engage with if you have applied with the program or if you have any questions for the program, it's likely that one of these people on screen will be the people getting back to you.

2:16
In terms of today's webinar, you'll hear from three of us.

2:20
So you'll hear shortly from Mark Hanis, Innovation Principal at Off what who's going to introduce the sort of context of the program amongst the other streams of funding that exist.

2:33
You'll probably hear quite a lot from myself today.

2:37
I'm an associate director here at our utilities and have led the design and delivery of this program.

2:43
And you'll also hear from Dave Morris at Arab, who's going to come and explain some of the details around how to engage with parts of the program in terms of the content that we're going to cover today.

2:57
So we'll first introduce the Water Innovation Implementation program as a whole and sort of provide some of the context of why this is such an important program for the sector.

3:10
We'll then go into the detail of two streams of funding that exist within this program.

3:15
The 1st is called the Implementation Enabler Stream, and we'll tackle this one, this one first and provide detail about that.

3:22
The second is called the Early Adopters and Fast Follower Stream, and again, we'll provide information around sort of how to enter that, what funding exists, and how to get involved throughout the session.

3:35
We'd love for you to ask any questions.

3:38
We're using a tool called Menti Meter to be able to capture those questions.

3:44

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The easiest way for you to engage with it is to get your phone, if you've got one, sat next to you and scan this code on the right hand side.

3:52
This will jump you straight to the question and answer form where you can add anything as it comes up in your mind today.

4:00
If you prefer, you can also get to it through a web browser, so you can go to www.menti.com and type in this code.

4:09
This code will be along the bottom of the screen throughout the webinar.

4:12
So if you want to access it at any point and whatever is in your browser closes, please do just open it up again and ask, enter that code.

4:22
Like I say, please at any point throughout today, make sure that you're adding questions into the mentor meter.

4:27
We will address these at the end of the call.

4:30
We'll should have about half an hour for Q&A today.

4:34
And anything that we don't answer on the call today, we will sort of provide a follow up answer for following the session.

4:42
So I will now hand over to our first speaker and Mark Hanis, who's just going to introduce the innovation fund and provide a bit of context about where the implementation program sits within that.

4:53
Everything Mark real.

4:55
Thanks a lot, Nick.

4:55
Hello, everybody.

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4:56
Lovely to see so many people on the call today.

4:59
Yes, I'm Mark Hanis and I Co lead the innovation team here off what I've just got a couple of slides to go through around how we've got here with the program.

5:06
I will try and keep this as short as possible so that we can get into the meat of the session.

5:10
And I am also aware that quite a few of them record, have probably seen me talk about this many, many times over before.

5:16
But a little bit first on a reminder about what it is and what we're aiming for with the Offer Innovation Fund.

5:22
So it's a £600 million fund over 10 years and we have three main aims as you can see on the screen there.

5:29
They are to accelerate the creation and roll out of innovation, to build the capability and capacity of the sector to innovate.

5:36
And thirdly, linked strongly with the second one, there is to embed a culture that values, encourages and supports innovation.

5:43
Now our evaluation activity tells us that we're making progress on all three of these.

5:48
But if we just concentrate on that first time for a second, we've certainly accelerated the creation of innovation activity.

5:55
You can see that we've spent £200 million across over 100 projects.

5:59
And what we're looking to do with the implementation program is to support that second part of that aim, which is all about accelerating the roll out of innovation.

6:07
Next slide please, Nick.

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6:11
There it is.

6:12
So this is what our overall program of activity looks like for AMP 8.

6:17
Hopefully, many of you will be familiar with our Breakthrough and Discovery challenges.

6:22
Breakthrough 6 and Discovery 2 are live right now.

6:25
They have been our bread and butter over the previous five years and they will continue to feature strongly over the next four to five years or so.

6:34
They've served us really, really well around accelerating innovation that point in the first aim.

6:41
But I think what my colleagues and I will probably tell you if you ever speak to us is that we recognize over the last 3-4 years as the programs mature and as we've got out and about a little bit more that if we want to have the impact that we really need to have, then we're going to need to build a program out beyond just putting money down on the table in this historic sort of legacy sort of competition approach that we've done hitherto.

7:05
And that's what we're attempting to do with the sort of second part of the slide that you can see there, a suite of new programs.

7:13
And I'm not going to go into too much detail on the missions program or the cross sector program here, but you get a sense of what they're all about in high level terms from the description on the screen.

7:24
For me, the most significant new area we're looking at is the implementation program.

7:29
And we have really learned from hearing stories of water companies, innovators, supply chain bodies, you name it, that despite having all this funding available through breakthrough and discovery, we were really only unblocking one problem.

7:46
We were helping more innovation to happen to do that in a structured sort of less risky way.

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7:51
Absolutely fine, really good work.

7:53
But it then leads us to the next obvious question.

7:55
But what happens with the implementation of these innovations?

7:59
And what does that experience of trying to implement look like from an innovative perspective, from a water company perspective, from a regulatory perspective?

8:07
And reminds me a little bit of of a fly over which was built to alleviate some horrendous traffic issues near I where I live.

8:14
And the Flyer was really good, great fun to drive on.

8:17
It certainly reduced the bottleneck at this really, really busy junction, but it then just shifted the traffic to the next junction, which was only a couple of miles down the road.

8:26
So it didn't really help solve the overall problem.

8:29
It helped a little bit, but not overall.

8:30
And it feels a bit like this for innovation.

8:32
We know that we need to unblock opportunities to implementation because implementation is really hard.

8:38
It's costly, it's risky.

8:40
A solution which works on Site A may need adapting for site B and again that brings about more cost and more risk.

8:47
We know that colleagues may need upskilling.

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8:49
We know that long term internal sponsorship is required to really support innovation, the implementation of innovation.

8:56
Put on top of that, that regulation doesn't always support innovation and you can see that it's quite a challenging thing to have a go at.

9:04
So the idea here really is that we accelerate the act of scaling and deployment so that innovation can take its effect earlier.

