

News story: Bids for government funding prove strong interest in LaunchUK

- 26 proposals were submitted in response to the call
- Proposals came from spaceports all over the UK, working with vehicle operators from the UK, other European nations and the US
- Multiple proposals have been recommended for further consideration, to ensure any grant funding delivers the best outcome for the UK

The number of responses for government funding to support UK spaceflight has highlighted a strong interest in the UK commercial market for small satellite launch and sub-orbital flight. The UK Space Agency's call for grant proposals to establish initial launch capability in the UK has now concluded, with a number of options being recommended for consideration.

In total 26 proposals were submitted to the call process, representing potential spaceports all over the UK and a range of launch and sub-orbital flight technologies. These were assessed by a panel of independent experts drawn from academia, industry and government. The panel looked at a range of criteria including technical feasibility, commercial sustainability and benefits to the UK.

Ross James, Deputy CEO of the UK Space Agency, said:

"The fact several proposals have been recommended for consideration reflects the exceptional strength of the field, and the high level of interest in LaunchUK. The funding requested exceeded £10 million, and we believe there may be a case for awarding a number of grants to establish the UK's first spaceport and launch capabilities. We will now enter into dialogue with the relevant parties to ensure we are getting the best outcome for the UK."

This is just the start of this exciting new endeavour in the UK, with further opportunities to be a part of the new market for those that missed out on the call. The UK Space Agency will continue to engage with organisations looking to participate in commercial small satellite launch and sub-orbital flight in the UK. Ross James added:

"This funding call is about establishing initial capability in the UK, but our wider ambition remains to grow a strong market, making the UK the best destination in Europe to participate in small satellite launch and sub-orbital flight.

"The proposals we received demonstrated an exciting future of new launch technologies and services. We will continue to engage with all organisations that wish to enter the UK market. We will be holding a second LaunchUK event later this year to bring together this community, and discuss our plans going forward in more detail."

Final announcements about any awards of grant funding are expected later in this financial year.