

Food and Drink Manufacturing Grant and Funding Opportunities March 2025

Below is a list of the current funding opportunities for food and drink businesses, and a few initiatives which are currently in progress however not open for new funding applications.

Here are the UKRI definitions for the various types of projects included in the table and what they mean in practice:

- **Feasibility study** – investigation of technical, economic, and operational impacts of deploying a technology solution within the existing industrial process.
- **Engineering study** – a detailed project plan that identified specific technical and operational requirements which provide sufficient detail for a business to arrive at an investment decision.
- **Deployment projects** – will support onsite deployment of technologies with the intention of a commercial roll out and permanent installation of technologies at industrial sites.

A quick reference of Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) definitions is included at the end of the document.

Open Schemes:

Programme Name	Countries/ Regions	Details of Scheme	Funding Details	Key Dates / Notes
Scottish Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (SIETF)	Scotland	The Scottish Government announced it is open to expressions of interest regarding potential match-funding investment for industrial decarbonisation projects that can demonstrate significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions such as through energy efficiency, switching fuel to a lower-carbon source or capturing carbon.	<p><u>View further information</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key contacts can be found below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Scottish Enterprise (SE): ian.carstairs@scotent.co.uk → Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE): Keith.Masson@hient.co.uk → South of Scotland: NetZero@sose.scot 	<p>Stage 1 - February to March 2025: Expressions of interest to capture project data via agencies (closure Wednesday 19 March 2025) View the timetable here.</p>
Investor partnerships:	Northeast England (refers to the	The aim of this competition is to provide support for research and development and access to the capital investment that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding type: Investor Partnerships (up to £1.7 million) 	<p>Opened: 24/02/25 Closes: 09/04/25</p>

<p>digital technologies, North East round 2</p>	<p>geography of the North East Combined Authority which includes Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham)</p>	<p>businesses need to develop and commercialise their innovations and grow.</p> <p>Innovate UK, as part of UK Research and Innovation, has selected investor partners who have demonstrated the credibility, capability, capacity and appetite to invest in innovative, technology-led businesses in areas that align with our objectives in programme areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You must demonstrate that if your project is funded, it will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → have significant market impact → be scalable → be attractive to equity investors • Your project must help to grow your innovation activities in the digital technology cluster in North East England, both during and after the project. <p>Find out more details about the scope of the programme</p>	
<p>Launchpad: net zero industry, Southwest Wales – round 2 CR&D</p>	<p>Southwest Wales</p>	<p>The aim of this competition is to support outstanding innovation projects led by businesses.</p> <p>This funding is from Innovate UK’s Launchpad programme which supports the UK government’s goals for local economic growth. This Launchpad is also supporting Net Zero Industry Wales as the local cluster management organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding type: Grant (Your project’s total eligible grant funding request must be between £150,000 and £750,000.) • To lead a project your organisation must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → be a UK registered business of any size → be or involve at least one grant claiming micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) → collaborate with other UK registered organisations → be growing your innovation activities in the net zero industrial innovation cluster in Southwest Wales → have a demonstrable ambition for business growth 	<p>Opened: 24/02/25 Closes: 09/04/25</p>

			Find out more about the scope of the programme	
Innovate UK innovation loans future economy: Round 20	UK	<p>Innovate UK innovation loans are for highly innovative late stage research and development (R&D) projects with the best potential for the future. There must be a clear route to commercialisation and economic impact.</p> <p>Your project must lead to innovative new products, processes or services that are significantly ahead of others currently available, or propose an innovative use of existing products, processes or services. It can also involve a new or innovative business model.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding type: Loan between £100,000 and £2 million (£25 million in total) • To receive an innovation loan for a new project you must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → be a UK registered SME → carry out your project from or in the UK → intend to exploit the results from or in the UK → give evidence that your business is suitable to take on a loan <p>Find out more details about the scope of the programme</p>	<p>Opened: 06/03/25 Closes: 07/05/25</p>
Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS)	SMEs across the West Midlands, including Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton, as well as Worcestershire and the Marches, Warwickshire	<p>The Pilot Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS) is offering 4000 free energy assessments. The assessments will provide recommendations for energy reduction, helping to reduce costs.</p> <p>Then after a business has undertaken an energy assessment there will be an opportunity to apply for a grant for commercial and industrial SMEs to facilitate investment in energy efficiency measures.</p>	<p>Opportunity for the SMEs to apply for grants up to £100,000.</p> <p>These grants will be administered by the SME's local authority.</p>	<p>Ensure to register for the correct authority or this could delay your assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating in Birmingham, Solihull, Coventry or the Black Country • Operating within Herefordshire, Shropshire or Telford & Wrekin • Operating within Staffordshire County Council