9:11
And we've devised a program which looks at two key tracks.

9:15
And Nick will go into way more detail on this and it's just alluded to them a little bit.

9:18
But firstly, it's about DE risking the active implementation by offering 5050 match funding.

9:24
We have a limited pot of money for that.

9:27
So how far can we go is a question.

9:30
But what we really want to do is develop a model which demonstrates the potential to enable much more of this in the future without the fund necessarily having to prop this up from here on in for the rest of time, for example.

9:43
And the other is, is really looking at the regulation, what are the blockers out there and what can we do on that?

9:48
And you'll hear a lot more on that.

9:50
So I hope that sets the scene a little bit from the off.

9:52
What side For me, supporting implementation could be the OK, that's my doorbell.

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9:56
Apologies for that.

9:57
For me, supporting implementation could be the most important thing that we do across the whole program over the next few years.

10:03
I think it is the way to see impact.

10:05
It's the way to drive through those urgent changes that we really need to see across the sector.

10:10
And I, I really hope it's also a way to cement a more innovative culture across the sector.

10:15
If we can see those clear lines from the testing and training of things of those solutions through to the wide scale adoption and reduction in bills, reduction in carbon, improvements in the environment, then you'd hope that the benefits of this activity begins to really sell itself.

10:29
And that innovation can become that centrepiece across the sector as a really essential activity.

10:35
Regardless of which part in the system that you play, which role within the water company or the innovation or whatever it might be, innovation needs to be right at the centre.

10:45
So hope that sets the scene and I'll hand back to Nick probably.

10:49
Thank you very much, Mark.

10:51
And so Mark's done a fantastic job there of sort of teeing up why implementation is so important and so important that we get it right, and sort of some of the drivers behind why that's led to the creation of this new program, the implementation program to bring that to life a little bit.

11:09
And we've created this diagram and you can see the lovely little man stuck here above innovators.

11:14
As Mark said, water company's done a fantastic job doing lots of innovation, whether that's through previous streams of the fund or within their own sort of portfolios of work.

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11:25
We know that lots of innovation exists, but moving it into that stage of adoption and implementation is challenging.

11:35
So this diagram here sort of explains some of that adoption journey and some of the the different roles that exist along that.

11:41
But critically, there is a chasm that exists once you've done some innovation and you've you've sort of tested whether something works, getting to that point of adoption and getting more people adopting those solutions.

11:53
First, you have to, to get over this, this chasm where a lot of activity drops off.

11:59
And the impact of this is the, IT then means that companies that have these challenges or these problems that they're looking to solve whenever with innovation aren't able to do so as as quickly as they might need to deliver benefit.

12:13
And also the companies that are creating those solutions may find it difficult to sort of survive the test of time that's caused by this chasm before they're picked up and adopted more widely.

12:25
So we're really keen that we sort of move along this journey and where we'd really want to get to is around this sort of early adopters, early majority stage where we've got not just one company adopting something, but multiple.

12:38
And this has really helped inform sort of the design of this program and how we plan to support it.

12:46
So we've mentioned there are two streams to this program, and I'll go into more detail of these shortly.

12:53
But just want to flag that the overall aim of the Water Innovation Implementation program is to accelerate the speed and scale at which successful innovations are implemented by the water sector in England and Wales.

13:05
So that's really what we're trying to do.

13:07

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To do that, we've got these two streams and they operate slightly differently because they're trying to tackle sort of two different parts of the problem.

13:15
So the first screen implementation enablers is really targeting at how we can drive some systemic and lasting change in the system as a whole.

13:25
So really we want to be trying to break down some of these barriers that exist that really slow or inhibit our ability to implement innovation regardless of what that innovation is.

13:37
The second stream then is targeted support to try and increase the speed and scale for that specific innovations are implemented.

13:47
And the way that we're planning to do this is by de risking that initial implementation activity.

13:54
So we know that even once you've proven that a solution technically works, being the first to implement that or adopt that still has a level of inherent risk within it.

14:04
And we want to try and sort of de risk that for those early adopters.

14:08
And the early majority in terms of our program as a whole really want to flag that we're operating this as a as a trial for the first year.

14:21
We're trying to do something here that is quite ambitious and quite new in terms of allocating funding.

14:26
And we want to make sure that we remain open to learning throughout this.

14:31
So from today, today is the day that both streams of this program launch all the way up until the end of March, next year is going to be our learning.

14:41
So what that means is that during this time we may change some of the supporting material or some of the processes in relation to these programs to make sure that we're able to be agile and adapt to new learning that comes around sort of trying to do this.

14:58
And it doesn't mean that the sort of programs will stop at that point in in March.

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15:03
It's just that we want to have implemented any changes by that point so that the continued program can carry on and benefit from any learning during this.

15:14
So the first stream of the program, the implementation enable the streaming.

15:20
The aim of this stream is to create the conditions by which implementation of innovation can thrive.

15:27
So the way that we're planning to do that is by identifying and selecting some of these systemic barriers that exist for the UK water sector and trying to unblock those so that we get the benefit of being able to implement innovation better.

15:43
So each year we're going to select a high priority barrier and develop solutions around that help us address those.

15:52
So our process for developing solutions will be end to end sprints and we'll be pulling in a sort of diverse pool of people to come and help try and identify well if this is the problem, what could be done about it.

16:08
We will then develop some tailored funding to support some of those solutions to be implemented and help sort of unlock that barrier.

16:19
And that tailored funding will differ depending on the barrier or depending on the types of solutions that have been developed, because not all problems need the same solution.

16:30
So we'll sort of adapt A tailored funding approach depending on what that challenge is.

16:37
In order to help us select those barriers and work through some of that solutioning process.

16:43
We are establishing a new committee, this is called the Sector Implementation Committee and they will meet quarterly with the remit to help us identify and critically select the most high priority barriers for us to focus our activities on.

16:59
They'll then help us develop the most appropriate pathways for creating solutions around that.

