UK-HyRES Funding Opportunity – Flexible Fund 4 - the Challenge call

1 Summary of Call Details

Maximum Award per Proposal	£ 150,000
Information Webinar for EoIs	Friday 11th September 2026
Expression of Interest call opens	Friday 11th September 2026
Closing date for Expressions of Interest	Tuesday 13th October 2026
Communication outcome of EOI	Friday 13th November 2026
Call for Full Proposals opens	Monday 16th November 2026
Call for Full Proposals closes	Friday 15th January 2027
Interview date(s) for shortlisted candidates	February 2027
Notification of successful and unsuccessful proposals	End of March 2027
Anticipated start date of successful proposals	No later than Mid-April 2027

Please check your eligibility for EPSRC funding at: Check if you're eligible for funding – EPSRC – UKRI

2 Research Challenge – Scope of Call

- **Purpose**

This is the **final major Flexible Fund call of the UK-HyRES Hub Programme** and will be delivered as a **Challenge Call**.

We are seeking ambitious, challenge-led proposals that respond to pressing real-world needs in hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels. Through this call, we aim to fund up to three prestigious UK-HyRES Research Grants of up to **12 months' duration**, supporting talented researchers and innovators as they transition towards research or innovation leadership.

Projects must be built around a **clearly defined challenge** identified and co-developed with an industry, civic, public-sector or other end-user partner. The ambition is to support research that not only advances knowledge, but also accelerates innovation, adoption and deployment by addressing genuine challenges faced by Industry, civic organisations and other users. Successful projects should demonstrate a credible pathway towards real-world impact beyond academic outputs.

Challenges could, for example, relate to:

- The flexibility, performance and scale-up of electrolysers;
- Hydrogen at any scale and infrastructure limitations (or constraints)
- supply chain resilience and security;
- Other critical technical, economic, operational, regulatory or system-level barriers.

The challenge should **drive the research.** Applicants are expected to work with partners from the outset with the partner define the problem and shape the research objectives around genuine need, problem or opportunity, rather than seeking retrospective endorsement of an existing a research idea.

We are looking for projects that can demonstrate how their outcomes could support decision-making, adoption, demonstration, deployment or future commercialisation. Applicants should be able to clearly explain how **the challenge leads and the research responds**, by indicating:

- who will benefit from the research,
- what problem it solves, and
- how the outputs could be used in practice.

- **Eligibility**

- Applicants must demonstrate that the resource and capacity needed to deliver the project is in place, or readily available, within the proposed project duration.
- The **Lead Applicant** does not need to have a current role at the intended host institution,but must have the support of the institution (a letter of support, LoS, will do).

- **Funding available**

- The 100% Full Economic Cost (FEC) of your proposal can be up to £187,500
- Project will be funded by the UK-HyRES Hub based on 80 % of FEC, i.e. to a maximum of £150,000.

- Terms of grant awards are based on the UK-HyRES Hub terms, which apply principles of active management. Typical EPSRC conditions are also applied.
- Eligible costs include staff costs, consumables, travel and subsistence.
- Equipment costs are not eligible.
- Applicants must provide a clear, realistic breakdown showing how the full award will be spent within the proposed project duration.

- **Project Duration**

Projects should be deliverable within 12 months, from April 2027 to April 2028. Applicants must clearly explain in their proposal how they will deliver the full programme of work in this time, for example, where the project relies on recruiting new staff, applicants should show this is realistic within the timescale, as reviewers will look for confidence in delivery over ambition alone.

- **Partnership Identification and Requirements: Challenge Call**

This Challenge Call is built around **genuine co-creation with the users and beneficiaries of the research**. A meaningful partnership with an industry, civic body or other end-user is therefore a **core requirement of the call**, rather than an additional supporting element.

We are not seeking proposals where a partner is identified simply to provide a letter of support. Strong applications will demonstrate that the challenge has been shaped through engagement with the partner and that the proposed research responds directly to a real-world need or barrier they face.

At the **Expression of Interest (EOI) stage**, applicants must clearly identify:

1. the intended partner (industry, civic body or other end-user); and
2. the specific real-world challenge or opportunity faced by that partner which the proposed project will address.

