[News story: Cleaner and more efficient railways: apply for contracts](#)

The £3.5 million funding opportunity for businesses will encourage innovation in the UK rail sector, demonstrate new technologies to customers and industry and build better railways for everyone.

Innovate UK is launching this competition on behalf of the [Department for Transport (DfT)](#).

It is being run through the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI).

Growing demand and expectations

[Statistics show](#) that the UK rail industry transported more than 1.7 billion passengers as well as millions of tonnes of freight last year. The number is likely to double within a decade.

This, coupled with growing customer expectations, present a real challenge to the rail and light-rail industries.

New technologies could help to meet the demand and offer more sustainable, quality services, journeys and better value to users.

Greener railways and a better customer experience

We are looking for well-developed innovations that are ready to be tested in an environment with railway customers and industry.

The competition has 2 themes.

In the first, projects should look at reducing the carbon footprint of railways across stations, rolling stock and infrastructure. Your project could focus on:

- building stations with a zero carbon footprint
- improving air quality in stations and across the network
- reducing noise and pollution
- finding alternatives to fossil fuels, batteries or dual power systems, or supporting cheaper electrification
- developing lightweight, energy-efficient rolling stock
- transferring knowledge from other sectors, such as automotive or aerospace
- making better use of energy generation and storage

The second is inviting projects that use innovative technology to build a station of the future that improves the passenger experience. This could include:

- offering a seamless end-to-end journey
- supporting accessibility for all passengers
- developing ticketless gate lines and barrier-free access
- developing virtual assistant technology
- providing reliable, consistent information during disruption and delays

Addressing the big 4

Funding is for integration and direct testing with users. Your project should gather feedback, show how it would benefit passengers and demonstrate a significant change for the rail industry.

It must also look at:

- reducing costs by 50% or more
- doubling capacity
- halving carbon emissions
- improving the experiences of customers

Competition information

- the competition opens on 8 October 2018 and the deadline for registration is midday on 21 November 2018
- it is open to organisations of all sizes and sectors
- we expect to fund up to 12 projects with total costs of between £250,000 and £350,000, including VAT
- projects will be 100% funded
- briefing events will be held on 9 October 2018 in York, 11 October in London as well as an online webinar
- projects must start by 1 March 2019 and can last up to 9 months