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17:05
So help guide us as do we think this is something that we need a Sprint on, What types of people do we need in that?

17:11
And then they'll also help review and provide feedback on some of the solutions that are identified and help us to structure whatever sort of funding is required around that.

17:23
We're in the process of appointing this committee at the moment and already have members that exist across water companies, regulators, industry bodies and supply chain.

17:33
And we are looking for those individuals to have a strong understanding of the UK water landscape and some of the challenges that exist there.

17:42
But like I said, we've appointed a number of members already.

17:46
But if you know of anyone that you think would be really well suited to join this committee, then please do reach out to us.

17:54
You'll see e-mail address listed a number of times throughout this presentation.

17:58
It's on the website as well.

18:00
But if you want to get hold of us, innovationimplementation@ourutilities.com.

18:04
So yeah, if you can think of anyone, please do feel free to reach out to us.

18:11
For our first challenge, we've already identified our high priority barrier and we have already also LED a Sprint into sort of coming up to solutions for this challenge.

18:22
The reason being we did a lot of this last year as we were sort of going through the design process because this is such a critical challenge for the UK water sector.

18:32
So we wanted to sort of speed it through any processes that we were designing and hopefully help us get to a solution a lot quicker.

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18:40
The barrier that's been selected is the lack of resilient UK based facilities capable of undertaking full Regulation 31 testing.

18:48
For anyone unfamiliar, Regulation 31 is the regulation that helps make sure any materials or products that we're using in contact with potable drinking water aren't creating any negative impacts on on that clean water that's being produced.

19:04
And they have to undergo sort of laboratory testing to be enabled to make sure that that's the case.

19:11
At the moment in the UK, we don't have any facilities that are capable of doing that testing, which means there's a huge bottleneck of potential solutions that we may have tested and validated and show to to work and deliver value, but that companies aren't actually able to implement in live systems because they don't yet have this approval.

19:31
So we really need to unlock this barrier and it not only benefits those companies that might be looking to implement their solutions or those companies selling those solutions.

19:40
It also benefits the UK economy because at the moment, if companies can't sell their solutions in the UK because of this, they're looking elsewhere.

19:48
And we already know that there are UK companies that are now sort of considering expanding or setting up in in other countries because they can't sell their solution in the UK market.

19:58
So we really need to sort of address this challenge.

20:01
And that's the focus of this first stream of of funding.

20:06
The way that we're looking to support this challenge is through a two stage funding approach.

20:12
So we've allocated £3,000,000 in total to addressing this and it'll be awarded across 2 stages.

20:20
The first stage will provide up to 50,000 lbs for successful applicants to essentially develop delivery plans.

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20:29
They explore the feasibility of the solution that they're proposing.

20:33
The second stage then will provide additional funding once these delivery plans have been created.

20:40
That such essentially help put them into action in terms of who can enter.

20:47
It's a fairly open challenge.

20:50
We're looking for proposals that help address this barrier.

20:53
So you have to demonstrate in your proposal how you're directly addressing this barrier that's been identified about this lack of capacity, have to be UK registered companies with the UK bank account.

21:04
That's how we can transfer the funds.

21:07
It must agree to share and permit disclosure of some of the information that forms those delivery plans because we want to make sure that as a sector we are learning and then some standard things like agreeing to our terms and conditions as well as being led by a single entity.

21:24
So we need a single entity to lead it, but there can be collaborations and partnerships formed as part of this.

21:30
And really we want to encourage collaborative entries.

21:34
So as long as they're listed, that's OK, but there needs to be a lead company for the entry itself.

21:40
We're really open to what solution to the challenge could look like and we don't want to find the answer.

21:45
We've listed some examples of what it could look like here.

21:48
And again, these are all in the guidance.

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21:50
So please do take a look at that.

21:52
But really we're open to ideas.

21:54
So please do take a look at the application form if you have got one.

21:59
In terms of timeline, it opens today.

22:02
So we're accepting applications from from today and the application form is available on the website.

22:10
We will then be closing those applications on the 1st of May and getting into our process of assessment.

22:16
So all applications will be reviewed by the delivery team offer and in partnership with DWI and then we will provide that initial award towards the end of May for those successful Stage 1 to applicants.

22:30
So that's that money to help develop out those detailed delivery plans.

22:34
We'll confirm the deadline for those delivery plans to be created for the successful applicants nearer the time, but expect it to be roughly 3 months in duration.

22:44
And so it's quite a compressed window.

22:46
And again, this is designed to help us move our pace.

22:49
We want to solve this problem quickly.

22:53
The dates and the timeline for the Stage 2 activity again will be confirmed for that cohort once they're awarded.

22:58
So we don't have those dates just yet.

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23:03
In the interest of time, I'm going to sort of move over this, but we have outlined what our application questions are here.

23:09
So you're asked for sort of four key bits of information in the application for Stage 1 funding.

23:15
Really it's an overview of the approach, what experience you have and how do you think that additional capacity would be operated in the long term.

23:25
And then a few more details around, well, what would you do with that funding if you were awarded it?

23:30
So please do head over to our website to look at that in detail.

23:34
And if you have any questions, please do reach out to us.

23:39
Next.

23:40
I'm going to go into the second stream of the program.

23:43
So this is the early adopters and fast followers stream and it operates slightly differently to what we've just talked about.

23:50
So please do sort of think of this as sort of a distinct St.

23:56
The aim of this stream it is to de risk the early implementation of proven solutions.

24:03
The way that we are doing this is by helping provide match funding for companies that are looking to implement something new and innovative.

24:13
The match funding is on a 5050 basis, so it is sort of equal share match funding and that's designed to reflect the reduced level of risk for implementing something that has already been proven, but acknowledging that there still is some risk that exists in those situations.

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24:31
For this stream, projects will be structured around an early adopter and a group of FAST followers.

24:38
The early adopter will be the first company to complete the implementation.

