

NHS Cancer Programme Innovation Open Call 4

INVITATION TO TENDER

This Invitation to Tender should be read in conjunction with other documents associated with this competition. These and all associated documents can be downloaded from the [SBRI Healthcare website](#).

Summary

Applicants are invited to tender for projects under the SBRI Healthcare programme to implement innovation-enabled solutions addressing the challenge outlined in the [Challenge Brief](#) available on the [competition webpage](#).

Funding Models

To address different stages of innovation maturity and distinct barriers to adoption, the competition will support **two complementary funding models**:

- **Real World Implementation and Evaluation**
Funding to support the real world deployment and independent evaluation of market ready innovations across multiple NHS sites, through projects of **up to 24 months**.
- **Innovation Spread**
Funding to support the spread and embedding of innovations that have already demonstrated positive patient outcomes and a favourable cost benefit or cost effectiveness profile at multiple sites, through projects of **up to 36 months**.

Real World Implementation and Evaluation funding:

The competition is open to all organisations that can demonstrate a route to market for their solution and provide an NHS implementation/adoption strategy. This SBRI Healthcare scheme is particularly suited to small and medium-sized businesses, as the contracts operate on short timescales.

Due to the nature of the projects that will be supported, and the intended outcomes, clinical efficacy and safety must be demonstrated, and the involvement of appropriate clinical partners **based in England** and an independent evaluator is mandatory.

Real world implementation projects are 100% funded and focused on specific identified needs, increasing the chance of exploitation. This NHS Cancer Programme Innovation Open Call is intended to facilitate the collection of evidence in real-world settings and build on the value proposition of mature products for adoption and spread. The contracts awarded will be for a maximum of 24 months and up to £3 million (**NET cost, excl. VAT**) per project.

Please refer to the published [Challenge Brief](#) for more details on eligibility criteria.

Note: All applicants are recommended to include a set-up phase of ~4-6 months in the proposed project timeline (this is included in the total project time up to 24 months). The set-up period will enable the project team to undertake all activities needed to start the implementation of the proposed innovation.

Innovation Spread funding:

The competition is open to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and Cancer Alliances (through their host legal entity) **based in England**. The competition is open to single organisations, acting as lead applicants, with contracts executed with the lead applicant's legal entity only. However, given the nature of the projects supported, all proposals are expected to be collaborative.

Innovations must be proven in real-world NHS settings, with independent evidence of benefit and economic value, and be ready for adoption and procurement within the NHS. Digital solutions must also demonstrate compliance with relevant NHS standards and interoperability requirements.

The funding supports a **time limited, outcome based implementation project** designed to embed and scale a proven innovation across multiple sites within at least one Cancer Alliance footprint. Projects may run for **up to three years** and the funding will be provided through an outcome-based, matched funding agreement. The NHS Cancer Programme will cover costs for activities delivered in the first two years only up to a maximum of £5 million (**NET cost, excl. VAT**) per project. Achievement of a defined set of outcomes by an agreed Go/No Go decision point in Year 2 will unlock full ICB funding for delivery and ongoing commissioning of the service from Year 3.

Please refer to the published [Challenge Brief](#) for more details on eligibility criteria.

Application Process

Bids must be submitted *via* an online portal which will open in the Autumn and can be accessed by following the application link in the “Open Competitions” landing page on the [SBRI Healthcare](#) website once it is opened.

Details of the challenge, eligibility criteria and expected outcomes of the projects can be found in the [Challenge Brief](#).

Successful applicants will be selected by an open competition process and retain the intellectual property rights generated from the project, with certain rights of use retained by the NHS.

The competition opens on **14 October 2026**. Applications must be submitted *via* the online Portal (the link will be shared on the competition webpage closer to the opening date). Only

applications received by **1:00pm GMT 01 December 2026** will be accepted.

Please note that we will not accept applications submitted by post or by any other means than through the online portal as described above

