

Making Reasonable Adjustments (Pre- and Post-Award)

Summary Statement

This document sets out how Innovate UK should manage the provision of reasonable adjustments to customers who are applying for, and have received, Innovate UK funding.

The content of this document should be used in conjunction with UKRI EDI policies.

If you require further information, or advice, please contact the Customer Support Team via Support@innovateuk.ukri.org.

Please speak to your manager if you think your query requires legal advice.

Management Statement

This document is for Innovate staff to follow.

In order to ensure public funds are awarded in a fair and transparent manner Innovate UK is committed to removing barriers for all potential and successful disabled applicants.

All UKRI employees working within Innovate UK are expected to comply with the instructions in this document as a minimum standard of best practice. Non-compliance may be treated as a disciplinary matter. Where relevant the document also includes instructions for employees that address non-compliance, disqualification, and any exemptions for stakeholders, including grant applicants.

This document is fully endorsed by the Innovate UK Executive Management Team. Adherence by all staff of Innovate UK will ensure that Innovate UK Operations, and other relevant teams, are compliant with legal and ethical requirements and related policies, guidance or instruction (e.g. GDPR regulations, Equality Act 2010, Managing Public Money).

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References:

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
[Public Sector Equality Duty](#)
- [UK data protection legislation](#)
- [Government Digital Service \(GDS\) Digital Inclusion strategy](#)
- [Disability Confident Service Providers](#)
- [REDACTED]
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1. Scope

Use 'applicant' or 'applicants'?

- 1.1 This document is for use by Innovate UK staff when responding to any applicant who is seeking support with the application process or the post-award process.
- 1.2 This content specifically applies to the pre-award and post-award interactions between Innovate UK and the applicant. Reasonable adjustments will not be provided by Innovate UK to successful applicants for delivering a funded project. Instead, pre and post-award support will be provided to remove any barriers to ongoing interactions with Innovate UK, such as producing requested documentation.
- 1.3 This document is founded upon legal requirements as provided for in the [Equality Act 2010 \(the Act\)](#) which includes the Public Sector Equality Duty. Due to its broad reach, what the Act does not cover are specific directions regarding how it should be enacted in the context of Innovate UK's work. This document will address the needs of Innovate UK and its applicants specifically.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this document is to provide clear and comprehensive information for all Innovate UK employees regarding expectations for reasonable adjustments and compliance with legal requirements for provision of reasonable adjustments to applicants.
- 2.2 Adherence to these instructions will ensure the timely and accurate provision of advice and practical support to achieve equitable access for all applicants.
- 2.3 This document serves as a minimum expectation for best practice from all Innovate UK employees.

3. Key Points

Legal Duty upon Innovate UK

- 3.1 Innovate UK has a duty to all its applicants to provide fair and equitable access to the organisation's systems and processes.
- 3.2 Innovate UK must make reasonable adjustments to ensure compliance with the Act. This includes reasonable adjustments for an applicant who has a disability as defined by the Act. This is usually determined by reference to the effect an impairment has on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Day-to day activities could include travelling to/from work, using computers, stakeholder interactions, time management, or other relevant activities. Where UKRI systems and processes hinder or prevent engagement with a disabled person that

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places them at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled (e.g. a requirement to type an application with no alternative submission options), Innovate UK has a legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments to avoid the disadvantage.

- 3.3 Innovate UK will offer as much support as is reasonable to avoid a disadvantage experienced by a disabled person to ensure parity in the assessment of all applications.
- 3.4 Where a request for support is made, Innovate UK should work closely with the individual to determine how to best provide this.
- 3.5 Innovate UK has a legal duty to consider reasonable available options. While not legally obliged, Innovate UK aims to agree with the applicant any individually tailored solutions, taking into account any preference of the applicant.
- 3.6 Innovate UK will pay for reasonable adjustments; no costs for reasonable adjustments will be payable by the applicant. The cost of an adjustment can be considered in deciding if it is reasonable or not. However, as a public authority with significant resources, Innovate UK will need to justify using cost as a reason to not make an adjustment.
- 3.7 Applicants may use personal assistive technologies or other support adaptations (e.g. screen readers) to fully or partially remove access barriers themselves. Any support Innovate UK provides should be compatible with these systems.
- 3.8 The Reasonable Adjustments process map provides details on the process for delivering reasonable adjustment support, and this should be followed by staff [\[link to process hub\]](#).

