HI-ACT
Hydrogen Integration for Accelerated Energy Transitions

UK Research and Innovation

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

HI-ACT Global Impact Flex Fund

Call for Proposals – Guidance Document

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1. Summary

This call provides flexible funding for international outreach activities that raise the global profile of the Hub for Hydrogen Integration for Accelerated Energy Transitions (HI-ACT). The fund is designed to foster global collaboration, develop skills, and establish enduring partnerships that accelerate research into the integration of hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels for a sustainable, net-zero energy transition.

The funding can support international visits, hosting of researchers, or short-term collaborations of up to two weeks. Projects should focus on joint research, skills development, and outputs that contribute to HI-ACT's mission.

You must:

- Be based at a UK organisation eligible for UKRI funding
- Meet individual eligibility criteria
- Be able to deliver the flex funded activity between 1 April 2026 and 31 March 2027.

The closing date for this Call's applications is 5 January 2026 at 5pm.

There is also an open and rolling call for global impact proposals, however we reserve the right to close the rolling call depending on the number of successful applicants.

Projects can be costed up to £15,000 at 100% full economic cost (fEC). We will fund 80% of the eligible full economic cost (fEC), the remaining 20% will need to be met by the recipient Research Organisation. The annual Global Impact Flex Fund available is £45,000.

2. Flex Fund Objectives

The overall purpose of the global impact funding call is to raise the profile of HI-ACT across the international academic, industry and policy community.

This global impact fund will support costs of hosting researchers/academics, and for visits to internationally-leading research groups, for the purposes of skills development, joint papers, and short research collaborations.

Each project will need to ensure it has at least 1 outreach/engagement activity to disseminate the work undertaken.

Preference will be given to applicants who can clearly demonstrate the expected impact of their proposal and how it will achieve HI-ACT global objectives:

- to raise the profile of HI-ACT amongst the international research community
- to undertake research which is internationally significant and novel
- to engage with stakeholders who have a global presence and
- to enable the UK economy to benefit from global developments in hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels.

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3. Making an application

3.1 Eligibility to Apply

Researchers within the HI-ACT consortium and external collaborators may apply. Applicants must demonstrate alignment with HI-ACT's objectives and ensure that activities are consistent with UKRI funding rules.

3.2 Funding and duration

The maximum fEC project value will be £15,000 p.a. HI-ACT will fund 80% of the eligible full economic cost (fEC), the remaining 20% will need to be met by the recipient Research Organisation.

The Fund may cover:

- travel,
- bench fees,
- consumables, and related expenses.

The following categories are eligible, as per UKRI funding requirements, see table below:

Directly allocated costs	Investigators (PIs and Co-Is)
	Estates Costs
	Other Directly Allocated (e.g. infrastructure technicians)
	Indirect costs
Directly incurred costs	Staff (i.e. researchers, administrators)
	Travel and subsistence
	Consumables
	Other (subcontracts, fees)

Please note equipment is not an eligible cost.

Projects are likely to be short term, typically lasting a maximum of two weeks. Other lengths can be considered as appropriate for proposed work.

The project can finish no later than 31 March 2027.

3.3 Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

The academic lead must provide a final report on completion of the project. The final report should detail how funds have been used and include a summary of activities, outcomes, and impacts, including how the project contributed to HI-ACT's global impact goals.

4. HI-ACT Research Programme

Hydrogen Integration for Accelerated Energy Transitions (HI-ACT) is a £10.5m EPSRC funded research hub comprising 12 universities and 55 academics, led by Birmingham University. The Hub aims to drive forward the design of a hydrogen integration plan for the UK's energy system to help progress the UK's transition to net-zero. HI-ACT will ensure that hydrogen is appropriately integrated into the UK's future energy system by exploring the technical, environmental, social, economic, regulatory and political challenges facing the industry and policy makers.

We will achieve our objectives by analysing the role of hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels (HALF) in the context of the overall energy landscape and to understand the requirements of all those stakeholders who can help accelerate this transition.

Through academic research, HI-ACT aims to develop a better understanding of the potential pathways for integrating hydrogen into future energy use. Currently, there are gaps in our understanding of how to integrate hydrogen into the UK's energy system, particularly around issues such as infrastructure for storage, delivery and transportation, as well as demand and supply chain availability. HI-ACT intends to address these challenges by convening key industry and policy stakeholders to identify key gaps in research and knowledge to help drive forward the Government's ambitions. By helping to develop models and demonstrators of real-world whole systems infrastructure that answers where, in what form and at what scale hydrogen integration should occur, we can drive forward a future energy market that is greener, more efficient, and more secure, with less reliance on imported energy supplies.

