

Early-Stage Commercialisation Projects Call Guidance

Overview of ESC Projects Call

The Early-Stage Commercialisation (ESC) Projects Call supports co-created research between SCHEMA academic Co-Investigators (Co-Is) and strategic industry partners. It aims to accelerate translational research that contributes to the Hub's vision and impact.

A Vision for Sustainable Manufacturing

The Sustainable Chemicals and Materials Manufacturing Hub (SCHEMA Hub) is a multi-partner, multi-disciplinary programme uniting leading UK researchers with a broad consortium of commercial, civic, and innovation partners. The Hub's mission is to improve the sustainability of chemical and polymer production by transforming their design, manufacture, and recyclability.

SCHEMA's vision is to develop new science and engineering for the manufacture of sustainable chemicals and materials using renewable raw materials sourced from waste, air, and water, powered by renewable electricity. This work supports UK supply chain resilience and promotes deep interconnectivity across the manufacturing sector—from chemicals to polymers.

By exploiting synergies between diverse industry sectors, SCHEMA enables innovation across high-growth 'downstream' applications in transport, energy, construction, electronics, and consumer goods, empowering them to reach net-zero emissions.

SCHEMA Grand Challenges

ESC projects should align with one or more of SCHEMA Hub's four Grand Challenges:

1. Transform renewable resources and wastes, with renewable power, into chemicals and materials
2. Develop innovative manufacturing processes adaptable for future operations
3. Integrate digital and information technologies to maximise sustainability and resilience
4. Design products for life-cycle sustainability (e.g. re-manufacturing, recycling, biodegradation)

SCHEMA Research Work Packages

Applicants are encouraged to consider how their proposals align with one or more of SCHEMA Hub's Work Packages (WPs):

WP1: Renewable Chemicals and Power

WP2: Digital Information Technologies

WP3: Polymers, Materials, and Application Development

WP4: Process Chemistry and Engineering

WP5: Sustainability Assessments

Important Details

Key Dates

- Call Opens: 1 June 2025
- **Call Closes: 22 September 2025**
- Panel Review: October 2025
- Notification of Outcomes: November 2025
- Project Start Date: January 2026

Funding Details

- Duration: 12 months
- Funding for a Postdoctoral Research Assistant (PDRA), including consumables and travel
- Number of Projects Funded: 5–8

Key Assessment Criteria

Proposals will be assessed based on:

- Excellence of Science
- Quality of Partner Engagement
- Partner Leverage
- Expected Outputs and Impact

Proposal Content and Structure

Proposals must use the official pro-forma (available online) and should not exceed two pages and be clearly structured to reflect the assessment criteria.

1. Scientific Excellence (1 Page)

Demonstrate the novelty and quality of the research.

Include:

- Project Description / Scientific Rationale: Outline scientific objectives and explain how the work aligns with SCHEMA's vision, Grand Challenges, and Work Packages.

2. Partner Engagement

Describe the collaboration with the strategic partner.

Include:

- Partnership Justification: How the partner will enhance delivery and impact
- Partner Expertise: Relevant capabilities and contributions
- Engagement Quality: Depth of involvement (e.g., joint delivery, steering role)

3. Partner Leverage

Demonstrate a minimum contribution of £50k (direct and/or indirect).

Include:

- Resource Breakdown: Direct (cash) and indirect (in-kind) partner contributions, with assigned values
- Leverage Examples:
 - Extending project duration beyond 12 months
 - Co-delivery of project (part academic researcher, part industrial scientist)
 - PDRA secondment to partner

4. Expected Outputs, Impact, and Future Direction

Include:

- Anticipated Outcomes: e.g., patents, follow-on funding, R&D investment, venture formation
- Future Plans: Pathways for scale-up, commercialisation, and continued impact

Eligibility

- Lead Applicants: Must be existing SCHEMA Hub Co-Investigators
- Collaborators: Other academics from SCHEMA partner institutions (Oxford, Bath, Cambridge, Cardiff, Liverpool, York) may be included but cannot lead
- Industry Partners: Should be existing SCHEMA strategic partners. New partners must demonstrate prior engagement and strategic alignment to SCHEMA Hub (e.g., event participation, previous/existing collaborations with SCHEMA Co-Is, a letter of support)

Application Process

- Download the official pro-forma
- Complete your proposal (max. 2 pages)
- Submit by **22 September 2025** via email
- Send to schemahub@chem.ox.ac.uk with the subject line: **ESC Project Proposal [Last Name]**
- Review: Panel review in October 2025
- Notification: Early November 2025

Need Help?

For support in scoping your proposal or estimating partner contributions, please contact: Greg Sulley

SCHEMA Hub Industry Manager

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