

# FAQ for Applicants v1.2

## CreaTech Frontiers – Foundations Funding Call

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### 1. Scope

#### What is in scope?

- Innovative ideas for new content, products and services using creative technologies.
- Prototyping, testing and developing new content, products, services and experiences
- Developing early-stage concepts, projects or prototypes around responsible and human-centred applications of creative technologies.
- R&D activity that will generate business innovation and growth.
- Creative research that prototypes and explores content and experiences with audiences and users
- Exploration of new business models and intellectual property (IP) strategies within the context of specific new content, products, services and experiences

#### What is not in scope?

- 'Business as usual' for you or your organisation
- Purely theoretical research, critical studies or historical analysis

## 2. Eligibility

### **What type of creative companies can apply?**

The CreaTech Frontiers Foundations call is designed for SMEs, micro-businesses and freelancers in the West Midlands region that wish to develop an innovative idea involving creative technologies through collaborative research and development (R&D).

### **Can CICs and charities apply?**

Community Interest Companies can apply. Charities can be involved in a project as collaborators but can only apply for funding if they also have company status.

### **Can individuals apply?**

Yes, we welcome applications from individuals who have a unique tax reference and are based in the West Midlands region.

### **What areas are covered by the West Midlands region?**

The six counties of the West Midlands region are Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands county, and Worcestershire. Postcodes in any of these six counties, including all local authorities areas included in the region, are eligible.

### **I am a registered company/individual outside the West Midlands region, can I still apply or are there other opportunities for me?**

No, only registered companies and individuals resident in the West Midlands region as defined above can apply. You can still be named as a collaborator in a proposal from a West Midlands-based applicant if they can demonstrate that your role is instrumental for the project.

### **What is the eligibility regarding education-focused projects?**

Education-related projects are eligible, but please consider that our priority is to fund innovative ideas and the development of innovative content, products, services and experience using creative technologies.

### **I have not received any funding before for my work, can I apply?**

Yes, this is one of our key priorities. We fully encourage applications from eligible SMEs, micro-businesses and freelancers who have not yet had the opportunity to apply for funding or may be from underrepresented or under-supported areas of the West Midlands.

## 3. Application Process

### What is a good application?

A good application will show alignment to CreaTech Frontiers' vision to transform creative content, products, services, practices and policies through inclusive innovation. It will detail work reaching beyond current uses or standards for creative technology and illustrate how at least one of our key themes - responsible innovation, EDI and sustainability - are fully integrated into the project aim. Finally, a good application will clearly demonstrate ambition but be realistically achievable with the time and resources awarded in this grant call.

### What is a bad application?

A bad application is one which does not align to the vision for CreaTech Frontiers. It may be a project which lacks a clear aim and ambition and does not consider novel applications, tools, platforms, or processes for creative technology. This may be a project which aims to use current technology in a standard way or develop irresponsible or exclusive practices in its design.

### What is required by the Project Overview deadline?

Sections A, B and C of the application form should be completed by the Project Overview deadline of 21<sup>st</sup> July 2025, 13:00 BST. This is required for all applications to both the EXPLORE and EXPERIMENT themes. The sections of the application form titled "Grant" (section A), "About You" (section B) and "Project Outline" (section C) should be completed. This will help us allocate appropriate resources to the review process in a timely manner.

**Please DO NOT submit the application form at this time.** You will still be able to edit or update these sections of the application form before the application deadline of 4<sup>th</sup> August 2025, 13:00 BST.

### I did not submit the required information by the Project Overview deadline, can I still apply?

To help us allocate the optimal review team for your application, we highly encourage you to complete the required information for the Project Overview deadline. However, we realise that in some situations this may not be possible, and this is not a mandatory requirement. You can therefore still apply for the funding by submitting the application before the final deadline of 4<sup>th</sup> August 2025, 13:00 BST.

## **Do I need to apply for the full amount of funding, or can I apply for part of it?**

You don't need to apply for the full amount of funding. We encourage the submission of applications that offer commensurate value for the cost of the project. This means you can apply for the level of funding suitable to meet the aims of your project up to the full grant amount.

## **Which one should I apply for, EXPLORE (up to £5k) or EXPERIMENT (up to £10k)?**

EXPLORE and EXPERIMENT are two distinct strands which represent different funding levels and different project maturity levels. Reviewers will assess each application based on this alignment alongside the project value for money. We therefore encourage you to be honest and realistic about the current position and needs of your project, remembering that EXPLORE grants are for initial exploration of ideas for innovative content, products or services through collaborative R&D, and EXPERIMENT grants are to progress the development of existing concepts, projects or prototypes for innovative content, products or services through collaborative R&D.

