

Background

Knowledge Exchange Funding supported by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) provides universities with an ability to accelerate the development and translation of research to application through partnership and collaboration in a rapid and effective way.

At The University of Manchester, we have utilised these flexible sources of funding with partners to ensure that our world-leading research realises its full potential and finding ways to create social, economic and environmental impact on a global scale.

Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) funding enables us to invest in opportunities to develop our researchers and their ideas and fosters a positive culture of innovation reaching deeply into our institution.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships facilitate the exchange of ideas and expertise with a focus on business need, to the benefit of the entire project team working in partnership with companies from a small regional SME partner through to a large multinational.

The strategic importance of these funds as mechanisms to facilitate long term, mutually beneficial collaboration continues to be a core priority for the University.

Managed and delivered by the Knowledge Exchange Partnerships Team, part of Business Engagement and Knowledge Exchange, these funding opportunities supports the creation of impactful external partnerships for mutual benefit

UKRI Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) Funding

Our IAA provides flexible support to progress the commercialisation and translational development of university research, in collaboration with external partners.

Manchester's IAA, running from April 2022 to March 2026, comprises funding from six Research Councils totalling £10.5 million. This is the largest IAA allocation in the North, and second largest in the UK.

Within the IAA, we provide six key funding mechanisms:

Starter fund (£10k) – to explore new collaboration opportunities and undertake small impact projects

Pilot fund (£30k) – support for early-stage and innovative feasibility studies and proof-of-concept projects

Advance fund (£60k) – translation, development, and optimisation of university research that can generate commercial and/or societal benefit

Strategic Partnership fund (£75k) – wide-ranging collaborative support that seeks to create new strategic partnerships with organisations that are characterised by engagement activities across multiple faculties and disciplines

Innovation Works (£10k) – network funds that are directed toward regional engagement, thematic brokering, and innovation labs

Commercialisation fund (£50k) – initial market and competitive landscaping, and technology evaluation to drive spin-out and licensing of University Intellectual Property.

Innovate UK Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP)

In 2025, KTP will be 50 years old. KTP is the leading knowledge transfer programme that helps businesses innovate for growth. They do this by connecting businesses that have an innovation idea with the academic expertise to help deliver it. Right now, approximately 800 businesses, 100 knowledge bases (universities and other research organisations) and over 800 graduates are involved in KTPs – collaborative, transformative, three-way partnerships creating positive impact and driving innovation.

Projects are focused on delivering a strategic step change in productivity, market share and operating process by embedding new knowledge and capabilities within an organisation. The expertise, technology and world-leading research that resides within The University of Manchester enables businesses to reap the benefits that a strategic partnership such as a KTP project can provide.

Why partner with The University of Manchester?

Manchester is a leading provider of KTP within the UK. We have secured over 300 KTPs with an application success rate of >95%.

- Businesses achieve an average increase in annual profit of more than £1 million after taking part. They also create an average of three new jobs and train 31 staff
- Academic partners produce on average more than 3 new research projects and 2 research papers for each project
- Around 80% of associates are offered a permanent job in the company when the project ends

Partnership highlights

- Developed via a KTP between Sports footwear firm inov-8 and The University of Manchester, the world's first running shoe to use a graphene-enhanced foam in the sole, bucking the widespread trend for carbon-plate technology and doubling the industry standard for longevity, was launched. The cushioned foam, called G-FLY™, features as part of inov-8's new trail shoe, the TRAILFLY ULTRA G 300 MAX™, designed for ultramarathon and long-distance runners. Tests have shown the foam delivers 25% greater energy return than standard EVA foams and is far more resistant to compressive wear. It therefore maintains optimum levels of underfoot bounce and comfort for much longer. This helps runners maintain a faster speed over greater distances, aid their feet in feeling fresher for longer, and prolong the life of their footwear.
- Global production of cement – the 'glue' that holds concrete together – accounts for 8% of the world's CO₂ production. Adding tiny amounts of graphene to concrete dramatically increases its strength – meaning much less material is needed, and CO₂ emissions are significantly cut. Following a collaborative Innovate UK grant, the University is continuing to collaborate with Nationwide Engineering Research and Development, via a KTP, to exploit Concretene - a graphene-enhanced admixture for concrete, that is engineered to improve performance and sustainability. The technology improves the microstructure of concrete, significantly increasing compressive, tensile and flexural strength, reducing curing periods, microcracking and permeability.