



Essex County Council
Sustainable Growth



**INNOVATION FOR A
BRIGHTER FUTURE**

Funding News Weekly Bulletin 1st August 2025

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Funding News Bulletin – 1 August 2025

Innovation for a Brighter Future

This week's bulletin highlights funding opportunities for startups, SMEs, researchers, and community organisations across Essex and the UK:

Venture.Community Accelerator – £20K investment + £10K Skillbank grant for pre-seed/seed UK startups. Open now.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) – Strategic innovation projects with academic partners. Deadline: 17 Sep 2025.

Horizon Europe Brokerage Visits – Fully funded travel for UK innovators to EU consortia events. First deadline: 8 Aug 2025.

IPHatch UK – Patent licences (~£200K) + up to £30K cash for deeptech startups. Deadline: 8 Aug 2025.

Defra ADOPT Project Facilitator Grant – £2,500 for farmers to develop ADOPT applications. Deadline: 11 Sep 2025.

Ada Ventures – £250K–£1M equity for impact-driven startups. Rolling deadline.

EIC Accelerator (Horizon Europe) – Up to €10M blended finance for deeptech scale-ups. Deadline: 1 Oct 2025.

Catalyst Pilot Projects Fund – Up to £40K for tech ecosystem pilots outside London. EOI deadline: 22 Aug 2025.

Growth Catalyst: New Innovators – £25K–£50K for early-stage tech innovations. Deadline: 6 Aug 2025.

Hadleigh Shopfront Grants Scheme – Up to £3K for commercial premises improvements in Hadleigh. Deadline: 17 Oct 2025.

Million Hours Fund – £30K–£100K for youth work in areas with high antisocial behaviour. Deadline: 22 Oct 2025.

IT4Good Grants Programme – Up to £15K for IT-focused projects by UK nonprofits and schools. Deadline: 18 Aug 2025.

Innovate UK Business Growth – Access to Catapults and RTOs – Up to £15K for SMEs accessing specialist innovation centres. Rolling deadline.

Support for Early-Stage UK Startups Through Venture Accelerator

Early-stage UK startup founders can apply to join the Venture.Community Accelerator, which offers financial support, mentoring and access to investor networks. The scheme aims to support scalable ventures at pre-seed or seed stage seeking long-term sustainable growth.

Applicants must secure at least £20,000 from the Venture.Community network. This investment forms part of the accelerator's funding structure and contributes to initial equity arrangements. In addition, eligible founders can access a £10,000 Skillbank grant to help reduce development costs.

Following completion, participants are assisted in raising over £100,000 in seed investment from an in-house angel syndicate, community-backed funders and venture capital partners.

Founders must have high-growth potential and a scalable business model. Applications are open to individuals at pre-seed or seed stage, and candidates may either apply directly or be nominated by a fellow member of the co-operative.

Applications can be made at any time.

Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP)

Funding is currently open, offering UK SMEs a valuable opportunity to collaborate with academic institutions on strategic innovation projects. The scheme enables businesses to access academic expertise and apply it to real-world challenges, with support from a graduate-level KTP Associate who works within the business for the duration of the project. Projects typically last between 12 and 36 months and cost around £8,500 per month, with a significant portion funded by Innovate UK.

To participate, a UK-registered business or not-for-profit organisation must partner with a UK academic institution, research and technology organisation (RTO), or Catapult. If a business does not yet have a partner, a Knowledge Transfer Adviser can help identify one and support the application process. KTPs are particularly beneficial for SMEs looking to enhance productivity, embed new capabilities, and accelerate innovation through access to cutting-edge research and facilities.

The current round—2025–2026 Round 3—is open for applications until 17 September 2025 at 11:00am.

Horizon Europe Brokerage Visits 2025–2026: Fully Funded International Collaboration Opportunities for UK Innovators

Innovate UK, in partnership with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), the UK Science and Technology Network (STN), and the UK National Contact Points (NCPs), is offering a series of fully funded Horizon Europe Brokerage Visits between September 2025 and March 2026. These visits are designed to help UK-based organisations build international partnerships and join consortia for upcoming Horizon Europe funding calls.