	and Stoke and Staffordshire.			
Bio renewables Development Centre	Yorkshire	<p>The BDC provides customers with innovative ideas to convert plants, microbes and biowastes into profitable, high-value products.</p> <p>The BDC can support businesses by delivering desk-based assessments (e.g. market research, mapping of primary and secondary sectors), facilitating connections across the bioeconomy sector, and helping companies to find value across their supply chain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded support for regional SMEs Part-financed by the ERDF, the BDC offers funded support for Yorkshire SMEs operating in bioeconomy sectors. The offer includes lab- and consultancy-based projects. • Business Innovation insight Helping customers to find commercial value chains by delivering market research and mapping, facilitating introductions and connections (B2B, B2C), providing business advice and identifying funding opportunities. 	To discuss how the BDC can help your research or your business, contact the BDC team info@biorenewables.org or +44 (0)1904 328040
Made Smarter - SME Digital Adoption Support	Currently England only	<p>Made Smarter Digital Adoption Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer funding and support for SME manufacturing business looking to adopt technology. • Opportunities available in: North East, North West, West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, West of England and East Midlands. 	<p>SME Regional Digital Adoption Support</p> <p>North East - delivered by North East LEP & Tess Valley Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes workshops, guidance, leadership training and a 1-2-1 digital health check. Funding routes also available <p>North West - delivered by The Growth Company, Cheshire & Warrington LEP, and Cumbria LEP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers a fully funded assessment, match funded grants of up to £20k to purchase hardware and software <p>West Midlands - delivered by Coventry and Warwickshire LEP with GBSLEP, the Black Country, Worcestershire Business, The Marshes, Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match funded grants up to £20k for the purchase of hardware and software 	Most regions offering match funded grants up to £20k for SMEs looking for support to adopt digital technologies.

			<p>Yorkshire and the Humber - delivered by South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority with West Yorkshire Combined Authority, York and North Yorkshire Growth Hub and Hull and East Yorkshire LEP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully funded business assessment Match funded grants of up to £20k for the purchase of hardware and software. 	
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***IETF:** The funding for the second competition window of phase 3 of the IETF was announced by the previous Government, however we are awaiting for an official confirmation from the new Government as it wasn't included in the Autumn Budget and currently cannot provide further details.

Up-coming Schemes:

Programme Name	Countries/ Regions	Details of Scheme	Funding Details	Key Dates / Notes
Testing transformative AI technology	UK	<p>The £7 million funding comes from the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Technology Missions Fund, delivered by the Innovate UK BridgeAI programme.</p> <p>It will help the 120 projects test potentially transformative AI technology across four high growth industry sectors, including the agri-food sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £7million fund in total (Specific details will follow when the programme opens) • Awarded to SMEs 	TBC

Recently Closed Schemes:

Programme Name	Countries/ Regions	Details of Scheme	Funding Details	Key Dates / Notes
Innovate UK innovation loans future economy: Round 19	UK	<p>Innovate UK is offering up to £25 million in loans to micro, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).</p> <p>Innovate UK innovation loans are for highly innovative late-stage research and development (R&D) projects with the best potential for the future. There must be a clear route to commercialisation and economic impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding type: Loan • You can apply for a loan of between £100,000 and £2 million to fund your project's eligible costs. • To receive an innovation loan for a new project you must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → be a UK registered micro, small or medium sized enterprise (SME) → carry out your project from or in the UK 	<p>Opened: 09/01/25 Closed: 05/03/25</p>

