

[News story: Developing early-stage, user-centred design: apply for funding](#)

Innovate UK has up to £1 million to help organisations put high-quality, human-centred design at the earliest stages of innovation.

This competition will fund projects across a wide range of technologies and markets. It applies to new concepts as well as testing and improving existing ideas.

Why early-stage design matters

Thinking about what customers, users and stakeholders need at an early stage can show organisations where to concentrate their effort and innovation.

Improving the design process can help to spot flaws, uncover new angles and shed light on what customers are actually doing to inform further research and development.

Previous projects to be awarded grants include 'delivering warmth', which wants to help people heat their homes and manage how much water they use, and a wearable device for infants to monitor their health and allow for faster, more accurate diagnosis.

What makes a desirable product?

We're looking for projects that explore what people really need from products and services, and what makes them desirable from a customer's point of view. It could be about a physical product or the design of digital products or services.

Projects should:

- identify and address the problems that customers care about
- generate ideas for new products, services or business models in line with customer demand
- record their findings to support future development and investment

They must follow an established early-stage design process, such as the [Double Diamond model](#), which divides the design process into 4 phases: discover, define, develop and deliver.

Project teams should also include experienced design professionals, either in-house or as part of a collaboration.

Competition information

- the competition opens on 13 August 2018 and the deadline for applications is midday on 19 September 2018

- UK-based businesses of any size or research and technology organisations can lead a project. Businesses can work alone or in collaboration with partners
- total project costs can be between £10,000 and £40,000
- you could get up to 70% of your project costs
- you can register to attend a [briefing event in Manchester](#) on 16 August 2018 to find out more about the competition and how to make a quality application
- successful applicants will be contacted by 26 October 2018
- projects must start by 1 January 2019 and last no more than 3 months