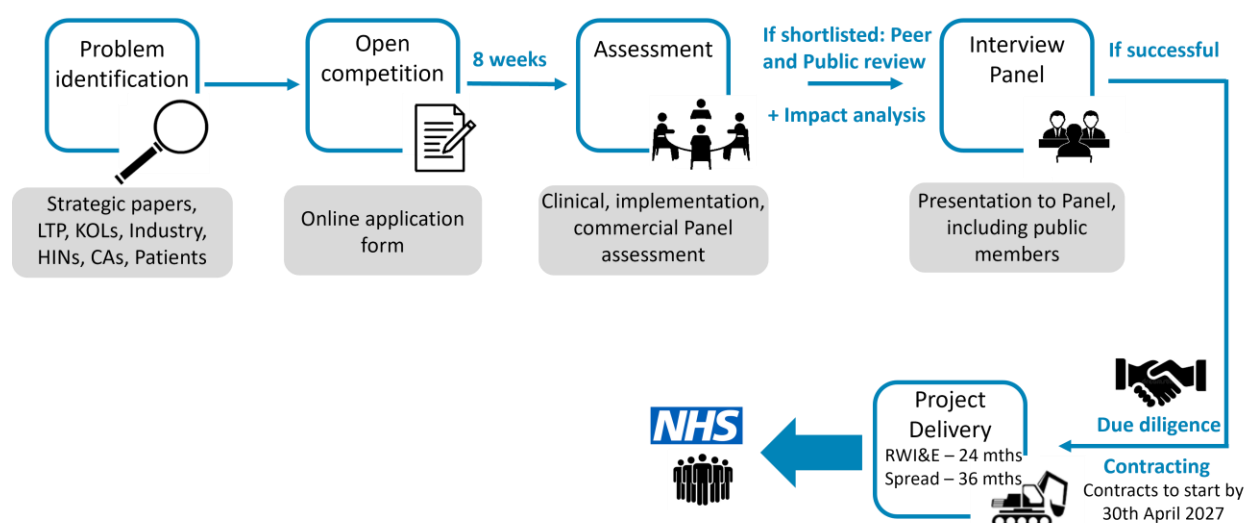
Key dates

Competition Open	14 October 2026
Deadline for applications	01 December 2026, 1:00pm GMT
Assessment	December 2026 – January 2027
Peer review (if shortlisted)	February 2027
Interview Panel(s)	w/c 08 March 2027
Contracts awarded	March 2027
Contracts start by	30 April 2027

Assessment process

A diagram of the process for application and assessment is shown below (Figure 1):

Figure 1: Diagram of the NHS Cancer Programme Innovation Open call



All eligible applications will be reviewed by a selected Panel of experts with complementary clinical, implementation and commercial expertise, who will provide feedback on the applications according to the following assessment criteria:

Real World Implementation & Evaluation Funding Assessment Criteria:

- How well does the proposal address the challenge outlined in the brief and how significant is the impact on productivity OR early cancer diagnosis? (WEIGHT 20%)
- How convincing is the evidence base to demonstrate that the proposed solution would improve productivity OR earlier cancer detection and diagnosis? (WEIGHT 20%)
- Are the project plan (including independent evaluation plan), deliverables and risk mitigation strategy appropriate? Is the independent evaluation plan well scoped and key metrics to demonstrate outcomes identified? (WEIGHT 20%)
- Will the solution have a competitive advantage over standard of care and existing alternative solutions, and how innovative is the proposal and are the arrangements surrounding the use and development of Intellectual Property appropriate? (WEIGHT 10%)
- Does the proposed project have appropriate commercialisation and adoption strategies, including a comprehensive sustainability plan for carbon reduction, which aligns to the new NHS net zero requirements for procurement in the UK? (WEIGHT 10%)
- Does the proposed innovation have the potential to enhance equity of access and has the project demonstrated appropriate considerations toward patient and public involvement and engagement? (WEIGHT 5%)
- Does the host organisation and project team appear to have the right skills and experience to deliver the project? (WEIGHT 10%)
- Are the costs justified and appropriate? (WEIGHT 5%)

Innovation Spread Funding Assessment Criteria:

- How well does the proposal demonstrate a clear service gap, strategic need and alignment with the fund objectives? (WEIGHT 10%)
- How convincing is the evidence that the innovation is ready for spread and how significant (including scale) and credible are the expected benefits? (WEIGHT 10%)
- How robust and deliverable is the implementation plan, including milestones and risk mitigations (WEIGHT 20%)
- How convincing are the financial case, the KPIs and plans to transition to business-as-usual commissioning? (WEIGHT 20%)
- How well does the proposal address patient and public involvement, acceptability and health inequalities? (WEIGHT 5%)
- How well does the proposal address sustainable procurement, interoperability, supply chain resilience, obsolescence and business continuity? (WEIGHT 10%)

- Does the proposed partnership have the right organisations, senior sponsorship, governance and delivery capability to implement the project successfully? (WEIGHT 15%)
- Are the costs justified, proportionate and aligned with the expected benefits, value for money and long-term funding model? (WEIGHT 10%)

Bids will be reviewed by the NHS Cancer Programme Innovation team at NHS England to assess whether proposals align with the NHS Cancer Programme's priorities.

