Innovation Loans for SMEs: apply for funding

Following the success of the Innovation Loans pilot programme throughout 2018, the programme is being extended to the end of 2020 with an additional £25 million available for business innovation projects in 2 further competitions.

Loans will be used to help businesses to support cutting-edge innovations become successful commercial realities.

Previous successful applicants of Innovation Loans include:

In this current competition, a share of £10 million is available through Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, for micro, small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for highly innovative, late stage projects with the most game-changing ideas and concepts.

Disruptive promise

Projects should develop new products and services, or highly innovative uses of existing ones, that are significantly advanced of anything currently used.

These can come from any technology and in any part of the economy, as long as they are sufficiently disruptive. Projects must focus on commercialisation, growth or scale-up, and priority will be given for projects likely to lead to growth in productivity.

Projects must show:

- a clear game-changing idea
- how the idea can lead to innovative products, processes or services significantly ahead of the current field
- practical financial plans

Loans will be declined for businesses that are considered unable to afford the interest and repayments on the loan.

Competition information

- the competition opens today 8 July 2019. The registration close date is 11 September 2019
- micro, small and medium-sized organisations may apply
- loans between £100,000 and £1 million are available per project
- briefing events will be held throughout July 2019 in Brighton, Birmingham, London, Daresbury and Sheffield, where organisations can find out more about the competition and process of applying

Change of British High Commissioner to the Republic of Zambia – August 2019

2016 to Present Democratic Republic of the Congo (also Republic of Congo, Central African Republic), Deputy Head of Mission 2014 to 2016 Islamabad, Head of Conflict and Joint Programmes 2013 to 2014 Kabul, Head of Reconciliation and External Politics 2010 to 2013 National Security Secretariat (Cabinet Office), Head of Middle East and North Africa section 2009 New York, Desk Officer for Middle East, UK Permanent Representation to the United Nations 2006 to 2009 Brussels, Desk Officer for Middle East and North Africa, UK Permanent Representation to the European Union 2005 to 2006 Brussels, National Expert in Cabinet of the European Commissioner for External Relations 2006 Joined FCO 2004 to 2005 Ministry of Justice, various roles including Family Justice policy lead for High Court reform 2003 Adventure Tour Leader, Explore Worldwide 2000 to 2002 English Teacher, Japan (JET Programme) 2003 Adventure Tour Leader, Explore Worldwide 2000 to 2002 English Teacher, Japan (JET Programme)

UK companies to benefit from UK-Saudi trade

The first Economic and Social Pillar meeting of the UK-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council was jointly hosted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, and his counterpart, the Saudi Minister of Commerce and Industry, Dr Majed Bin Abdullah Al Qasabi, yesterday (7 July 2019).

Commercial opportunities that were agreed during the Strategic Partnership Council include:

- a £100 million contract with manufacturer De La Rue to help tackle illicit trade by introducing a digital tax stamp solution for soft drinks and tobacco products sold in the Kingdom
- a full banking licence for British bank Standard Chartered
- a venture capital licence for Hambro Perks

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, said:

> Saudi Arabia continues to take positive steps towards a more modern and diverse economy though its Vision 2030 plan.
>
> The UK's experience and expertise mean we are in a unique position to offer Saudi Arabia support with their economic diversification. More investment and more trade benefits both of our economies.

The UK's world-leading expertise in investment and finance is also helping Saudi Arabia to reform its economy as part of its Vision 2030 plan. In April this year, Aramco listed its first international bond, worth $12 billion, on the London Stock Exchange, and soon the UK will open a new Export Finance office in Jeddah, to support UK companies in accessing opportunities in Saudi Arabia.

While visiting Saudi Arabia the Chancellor met the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and held meetings with business and political leaders, including the Minister of Commerce and Investment of Saudi Arabia, Dr Majid bin Abdullah Al Qasabi, the Minister of Finance, Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan, and Energy Minister, Khalid Al-Falih.

The Chancellor was also joined in Saudi Arabia by the Minister for Investment, Graham Stuart, and a delegation including David Schwimmer, CEO of the London Stock Exchange Group.

Further Information

Agreements reached as part of the Strategic Partnership Council include:

- Standard Chartered Bank has been granted their banking license in the Kingdom.

- INEOS has signed an agreement to invest $2 billion with Saudi Aramco and Total to build its first ever plants in the Middle East.

- Alderley has announced a $10 million contract award from Saudi Aramco for the design and manufacturing in-kingdom of Modular Skids. This is the second award of its kind awarded from Saudi Aramco to Alderley in Saudi Arabia with a total of more than £52 million in contract awards in Q1 2019.

- Health Education England signed a Memorandum of Understanding in April for the International Postgraduate Medical Training Schemes (IPGMTS) between Health Education England (HEE) & Scholarships affairs, Ministry of Education.

- Manchester, Birmingham, King's College London and Queen's Belfast Universities have each signed separate agreements with the Ministry of Education, Scholarship Department at the International Higher Education

Conference this year to enable 200 Saudi nurses to join one of these UK universities.

- De La Rue announced a five-year contract with the General Authority of Zakat and Tax (GAZT) to implement and operate a digital tax stamp solution for all tobacco products and soft drinks sold in the Kingdom.

- The Royal Mint signed a contract with the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA) to supply both lower denominations and one Riyal coins together with supporting the Central Bank on coinage forecast advice.

- GlaxoSmithKline (GSK): GSK will be announcing the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) in the next couple of weeks. Through this MoU, GSK aims to further expand its local manufacturing of its innovative pharmaceutical portfolio and invest in local talents and capabilities aligned with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals.

