



## Invitation to Apply to the ESA BIC UK

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Thank you for your interest in the ESA BIC UK.

The European Space Agency (ESA) together with its Member States supports entrepreneurs with the ambition to exploit space technology or utilise space systems in non-space markets, or become suppliers to the space sector, e.g. by exploiting non-space technology in the space market.

Together with its local partners, ESA manages a network of Business Incubation Centres (ESA BICs) across Europe. In the United Kingdom, STFC Innovations Ltd (SIL) and its subcontractor the University of Leicester (UoL) are responsible for managing the ESA BIC UK. The locations where start-ups can be incubated are Harwell, Daresbury, Edinburgh and Leicester.

The ESA BIC UK offers a comprehensive package of support to start-ups selected for incubation, including office accommodation, incentive funding, technical support, business coaching, and legal/IPR advice.

The ESA BIC UK hereby invites you to submit your application for business incubation. This document provides an introduction to the application and evaluation process and contains references to the templates that should be used when applying.

Please contact the ESA BIC UK for any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Elizabeth Kirby  
Chief Executive Officer, STFC Innovations Ltd  
ESA BIC UK

## Introduction

The purpose of this Open Call for the ESA BIC UK is to provide information about the opportunity for space-related start-ups to be incubated in the ESA BIC UK and to provide the material and guidance needed to apply for incubation.

Selection and evaluation of applications are scheduled periodically. See [www.esa-bic.org.uk](http://www.esa-bic.org.uk) for details.

The Call is permanently open and has no closing date for the submission of applications unless the ESA BIC UK has indicated otherwise.

## Who can apply?

In general, any space-related start-ups registered in the United Kingdom less than five years old, or individuals with the intention to set up a space-related start-up, are welcome to apply for incubation.

Some further criteria apply. These can be found in the Cover Letter Template of the application documents. In particular, note the following:

- The application needs to have a valid *space connection*. In general terms this means that it must be evident that “space” (space technology or a space-based service such as satellite communication, navigation or earth observation) is actually needed and that the application demonstrates an innovative use of space which adds value to the business offering. Alternatively, it must be evident that the proposed technology or service can actually be used in a space context. In case of doubt, please complete the Space Connection Assessment document and contact the ESA BIC for further guidance.
- Applicants need to run their start-up at their own risk. In practice this means that more than half of the shares must be owned by the entrepreneur(s) who apply to the ESA BIC.
- Where the application is made by individuals, each person must have a permanent work permit in the United Kingdom. In addition, the process of setting up a company must have been started, since an incubation contract can only be signed with a legal entity. The application must include details about the status, the intended legal structure, and the share ownership structure.
- It is required that the company rents physical space at one of the ESA BIC UK locations.
- This Call explicitly excludes activities promoting, or related to alcohol abuse, tobacco, religion, politics, intolerance, violence, firearms, pornography, obscenity, gambling or illegal drugs.

## How to apply

As a first step, please contact the ESA BIC UK team on [enquiries@esa-bic.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@esa-bic.org.uk) to discuss your application. We recommend that you contact the ESA BIC UK team as far in advance of an application deadline as possible. **All applicants should discuss their application with the ESA BIC UK team at least 2 weeks before an application deadline.**

Please make sure you have received the following documents, which are part of the Open Call documentation:

- Cover Letter including Requirement Checklists
- Business Plan
- Incubation Proposal
- Draft Incubation Contract
- Draft Rental Agreements.

Make sure to fill in all the required sections in the application templates and pay particular attention to the following:

- Instructions inside the documents ([highlighted in blue in each template](#)) must be followed in order to fulfil all pre-conditions of the Open Call and for the application to be accepted.
- Please read the Draft Incubation Contract carefully. The Cover Letter must include a clear, explicit and unambiguous statement declaring that the applicant has read, understood and accepted the terms and conditions contained in the contractual documentation (this is part of the Cover Letter template). Modifications or amendments to the Incubation Contract may only be made in exceptional cases. Please contact the local ESA BIC Manager for guidance.
- Make sure the Cover Letter and the Requirement Checklists are signed in all the required places by either the majority shareholder or by shareholders with a combined ownership in excess of 50%.
- The Cover Letter must include scans of photographic identity documents for all applicants signing the cover letter, together with work permits where required.
- Incubation in the ESA BIC UK may be requested for a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of 24 months.
- The incubation proposal should include details on how the incentive funding is intended to be spent. Note that the incentive funding has a ceiling of £43,103. As a general rule it may not be used for direct labour costs, and can only be used for product development and IPR. Within this overall amount a maximum of £5,000 of the local incentive may be allocated to market research activities, and a maximum of 10% of the ESA incentive (i.e. £2,155.15) may be allocated to travel to international business fairs. Please see the Draft Incubation Contract for details.
- In addition, SIL offers up to 40 expert hours of technical support for the duration of the contract plus 40 hours of ITAC (Innovation Technology Access Centre) support per year for the contract term. UoL offers up to 80 expert hours of technical support for the duration of the contract.
- Please note that 50% of the incentive funding (£21,551.50) is provided by ESA and 50% (£21,551.50) is provided by STFC Innovations Limited (SIL) or the University of Leicester (depending on the location of choice). The 50% (£21,551.50) incentive funding **not** provided by ESA, in addition to all support in kind provided through incubation at the ESA BIC UK constitutes Minimal Financial Assistance. Further details may be found in the Incubation Contract.