24:43
And while they're doing that, they'll be capturing knowledge about how to sort of practically implement that innovation and they'll then be looking to share that with their cohort fast followers.

24:52
So we build this community around implementing an innovation and they share practical learning to make sure that everyone benefits from that first activity.

25:02
In order for a proposal to progress to award, there is a requirement for there to be at least 2 fast followers who are willing to do this and it's limited to up to five.

25:15
So the at least two helps us make sure that every project is is replicable and other companies are able to do it.

25:25
And also that there's enough demand to, to implement these types of solutions demonstrating that sort of it's worth scaling them up within the UK and it's capped at 5.

25:36
The reason it's capped at 5 is if you cast your mind back to that diagram of our curve is we want to support the companies that are doing this first because that's where the inherent level of risk is.

25:48
If you think around some of the, the back end of that chart, it's the late majority in the laggards.

25:54
Ultimately they will adopt stuff as long as the the risk has been sort of eliminated sufficiently.

26:01
So we think by the time five companies have done it and that should demonstrate that this is possible to to work within the sector and others can follow in terms of what funding is available.

26:14
We've allocated a little bit more to this stream for the for the initial.

26:18
So there's £15,000,000 allocated to the stream to start with.

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26:24
Within that, each applicant can request between 100,000 lbs to £1,000,000 in match funding to support the implementation of an innovation.

26:32
And they'll also be eligible to secure an additional 50,000 lbs of funding if they are an early adopter.

26:41
And that money is ring fenced for how they are going to support the fast follower community that follows them to make sure that they benefit from that learning.

26:51
Importantly here there is a cap on sort of the total amount that can be put towards the implementation of an innovation.

26:58
So we're we're capping it at £5,000,000 per innovation.

27:03
So that includes the total amount of money that the early adopter would be requesting and the entire cohort of fast followers.

27:12
The amount requested doesn't have to be the same between companies.

27:15
So the early adopter could request the different amount to the fast followers and it really just depends on the scale of the implementation that they're looking to undertake.

27:25
It is a requirement for there to be at least 50% match funding from the organization's applying.

27:31
But this match funding can be made-up from different sources.

27:35
So it can be made-up from financial contributions which can be from existing sources.

27:41
So things like operational budgets or allocated business plan spend that exists within the water companies budgets already or it could come from non regulated funds or shareholder profits as the other the other elements of the program are set up to do so.

27:59
But it can also be made-up from in kind contributions.

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28:02
So if you think about the total cost of implementing something, a portion of that is going to be the resources needed to do it.

28:09
And those resources we want to make sure that we're counting that within the total cost of implementation.

28:15
So those in kind contributions are valid as well for the applicants.

28:23
These do have to be water companies in England and Wales, but can include Wasks, walks, Navs and infrastructure project provider licenses.

28:33
Companies must submit an application as either an early adopter or as a fast follower in response to an early adopter application.

28:43
There is a limit here that we're introducing just for the trial and that is that during this.

28:49
Each company may only have a single active early adopter application.

28:55
What we mean by active here is that it's either in consideration for fast following or it has been awarded funding.

29:02
If you submit an early adopter application and it doesn't progress, then you are able to submit another one.

29:08
But we just don't want Company A to submit 20 applications all at once.

29:15
And there is no limit for the number of times that companies can fast follow.

29:19
So if you want to fast follow multiple implementations, then you absolutely can.

29:24
Another important point at the bottom here is there is no fixed application window for this program.

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

29:29
So we are accepting applications from any point from today.

29:34
So hopefully this helps ease some of the burden of putting these applications together and it allows that flexibility for you to come and apply to the program when you are ready to implement something.

29:45
Once it has been proven on the right hand side here, then this just explains sort of what are eligible innovations for this.

29:54
Critically, this is not a stream of funding to continue any trialling or further development of solutions.

30:02
It's about implementing things that have been proven in order to make sure we're doing that.

30:07
Applicants will be asked to provide evidence that that innovation is proven through the application process and they will be asked to provide evidence that they are implementing it at a scale or in a way that has not yet been achieved by water companies in England and Wales.

30:23
So again, we're really tackling those early adopters and early majority.

30:27
We want to be doing the things that are new, not the things that others have already already done and through the work.

30:35
I'll now hand over to Dave who's going to talk a little bit more around how you can apply for this program.

30:42
Thanks, Nick.

30:43
I'm conscious of time, so there's quite a bit of detail on these slides.

30:47
I won't talk about them at length, but they will be available to you afterwards.

30:51
So whether you're an earlier adopter or a fast follower, we do need a few things from you to be able to process your application.

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

30:57
So the application form is available on the website and that has a set of answers that we need you to complete and there is guidance available to help you to complete those.

31:06
We've tried to keep it as simple as possible, but there are key elements that will need to be completed, one of which is a business case which clearly outlines the value expected for the implementation.

31:15
Many of you will have business cases supporting innovations already.

31:20
You might want to use some data from that to fill in this business case, but it is a business case that's bespoke to your application for funding.

31:27
Linked to this as well is an implementation plan which details all the activities and associated costs for implementation.

31:34
And as Nick said, you know the financial contribution there that needs to be made is, is 50% to the overall cost.

31:42
If you are applying as an early adopter, you're also going to need to outline how you're going to support the fast followers.

31:48
So a key part of this is that we have a collaborative arrangement between the early adopters and the fast followers that helps both in terms of knowledge transfer, but it helps make sure that the fast followers are getting in as fast as possible as the early adopters start to see the results from their from their innovations.

32:05
So we will like to see how you plan to support the fast followers through that process.

32:11
In terms of that box on the right calculating the cost, all the costs must relate directly to the period of implementation and they can cover those things.

32:19
You can see on the screen there from anything related to capital expenditure right through to any training or change management support you're going to need to do as part of the process.

32:29

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The bits at the bottom is really critical so you don't need to wait for fast followers to be assigned to you before you put an application in.

32:37
So if you are wanted to be an early adopter, please get the application form in as soon as possible and then the process will help the fast followers follow.