The NHS Cancer Programme is expecting that applicants actively engage in tackling healthcare inequalities, and in supporting diversity and inclusion, while drafting their proposal, by including communities where the proposed innovation will make the biggest impact. NHS England are committed to give patients and the public a voice. The NHS Cancer Programme has embraced this vision and has incorporated patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) in the scheme to ensure the proposed innovation addresses the needs of patients and carers, as well as clinicians and health system leaders and users.

PPIE is an accepted and recommended working practice within healthcare research ensuring that solutions are co-produced with patients, meet patient needs and to ensure there is an acceptability among end-users. Applicants are expected to develop a thorough PPIE strategy as part of their projects.

Applicants are also invited to consider the environmental impact of their innovations to support the net-zero commitment that the NHS has set in the [Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service report](#).

Shortlisted applicants will be notified after the shortlisting meeting and invited to an interview meeting to present their proposal to the Interview Panel, which will be made of a subgroup of the Panel of experts that participated in the shortlisting process. The interview takes the form of a short presentation (typically 10-15 minutes) followed by a question-and-answer session with the Panel members. Ahead of the Panel interview, shortlisted applications will undergo further assessment, including:

- Independent external peer and public reviews, and internal NHS England review of alignment with existing programmes and potential impact.
- An impact analysis of the innovation on productivity/early diagnosis of cancer, performed by the NHS England Cancer Analysis and Insight (CAIT) Team. The analysis will be completed based on the data and information submitted in the application and in the Productivity/Early diagnosis impact assessment. ***Please note: The NHS England CAIT may engage with the applicants between the shortlisting and interview Panel to ensure a robust and fair impact analysis can be completed.***

The applicants will have access to the anonymised reviewers' comments and are encouraged to use the Panel interview opportunity to address them during their interview.

The Panel will score shortlisted applications according to the following assessment criteria:

- a) How well does the proposed technology meet the competition brief?
- b) To what extent does the proposed technology offer potential clinical benefit to the NHS and/or social care settings?
- c) How strong is the team (including partners and sub-contractors,) with particular reference to the delivery of milestones relevant to the project?
- d) How well is the case for commercial and NHS sustainability made and does the solution offer value for money?

The outcome of awards will be communicated to applicants after the Panel meeting and contracts for successful applicants will be awarded shortly thereafter.

Conditions

By applying, organisations are automatically consenting to the terms and conditions contained in the NHS Cancer Programme Development Agreement that will be published on the competition webpage.

The NHS Cancer Programme is committed to actively and openly supporting and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion both in terms of the people who administer the programme and the innovators involved in, leading, delivering and supporting the project.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, the personal information that you provide within the outline proposal will specifically be used for the purpose of administering the call. The information will be viewed by the SBRI Healthcare Programme Management Office and the NHS Cancer Programme assessors and will not be used for any other purpose without your specific consent.

Documents associated with this competition

Relevant to all applications:

- [Challenge Brief](#)
- Invitation to Tender (this document)
- [Productivity impact assessment](#) (template)
- [Early diagnosis impact assessment](#) (template)
- [A Guide to Logic Models for Applicants and Awardees](#)
- [Logic Model Template](#)

Specific to Real World Implementation and Evaluation applications:

- [Real World Implementation and Evaluation Sample Application Form](#)
- [Real World Implementation and Evaluation Finance Form](#)
- [An Introductory Guide to Evaluation](#)
- [Data Metric Mapping Template](#)
- [Evaluation Strategy Template](#)

Specific to Innovation Spread applications:

- [Innovation Spread Sample Application Form](#)
- [Innovation Spread Finance Form](#)
- [KPI list](#) (optional template provided)

Contact Points

Questions and comments are very welcome while the competition is open. Questions on the challenge and scope of this NHS Cancer Programme competition should be addressed to LGC Ltd via email sbri@lgcgroup.com.

Questions will only be accepted when received through this route.

Applicants are also invited to consult the competition [FAQ page](#), which is regularly updated by the SBRI Healthcare Programme Management Office.

For further information on this NHS Cancer Programme competition, visit:

<https://sbrihealthcare.co.uk/competitions/nhs-cancer-programme-innovation-open-call-4>

For more information on other initiatives of the SBRI Healthcare programme, visit:

<https://sbrihealthcare.co.uk/>