



University
of Essex

INTERNAL FUNDING · KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Enterprise Project Fund 2026-27

Funding to grow knowledge exchange, leverage external investment and commercialise Essex research and expertise.

Presented by Flavia Popescu-Richardson & Ville Karhusaari

Knowledge Exchange Managers · Research and Enterprise Office

What is the Enterprise Project Fund?

APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

Internal funding that helps academic staff apply their research and expertise beyond the University: building new collaborations, leveraging external funding and taking innovations to market.



New collaborations Connect with partner organisations that can benefit from your expertise.



Test the market Assess demand for your research as a product, service or CPD offer.



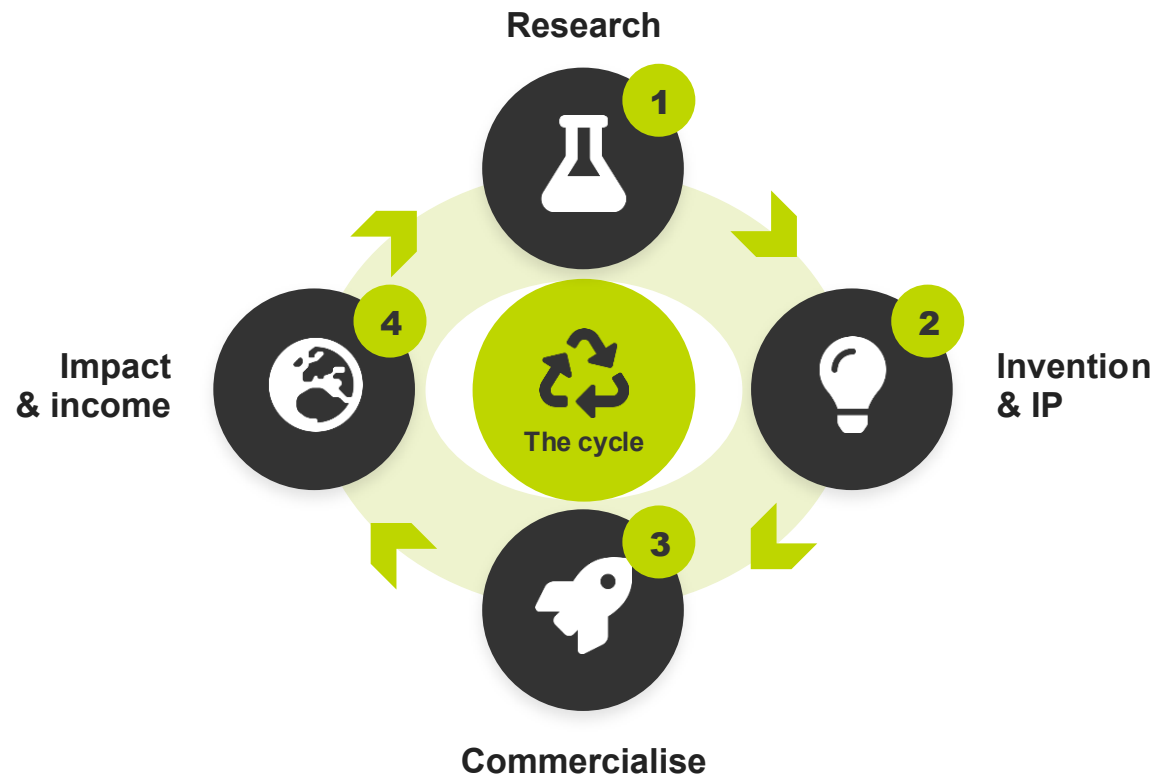
Protect & exploit IP Develop, safeguard and commercialise new intellectual property.

What it supports

- ✓ Proof-of-concept work
- ✓ Prototyping & technical design
- ✓ Market research & validation
- ✓ Industry events & workshops
- ✓ New CPD & short courses
- ✓ Protecting and exploiting IP

Why get involved?

Turn your research into real-world products, income and lasting impact.



What's in it for you



De-risk early ideas

Funding to test and prove a concept before seeking bigger investment.



Real-world impact

Build the evidence of impact that strengthens REF and your portfolio.



New partnerships

Form lasting links with industry and public-sector organisations.

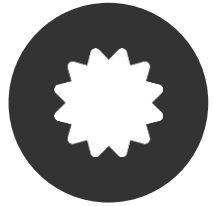


Income & recognition

Share in income from licensing, spin-outs, toolkits and services.

Routes to market

Different ways EPF-funded work can become products, services and income.



Licensing

License your IP to companies in return for royalties and fees.



Spin-out

Launch a new company built around your technology or method.



Partnerships

Collaborate with industry and public-sector partners on funded work.



Toolkits & subscriptions

Package methods and tools as products or subscription services.



And ultimately, impact. Every route turns research into real-world benefit, and new income for you and the University.

Three funding strands

Choose the strand that matches the stage of your idea. All amounts include VAT.