Our global impact goals are: to raise the profile of HI-ACT amongst the international research community, to undertake research which is internationally significant and novel, to engage with stakeholders who have a global presence, and to enable the UK economy to benefit from global developments in hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels. In summary, our aim is to establish and/or maintain unique, world-leading research in hydrogen integration.

HI-ACT Work Packages

The Programme will be delivered through four interconnecting work packages brought together to collaborate on Hydrogen and Alternative Fuels (HALF) Use Cases.

The Way Forward (Work package 1)

There are significant gaps between current levels of hydrogen production, transportation, storage, conversion, and usage, and the estimated requirement for achieving net-zero by 2050. HI-ACT will develop forward-thinking HALF technology roadmaps; assess the supply chain availability and security; identify and quantify the opportunities, risks and dependencies of selected representative HALF use cases, which will provide building blocks to the whole-system analysis; and develop an overarching roadmap for HALF system integration in order to inform technology advancement, industry and business development, as well as policy making and social interventions.

Whole System Understanding (Work package 2)
This work package will push the boundaries of whole systems methodologies, improving HALF characterisation and exploring urgent new perspectives on the energy transition, including those related to ensuring resilience and security while also achieving net-zero, and contrasting the energy transition delivered by real incentives/behaviour versus those projected by widely-used optimisation models. It provides the whole systems modelling engine of the HI-ACT Hub, with a diverse array of state-of-the-art tools to explore HALF integration.

Cyber Physical Architecture (Work package 3)
Our academics will explore the vital coupling of data and information relating to whole system planning and operational decision support through the creation of a cyber physical architecture (CPA). The CPA will synchronise digital assets with physical networks, within a digital modelling environment. This will generate new learning on current and future opportunities as well as risks leading towards a whole system ontology for accelerated integration of hydrogen technologies.

Social and Political Perspectives (Work package 4)
This work programme will consider solutions or options for a future Whole Energy System (WES) which incorporates HALF from a number of perspectives. The first is to consider expert views on HALF energy futures, and the public perceptions of those views. The second is a perspective which considers place-based options for social benefit in WES+HALF transitions. The third is to consider regulatory and policy options which would better enable the WES+HALF futures which the other WPs are investigating.

More information on HI-ACT Research Programme is available on HI-ACT website.

5. Application Process

To apply, please complete the online application form and EDI form on the HI-ACT website. If you have any queries, please contact HIACT@newcastle.ac.uk.

The closing date for this Call's applications is Monday 5th January 2026 at 5pm. There is also an open and rolling call for global proposals, however we reserve the right to close the rolling call depending on the number of successful applicants.

We intend to contact applicants within 2 months after the deadline with an outcome, and summary feedback. Your proposal must address the objectives of this funding opportunity and demonstrate how it will achieve these objectives. Please refer to these in your application.

What you must submit:

- Proposal Details (see application form)
- Case for support (see application form)
- Supporting letter from the supervisor/ line manager confirming their support of activities (maximum two A4 pages)

5.1 Proposal Details

Please include the following information on the application form:

- Applicant details
- Lead organisation details (including finance/ legal contact)
- Project details:
  - Project title
  - Proposed start date
  - Duration of the project
  - Total cost (please include this at 100% fEC total cost, HI-ACT will be able to support 80% fEC for eligible costs)

5.2 Case for Support

The case for support should describe the proposed project and its intended outcomes including:

- Short summary of the activities which includes their context and importance (400 words)
- Summary of how activities will support the global impact of HI-ACT (250 words)
- Summary of resources required to support the project and justification for the inclusion of each item. Please follow EPSRC guidelines for allowable costs and use Full Economic Costing (fEC): https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/fundingguide/resources/

See Section 3.2 for eligible costs.

5.3 Supporting Letter from supervisor/line manager

A supporting letter from the supervisor/ line manager which confirms their support of activities. The letter of support should identify any in-kind or cash contributions and include the date and signature of an appropriate representative of the organisation.

The maximum page limit for the letter of support is two A4 pages.

6. Assessment Process and Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by the HI-ACT Executive Board using the outlined criteria below. Final approval of the application will be made by HI-ACT Executive Board. HI-ACT will aim for applicants to receive a decision within 4 weeks and no more than 2 months from submission.

Criterion	Indicators
Relevance to Specification	• Alignment with HI-ACT's objectives and global impact goals
Research Excellence	• Ambition • Innovation • Feasibility of the proposed activities.
Impact	• Potential to advance global hydrogen integration efforts and benefit stakeholders.
Value for Money	• Efficient use of resources to achieve measurable outcomes.
Deliverability	• Likelihood of completing the project within the proposed timeframe.

7. Additional Information

For additional information please contact HI-ACT at HIACT@newcastle.ac.uk.