Communication

- 3.9 Innovate UK staff should always be vigilant in their communications to ensure that disabled applicants requesting reasonable adjustments are promptly supported, and the process managed appropriately.
- 3.10 Innovate UK staff who interact with disabled applicants (such as Customer Support Service (CSS)) must have inclusive communications training to support effective dialogue. This training must be specific and bespoke, recognising and anticipating that applicants have diverse needs and that supporting them through the process needs to utilise a tailored approach. The training will be overseen by the EDI team.
- 3.11 Innovate UK requires and encourages open and transparent communication about the additional support the organisation can supply.
- 3.12 This information should be readily accessible to applicants through Innovate UK's standard external communication methods, for example:
 - 3.12.1 documentation within the Innovation Funding Service process and in associated applicant guidance.
 - 3.12.2 applicant briefing events.
 - 3.12.3 support provided by the wider Innovate UK family including KTN and Innovate UK EDGE.
 - 3.12.4 Grant Offer Letters

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Provision of reasonable adjustments

- 3.13 Applicants requiring reasonable adjustments must be referred to a Third-Party supplier, with whom Innovate UK holds a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to provide reasonable adjustment assessments and support.
- 3.14 Innovate UK cannot devolve legal liability for the duty to make reasonable adjustments. Therefore, when employing a Third-Party to provide reasonable adjustments, it is Innovate UK's responsibility to ensure that the provision is reasonable and legally compliant.
- 3.15 The Third-Party will assess the applicant's requirements for reasonable adjustments, if the applicant does not already know the specific support required.
- 3.16 The provision of support should be agreed between the applicant, CSS and the Third-Party. However, there is no legal obligation to agree the support with the applicant.
- 3.17 The applicant will have the opportunity to request specific reasonable adjustments. Innovate UK, via the Third-Party, will make every effort to meet the requested adjustments. However, if it is not possible (for example, due to the timeframe), CSS, the applicant and the Third-Party will discuss alternative adjustments.
- 3.18 The Third-Party will provide reasonable adjustments on behalf of Innovate UK. All support and associated decisions should be logged (e.g. selecting one type of support over another), with clear justification for the actions taken.
- 3.19 Should there be any breakdown of communication, or requirement for additional engagement from Innovate UK, CSS will remain the key contact for both the Third-Party and the applicants requiring support.
- 3.20 Any Third-Party is subject to confidentiality agreements, which would cover data sharing between themselves, Innovate UK and the applicant.
- 3.21 Feedback will be requested from service users on their experience of receiving reasonable adjustment support. This will be coordinated by the EDI team.
- 3.22 The Third-Party support will be reviewed after 6 months initially, and then annually. This is to ensure quality of service and value for money.

Pre-Award

- 3.23 An applicant can make a request for reasonable adjustments by contacting CSS by telephone or email.
- 3.24 To ensure that Innovate UK can accommodate any reasonable adjustments that may be required, applicants should aim to contact Innovate UK CSS to discuss any reasonable adjustment requirements within 15 working days' notice of the competition closing, otherwise the provision of a support package provided may be compromised.
- 3.25 It is recognised that disablement may occur at any time. If the need for reasonable adjustments becomes apparent after the 15 working day period, Innovate UK will aim to provide adequate reasonable adjustments in the remaining timeframe. Support may be limited due to the time constraint.

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- 3.26 Applicants requesting reasonable adjustments will be referred to a Third-Party (see section...)
- 3.27 To ensure GDPR compliance, a privacy notice must be agreed to as part of the initial conversation. This will outline the purpose for collecting the data, what it will be used for, who will be using it and how it will be stored.
- 3.28 Information obtained about the applicant should only be available to those involved in providing reasonable adjustments, including but not limited to CSS administrators.
- 3.29 Innovate UK's position is that all other individuals are left unaware of the activity, specifically the Innovation Leads, Assessors, and the Application and Assessment Team who are assigning Assessors. This is to remove any potential bias and ensure there is no conflict of interest.
- 3.30 Innovate UK will not routinely consider the movement of a live competition deadline as a reasonable adjustment, due to the implications for Innovate UK. Competitions are advertised and/or open for a significant time frame to enable application planning and submission. Any request for deadlines to be adjusted will be recorded individually, stating nature of request, associated implications of moving the deadline and decision reached.
- 3.31 As part of Innovate UK's commitment to support disabled applicants, CSS will also refer the applicant to KTN, as a method to receive additional application support (e.g. on best practice for answering questions). It will be KTN's responsibility to provide any reasonable adjustments to remove any barriers to accessing their service.
- 3.32 If an applicant makes a direct request to KTN for reasonable adjustments to access their services, KTN should follow their own procedures to provide the support.
- 3.33 Reasonable adjustments will be provided for an applicant, regardless of the eligibility of their project. This ensures that parity for all applicants.
- 3.34 If the applicant is expected to attend, as part of the competition, interviews or similar events, reasonable adjustments will be provided, where required.
- 3.35 Competition documentation and briefings must incorporate accessibility best practice. Staff should refer to the [Innovate UK EDI hub](#) for guidance.