- London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG): Saudi Aramco established a Global Medium-Term Notes Programme (GMTN) and issued their inaugural $12 billion debut bond with five tranches – the largest corporate bond from Middle East, Africa or Asia on London Stock Exchange. This follows a US Dollar denominated sukuk ($2 billion, 4.30%, Jan-2029), listed in September 2018.

Nanoco: developing new techniques to detect and treat cancer

A University of Manchester spin-out is developing nanomaterials known for their use in lighting and solar energy into new fluorescent biomarkers that could detect and improve treatment of some of the deadliest forms of cancer.

Nanoco: developing new techniques to detect and treat cancer

According to the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund, 10,000 people are diagnosed with the disease each year in the UK and it is the fifth most common cause of cancer deaths. It has the lowest survival rate of all cancers, with only 3% of those diagnosed surviving more than 5 years.

Nanoco is working with Professor Sandy MacRobert and researchers at University College London on its pancreatic cancer project. This innovation could help with better diagnosis and treatment.

Quantum dots can guide the physician

Quantum dots are made from a semiconductor material and are about 10,000 times smaller than the thickness of a human hair. They have traditionally been made of toxic materials and used in products such as television screen displays.

Nanoco has developed a way of making quantum dots from non-toxic materials and is investigating how its bio-compatible type of quantum dots, VIVODOTS™ nanoparticles, could be used as fluorescent biomarkers, with the support of funding from Innovate UK.

Nanoco Technologies' Felicia Barklund, Imad Naasani, Mike Davidson and Joe Broughton and their quantum dot material

Nanoco life science chief technology officer Dr Imad Naasani said:

> Quantum dots are fluorescent so, if you hit them with energy, they emit different wavelengths of light. They work in the same way that fireflies do in nature.
>
> Their properties make them attractive for many uses. Because they are very stable, bright and don't photobleach they can be used for real-time imaging of targeted tissue. We can make them bind to a tumour, for example.
>
> A surgeon can use them for image-guided surgery. Other applications could be tracking of stem cells in the body after injection to see if they reach targeted tissues.

Efforts focused on pancreatic and skin cancers

Nanoco is focusing its efforts on image-guided surgery for pancreatic cancer and on early detection and simplified diagnosis of skin cancers. It is carrying out pre-clinical safety tests.

> In our skin cancer project, we are aiming to show that our VIVODOTS™ nanoparticles will work more effectively than current state-of-the-art methods.
>
> It currently takes 3 months to rule whether a lesion is malignant or not and this has a big burden on the medical system. GPs can't make quick decisions, they have to take samples and send them away. The stress imposed on the patient is huge.
>
> We think we can create something like a cream that can be applied so a GP can get an answer in one or 2 days instead of 3 months. Three months is a long time so we expect a better outcome for patients too.

The aim is to link VIVODOTS™ nanoparticles with antibodies and inject them into the patient. This will help to identify cancerous cells during endoscopies, allow image-guided surgery and ensure the killing of any remaining cells left after surgery.

Funding supports high-risk innovation

The company was spun out of the University of Manchester by its chief technology officer Nigel Pickett in 2001. It is now quoted on the main market of the London Stock Exchange.

It specialises in the research, development and large-scale manufacture of heavy-metal-free quantum dots and semiconductor nanoparticles for use in displays, lighting, solar energy and bio-imaging.

The company is just finishing its early pre-clinical safety studies and has yet to test its technology in humans. It could take 5-7 years to develop it fully for use in hospitals and GP surgeries.

Imad added: > Innovate UK funding is helping to accelerate development at this early stage and to ensure a smooth translational phase so that the technology is attractive to big pharma and venture capital.

The company has received funding support from Innovate UK, the Medical Research Council, Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and the Science and Technology Facilities Council since 2011.

British soldiers killed during WW2 are honoured as they are laid to rest

The 2 men were buried on Wednesday 03 July during a moving ceremony at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Salerno War Cemetery in Italy.

The service, organised by the MOD’s Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, was conducted by the Reverend Iorwerth Price CF, reserve Chaplain to the 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment (RANG). Members of the 2nd Battalion, The RANG carried the coffins to their final resting place.

Members of the 2nd Battalion, RANG carry the coffin led by Padre Iorwerth Price and followed by Trumpet Major Matthew Screen, Band of the Household Cavalry, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Nicola Nash, JCCC said:

> These 2 soldiers lost their lives in 1 of the most ferocious battles of the Second World War. Although we were not able to identify them, they have now been laid to rest with honours and their bravery and heroism will always be remembered.

The remains of the 2 soldiers were found by the 1943 Salerno Association, outside of Salerno, on a hill nicknamed “the Pimple” by Allied soldiers during World War 2. This hill was heavily guarded by the Germans and was the focus of intense fighting during September 1943. Despite extensive research and DNA testing, the JCCC were unable to identify these two men.

Preparing to fold the flag, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The 1943 Salerno Association also found the ID bracelet of Major Robert Brown DSO, who was attached to the Royal Leicestershire Regiment and was also killed during action on the Pimple on 16 September 1943. The bracelet was handed back to the JCCC, who will present it to Major Brown’s daughter.

Stefano Esu, CWGC Works Supervisor, Italy, said:

> I am honoured and grateful to be present at the burial of these 2 soldiers at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission’s Salerno War Cemetery. I always try to do my best with great dedication and a sense of responsibility because it is thanks to the sacrifice of these young men that we can live in freedom. Their service and sacrifice have not been forgotten and we will proudly mark and care for their graves, together with all of those who served and fell, in perpetuity.

Two new headstones for the unknown soldiers have been provided by the CWGC.