Please submit the documents in electronic form (pdf, maximum three files, one for each required document) to the following e-mail address: [enquiries@esa-bic.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@esa-bic.org.uk) with subject “ESA BIC UK Open Call”.

Any questions related to submission of proposals should be sent to the same e-mail address: [enquiries@esa-bic.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@esa-bic.org.uk).

## The evaluation procedure

The evaluation of all received applications is managed locally by the ESA BIC UK and follows common ESA BIC procedures.

Once a published submission deadline has passed, the ESA BIC UK firstly assesses the formal aspects of applications received before the submission deadline. If a non-compliance of a minor nature is found, the applicant may be asked to address this in an updated proposal within 48 hours. If the proposal is found non-admissible, the applicant will be informed and the reason will be explained. In such a case an applicant is eligible to submit a revised proposal at a later date, but a maximum of two submissions may be made for one company or idea unless an exception is agreed by the ESA BIC.

If the application is compliant with the formal requirements, applicants will be invited to make a presentation to the ESA BIC UK Tender Evaluation Board. There will also be an opportunity for the Tender Evaluation Board to ask questions of the applicant. The evaluation will typically take place a few weeks after the submission deadline. The Tender Evaluation Board consists of representatives of ESA, the UK Space Agency, STFC, the University of Leicester, the Satellite Applications Catapult and other experts.

The application and the presentation will be marked against the criteria in Table 1, taking weighting factors into account.

Criteria	Weighting factor
Background and Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experience and team composition</li><li>• Support entities</li><li>• Vision</li></ul>	25%
Technology/Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Space Connection</li><li>• Technical feasibility of the product/service to be developed</li><li>• Production development strategy</li><li>• Intellectual Property strategy</li></ul>	20%
Value proposition & Market <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Value proposition</li><li>• Market</li><li>• Competition</li></ul>	20%
Business Modelling and Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revenue model</li><li>• Finance</li><li>• Risk</li></ul>	15%
Activity proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality of the application</li><li>• Milestones/Cost-planning</li><li>• Work break-down</li><li>• Management</li><li>• ESA BIC investment opportunity</li></ul>	20%

*Table 1: ESA BIC evaluation criteria and weighting factors.*

All applicants will be notified in writing about the outcome of the evaluation. The applicant may request, within 10 calendar days from the receipt of the notification, an oral debriefing explaining the reason why the application was successful or not.

The ESA BIC UK will enter into contract negotiations with successful applicants, taking the comments of the Tender Evaluation Board into account. The ESA BIC UK has the right *not* to place a contract if, three months after the notification to a successful applicant, a contract has still not been signed, and this is because of a reason for which the applicant can be held accountable.

Additionally, the ESA BIC UK has the right not to place a contract if the (intended) legal entity presented in the application is different from the actual established and registered legal entity.

Furthermore, we kindly ask you to pay attention to the following:

- Please note that applications will be treated as confidential. However, we strongly recommend that the applicant discusses the protection of his/her idea with a dedicated expert in this field prior to application, and – if relevant – takes appropriate steps to protect the idea (e.g. by applying for a patent).
- As far as allowed by law, any title held by the applicant to his/her idea shall remain vested in him/her. An application to the ESA BIC UK will not result in the acquisition of any title whatsoever to the idea. *However, once an incubation contract has been signed and is in force, ESA retains a right to use the Intellectual Property in specific cases. Please read the detailed conditions described under the section “Use of Intellectual Property Rights” in the Draft Incubation Contract.*
- No expenses incurred in any stage of the application procedure will be reimbursed to the applicant by the ESA BIC UK, ESA and/or any third party.
- This Open Call does not impose any obligation upon the ESA BIC UK to enter into negotiations with any applicant.