## **My idea is preliminary or just a concept, am I still eligible to apply?**

Yes, we welcome concept ideas which focus on the themes of CreaTech Frontiers, and these may align well to the EXPLORE strand.

## **How many times can I apply over the course of the 5-year cluster programme?**

You can apply to more than one funding call over the 5 years of the project. Please remember that you can only submit one application within any funding call.

## **Can I be named on other applications as a freelancer?**

Yes, you can be named on more than one application in a freelance capacity. The main applicant would need to clearly outline your role as a collaborator within their project proposal.

## **If I am unsuccessful this time, will there be other opportunities for funding or support through CreaTech Frontiers?**

Yes, we will offer unsuccessful applicants support in the forms of events and workshops and we will be running more funding calls over the five years of the CreaTech Frontiers cluster programme. We will aim to provide you with constructive feedback on your grant

application and signpost potential collaborators or networks to help you shape and refine your ideas. You can re-apply to CreaTech Frontiers with a new project, or with the same project if you demonstrate that all feedback on your original proposal has been addressed in the resubmission.

### **What about Intellectual Property (IP)?**

All grant recipients will retain the IP they develop in Createch Frontiers. Our aim is to build a sustainable and prosperous CreaTech cluster in the West Midlands - to see new businesses emerge and existing businesses grow. Should projects decide to sell IP developed through the cluster programme to companies outside the West Midlands, we retain the right to review this arrangement.

### **Can the supply chain for my project be outside the region?**

Some elements can be external (e.g. specialised technical expertise or services), but the benefits of the R&D impact for the West Midlands region must be clearly demonstrated and evidenced.

### **Is there a required Minimum Viable Product (MVP)?**

No MVP is required for this funding call. You can apply with just an idea or a partially developed prototype.

### **What happens to the funding if I cannot start the project by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025?**

We will aim to have your grant agreement in place and funds transferred to you by the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2025. You will have then a month to start your project. In most cases, if you are unable to start your project by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025, the grant will be withdrawn.

### **Am I required to evidence my spends at the end of the project?**

At the end of the R&D activity you will undertake a review with the CreaTech Frontiers team to look at grant spend against the original budget submitted at the application stage, to ensure costs align to activity undertaken. Where appropriate, receipts will be requested as evidence of spending.

### **What happens to the funding If I have not spent the funds awarded to me by the project end date of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026?**

If you believe that you will not spend your grant by 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026, you will need to talk to the CreaTech Frontiers Team as soon as possible to discuss in detail if there is a realistic

date within the next 4-week period by which you will have spent the grant. If this is not possible, the remaining grant will be withdrawn.

## 4. Academic support

### **How do we find academic support?**

If you already know or have identified academics from the CreaTech Frontiers R&D pool that you wish to collaborate with, you can name them in the application. Please refer to the Call Guidance for the names and expertise of the academics in the CreaTech Frontiers R&D pool. If not, the CreaTech Frontiers team will allocate academics to funded applications, based on alignment of research expertise and the R&D needs of the grant recipients.

### **Is academic support free for companies and freelancers?**

Yes, academic support for collaborative R&D is provided at no cost to the companies or the freelancers and in addition to the grant. The number of days of support will vary depending on the value of grant awarded and the R&D needs of the project. This will be outlined to applicants if they are successfully awarded a grant.

### **What facilities are available to use at the four universities?**

Successful applicants will have access to a network of four CreaTech Frontiers complementary labs, acting as interconnected hubs for collaborative R&D, including world-class facilities and computing infrastructure:

- Birmingham City University, CreaTech Frontiers Lab at STEAMhouse and other spaces at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and Parkside (immersive video and audio, motion capture, world building, high-end recording studios and performance venues)
- University of Coventry, Labs in the Delia Derbyshire building (virtual production and immersive)
- University of Birmingham, Transformative Humanities Lab (AI and ML for creative applications)
- University of Warwick, Fusion Lab (Gaming, esports, and animation)
- Royal Shakespeare Company (Stratford-upon-Avon), Mobile CreaTech Frontiers Lab (mobile equipment on loan for createch projects, access to theatre space)

Access to the Labs will be determined through discussion between the grant recipient, academic and technical support team after the grant has been allocated. Technical support in the labs will be available for the duration of the R&D collaborations.