32:46
So if we can move on to the next slide, please, Nick, effectively what you're seeing here is what do you need to complete as either an early adopter or a fast follower?

32:55
The, the they look fairly similar.

32:57
Obviously the two distinctions there are based on the fact that the early adopter is putting the innovation in.

33:04
And so actually what we expect to see through that business case is all the outstanding technical risks have been addressed and highlighted.

33:10
And so as a fast follower, you won't need to do that.

33:12
You're, you're basically benefiting from that work being done by the early adopter.

33:17
And similarly you, you don't need to demonstrate that you are going to fast follow another fast follower.

33:21
So that won't be a requirement for you.

33:23
So most of these actually are all for early adopters and then some related to fast followers there really want to make sure we've got the right rigour for both applications, both from a quality perspective, but also to make sure that we can see the value coming back out.

33:39
But obviously it's slightly easier there for a fast follower.

33:42
If we go on the next slide, Nick, please.

33:47

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

So effectively the stages that you go through, so the early adopter will submit the application form via the program mailbox.

33:54
That e-mail address will come shortly and all the applications must include all the evidence and declarations as outlined in the program guidance.

34:03
If you're not sure, or if you when we review your application, there are bits that aren't quite at the right level or haven't quite been completed.

34:11
We as a program team will help support you with this.

34:13
So as you submit, you effectively will be assigned a case manager from one of us on the team who will help guide your application through these next steps and make sure it's ticking all the boxes that need to be ticked in order for the funds to be released as soon as possible.

34:27
That's what we'll do at the screening and assessment stage and we'll come back to you with any feedback to refine the application as needed.

34:33
And then the application is going to be shared with the appointed implementation representatives who will review it and give their considered thoughts around it.

34:42
So what we're trying to do with this whole process to be completely transparent and open about what's been submitted and how it could benefit others.

34:50
And then that will effectively trigger the opportunity for fast followers to follow.

34:55
And as it says there, we're really looking for application forms from fastfollowers within the three months that the early adopter application is submitted.

35:04
And then the fastfollowers will go through the same stage there in terms of screening and assessment and then we will make a final decision and award.

35:12
So as Nick was saying, the aim is to have this running on a quarterly cycle and really within a three month period from an early adopter application from form coming in, we are ready to issue the funds.

35:24

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Our encouragement is that as you're collaborating naturally to talk to each other and make sure that you're really being ready for this process in the background as the early adopter applications start to come in.

35:36
So real opportunity here to collaborate as a sector to to receive the best benefit from from this funding.

35:45
This next slide effectively does that innovate step by step way.

35:49
So again, lots of detail on here, but effectively once the applications checked and submitted, the business case will then be shared and then that triggers that process for fast followers to come through.

36:03
The funding then goes to the early adopter.

36:05
The early adopter completes and shares the learning.

36:07
That's a big part of what we need from this process as well in terms of that knowledge share with others and then the fast follower picks up on the background.

36:15
So a fairly linear process, a fairly straightforward process and one that can be accelerated based on how the early adopter is performing and the early adopter's view on the readiness of the fastfollow to chip in and get started as well.

36:31
Next slide please, Nick.

36:34
So what is the implementation review forum?

36:36
So these are where they, the implementation representatives will have the opportunity to review and discuss the earlier adopter applications.

36:47
They'll be able to raise awareness of the opportunities to anyone interested from a fast follower perspective.

36:53

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

And also this forum is where learning that we take from these early adopter and fast follower activities will be shared with the wider group.

37:01
We're really keen that any organization wanted to participate as either an early adopter or a fast follower.

37:07
Fast Follower registers an implementation representative.

37:11
They can be from the organisations listed there.

37:14
Some of you have already done that and thanks to those that have.

37:17
If you haven't, please could we have your implementation representative submitted by the 27th of March, by Friday the 27th of March.

37:25
That way we've got everybody we need in place ready to really get going as we start to critique and review these early adopter applications.

37:34
Next slide please, Nick.

37:37
So that's the timeline that we're working on ideally with the first forum to review applications by the 14th of April and then quarterly thereafter.

37:46
As you can see the asterisks on July or October and January mean those dates might move slightly.

37:52
But the aim is that at least once every three months after the start, we will be reviewing the progress of the performing early adopters, those that are already up and running further early adopter applications and obviously making sure that fast followers are informed as to what's happening.

38:09
So a regular drum beat of activity right through to March 2027 to make sure that everyone's sighted on what's happening and has the opportunity to contribute thoughts and ideas, but also more importantly, to really express appetite for wanting to follow if we can get the next one, please, Nick.

38:29
So if you are successful as an applicant for either an early doctor or a fast follower, you will need to do these things, please.

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

38:36
There is a funding agreement that we will need you to sign.

38:39
For those of you familiar with the Innovation Fund, it will look and feel quite similar, but it is something that we'll need you to review and commit to.

38:47
We may need to undergo screening and due diligence with you in as required by us as the delivery team.

38:53
So that'd be based on your application form, based on your organization.

38:57
This point here around participating fully in the monitoring and evaluation process is really, really critical.

39:03
So this is about helping innovation stick, helping them add long term value, helping us as a set to learn from each other.

39:10
So the learning process is a really big part of this activity.

39:13
And we really need everybody who's receiving funding to contribute inside information and lessons learned as they've gone along the process.

39:22
And that's our role as a project team to help support in that as well.

39:25
And please do engage with communication opportunities to promote your participation in the program as either requested by us of the delivery team or by off what?

39:33
So again, it's a real sector wide endeavour that we're really keen to make sure we on earth some great insight and some great stories that can be shared more widely.

39:45
And final slide, please.

39:48
So this is it in simple form.

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

39:50
Please register your implementation representative by the 27th of March so we can get the form formed by the 14th of April.

39:59
Please submit an expression of interest in EOI.