A formal letter of support is **not required at the EOI stage**. However, applicants should have already had an initial conversation with the named partner to validate the challenge and ensure that the proposed research aligns with their needs. Applications that name a partner or challenge without evidence of meaningful engagement are unlikely to be competitive and may be viewed negatively by reviewers.

We recognise that many strong applicants will already have established relationships with relevant industry, civic or end-user partners. The EOI window of approximately four weeks is intended to provide sufficient time for applicants to confirm and clearly articulate the partnership and challenge, rather than requiring new partnerships to be developed from the outset.

At the **full proposal stage**, applicants will be expected to provide a clear plan demonstrating how the partner will contribute meaningfully throughout the project. This could include, for example:

- financial contribution;
- in-kind support, such as staff time, access to data, facilities, equipment or expertise; or
- another substantive form of engagement that strengthens the delivery, relevance and impact of the research.

Industry cash contributions are welcomed and will strengthen the impact case for proposals. However, we recognise that different partners contribute in different ways.

Civic partners are not expected to provide cash contributions or substantial in-kind support, and proposals involving civic partnerships will not be disadvantaged on this basis. Instead, applicants should demonstrate how the partnership provides valuable insight, access, engagement or pathways to impact relevant to the challenge being addressed.

The strongest proposals will demonstrate that the challenge, partnership and research approach have been developed together — ensuring that the research has a clear route to delivering meaningful impact beyond the academic community.

- **Requirements**

  - The research must align with the UK-HyRES themes and be about green hydrogen or green alternative liquid fuels.
  - Research should not duplicate research already funded by UK-HyRES (see https://ukhyres.ac.uk for current projects).
  - Proposals should be realistic, i.e. only include research that can be conducted within the time and budget requested, be cognisant of risks with appropriate mitigation in place, and be realistic about achievable impact.
  - Proposals should embed the principles of EDI and sustainability.
  - Successful applicants will be expected to engage with UK-HyRES Hub activities as applicable, including presenting at Hub events.

- **Research and Integration with UK-HyRES**

Successful proposals will become an integrated part of the **UK-HyRES research programme**, contributing novel approaches and solutions that enable the wider adoption of hydrogen and hydrogen-based liquid fuels to support the decarbonisation of the UK economy.

Projects should demonstrate clear alignment with one or more of the Hub's **four technical themes (TT1–TT4)** and/or **four cross-cutting themes (CT1–CT4)**. Applicants should explain how their research complements and strengthens the existing UK-HyRES portfolio, rather than operating as a standalone activity.

Projects will be supported and informed by the relevant **Cross-Cutting Theme Leaders** to ensure that research appropriately considers wider factors essential for successful deployment, including:

- techno-economic considerations;
- environmental impacts and sustainability;
- societal considerations and acceptance; and
- safety and risk.

At the **Expression of Interest (EOI) stage**, applicants will be asked to describe how they intend to engage with and contribute to the wider UK-HyRES community. This may include, for example:

- engagement with relevant technical or cross-cutting themes;
- opportunities to share knowledge, data, methodologies or outputs;
- use of shared equipment, facilities or research capabilities; or

- opportunities to contribute to wider Hub activities and collaborations.

Applicants do not need to define every aspect of their integration plan at EOI stage. However, they should demonstrate a clear understanding of where their research sits within the Hub and how it can add value. At the full proposal stage, applicants will have the opportunity to discuss their approach with relevant theme leads and further develop plans for integration.

Competitive proposals will demonstrate a strong fit with the UK-HyRES portfolio and should clearly evidence **at least two** of the following characteristics:

- **Substantial innovation** – delivering new concepts, methods, technologies or approaches beyond the current state of the art;
- **Addressing critical needs** – tackling important technical, operational, societal or system-level barriers to hydrogen deployment;
- **Alignment with UK priorities** – supporting ambitions set out in UK Hydrogen Strategy, Industrial Strategy and wider net-zero objectives;
- **Strong industrial pull or technological push** – responding to a clearly identified market, industry or end-user need or offering a significant technological advance with potential for adoption.

