



Hydrogen Integration for
Accelerated Energy Transitions



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HI-ACT Secondment Flex Fund Call for Proposals – Guidance Document

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1. Summary

This call offers secondment funding for researchers or industry partners to co-create research and develop new skills, to help to accelerate research into systems integration of hydrogen for the future net-zero energy transition through co-creation.

Academic researchers (internal) and partners (external) can undertake secondments of up to three months at partner institutions (both academic and non-academic) within the consortium.

You must:

- be based at a UK organisation
- meet individual eligibility criteria (see Section 3.1)
- be able to deliver the work between 1 April 2026 and 31 March 2027 (exact end date dependant on project start date).

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

Projects can be costed to support up to 3 months for a secondee, plus suitable travel and subsistence costs. The full economic cost (fEC) project value will be up to to £15,000. The

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Flex Fund will fund 80% of the eligible fEC, the remaining 20% will need to be met by the recipient Research Organisation. The annual fund available is around £45,000.

2. Flex Fund Objectives

The overall purpose of the secondment funding opportunity is to support skills development and knowledge exchange between academia and industry, public and third sector, in the integration of hydrogen into the wider energy system.

Applicants will introduce new skills, technology, disciplines, or partners to the HI-ACT Hub consortium. The secondments will need to develop the skills of researchers working in this domain and work towards a specific co-created output such as a report, publication, model, or event.

The secondment opportunity must also be mutually beneficial to the hosting organisation and to the secondee's research and/or career development. Preference will be given to applicants who can clearly demonstrate the benefits of their secondment and how it will achieve some of the success measures listed below.

- Add value to the hosting organisation, through innovative outputs that contribute to solving real-world challenges in hydrogen integration, such as; a specific industry-led research project, development of process/es, development of training resources, writing relevant reports and/or research papers, organising public/stakeholder engagement events etc.
- Bring wider benefits or impacts to the hosting organisation and/or the wider hydrogen community, e.g. social, environmental or economic impacts.
- Enhance the secondee's knowledge, interdisciplinary skills and allow for exploration in career pathways.
- Demonstrate links to one or more HI-ACT work packages (see below).

3. Making an Application

3.1 Eligibility to apply

The overall grant will be awarded to the home organisation to support the secondment to the hosting organisation, for research secondments. For industry secondments, the grant will be awarded to the hosting organisation, which must meet UKRI eligibility as a research organisation. The applicant must have arranged the secondment with the hosting organisation before submitting an application. See the application process for more details.

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Secondment funding can support secondments from academic research institutions (higher education institutions, research council institutes, independent research organisation) to industry, business, governmental bodies or third sector organisations. Secondment funding may also support non-academics wanting to work with academia. To check your eligibility, please contact HIACT@newcastle.ac.uk.

A. Secondee eligibility

As a secondee:

- You must be a resident in the UK*.
- You must be employed by your home organisation for the duration of the proposed secondment.
- Your current role does not necessarily have to be funded by HI-ACT. The call is open to the wider HI-ACT consortium.
- You must have relevant experience within your field and in hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels integration.
- You should already have permission from the principal investigator of your project or line manager at your home organisation (as appropriate).
- A doctoral qualification is not a requirement; however, preference may be given to applicants of a postdoctoral standing or have equivalent professional experience.
- *Visa holders: If you are a holder of a visa to work, that visa must allow you as the secondee to undertake the secondment in the UK for the proposed duration of the secondment. It is the responsibility of the secondee to check with their employer that they are eligible to undertake the activity in line with their visa category and conditions. If you are successful in the application process as the secondee, you must have a collaboration agreement signed by the hosting and seconding organisations.

B. Home organisation eligibility

This is the organisation sending the secondee. Only the home organisation will be eligible to receive funds from the award. The home organisation must therefore:

- Be in a position to support a secondee to apply for a secondment project.
- Hold a UK bank account.
- Claim and administer the grant if awarded.

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- If a secondee is from a university or research organisation, the home organisation must have the potential to pause a research project and/or extend a contract to allow for the undertaking of the secondment.

C. Host organisation eligibility

This is the organisation receiving the secondee for the duration of the secondment. The hosting organisation must:

- Be a non-academic private, public or third sector organisation (or a research organisation if the secondee is a non-academic).
- Have a suitable secondment environment in the UK.
- Not require that the secondee undertakes international working.
- Not claim any funds (unless the secondee is a non-academic).
- Provide a supportive, accessible, and inclusive working environment for the secondee, including networking and peer-learning opportunities.

3.2 Funding and duration

The home organisation can apply for a grant to a value 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 funding is intended to support a secondee for up to 3 months, plus suitable travel and subsistence costs (unless the secondee is non-academic, in which case the host organisation should lead the application). There is no minimum request for funding. During the secondment, the secondee will continue to be employed by the home organisation.

Industrial non-academic partners will need to include some in-kind/cash contribution to the secondment, such as salary costs and/or commitment to a reciprocal arrangement to host a researcher secondment, where possible.

HI-ACT secondment funding can cover:

- Salary costs including National Insurance and other salary on-costs, as per UKRI Full Economic Costing guidelines (buying out time of a current employee for the purpose of the secondment).

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- Travel and subsistence costs related to the secondment, including accommodation when staying away from home during short periods or if a longer-term relocation is required.