Post-Award

- 3.36 Where a supported applicant is successful, the support provided as part of the pre-award phase will be carried over to support the ongoing engagement with the post-award process, as necessary.
- 3.37 The applicant's reasonable adjustment requirements will be confirmed at the Funders Panel, to ensure the support is carried over into post-award support, where required.
- 3.38 Where an applicant is issued with a formal Grant Offer Letter (GOL), it will be accompanied with a commitment to provide a tailored package of support for the post-award process, where required.
- 3.39 The reasonable adjustment requirements will be shared with their Monitoring Officer, where required to ensure compliance with the legal obligation to provide reasonable adjustments. Monitoring Officers will be provided with guidance on the handling of this information.
- 3.40 Ongoing reasonable adjustments will not cover support for delivering the project, only support for interactions with Innovate UK (e.g. submission of Project Completion Forms). If the applicant requires support for project delivery,

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they should be referred to the Government's [Access to Work scheme](#) (for England, Scotland and Wales) or [Employment Support](#) (for Northern Ireland).

3.41 Should a grant holder experience disablement at any time during their project, and as a consequence require reasonable adjustments to be made, they should be signposted to CSS via their Monitoring Officer to request support.

3.42 Requests for extensions for project end dates, or similar requests, will need to be referred to the Innovation Lead of the competitions. Such requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, due to the Terms and Conditions of the Award.

Data handling

3.43 Data is stored in accordance with UK data protection legislation. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (number 1389) has been completed for provision of reasonable adjustments.

3.44 Applicants will be provided with the privacy notice on what their data will be used for and how it will be stored, before any protected information is shared.

3.45 Each reasonable adjustment request, decision and support provided is recorded individually and stored by the Third-Party.

3.46 A data sharing agreement must be held between the Third-Party and Innovate UK. Innovate UK will track reasonable adjustment requests to understand requirements and improve processes, systems and support.

3.47 A confidentiality agreement must be held between the applicant, Third-Party and Innovate UK.

Concerns, complaints and freedom of information requests

3.48 The Third-Party will work with CSS and the applicant to provide suitable reasonable adjustments.

3.49 There may be some exceptional situations where Innovate UK decline to provide reasonable adjustments (e.g. due to timeframe). Any decision to not provide reasonable adjustments must be approved by the Head of Customer Support.

3.50 If the applicant has concerns over the process, or is not happy with the support provided, they should be referred to the Third-Party provider in the first instance. Innovate UK will not routinely reassess any decision on the type of support the Third-Party decides is appropriate for an individual.

3.51 If the applicant has any unresolved concerns or complaints, they should be directed to make a complaint through the Third-Party's official complaints procedure.

3.52 The Third-Party must keep Innovate UK informed about any complaints and liaise with Innovate UK as appropriate throughout the process.

3.53 After a complaint is made and investigated, CSS should work with the Third-Party to ascertain how the situation occurred and what, if anything, could have been done to prevent the situation. Useful learning from a review should be embedded in policy, guidance and instructions to inform future contact with those individuals.

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3.54 All Freedom of Information requests and complaints linked to reasonable adjustments should be shared with Innovate UK EDI and CSS team members for review.

4. Delegation

The Head of Operational Delivery as the owner has freedom to amend Innovate UK business practice in compliance with the instructions set out in this document. The Applicant Support Services, Equality Diversity and Inclusion and Competitions teams have the responsibility for ensuring this content is implemented and complied with by Innovate UK and where necessary to make recommendations, through the Head of Operational Delivery to the COO for the amendment and improvement of operating processes and procedures. Non-compliance may also result in a request to rewrite Innovate UK instructions.

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5. Document Control

Version Control

| Version Number | Status | Revision Date | Author(s) | Summary of Change |
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Distribution Control

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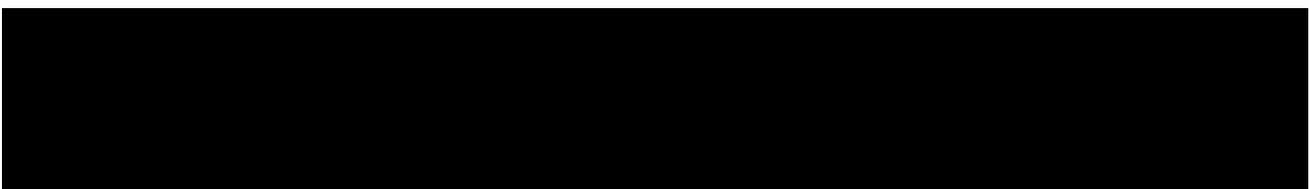
Publication Control

| Version Number | Effective Date | Approval Date | Policy Owner | URL | Next Review Date |
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