The strongest proposals will demonstrate not only excellent research, but also a clear pathway for integration, collaboration and impact across the UK-HyRES Hub.

- **Main duties & responsibilities of the Project Lead**

- Conduct individual and/or collaborative research projects that result in high-quality research in any research area in the hydrogen value chain.
- Develop research objectives, projects and proposals.
- Set standards by scoping projects and managing its delivery (e.g. timeline, budget, quality) to fulfil research grant proposals.
- Publish in high-quality peer-reviewed journals appropriate to the discipline.
- Develop and sustain an external research profile and reputation and international research links through activities such as:
    - Overseas research visits
    - Conference presentations
    - Conference organisation
    - Refereeing
    - Public engagement activities
- Promote and engage in interdisciplinary research activities as part of UK-HyRES.
- Develop a plan for future funding.

- **Anticipated outputs**

- At the EOI stage, applicants should demonstrate awareness of the potential pathways through which their research could generate impact beyond academic publications. Applicants are encouraged to identify the types of outputs that may arise from the proposed work and how these could support uptake by users, industry, policymakers, or other stakeholders.
- Potential outputs may include prototypes, software or digital tools, design guidance, decision-support frameworks, policy briefings, industrial best-practice guides, or roadmaps for

demonstration and scale-up. Applicants are not expected to commit to specific deliverables at this stage but should indicate the outputs most likely to result from the proposed research.

- **Research and Integration with UK-HyRES**

Successful proposals will be integrated into the existing UK-HyRES research programme to deliver novel solutions to enable the wider adoption of hydrogen and hydrogen-based liquid fuels to decarbonise the UK economy. Further details of UK-HyRES can be found in the Annex in Section 7.

Projects in each Technical Theme are guided and informed by each of the Cross-cutting Theme Leaders, to ensure appropriate consideration of techno-economics, environmental and societal impacts, and safety.

Research should align with one or more of the Hub's four technical themes TT1–TT4 or four cross-cutting themes CT1–CT3 (as illustrated in Figure 1).

3 How to apply

There are two application stages. The first is an expression of interest, after which selected applicants will be invited to write a full proposal. Full proposals will be reviewed by a review panel and the PLs will be interviewed, then then final funding decision will be made.

- **Application and Assessment Process**

The call will follow a **two-stage application process**:

4 Stage 1 — Expression of Interest (EOI)

Stage 1 will invite applicants to submit an **Expression of Interest (EOI)** through an online form hosted on Microsoft Forms. (link to the form)

EOIs will be assessed by a panel comprising UK-HyRES Theme Leads, members of the Strategic Advisory Board, and invited external reviewers with relevant subject expertise. Applications will be assessed against **criteria 1–4** outlined in the assessment criteria section.

Given the breadth of research areas covered by this Challenge Call, UK-HyRES will identify and, where required, appoint external reviewers with appropriate expertise to ensure proposals are assessed fairly and effectively.

Due to the expected volume of applications, applicants who are not invited to proceed to Stage 2 will not receive individual feedback.

Following the EOI assessment, applicants invited to submit a full proposal will have the opportunity to engage with relevant UK-HyRES Cross-Cutting Theme Leads before submission. These discussions are intended to help applicants strengthen their proposals by considering wider project impacts, including:

- **techno-economic considerations;**
- **environmental impacts;**
- **safety considerations;**

- **multi-sector and/or multi organisational input;**
- **multidisciplinary involvement;**
- **social acceptance and wider societal impacts.**

Applicants are **not expected to have fully developed these considerations at the EOI stage**. The purpose of the theme-lead discussions is to support the development of stronger, more integrated full proposals.

5 Stage 2 — Full Proposal

Applicants invited to Stage 2 will submit a full proposal that will undergo a robust peer review process. Full proposals will be assessed against **all assessment criteria** outlined in this call.

The full proposal template will be provided to successful EOI applicants and will include the following sections:

- **Part I: Project Details**
- **Part II: Case for Support**
- **Part III: Track Record**
- **Part IV: Justification of Resources (JoR)**
- **Letters of Support**
- **Project Lead CV**

The full proposal should provide a clear demonstration of the research ambition, challenge relevance, partnership approach, integration with UK-HyRES, and potential pathway to impact.