## 5. Funding

### Can freelancers be funded, especially if they are out of the region?

Freelancers from outside of the West Midlands region can be supported by a West Midlands based grant recipient, but the regional impact must be clear. Where these types of collaboration are known at the time of applying, you should outline details of the support and why there is a requirement to work with a freelancer from outside of the region, outlining the rationale.

### Can I pay myself from the grant funding?

Yes, you can pay yourself and use some of the grant to cover your time to undertake R&D collaborations. You should outline in your application why this approach is required and how it will enable the R&D activity to happen that may otherwise not be possible. The grant cannot be used to support 'business as usual' activity.

### Is the grant taxable?

In line with HMRC rules, Foundations grants are taxable as trading income. However, the grant income can be offset with qualifying business expenses, both for freelancers and companies, ideally reducing your taxable profit to zero. Remember to **keep receipts and accurate records** to support all expenses.

### Is the grant subject to subsidy control rules?

The funding is subject to subsidy control – "Minimal Financial Assistance" (MFA). You must not exceed £315,000 in government funding over three fiscal years. You will be required to state if you are/are not within your subsidy control limit at the time of application.

### What insurance and risk assessments are required?

This will depend on your project – details will be confirmed with each technician team in the specific Lab location that you will be using. Undertaking R&D activity within a university campus will require risk assessments to be undertaken in advance of R&D work commencing. You should be able to evidence that you have public liability insurance cover.

### Can the project core partners participate in grant applications. Can they be a named partner?

No, existing CreaTech Frontiers core partners (Birmingham City University, Coventry University, Digital Catapult, Royal Shakespeare Company, University of Birmingham and University of Warwick) cannot apply for grants or receive payments from the grants awarded

to a grant recipient. Individual academics can apply for grants only in their capacity as freelancers or company owners if they have a separate business that is completely independent from the university that employs them.

### **Can a CreaTech Frontiers industry partner\* participate in a grant application? Can they be named as a collaborator?**

Yes, but please consider the following. If you are already working with an organisation who is a CreaTech Frontiers industry partner, you should clearly outline within the grant application the existing relationship and how the collaboration will enable R&D innovation to happen. How would the R&D grant enable you to move to the next step, and how will it add value to your existing collaboration? If the industry partner is receiving funding directly from CreaTech Frontiers to deliver a specific activity outlined in the original funding submission, then the grant applicant should clearly outline how this collaboration on R&D activity is above and beyond that activity.

### **What documentation will you need from me if I am successful?**

As a minimum, the documentation we expect to ask you for will include:

**Grant Agreement Terms and Conditions:** You will be required to sign and return the CreaTech Frontiers Grant Agreement before any costs can be claimed on the project.

**Nominated contacts:** We will ask you to confirm a project contact and a finance contact (they can be the same person).

**Bank account and other financial details:** In order to pay your grant, we will need your bank details. You will also need to complete a new supplier form so that we can set you up as a supplier on our systems.

**Payments and financial claims:** 80% of the grant will be paid at the start of the project, once the grant agreement has been signed. The remaining 20% of the grant will be paid at the end of the project, after the final project report has been submitted. Costs are eligible only if they are incurred between the project start and end dates.

**Document retention and audit:** You should retain all records relating to the project for at least five years after it finishes. We may ask you provide further supporting evidence to

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\* As of 1 June 2025: Advantage Creative, Ars Electronica, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, BIMM University, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Opera Company, Birmingham Open Media, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Capture, Central Conservatory of Music, Covatic, Coventry City Council, Create Central, Creative UK, Culture Central, Danucore, Future Screens NI, Hollywood Gaming, Holosphere, Reach, Rebellion, South by Southwest, Tech West Midlands, The Repertory Theatre, The Space, Totem Learning, Vodafone, West Midlands Combined Authority.



satisfy requests under our own regulations or audits from the AHRC, the funder of the CreaTech Frontiers cluster.

## 6. Review Process and Outcome

### **Who will review my application?**

Each application will be reviewed initially by specialist academics from the four university partners. A second review stage will include the CreaTech Frontiers Management Team and industry professionals.

### **What feedback will be provided to unsuccessful applicants?**

We aim to provide constructive feedback and support with next steps to all unsuccessful applicants.

### **Can I appeal a decision or provide feedback on my experience?**

As part of our commitment to responsible innovation we aim to provide transparency in our processes, and we will provide you with feedback on your grant application. You will not be able to appeal the final decision on your application, but you are more than welcome to share your feedback on any aspect of your experience with the process.