

Competition to find business ideas that are out of this world

The UK Space Agency will provide funding and the first space flight for the winning concepts, which could be anything from medicines and innovative materials developed in microgravity, to space-flown consumer products.

Matched funding of up to £1 million is available via the UK Space Agency from the European Space Agency's Business Applications Space Solutions fund. The announcement was made during World Space Week, which runs from 4 to 10 October.

Science Minister Chris Skidmore said:

Developments in space inspired technology have resulted in truly remarkable breakthroughs – from the hi-tech materials we use in engineering to examining cancer molecules within the human body.

It is amazing to see our most innovative businesses and entrepreneurs tackling one of the UK's greatest opportunities. For them, the sky is not the limit. The opportunity to test their pioneering projects in space will help ensure the UK remains a global science superpower.

The US is already exploring the emerging commercial microgravity market and its International Space Station (ISS) portfolio of projects has leveraged more than \$100 million from commercial sources. The market for this portfolio is estimated to be more than \$110 billion.

Emily Gravestock, Head of Applications Strategy at the UK Space Agency, said:

The global space sector is changing rapidly and we want the UK to be at the forefront of the commercialisation of microgravity, as part of our vision to lead the new space age. This funding could help open up whole new markets, create jobs and growth here on Earth and attract investment to support future research and exploration activities.

The selected projects will fly to the ISS, where they will be unloaded by astronauts and housed in the platforms provided by either the ICE Cubes or Bioreactor Express facilities. Payloads will have to range in size from a small matchbox to a large shoebox, and can make use of the resources provided by each facility, including power, data and, in the case of Bioreactor Express, temperature control and simulated gravity.

The environment of the ISS, where astronauts and objects float weightlessly,

offers a great opportunity to investigate novel materials, life science R&D and new technologies.

The European Space Agency is establishing a Business in Space Growth network in order to help build demand for low Earth orbit opportunities, particularly around the ISS. The network will bring together service providers and customers, augmented by additional funding sources in one programme with the aim to boost commercial research and applications in Space – and this call is supporting this initiative.

Libby Jackson, Human Exploration Programme Manager, said:

Even with technological improvements and the falling cost of launch, space travel is expensive. To support future exploration plans, including sending people to the Moon and Mars, we are encouraging entrepreneurs from across the UK to develop new business ideas. The best ones could profit from a flight on the International Space Station.

At the UK Space Conference held in September, Science Minister Chris Skidmore made a commitment to build the UK's national capability and forge new international partnerships, while strengthening its commitment to the European Space Agency, which delivers world-leading science and a significant return on investment, benefiting people and businesses across the country.

[World Space Week](#) is a United Nations celebration of space and science. This year's theme is "The Moon: Gateway to the stars". Thousands of events will take place all over the world, bringing people together to inspire an interest in space.