			<p>→ intend to exploit the results from or in the UK</p> <p>→ give evidence that your business is suitable to take on a loan</p> <p>Find out more about the scope of the programme</p>	
BridgeAI Innovation Exchange – Call for challenge holders	UK	<p>The BridgeAI Innovation Exchange (iX), led by Innovate UK Business Connect, offers an exciting opportunity for leading UK enterprises to tackle critical productivity challenges.</p> <p>By hosting these challenges, organisations can benefit from cutting-edge AI solutions from selected solution providers who are supported by access grant funding of up to £50,000 per project.</p>	<p>Applies to: medium to large UK-based enterprises, operating within high- growth sectors, including food processing.</p> <p>You will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A defined productivity challenge with potential for broad, scalable solutions • High-quality, relevant data to support solution development and integration • A commitment to collaboration, as you'll engage with AI solution providers to ensure effective solution delivery 	<p>Opened: 14/01/25 Closed: 07/02/25</p>
AI solutions to develop AI competencies in key sectors	UK	<p>Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, will invest up to £2 million in innovation projects as part of the BridgeAI programme.</p> <p>The aim of this competition is to develop responsible and ethical AI personalised learning solutions, to support AI competency development in specific sectors including agriculture and food processing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding type: Grant • Your project's total eligible grant funding request must be between £50,000 and £100,000. • To lead a project or work alone your organisation must: <p>→ be a UK registered business of any size</p> <p>→ carry out its project work in the UK</p> <p>→ intend to exploit the project results from or in the UK</p>	<p>Opened: 11/11/24 Closed: 29/01/25</p>

			<p>→ be or involve at least one UK registered micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME)</p>	
<p>Innovate UK Smart Grants: November 2024</p>	UK	<p>Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, is investing up to £15 million in the best game changing and world leading ideas, designed for swift, successful commercialisation.</p> <p>This competition has a focused scope and eligibility criteria to support micro, small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their partners in developing genuinely new innovations with significant potential for rapid economic return to the UK.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Type: Grant • View here to check if you are in scope • Your project must: <p>→ start by 1 July 2025 and end by 30 June 2027</p> <p>→ include at least one micro, small or medium enterprise (SME) as the lead or a collaborative grant claiming partner</p> <p>→ follow specific rules depending on its duration</p> <p>→ carry out all of its project work in the UK</p> <p>→ intend to exploit the results from or in the UK</p>	<p>Opened: 14/11/24 Closed: 22/01/25</p>
<p>Innovate UK innovation loans future economy: Round 18</p>	UK	<p>Innovate UK is offering up to £25 million in loans to micro, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding type: Loan • Loans can be between £100,000 and £2 million. • You must be able to show that you: <p>→ be a UK registered micro, small or medium sized enterprise (SME)</p> <p>→ carry out your project from or in the UK</p> <p>→ intend to exploit the results from or in the UK</p>	<p>Opened: 31/10/24 Closed: 8/01/25</p> <p><i>The funding available will be allocated across a series of competitions with the next round opening on the day the previous round closes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>round 19 will open on 9 January 2025 and</i>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → give evidence that your business is suitable to take on a loan 	<p><i>will close on 5 March 2025</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>round 20 will open on 6 March 2025 and will close on 7 May 2025</i>
Launchpad: bio-based manufacturing, Scotland, round two CR&D	Scotland	<p>Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, will work with Scottish Enterprise to invest up to £5.25 million in innovation projects.</p> <p>The aim of this competition is to support outstanding innovation projects led by businesses. Your business must use the funding to grow your innovation activities in the bio-based manufacturing innovation cluster in Scotland both during and after the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding type: Grant • Your project's total grant funding request must be between £150,000 and £1 million. • Your business must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → be a UK registered business of any size → be or involve at least one grant claiming micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) → collaborate with other UK registered organisations → be growing your innovation activities in the bio-based manufacturing cluster in Scotland 	<p>Opens: 4/11/24 Closed: 11/12/24</p>
Launchpad: agri-tech and food technology, Mid and North Wales MFA	Mid and North Wales (Ceredigion, Powys, Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham)	<p>Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, will work with Ceredigion County Council (host of Growing Mid Wales), Cyngor Gwynedd (host of Ambition North Wales) and Welsh Government to invest up to £1.5 million in innovation projects.</p> <p>The aim of this competition is to support outstanding innovation projects led by businesses. Your business must use the funding to grow your innovation activities in the agri-tech and food technology cluster in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Type: Grant • Your project's grant funding request must be between £25,000 and £100,000. • Your business must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → be a UK registered micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) → be growing your innovation activities in the agri-tech and food technology cluster in Mid and North Wales 	<p>Opens: 4/11/24 Closed: 11/12/24</p>