40:03
So even if you haven't got your application form ready, please let us know that you're interested in applying because what that helps us does is understand where the volumes going to come from and we'll be able to plan for that so we can manage the whole process as efficiently as possible.

40:16
There are a series of Foqs that accompany this webinar and will be available on the website for you to read.

40:22
And we will be hosting a number of 1 to one sessions where those of you that are interested in applying either as an early adopter or a fast follower can sort of talk to us as a delivery team specifically about any questions you've got around the application form or the process or how this is going to work.

40:38
And then the most important part is to get your application in via e-mail at the e-mail address there you can see.

40:46
So it's in for me.

40:47
Back to you, Nick.

40:47
Thank you.

40:49
Nice.

40:49
Thank you very much, Dave.

40:51
So we're now going to go into our QA section of the webinar.

40:55

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

I can see that lots of questions have come flooding into the the mentee and that you've all been voting on those.

41:00
If you haven't already got in there, please use this link to to do so.

41:04
You can either ask your own questions or you can sort of vote some of the ones that exist in there already and we'll try and prioritize those for answer.

41:12
I'm just going to hand to my colleague Ollie colleague Ollie Rod, who's going to help sort of just manage those questions and and divvy them out between us as a presenter panel.

41:23
Thank you, Nick, and a big thanks to all that have actually be able to jump in and ask some questions already got a few up voted.

41:29
I'll just go through those just for clarity.

41:32
Hopefully you can get in.

41:34
You can see what's on the the mentee down to the bottom right.

41:37
You'll be able to click on the question and answers and then see others, other questions that have been submitted.

41:42
So if I just take the first one and the top one that's been upvoted.

41:45
So this is a question from George, George Warren.

41:49
So maybe, Nick, you can start us off with this and then Mark, maybe you could join in as well.

41:55
So this innovation fund strand feels very tailored to widgets and gizmos.

41:59
Has any thought been given to how projects that look at processes and policy change might be eligible for this funding stream?

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42:07
Yeah, nice, really good question.

42:09
We absolutely want both these funding streams to be open to things that are either widgets or gizmos or processes and and and practices.

42:17
We don't wanna sort of create something that is is narrowed to either one of those.

42:22
What I would say is that the enabler stream is really well positioned to take some of those more sort of systemic challenges around like why is implementation so hard?

42:32
What are the processes and barriers that block us and try to unblock those as a sector collaboratively.

42:39
But equally the early adopter and fast follower stream is absolutely open to sort of more process innovation.

42:45
So if a company has a type of process innovation that they're willing to looking to implement, absolutely it's eligible for this fund that just have to sort of meet the requirements of the application guidance.

42:58
So critically, I'd have to be able to prove that it's been tested in some way, shape or form to show that it works and also that it's something sort of is new, it is innovative and it's being done sort of the first time.

43:13
So it's definitely eligible be my message.

43:19
Excellent Marks.

43:21
Anything you wanted to add in there, especially around the kind of culture piece, you are full grounded right at the start of the webinar?

43:26
Very little to what Nick said other than we've been very conscious that the whole fund more generally is not just about widgets and gizmos.

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43:32
We want to support enabling activity, want to support some of that process, process activity.

43:37
So none of that has ever been excluded.

43:41
We recognize its place within the system.

43:45
Excellent.

43:47
One specific here from Ian in small.

43:49
So for the Rec 31 challenge, is there information on why the barrier currently exists and specifically why did we lose this capability?

43:58
I don't know if anyone can jump in on that one.

44:01
Yep.

44:02
Well, Mark, you're well, I was going to say that there's probably a short and a long answer to this one.

44:07
I think the short answer is probably around that labs have basically chosen to move away from this, and that's because this work is really difficult.

44:17
It's quite specialist.

44:18
It requires specialist equipment and specialist labs.

44:22
They need to be a lot bigger than normal lab, for example.

44:26
And over time decisions have been made to move away from that.

44:29

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What's happened in the interim is there's this huge backlog, as Nick has mentioned, of innovations that need to come through and be tested.

44:36
There's also lapses in the certification of existing pieces that are already out in the market that will need to be recertificated.

44:43
And so the commercial viability we believe of these labs is now at its sort of strongest point.

44:49
And, and, and it's not just about commercial viability.

44:52
The just the basic need is there.

44:53
We will not be able to innovate in the clean water space without standing up some of these labs, which is why we're getting involved.

44:59
This is not an awful responsibility or within our remit necessarily to do this, but we see a such a key blocker that we are intervening and we are working very closely with DWI and indeed our partners at Water UK to try and make this happen.

45:15
Excellent.

45:16
Thanks, Mark.

45:16
I think we'll probably to move on to our next question now.

45:20
So this is from Emma.

45:22
How will early adopter projects be visible to allow consideration for fast followers?

45:29
Dave, I don't think you jump in on that one.

45:31
Yeah, thanks, Holly.

45:32
So a big part of that will be obviously the outcome of the forum.

45:36
So when the forum meets, there'll be a big promotion around what what is going into the forum for the implementation representatives to review, but also what comes out of the forum as well in terms of comments.

45:47
The website will be a really critical place where we'll have information uploaded as applications come in.

45:53
We'll obviously do a bit of a precis oversight of those in conjunction with the early adopter.

45:57
So we will be pushing as much promotion as possible.

46:00
And I think Nick, Mark, one of the things we should consider is having sort of regular webinars like this where we can talk to people about what's going on.

46:08
You can listen in to what are we seeing coming through by way of early adopters and who's looking to fast follow.

46:12
So Emma, I've seen a few questions, yours and others about communication that's absolutely critical to this.

46:18
So website will be a key source of truth outcome of the forums.

46:21
And then we'll look to put a regular program of promotion together using webinars such as this.

46:27
What, what I would sort of jump in and and add to that is that the sort of key part of that sharing is through those appointed implementation reps We won't be making sort of all of the information that forms things like the business case, for example, publicly available.

46:44
So it will be sort of a requirement for companies to appoint their implementation Rep as their single point of contact who will get sights of that more detailed information.