Up to 15 UK-registered organisations—including SMEs, corporates, universities, research and technology organisations (RTOs), and Catapults—will be selected for each visit. Innovate UK will cover all travel, accommodation, in-market transport, and subsistence costs for one representative per organisation. Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure accessibility for all delegates.

Each visit is aligned with specific Horizon Europe themes and upcoming call topics. Confirmed visits include:

Germany (23–25 September 2025) – Focus on Advanced Materials, Raw Materials, and Chemicals. Topics include sustainable alternatives to substances of concern, AI-driven materials discovery, critical raw materials processing, and recycling technologies.

Application deadline: 8 August 2025

Additional visits to Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Spain are planned, each targeting different sectors aligned with the draft 2026/2027 Horizon Europe Work Programmes. These include areas such as digital technologies, health, climate, mobility, and industrial transformation. Specific dates, themes, and application deadlines for these visits will be announced in due course.

This initiative is part of the UK's broader strategy to strengthen international R&D collaboration and increase UK participation in Horizon Europe. Delegates will have the opportunity to attend brokerage events, pitch sessions, and workshops with European partners, helping to shape competitive consortia for future funding bids.

UK Deeptech Start-ups Offered Patent Licences and Funding Support

Deep technology start-ups in the UK can apply for IPHatch UK, an open innovation programme run by intellectual property bank Piece Future. The competition aims to help businesses accelerate growth by commercialising patented sustainable technologies developed by major multinational corporations.

Winners will receive patent licences valued at around £200,000, as well as cash prizes of up to £30,000. Successful applicants will also gain access to mentorship and international networking to support market entry and scaling. Technologies available through the programme include artificial intelligence, augmented reality and virtual reality.

The programme is open to UK-based deeptech start-ups seeking to bring advanced technologies to market. It is designed to support the use of intellectual property assets for commercial development and innovation.

The deadline for applications is 8 August 2025.

Defra ADOPT Project Facilitator Support Grant – Round 3

Defra, in partnership with Innovate UK, has launched Round 3 of the ADOPT Project Facilitator Support Grant as part of its Farming Innovation Programme. This initiative offers a £2,500 grant to farmers, growers, and foresters based in England to engage an external Project Facilitator who can support the development of a Full ADOPT Grant application. The scheme is designed to improve the quality of submissions, broaden access to innovation funding, and build capacity within the farming community to engage with R&D opportunities. Successful applicants must provide evidence within six months that their Full ADOPT Grant application has been submitted for assessment before the grant is paid. Funding is limited and awarded competitively, meaning not all eligible applications will be supported. The programme is particularly focused on smaller-scale, farmer-led projects that trial and demonstrate the on-farm viability of new technologies, practices, or processes.

Deadline for applications: 11 September 2025 at 11:00am

Ada Ventures

UK-based venture capital fund offering equity investment to early-stage start-ups developing breakthrough technologies that address major societal challenges. The fund provides investment ranging from £250,000 to £1 million in the first funding round, with potential for follow-on investment as ventures scale. Ada Ventures is particularly committed to supporting founders from underrepresented backgrounds and regions, and actively seeks out companies that are often overlooked by traditional venture capital.

The fund focuses on scalable, impact-driven innovations in three core areas: climate equity (including sustainable and decarbonising technologies), economic empowerment (such as inclusive fintech, skills development, and the future of work), and healthy ageing (with a strong emphasis on women's health, mental health, and accessible care solutions). Ada Ventures is open to applications from pre-seed and seed-stage start-ups based in the UK or Northern Europe.

In addition to capital, Ada Ventures offers strategic guidance, access to a diverse founder community, and connections to mission-aligned investors and partners. The fund is ideal for values-led start-ups with bold ideas and a clear path to commercial and social impact.