- **Review Criteria - Overview**

Proposals will be reviewed on:

- Quality, ambition and novelty
- Development, training, support and mentorship of the PL
- Ability to deliver the research and complete within the time and resources requested
- Clear plans for proposed research, project management, engagement, EDI, skills development and impact
- Partnerships and Collaborations

Criterion	Applies at
1. Vision, quality and strategic fit — likelihood of a step-change contribution to hydrogen and alternative liquid fuel deployment; alignment to one or more UK-HyRES technical and/or cross-cutting themes; contribution to a balanced Hub portfolio	Stages 1 & 2
2. Meaningful partnership and non-academic impact — clear identification of the partner and the specific challenge being addressed (Stage 1); evidence of co-creation and a credible plan for the partner's contribution (Stage 2). Cash contribution is welcomed but in-kind or other meaningful engagement is acceptable, particularly for civic partners	Stages 1 & 2

3. Cross-cutting integration, consideration of the Hub's cross-cutting themes (techno-economics, environmental impact, safety, social acceptance) in project design	Stages 1 & 2
4. Deliverability, realistic scope, budget and plan for spending the award fully within the funded period; quality of risk identification and mitigation	Stages 1 & 2
5. Expertise of the applicants, appropriateness of expertise to the proposed research; potential for longer-term collaboration	Stage 2
6. Project management, effectiveness of proposed planning and management, including risk; appropriateness and affordability of resources	Stage 2

Stage 1 = EOI and Stage 2 = Full proposal

6 Funded projects required Outputs and Reporting

For EPSRC funds, a final, publicly disclosable report and slide pack (5 to 10 slides) that summarises key impacts, findings and follow on work enabled from the research, which will be used to verify completion and inform future activities.

A project summary which can be published on the UK-HyRES Hub website on announcement of the Flexible Funding award.

A summary of funding opportunities that the investigators expect the award to enable.

Please note that the research undertaken as part of the UK-HyRES Flexible Funding call is also subject to:

Discussion and feedback from the Strategic Advisory Board at their biannual meetings.

Successful applicants attending the UK-HyRES Hub Annual General Assemblies (or other dissemination events as required) to present the findings, impacts and follow on work from their research.

The PL of flexible fund research projects reporting on the research outcomes to the UK-HyRES Hub to input into ResearchFish.

Successful projects will be required to comply with the UK-HyRES Hub's reporting requirements throughout the duration of the award.

Projects must submit quarterly progress reports in alignment with the UK-HyRES Research Board calendar, with reports due two weeks in advance of each Research Board meeting. An updated Deliverables and Milestones Tracker, including a RAG status for each deliverable and milestone, must be submitted alongside each quarterly progress report.

A Final Report and Case Study must be submitted within two weeks of the project end date.

7 Terms and Conditions

- Terms and conditions of standard UKRI FEC grant awards apply (https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UKRI-161123-FECGrantTermsAndConditions-Nov2023.pdf)

- All project outputs and engagement should be branded as 'UK-HyRES Hub'. Brand materials and guidance will be provided to successful applicants.
- For published outputs EPSRC reference EP/X038963/1 must be quoted.
- Salary budget requested should be at a level commensurate with applicant's skills, responsibilities, expertise and experience.
- Whilst this fellowship scheme provides the opportunity for the applicant's development and dedicated time to focus to their own programme of research, it should not be construed as providing a guaranteed route to promotion. Applicants should consult with their Host Institution's HR Department and their Researcher Promotion Policy in this regard.

