

Healthier Futures Innovation Lab

The University of Manchester's Innovation Labs explore real-world challenges and innovation opportunities that could be delivered/informed through collaboratively designed research projects that bring together a range of academic disciplines working directly with non-academic partners.

On Tuesday 24 November, the [Healthier Futures research platform](#) will be hosting an Innovation Lab to explore those partner challenges around **health inequalities** that academics can help address.

Aim of the Event

The event will bring together 3-5 organisations who are seeking to overcome a specific challenge or to develop innovative products and services. The University will curate individual groups of academic experts from a range of complementary disciplines to help respond to each challenge, and over the course of this facilitated workshop we will develop tangible project plans to pitch for seed funding to develop the project.

How does it work?

- The Innovation Labs follow a facilitated process led by a creative consultancy.
- At each Lab we host 3-5 partners from the public sector, charities, community organisations, or business, working in teams of 4-6, with cross-discipline academic groups.
- We work through a dynamic, creative process – collectively defining the problem and generating a range of solutions, before concluding with the optimal project which will be pitched to our expert panel for seed funding. There is a strong emphasis on jointly developing projects which have the potential to grow into larger collaborations.
- A project might involve the development of novel research, or it may allow for already available research evidence can be applied to the partner's particular challenge.

What are the benefits?

- Engagement in a trusted model for facilitating the generation of collaborative research projects, and/or applying existing research evidence to partners' challenges.
- The opportunity to secure seed funding (up to £10k) to cover the costs of the research project to help overcome your organisation's challenge. This might be spent on academic time, convening costs, data, or other costs relating to the project. These funds would be managed by the academic lead for the project, based at the University of Manchester. Projects must be completed by July 2027
- University support will be available to further develop these seed funded projects into larger collaborative research funding proposals, where appropriate.
- Develop new relationships with university researchers with cross-cutting areas of expertise.

What do we need from partners?

- We need you to share a high-level overview of the challenge for which you wish to develop solutions in partnership with academic experts.
- Commit 2-3 representatives to attend the half-day workshop (5 hours), (to get the most out of the session we recommend you bring representatives who will be involved in overcoming the challenge if your project is funded e.g. technical staff if your problem is technical in nature).
- Where organisations are able to do so, we would encourage partners to consider an element of matched-funding or in-kind support to conduct projects as designed at the workshop, this will enhance the scope of the project. **Please note that matched funding is not mandatory; the University is keen to work with those organisations who are working directly on the pressing challenges of health inequalities, and we are happy to work out ways to facilitate projects from all organisations.**
- Consider challenges with potential to develop into a larger research collaboration down the line.

Our Expertise

The University of Manchester has a wealth of expertise that relates to health inequalities, which we bring together in our [Healthier Futures research platform](#).

Our focus is on the unfair and avoidable factors that hinder people's chances to live **healthier lives**, in **healthier places**, with equitable access to health and care systems (**healthier systems**). The University is committed to work in partnership locally, nationally and globally, across all sectors, to work towards health equity.

Previous projects

Earlier Healthier Futures labs have supported projects looking at food bank supply chains, working with a Manchester based community interest company; the use of green spaces for wellbeing in one of the Greater Manchester local authorities; evaluation projects with local charities to understand the impact of their activities; and several more.

How to get involved

You can submit an expression of interest here before 26 October 2026: [Healthier Futures: Innovation Lab Expression of Interest November 2026 – Fill in form](#)

You will be asked to give an outline of the challenge that you are looking to address, and some details about your organisation.

If you would like to discuss a potential research idea before submitting an expression of interest, please contact healthierfutures@manchester.ac.uk

