

Annex 2 – Guidance for project partners

This document provides guidance for project partners on proposals submitted to the Innovative Monitoring Approaches call.

Who is eligible to be a project partner?

Eligible ‘end-user’ project partners may be private, public or third sector organisations or institutions, private industry, public bodies (such as government departments, local government, regulatory authorities, etc.), non-government organisations or charities. Research Council Institutes and HEIs are **not** eligible as *end-user project partners*.

There is no limit to the number of project partners on each project, or to the number of projects a partner can be involved in.

What is the role of project partners?

Project partners on Innovation proposals are ‘end-users’ of NERC-remit research who have a stake in the proposed work. Assessment Panels see the role of project partners as critical to a proposal’s fundability. Panel members look for ‘user pull’ rather than ‘science push’, and evidence that a proposal has been written with partners to address their needs.

Successful innovation projects are those that generate sustainable outcomes and impact. In order to achieve this, the project requires strong and early user engagement. The project partners should co-create the project, defining the issues to be addressed, the project objectives, and the specification of outputs, ensuring value and utility to the end-users. Providing evidence to this effect is essential.

Project partners do not receive funding directly from the project, but will have an integral role in the proposed work and will have been involved in formulating the proposal.

How can project partners be involved?

Since the strength of the relationship between end-users and researchers is often what underpins the likelihood of success of activity project, it is **essential that end-users are involved in both the development and delivery of proposals**.

Project partners can be involved with a proposal in several ways. The following list is by no means exhaustive. Items 1, 4 and 8 are considered particularly important by Assessment Panels:

1. Collaboration in setting project aims and objectives;
2. Providing facilities or data not otherwise available to the applicant, or available at a cost;
3. Provision of staff time;
4. Involvement in workshops and meetings. This may include providing venues or helping arrange an event as well as participation;
5. Input of scientific or technical expertise and / or advice;
6. Acting as a link to other users where the partner already has contacts with such bodies;
7. Contributions to outputs (for example publications);
8. A commitment to make practical use of the project’s outputs;
9. A commitment to the project beyond the period of NERC support;
10. Hosting seconded staff.

What evidence is needed at the Outline Proposal stage?

At the Outline Proposal stage, NERC requires applicants to indicate their proposed project partners, and whether the project partner involvement has already been agreed (secure) or is proposed¹. Letters of support are **not required** at the Outline Stage.

What evidence is needed at the Full Proposal stage?

At the Full Proposal stage each project partner must submit a Letter of Support. These help Assessment Panels assess the strength of the relationship between the researcher and the project partner, and therefore the potential for the proposal to achieve its aims, and the aims of the Innovation Programme scheme as a whole.

This letter should be on headed paper (providing contact details of the project partner organisation/representative) and should be signed by the project partner representative. The letter must also contain the following information:

1. A benefit statement from the project partner describing how the proposed activity will benefit them and their organisation (what the organisational drivers are that underpin the project partner's involvement in the proposal, what the project partner objectives are that the proposed activity will help meet, what the likely outcomes / impacts of the activity will be for the project partner, or wider, through working with the project partner, etc.).
2. The nature of the collaboration, how the project partner will be involved in the work and provide added value.
3. What contributions (cash, project support, etc.) the project partner will make and an assurance that the project partner is committed to the work for its duration and that those contributions will be made. Where a partner will receive tangible benefits from the work, Assessment Panels would hope to see a contribution to the project.
4. For project partners involved in a secondment or staff interchange, the Letter of Support should also demonstrate the commitment of the project partner organisation to host the secondee.
5. How the partner will commit to the project beyond the period of NERC support, if applicable.
6. The Letter of Support should be targeted specifically to the project; it should not be generic.
7. Assessment Panels do not look favorably on supporting letters that place conditions on their support, or dictate what applicants may or may not do.

In-kind contributions from project partners should be carefully costed to ensure there is no double accounting. Access to data already in the public domain cannot be counted as in-kind support.

Project partners should ensure that any facilities and infrastructure are available before the supporting letter is submitted.

¹ This information must be provided in the Je-S pro-forma, and also the Case for Support.