8 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

The UK-HyRES Hub supports the UKRI Key Principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

- Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is a critical aspect of a healthy research culture – how projects are designed, carried out and who is involved.
- Research and innovation should be 'by everyone, for everyone' – a dynamic, diverse, and inclusive research and innovation system in the UK is an integral part of society and should give everyone the opportunity to participate and to benefit.
- We need to be diverse to accommodate that research and innovation is unpredictable, is often created through new and unanticipated combinations, and can take many forms.
- By recognising and nurturing all people in the system and diversifying interactions, we will enrich our lives by creating knowledge, enabling us to understand the world around us and empowering us to tackle the many challenges we face as individuals and as communities, nationally and globally.
- The whole workforce are key contributors in the research and innovation system – from the lead researcher or innovator to those who keep the lights on or maintain the large infrastructure and equipment in our laboratories, small businesses or on our research vessels
- By valuing all, we recognise that a diversity of ideas, opinions, knowledge, and people enrich our work and enlarges our knowledge economy

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UK –HyRES welcomes applications from groups underrepresented in green hydrogen research and associated applications. A core part of the work UK-HyRES does is supporting the ECR community to ensure talent development and diversity, that our grant award-holders reflect the diverse, world-class workforce we are striving to build within the region.

UK-HyRES aims to provide additional support to applicants from groups that are persistently underrepresented within green hydrogen research through the grant application process. This positive action will contribute to improving diversity in the talent pipeline and widening the diversity of applicants and awardees within our program.

We are looking to support applicants from the groups below through mentoring and guidance support for grant applications.

- Women
- Black people (including any mixed ethnicity groups that include Black ethnic backgrounds)
- Disabled people.

Applicants who would benefit from additional support in developing their application can contact UKHyRESadmin@bath.ac.uk outlining your needs to ensure UK-HyRES can assign the appropriate support.

Please note that all questions and comments about UK-HyRES, including about its funding calls, may be directed to UKHyRESadmin@bath.ac.uk.

9 ANNEX: Call purpose and background

- **UK-HyRES Purpose**

Hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels (H_2 and ALFs), such as ammonia, are essential for the UK to reach Net Zero emissions by 2050. Hydrogen is a highly versatile energy vector suitable for use in many hard-to-decarbonise sectors where other energy options, such as electricity, are not suitable. UK-HyRES aims to identify, prioritise, and seek impactful solutions to research challenges across the entire hydrogen value chain from production via storage and distribution to end use.

- **UK-HyRES Background**

The EPSRC has awarded £10.7M to UK-HyRES (https://ukhyres.ac.uk/) for a five-year research grant which began 1 June 2023, following an extensive co-ordination phase from April 2022 to (end) May 2023.

In addition to this strong support, UK-HyRES has to date secured over £5.5M in leveraged co-funding from industry, civic and other research partners and £8.1M from the Hub's core universities for PhD students and other targeted investments.

End-use areas include heating, power, mobility, and chemicals. Alternative liquid fuels such as ammonia are also an important theme. There is a strong focus on sustainability and safety in all the Hub's projects. Additionally, with its substantial flexible fund of £5.1M (FEC), UK-HyRES will facilitate a series of calls for new research projects and fellowships. These projects must have close alignment with the UK-HyRES themes and be responsive to the research challenges and opportunities identified.

UK-HyRES will drive forward the national effort in hydrogen research that is needed to facilitate this critical area of technology to meet industry and government needs.

The team will coordinate a national, interdisciplinary programme of research to ensure a pipeline of projects that can deliver practical hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels technologies that are safe and environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable, de-coupling fossil fuels from our energy system and delivering greener energy.

- **The UK-HyRES Hub Structure**

UK-HyRES provides a network and collaboration platform for fundamental research, and is a focus for industry, policy, and other stakeholder communities, to tackle research challenges that underpin the production, storage, distribution, and end use of H_2 and ALFs.

The Hub's unique structure has been developed to deliver maximum impact – focusing on four technical themes (production, storage / distribution, end use and alternative liquid fuels), and four cross-cutting themes (environmental, economic, social acceptance and safety).

The team will develop UK-HyRES into a global centre of excellence and impact in hydrogen and alternative liquid fuel research within its five-year funding window and into the future.

- **Flexible Funds: Call for Research**

The Hub plans to release calls throughout the five-year programme, to bring together the UK research community in hydrogen and hydrogen-based liquid fuels, both those who are already involved in hydrogen research and those who must be involved in future.