46:54

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And that detailed information is what you'll need to sort of take into consideration as to whether you want to fast follow or not.

47:00
So yeah, I'm just highlighting that that's sort of quite a critical role in this process.

47:05
So if you haven't appointed 1 already, please do reach out to us.

47:09
Shameless promotion there for more implementation representatives.

47:12
But absolutely right.

47:13
So the detail we won't share because it's relevant for you as a as an organization, but we will just be giving an overview as much as we can as to what's coming into the hopper.

47:23
Great question.

47:23
Thank you.

47:25
Excellent.

47:25
And the plea to get those innovation reps sorted, please do that by the 27th, is that right?

47:31
That's right.

47:32
Yeah, excellent.

47:32
OK, next question, OO D of what have put a lot of customer money towards innovations created in the Catalyst and breakthrough funds.

47:40
Will those projects be prioritized for early adoption over external innovation?

47:46
And Mark, maybe you could kick us off on this one then either Nick or Dave.

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47:52
The short answer to that is no, although it is not our decision as to what is going to come forward.

47:58
And so it'd be for the water companies to decide where they which, which ones they want to support and how comfortable they are supporting things that have been through the fund previously or indeed other things that they have, which they have a strong belief in.

48:10
So there is no preference showing whatsoever from our side here.

48:14
But naturally, water companies will need to think carefully about, I guess the the point about evidence and it being proven and the technical information that they can bring into play to support what they'll bring forward as an early adopter.

48:30
No, Perfect, thank you.

48:35
OK, next question.

48:37
This is run around fast followers specifically again from Oscar.

48:41
It seems that fast followers aren't fast at all.

48:43
If they have to wait for the early adopters to fully implement the innovation, isn't there a better way for fast followers to implement sooner?

48:51
Yeah, I'm happy to sort of jump in and take this.

48:54
There absolutely is.

48:56
So you'll see in the entry form that the early adopters are asked to define sort of the milestones and the measures that they would need to have in place to have confidence to start the fast followers.

49:08
So it doesn't mean that they need to wait right until the end of an early adopters project to conclude.

49:14

It just needs to have waited to the point where there is enough or sufficient learning to be able to sort of share that knowledge with the fastfollower community.

49:24
And that sort of things around sort of benefits materializing have happened sufficiently to provide confidence that it makes sense to invest more money in others implementing those solutions.

49:36
So there is some flexibility there.

49:39
It isn't just wait till the end and then start.

49:42
And I suppose the other point is if, if it is so clear as day that a solution is going to deliver benefit and value, perhaps the quickest thing to do is to sort of go outside this funding.

49:57
We don't have to funnel all implementation activity in the sector through this fund.

50:01
This is designed to tackle those ones where it is a little bit trickier.

50:05
There is maybe a little bit more risk involved to help smooth that process.

50:10
Absolutely.

50:11
Water companies, if there's stuff to do, stuff that works, go ahead and implement at your own pace if you think that's faster.

50:18
And if I could just add Nick as well, I think part of our role as the project and and project delivery team is to make sure that everything's moving at pace.

50:27
So we know when you get locked into delivery mode, it's all about it's all about driving ahead the outcome.

50:33
Our role to sort of support both the early adopters and the fast followers is to bring some critical challenge as well to the early adopter to say, OK, are we ready now for the fast follower to come in?

50:42

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So we will be that into points and voice in the room, making sure that this moves as fast as is appropriate for everybody.

50:50
Excellent.

50:50
Thanks both.

50:51
And next question here, Hannah Bachelor.

50:54
So for the enabler stream, I can't see the application form on the website.

50:58
Is that something we could just quickly verify or take offline?

51:03
I've noted it down.

51:04
I will double check after this call.

51:06
If it's not on there right now, it will be on within the next half an hour.

51:11
So where you'll be able to find that is on the implementation enablers stream page of the website.

51:17
And if you scroll all the way to the bottom of that page, there should be a supporting document section where that's uploaded.

51:24
I haven't managed to get it open while we're on the call, but I will check it straight afterwards.

51:28
If it's not there, it will be in half an hour.

51:31
Excellent.

51:32
Thank you.

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

51:33
A question here from Richard Mount.

51:35
So after an early adopter replies and is approved, what happens if no fast followers come forward within the three month period?

51:44
Go ahead please.

51:45
Yeah.

51:46
So hopefully that won't happen.

51:48
And I think, I think it's similar to the early comment we had around the communication and that that benefit of the forum and the implementation representatives really.

51:56
So the ideal is that everyone has at least 2 fast followers.

52:01
Again, as a program team, we will be working hard to make sure that your early adopter scheme is promoted as much as possible.

52:08
But I think the focus of the forum will be really to sort of critically consider and ask some really intelligent questions around what the early adopter is trying to do and how it can maybe be adapted or adjusted to support a fast follower.

52:22
So that forum is a really, really critical thing to participate in in order to ask questions to make sure that we get as many fast that was behind these applications as we can do.

52:32
Yeah.

52:33
And just to add to that, the, the the securing fast followers is, is sort of deliberately designed to be part of this process and part of the sort of selection and support process.

52:43
So actually if someone does put in an early adopter application and they don't secure the fast followers, that will be an unsuccessful application.

52:53
It won't be awarded funding.

52:55
The early adopter won't be able to implement it because it has to secure those past followers.

53:00
But that company is then free to either adjust their proposal and resubmit it.

53:05
Perhaps they need to sort of provide more support to their fast followers in there in order to to secure them.

53:11
Or they could consider actually clearly there's not enough interest in in implementing this solution in other places, therefore will apply for something else.

53:24
Excellent, thank you both.

53:26
Next question is from Paul, what is the reason for slash value in delaying release of funds for fast followers until the early adopter has implemented implementation barriers between companies could be wildly different.

53:41
I don't know who wants to take on that one.

53:44
It's similar, similar question to the the one we've had.