Given that funding is allocated by UKRI to HI-ACT on the basis of the UK's Dual Support funding structure, grants issued through this scheme will be paid on the 80% full economic cost basis (fEC). Research organisations, universities and academic institutions undertaking non-economic activity as part of this activity can claim up to 80% of the total eligible project costs.

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 (eg infrastructure technicians)
	Indirect costs
Directly incurred costs	Staff (ie researchers, administrators)
	Travel and subsistence
	Consumables
	Other (subcontracts, fees)

Please note equipment is not an eligible cost.

The home organisation and the host organisation are responsible for all other costs, as applicable. The host organisation may want to supplement the grant to attract secondees, e.g. supplement of salary, travel, accommodation etc. If this is intended, the host organisation must arrange this directly with the home organisation. Please document these costs in the application.

Secondments must start between 1 April 2026 and end by 31 March 2027.

- Duration of secondments can be up to 3 months full-time.
- Secondments can be full-time, part-time or remote working (depending on hosting and home organisation requirements).

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

3.3 Monitoring and reporting

During the secondment, the secondee must maintain regular contact with their line manager at the home organisation and/or their principal investigator.

The secondee must provide a final report to HI-ACT at the completion of their secondment. The report must include how the secondment has delivered the key objectives outlined in the funding application, if there were any challenges and how these were addressed, the skills and knowledge gained by the secondee, the wider impacts of the project on the host organisation and any future collaboration or engagement. The final report will not contain any sensitive or confidential information or data (as we may wish to share the report publicly).

We will also ask for a short evaluation from the visiting industry/policy partner, or visiting academic researcher, and the host institution.

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

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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.

4.1 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 several 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](#).



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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 5 January 2026 at 5pm. There is also an open and rolling call for secondment proposals, however we reserve the right to close the rolling call depending on the number of successful applicants.

Applicants will be contacted no later than 2 months after the proposal has been submitted with an outcome. 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)
- CV of the secondee (maximum two A4 pages)
- Supporting letter from the host organisation (maximum two A4 pages)
- Supporting letter from the home organisation (maximum two A4 pages).

5.1 Proposal Details

Please include the following information on the application form:

- Secondee details
- Home organisation details (including details for PI and finance/legal contact).
- Host organisation details (including details for host contact)
- Secondment details:
 - o Project title
 - o Proposed start date
 - o Duration of the project (months)
 - o Total cost (please include this at 100% fEC total cost, HI-ACT will be able to support 80% fEC), the remaining 20% will need to be met by the recipient Research Organisation.

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5.2 Case for support

The case for support should describe the proposed project and its intended outcomes. It should cover the context, importance, methodology and all the associated work and activities you propose to carry out that will contribute to the funding opportunity objectives.

1. **Short Summary** (250 words)

This summary will be made publicly available if funded.

2. **Proposal for secondment/impact of proposed** activities (500 words)

- Outline the proposed work and how it will contribute to HI-ACT's objectives, and to HI-ACT work packages.
 - Provide the background of the project and context of previous work into potential pathways for integrating hydrogen into future energy use undertaken at the hosting organisation.
 - Summarise the benefits and impacts the secondment project will have to the wider hydrogen integration challenge (e.g. social, economic, environmental, technical)

3. **Activity Plan** (250 words)

Please provide an activity plan that contains the key approach, methodology (if applicable), KPIs and timeline for completion of tasks/work packages. This should also include a description of risk management and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), including how you have implemented EDI considerations in your proposal and (if relevant) team as well as through the delivery of the work.

4. **Summary of resources required**

This section of the application form will ask for more detailed information on the resource needs to support the secondment 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/>

Projects can be costed for a secondment of up to 3 months (plus suitable travel and subsistence) at 100% full economic cost, we will then fund 80% of the full economic eligible costs. **See Section 3.2 for eligible costs.** All costs must be fully justified.

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5.3 Supporting letter from host organisation

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

In your letter of support, you must:

- Confirm the organisation's commitment to the proposed project, including in-kind and/or cash contributions.
- Articulate the benefits of collaboration with academia/connecting with researchers to the hosting organisation.
- Specify the full nature and timescale of the support that will be provided and how the partner will provide added value.

5.4 Supporting letter from home organisation

The organisation sending the secondee will receive funding to support the secondment (unless the secondee is non-academic). The maximum page limit for the letter of support is two A4 pages.

In your letter of support, you must:

- Confirm the organisation's commitment to the proposed project, including in-kind and/or cash contributions
- Specify the full nature and timescale of the support that will be provided.

6. Assessment Process and Criteria

The applications will be reviewed by the HI-ACT Executive Board using the criteria outlined below. HI-ACT will aim for applicants to receive a decision no more than 2 months from submission.

Criterion	Indicators
Research Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ambition and innovation• Value for money• Deliverability in time frame• Complementarity to HI-ACT research programme
Impact on wider Hydrogen integration challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact and relevant of work to the hydrogen community• Impact of proposed stakeholder engagement

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Likelihood of impact being realised
Suitability of secondees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expertise and track record• Effectiveness of proposed activity plan• EDI considerations
Suitability of host organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder engagement during the secondment• Host and home institution support (including in-kind or cash funding)

7. Additional Information

For additional information please contact HIACT@newcastle.ac.uk