Application deadline: Rolling – there is no fixed deadline, and founders can apply at any time.

Horizon Europe: EIC Accelerator – October 2025 Call

The European Innovation Council (EIC), under Horizon Europe's Pillar III – Innovative Europe, is offering up to €10 million in blended finance through the EIC Accelerator to support high-risk, high-impact innovations led by start-ups, SMEs, and—in exceptional cases—small mid-caps. This flagship programme is designed to help companies scale breakthrough technologies that have the potential to create new markets or disrupt existing ones, particularly in deep-tech sectors. The EIC Accelerator provides two main types of support: a grant component of up to €2.5 million for innovation activities at Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 6–8, and an equity investment component of €0.5 million to €10 million (or more in exceptional cases) to support scale-up and commercialisation. Applicants can apply for grant-only, investment-only, or blended finance depending on their needs and eligibility.

The programme is open to innovations in any field of technology or application, excluding military uses and those harmful to the environment. It is structured around two streams: EIC Accelerator Open: A bottom-up call for proposals in any sector or technology area. The 2025 budget for this stream is €384 million.

EIC Accelerator Challenges: A top-down call targeting strategic EU priorities. The 2025 challenges include: Acceleration of Advanced Materials Development and Upscaling, Biotechnology-Driven Low Emission Food Production Systems, GenAI4EU: Creating European Champions in Generative AI, In-Space Servicing, Operations, and Space-Based Robotics, Breakthrough Innovations for Future Mobility

Applicants benefit from access to EIC's Business Acceleration Services, which include coaching, mentoring, investor matchmaking, and networking with corporates and innovation ecosystems across Europe.

The application process is competitive and consists of three stages: a short proposal, a full application, and a face-to-face interview with the EIC jury. Only the most promising proposals are invited to proceed through each stage.

Deadline for applications: 1 October 2025 at 17:00

The Catalyst Pilot Projects Fund

Managed by the UK Tech Cluster Group and provided by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), is currently open for applications. This initiative offers grants of up to £40,000 to support short-term pilot projects that test new approaches to business support for technology-focused enterprises. The aim is to generate insights and learning that can be shared across the wider UK tech ecosystem. Projects must be delivered by UK-based, formally constituted place-based organisations that support tech ecosystems outside of London. Eligible costs include partner fees, marketing, travel, event hosting, and other delivery-related expenses. Each project can last up to six months.

Expressions of Interest must be submitted by 12:00 noon on 22 August 2025.

The Hadleigh Shopfront Grants Scheme

Funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and administered by Castle Point Borough Council, is currently open for applications. This initiative provides grants of up to £3,000 to support businesses and organisations that own or rent commercial premises in Hadleigh Town Centre, Essex. The funding is intended to help improve the appearance and accessibility of shopfronts, contributing to the wider regeneration of the town centre. Eligible applicants include both freeholders and leaseholders located on London Road, Rectory Road, Oak Road, and Castle Lane.

Grant funding can be used for a range of improvements, including painting and repairs to shopfronts and upper floors, replacement of windows, doors, signage, gutters, and downpipes, as well as accessibility enhancements. The scheme is designed to support local economic development and enhance the visual appeal of Hadleigh's retail environment.

Application deadline: 17 October 2025

Growth Catalyst Early Stage: New Innovators Competition

Innovate UK-funded initiative supporting UK-registered micro and small businesses to develop early-stage innovations with strong commercial potential. Delivered through the New Innovators model, the competition forms part of the wider Growth Catalyst programme aimed at accelerating high-potential start-ups.

The programme targets innovations in one or more of the UK's five critical technologies: Artificial intelligence, Semiconductors, Advanced connectivity technologies, Quantum technologies, Engineering biology.

Projects should lead to new products, processes, or services that are significantly ahead of current offerings, or propose novel applications or business models based on existing technologies.

The scheme offers grants of £25,000 to £50,000, covering 100% of eligible project costs. In addition to funding, successful applicants will receive tailored business support from Innovate UK Business Growth and access to Innovation and Growth Specialists.