		Mid and North Wales, both during and after the project.	→ have a demonstrable ambition for business growth	
Investor Partnerships in digital technologies, north-east: round one	North East England (refers to the geography of the North East Combined Authority which includes Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, and County Durham.)	<p>Innovate UK, as part of UK Research and Innovation, will work with North East Combined Authority to invest up to £2.5m in innovation projects.</p> <p>This funding is from Innovate UK's Launchpad programme which supports the UK government's goals for local economic growth.</p> <p>The aim of this competition is to provide support for your research and development and access to the capital investment that you need to develop and commercialise your innovations and grow your business.</p>	<p>→ Applies to: UK Registered SMEs</p> <p>→ The eligibility criteria for your project depends on your research category.</p> <p>For feasibility studies projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your total project costs must be between £50,000 and £300,000 • the project duration must be between 6 and 12m <p>For industrial research projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your total project costs must be between £100,000 and £1m • the project duration must be between 6 and 18m <p>For experimental development projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your total project costs must be between £250,000 and £2m • the project duration must be between 12 and 18m <p>For all projects, your project must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not start before 1 May 2025 • end by 31 December 2026 	Opens: 4/11/24 Closed: 11/12/24
Launchpad: net zero industry, South-	Southwest Wales (Carmarthenshi	Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, will work with Welsh Government and its agencies including Net	• Funding Type: Grant	Opens: 4/11/24 Closed: 11/12/24

West Wales, round two MFA	<p>re, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and the City and County of Swansea)</p>	<p>Zero Industry Wales to invest up to £1 million in innovation projects.</p> <p>The aim of this competition is to support outstanding innovation projects led by businesses. Your business must use the funding to grow your innovation activities in the net zero industrial cluster in South West Wales, both during and after the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your project’s grant funding request must be between £25,000 and £100,000. • Your project must focus on the markets for industrial decarbonisation in Southwest Wales and globally. • Your business must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → be a UK registered micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) → be growing your innovation activities in the net zero industry innovation cluster in South West Wales → not have previously been awarded funding from the Round 1 MFA competition strand for this South West Wales Launchpad → have a demonstrable ambition for business growth 	
Innovate UK Smart grants: July 2024	<p>UK</p>	<p>The Innovate UK Smart grant has focused scope and eligibility criteria to support micro, small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their partners in developing genuinely new innovations with significant potential for rapid economic return to the UK.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding type: Grant • Your project must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → start by 01 May 2025 and end by 30 April 2027 → include at least one micro, small or medium enterprise (SME) as the lead or a collaborative grant claiming partner → follow specific rules depending on its duration → carry out all of its project work in the UK 	<p>Opened: 23/7/24 Closed: 13/11/24</p>