53:47
So I point towards the fact that you don't, it doesn't have to always be that the first implementation is completed fully before the fast followers go ahead.

53:57
And the reason and the value behind it.

54:00
So rather than starting everyone all at the same point is to help mitigate the risk of potentially not all of the benefits materializing in the same scale or way that we hope.

54:11
So we know that implementing an innovation for the first time still carries some inherent risk.

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54:17
And that's exactly why this chasm exists.

54:20
It's difficult for companies to release funding to implement something until they know it works at that scale or until they can prove that those benefits materialise and therefore they can take that proportion of an operational budget towards sort of managing that solution, whereas before they couldn't.

54:39
So there is that risk that maybe that doesn't happen and we would like to mitigate that by one company going first, gathering all the learning about how to do it and then sharing that with others.

54:51
But like we said earlier, we're not trying to slow the process down here.

54:54
We've created something that we believe is flexible and can help move through that quickly.

55:00
Excellent conscious of time.

55:02
I think I'll move us on this question here from Moscow around how will we publicize the projects chosen as early adopters.

55:07
I think we touched on that already, haven't we?

55:09
So we'll continue to to make those available via the website and other kind of ad hoc either webinars or comms opportunities to kind of make people aware of that.

55:18
So I will treat that as answered and I'll go to the next one here, which is around the kind of from Paul again.

55:24
So picking up on the sorry no from Ian.

55:27
So Ian small.

55:28
So for the early adopter fast follower funds, do the solution need to be proven technology or can further technologies trials be included as well?

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

55:35
I think that was covered in in in the preamble there from Nick.

55:39
But just want to maybe if you want to jump in and just reiterate that, Yeah.

55:43
So yes, it has to be just proven solutions that will not be used for continuing to provide any other sort of trialling or development.

55:54
If that type of activity is needed, then there are the existing strands of the Water Innovation Fund that are better placed to support that.

56:04
Yeah, trialing and development where it's needed.

56:08
There's a question here around Spring being a collaboration communication partner, naturally we will, we will use them as a as a vehicle for this market.

56:17
Is there anything particular you want to add on that only that we speak to Spring regularly.

56:21
They are heavily involved in one or two of our other programs as well.

56:24
We haven't quite found the right place for them within this program yet, but as has been described as we are going to be learning as we go and if there are opportunities to bring to bring a little closer into into play than we certainly will because they are key players in other parts of what we do.

56:39
Excellent.

56:40
And just just a note as well, if you don't get through all of them, we've got about 6 questions left.

56:44
I don't think we've got time to answer all of those, but we'll take those away and provide answers back to, to, to participants of the webinar here today.

56:51
So don't feel like we're ignoring it.

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56:54
It's just a limited time.

56:55
So for ones that aren't answered, we will get back to you.

56:58
So question here from Kieran here in Brocklebank.

57:01
So can we submit adoption bids into any funding work stream WBC missions, etc, or restrict adoption to this part of the Water Innovation Fund?

57:13
I think if I've understood Karen's question, we are, the other programs mentioned are not about implementation, they're about the trial and testing of these new innovative solutions of this.

57:24
If I've interpreted correctly, this program is the home for that implementation question.

57:30
I don't quite see how they would fit into some of the other programs, but Karen and I let you to speak soon.

57:35
So I will pick it up with him and see see if I've got the right end of the safe.

57:42
There you go.

57:43
Thank you, Kieran for that.

57:44
Perfect.

57:45
All right, So probably last question, just giving the time.

57:49
So this is from Hannah Bachelor for the early adopter stream.

57:53
Can we use it to trial and test something in waste treatment that has previously previously been proven in clean, for example?

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58:00
Or does it need to have been proven previously?

58:02
So I think there's a couple of new answers there.

58:04
I think we've answered one part of it, but maybe if you want to take that point around trial somewhere or else in one application then brought into another application somewhere else maybe.

58:14
Yeah.

58:15
So this to me comes down with sort of the level of technical risk that remains.

58:20
Like we know there is big transferability between different sectors or different water users like the example given here.

58:28
And it really comes down to sort of how much confidence do you have that something is going to work when you transfer it from where it's been proven into where you're hoping to use it.

58:39
And we want to sort of reduce any of that technical risk as much as possible for it goes through this funding route.

58:47
And so if you have really strong evidence to suggest that actually it's highly transferable between these two environments, then I would say it is eligible for this.

58:56
But you'd have to provide not only your own organization to secure this level of match funding that that's the case, but also other companies who'd be willing to fast follow you if you think that there is a solution that's been proven in ways never ever been done before and water and you're not sure if it's going to work or not, that's testing and development and refining because you need to trial it.

59:19
You probably need to adapt it to some case.

59:21
So that's probably more applicable to some of the other funding routes 1st and then this.

59:29
Excellent.

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

59:30
Any more from the panel there at all?

59:34
No, some great questions.

59:35
Thank you.

59:35
And and obviously lots of engagement in what we're trying to do here.

59:38
So really good.

59:39
Thanks, everybody.

59:40
Yeah, excellent.

59:41
OK, Yeah, So that's it from me.

59:42
Thank you all for submitting your questions.

59:44
You've got the e-mail address there for the inbox.

59:47
Please do if you feel you're in the middle of the night, something comes to you.

59:50
You didn't get the chance to answer it today, please do that and we'll get back to you.

59:54
Like I said, any answer questions, we'll also get back to you with an answer to.

59:57
And with that, I'll hand back to Nick to wrap us up.

1:00:00
Thank you.

Please note this is a raw transcript and might have errors

1:00:01
Yeah, lovely.

1:00:02
Thanks Ollie and thanks everyone for for all your engagement on the call today.

1:00:05
Like Ollie said, if you have got any further questions, please do reach out to us and also check out the website.

1:00:11
We've prepared some frequently answered asked questions unanswered and answers on there.

1:00:18
So again, go and check that out.

1:00:20
If there's anything that remains unanswered, please do reach out to us.

1:00:24
Thank you again.