Engage

EXPLORE & CONNECT

up to **£2,000**

Find partners, attend industry events and scope new knowledge exchange opportunities.



Develop

BUILD & TEST

up to **£12,000**

Market research, prototyping and developing new IP to test viability in practice.



Commercialise

TAKE TO MARKET

up to **£35,000**

Proof of concept, protecting IP and bringing research outputs and services to market.

What you can fund

Example activities that build new knowledge exchange collaborations and commercial development.



Find a partner

Identify a business or organisation that could benefit from your expertise.



Develop new leads

Grow opportunities through travel, meetings and workshops.



Assess the market

Research demand for your expertise as a product or service.



Test viability

Try your idea in practice before scaling it up.



Prototype it

Technical design, coding, wire-framing and prototyping.



New CPD & training

Non-accredited short courses or executive education for organisations.



Attend industry events

Represent Essex at industry-led conferences and showcases.



Protect & exploit IP

Develop, safeguard and take intellectual property to market.

Change Agent Hub



Empowering change agents for organisational success: tailored tools and resources that develop resilient leaders of change.

Stages & funding

2020

EPF: Assess market demand for a change-agent decision tool.

2020–21

ESRC IAA: Develop and prototype the tool.

2021–24

BA Innovation Fellowship: Engage change agents and develop resources.

Nov 2025

Consultancy: “What it means to be a change agent” webinar for ECC.

2025–26

EPF: Pricing research, platform resources, LinkedIn survey, marketing and an engagement workshop.

Route to market: a freemium tool earning income through consultancy, e-learning modules and licensed access to resources.

Versatile RobotX



The VRX team with their mobile manipulator robot.



SECTOR **Robotics & embedded AI**



SPIN-OUT **Versatile RobotX Ltd (2024)**



BASE **Colchester, Essex**

A robotics spin-out from Essex Computer Science and Electronic Engineering, turning collaborative AI and robotics research into deployable robots.

Stages & funding

2015–22

Research: UKRI & EU collaborative research at Essex CSEE: foundational robotics and embedded AI.

2023

Defra project: Essex-led agri-robotics project (~£350k) proving the technology in the field. Enterprise Project funding £35k awarded.

2024

Spin-out: Versatile RobotX Ltd formed to commercialise the technology.

2026

SEIS assurance: Advance Assurance secured to raise early-stage investment.

2026–27

To market: First robot sales and customer pilots in target sectors.

Route to market: a spin-out selling robots and robotics services, built on licensed Essex IP and SEIS-backed investment.

The application process

Phase 1 · Prepare and scope your project

STEPS 1 TO 4 OF 8



Mon 13 July · 12pm

Attend the webinar

Optional but recommended.
A live briefing on this call,
with time for your questions.
Register online.

By Mon 27 July

Register your interest

Contact your Knowledge
Exchange Manager. They
check suitability and help
shape your outcomes.

July to August

Scope and cost it

Your KEM discusses the
project, advises on the right
strand and prepares your
project costings.

Before 28 Aug 2026

Internal draft review

Send a draft to your KEM so
they can give feedback well
before the final deadline.

The application process

Phase 2 · Submit, decision and delivery

STEPS 5 TO 8 OF 8



5pm · Fri 11 Sep 2026

Submit your application

Email your final application to keadmin@essex.ac.uk, copying your KEM. This is a hard deadline.

Sept to October

Panel review

A review panel assesses every application against the fund's published criteria.

October 2026

Outcomes announced

Funding decisions are communicated to all applicants during October.

By 31 May 2027

Deliver and spend

Run your project and spend all allocated funding by this date. Keep your KEM updated.

Who to talk to

At a glance



FUNDING STRANDS

£2,000 · £12,000 · £35,000 (inc. VAT)



REGISTER INTEREST

by Monday 27 July



DRAFT TO YOUR KEM

before 28 August 2026



FINAL DEADLINE

5pm, Friday 11 September 2026



SPEND ALL FUNDING

by 31 May 2027



SUBMIT / ENQUIRIES

keadmin@essex.ac.uk

Meet your Knowledge Exchange Managers

Flavia Popescu-Richardson · presenting

CSEE, Maths

Ville Karhusaari · presenting

Law, EBS, Edge Hotel School, Arts & Humanities

Paul McNaught

Govt, Economics, Sociology, LangLing, PPS, ISER

Alex Shakspeare

Life Sciences, Psychology, HSC, SRES

Phil Wilson

T-PIKE Programme Manager · technical staff queries

Ready to start?

Talk to your KEM (Knowledge Exchange Manager) about your idea, the earlier the better. We will help you shape it, scope the outcomes and work up the costings.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/research-funding/enterprise-and-knowledge-exchange-funding>



SUBMIT & ENQUIRIES
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WEBINAR
Mon 13 July, 12pm ·
register online



DEADLINE
5pm, Friday 11 September
2026