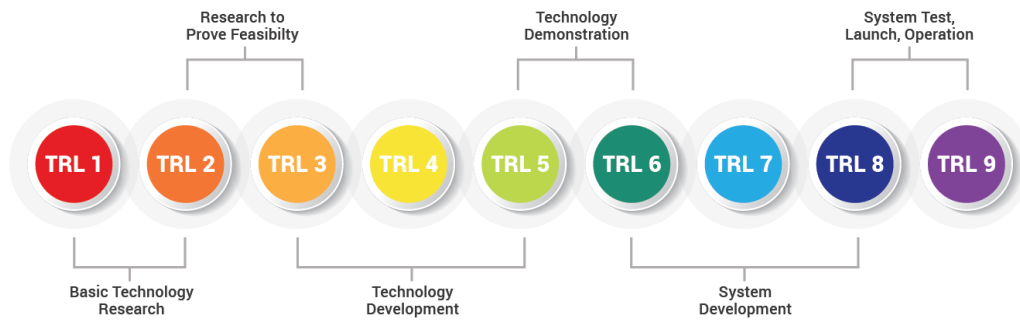
			→ intend to exploit the results from or in the UK	
Agri-tech and food technology, Eastern England - Round 2 MFA	UK	Innovate UK, in collaboration with Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council, Greater Lincolnshire LEP and the Greater Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to invest up to £2.5 million in innovation projects.	<p>UK registered businesses can apply a total grant funding request between £25,000 and £100,000.</p> <p>Your project must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • last between 6 and 12 • carry out all of its project work in the UK • intend to exploit the results from or in the UK • not start before 1 April 2025 • end by 30 June 2026 	<p>Opened: 23/9/24 Closed: 6/11/24</p>
Agri-tech and food technology, Eastern England – round 3 CR&D	UK	Innovate UK in collaboration with Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council, Greater Lincolnshire LEP and the Greater Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority will invest up to £2.5 million in innovation projects.	<p>UK registered businesses of any size can apply for a total grant funding request between £150,000 and £300,000</p> <p>Your project must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • last between 6 and 18 months • carry out all of its project work in the UK • intend to exploit the results from or in the UK • help to grow your innovation activities during and after the project in the innovation cluster described in the Scope section • not start before 1 April 2025 	<p>Opened: 23/9/24 Closed: 6/11/24</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • end by 31 December 2026 	
Innovate UK innovation loans future economy: round 17	UK	<p>To participate successfully in this scheme, your project must lead to innovative new products, processes or services that are significantly ahead of others currently available, or propose an innovative use of existing products, processes, or services. It can also involve a new or innovative business model.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total fund: £25m. Each participant can apply for a loan from £100,000 and £2 million • To receive an innovation loan for a new project you must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → be a UK registered micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) → carry out your project from or in the UK → intend to exploit the results from or in the UK → give evidence that your business is suitable to take on a loan 	<p>Opened: 29/08/24 Closed: 30/10/24</p> <p>Round 18 will open the day after Round 17 closes.</p>
Innovate UK Smart grants: July 2024	UK	<p>The aim of this funding grant is to support micro, small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their partners in developing genuinely new innovations with significant potential for rapid economic return to the UK.</p> <p>Proposals must be business focused, and show deliverable, realistic, adequately resourced plans to achieve return on investment, growth and market share following project completion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding grant up to £25m • Your project must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → start by 01 April 2025 and end by 31 March 2027 → include at least one micro, small or medium enterprise (SME) as the lead or a collaborative grant claiming partner → follow specific rules depending on its duration → carry out all of its project work in the UK → intend to exploit the results from or in the UK 	<p>Opened: 25/07/24 Closed: 23/10/24</p>

<p>Innovate UK innovation loans future economy: Round 16</p>	<p>UK</p>	<p>This competition offers loans to help businesses overcome barriers to their innovations becoming a successful, commercial reality.</p> <p>The aim is to make a considerable economic impact which results in significant, sustainable business growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can apply for a loan of between £100,000 and £2 million to fund your project’s eligible costs. • The applicants must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → be a UK registered micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) → carry out your project from or in the UK → intend to exploit the results from or in the UK → give evidence that your business is suitable to take on a loan 	<p>Opened: 27/7/2024 Closed: 28/8/2024</p>
<p>AI Upskilling fund: application guide</p>	<p>UK</p>	<p>The objectives of the scheme are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stimulate employer investment in AI training • address AI skills gaps in the UK workforce that are limiting AI adoption • measure the impact of AI upskilling on business productivity and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding available: £6.4 million • To apply you must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → be registered and operate in the UK → employ between 1 to 249 employees → be defined as an SME per the BEIS SME action plan: 2022 to 2025 → have been operating for at least 1 year at the time of application → operate in the Professional and Business Services sector as defined by the SIC codes <p>View the guidance for more details</p>	<p>Closed: 18/08/24</p> <p>A result letter will be sent to all applicants on September 2024.</p>
<p>Investment Readiness Programme - Part of the Made Smarter Innovation Sustainability Accelerator</p>	<p>UK</p>	<p>The programme aims to accelerate investment readiness by offering tailored support to help participants navigate the investment landscape, secure research, and funding opportunities, and boost their market presence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who can apply: registered and active UK based companies • What does the scheme include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → £5,000 cash funding → Strategic guidance → Tailored support → Investment readiness support 	<p>Closed: Sunday 21st July</p>

→ Diagnostic sessions

Technology Readiness Level Scale



- TRL1 – Basic Principles
- TRL2 – Invention and Research
- TRL3 – Proof of Concept
- TRL4 – Bench Scale Research
- TRL5 – Pilot Scale
- TRL6 – Large Scale
- TRL7 – Inactive Commissioning
- TRL8 – Active Commissioning
- TRL9 - Operations