To be eligible, applicants must:

Be a UK-registered micro or small business.

Not have previously received direct funding from Innovate UK.

Carry out the project in the UK and intend to exploit the outcomes for UK or international benefit.

The competition is open for applications until 6 August 2025.

The Million Hours Fund Opens for Applications (Eligible Areas of England)

The Million Hours Fund is provided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF).

Reopening after a two-year gap, this third round is offering grants of between £30,000 and £100,000 to provide extra support to young people in areas with higher rates of anti-social behaviour in England.

The funding will provide extra hours of youth work to give these young people more places to go and positive things to do. The extra hours could be used for things like learning, arts, and playing sports, or for activities like mentoring, and developing social or life skills.

To be eligible, projects must:

Benefit young people aged 10 to 18, or up to 25 if they have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)

Effectively engage with young people at risk of taking part in anti-social behaviour

Deliver more hours of youth work than currently provided

Involve young people in decisions about the work

Deliver youth work that is open to as wide a range of young people as possible.

Be run by trusted adults such as qualified youth workers, youth support workers, or experienced volunteers.

The extra youth work being delivered must help young people:

Have improved emotional wellbeing

Have improved life and practical skills

Feel safer and have access to trusted relationships with adults.

Organisations can only apply if their work either is in an eligible ward area or will benefit young people living in one or more eligible ward areas. The eligible wards for this round are based on the youth population and levels of antisocial behaviour recorded by the police.

Most of the funding being requested should be for the direct costs of running extra hours of youth work and can be used for:

Staff salaries to deliver this work

Volunteer costs to deliver this work

Training costs

Other direct costs to deliver youth work, like materials, equipment and food

The cost of reporting back to NLCF about the funding.

The funding can also include overheads, such as part of the rent, insurance, part of a salary for someone not directly involved in this work, such as a senior manager or an office admin worker.

Groups are encouraged to apply as soon as they are ready and not wait for the deadline as the programme may close before the deadline if more applications are received than expected.

The deadline for applications is 22 October 2025 (12 noon).

IT4Good Grants Programme

Constituted not-for-profit organisations and educational establishments across the UK have until 18 August 2025 to apply for funding to deliver IT projects and activities.

The WCIT Charity is offering grants of up to £15,000 to support activities within the themes of education, inclusion, IT for charities, and understanding of IT, such as the development and delivery of new services, solutions, training, apps, analytics, AI, robotics, or accessibility features/hardware.

Projects that are more likely to be funded include:

Projects where WCIT is a material or sole funder.

Projects where WCIT is the sole funder of the IT component of a larger project.

Organisations that could benefit from pro bono support.

Proposals should demonstrate an innovative use of IT, be scalable for wider replication, and be sustainable over time. Grants of over £15,000 may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Applications are typically considered at four committee meetings per year.

The next deadline for applications is 18 August 2025.

Access to Catapults and RTOs – Innovate UK Business Growth

Innovate UK Business Growth is offering grants of up to £15,000 to support innovative, ambitious UK-registered SMEs (with up to 250 employees) in accessing the facilities and expertise of Catapults and Research & Technology Organisations (RTOs). These specialised not-for-profit centres—including hubs, labs, testbeds, and offices—enable businesses to explore and test new product ideas, gain technical and sector-specific expertise, and receive support with regulatory processes, market analysis, cost modelling, and R&D project planning. The funding covers 100% of eligible costs for suitable projects and is available to businesses currently receiving growth advisory support from Innovate UK.

Catapults and RTOs play a critical role in accelerating innovation and commercialisation by offering access to cutting-edge infrastructure, industry networks, and expert guidance. This programme is particularly valuable for SMEs seeking to de-risk early-stage development, validate technical feasibility, or build strategic partnerships. Support may also include help with identifying market gaps, improving operational efficiency, and enhancing sustainability.

There is no fixed deadline, and applications are open on a rolling basis.