

Alchemy Pump Priming Funding Call

Funding type	Small grant
Total fund	£100,000
Max award (100% FEC)	£25,000 (awards made at 80% FEC)
Opening date	5 th October 2026
Closing date	17:00, Friday 4 th December 2026
Outcomes	Week commencing 22 nd February 2027

Brief outline of funding call

The [Alchemy](#) Pump Priming call will enable researchers to develop and test new ideas that operate at the Chemistry-AI interface. Our pump priming fund will allow scientists to conduct short projects, lasting up to 6 months, and can be used to cover costs such as researcher time, access to facilities, or consumables. See ‘What we will fund’ for a more exhaustive list.

To be eligible to apply, the Lead applicants must be employed at a UK research organisation which is eligible to receive EPSRC funding. Further details about the eligibility requirements are provided in the ‘Who can apply’ section.

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £25,000. Alchemy will fund 80% of the FEC (£20,000). £25,000 is the 100% FEC figure.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible for this call the lead applicant must be an academic employed at one of EPSRC’s recognised eligible organisations and must be a resident in the UK. Alchemy will follow the EPSRC standard eligibility criteria for organisations, before applying for funding, please check the [Organisation Eligibility](#).

Academics can apply as an individual or collaborative team, from a single or across multiple organisations. We encourage applicants from interdisciplinary teams spanning both chemistry and computer science. For teams with multiple organisations, there must be a single lead applicant and institution identified which will submit the application on behalf of all partners. We

particularly encourage applications from early career researchers¹, including those at postdoctoral level (with PI approval, see application form). We also encourage applications that aim to develop new and existing collaborations between academic and industry partners.

We are committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all applicants and encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers and will seek to support flexible ways of working as requested.

Funding available

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £25,000. Alchemy will fund 80% of the FEC amount up to a maximum of £20,000. Alchemy has a total budget of £100,000 for this funding round and expects to fund 5-8 projects.

What are we looking for?

The scope of work for the Alchemy Pump Priming call is broad, with the aim to foster new ideas and collaborations that operate at the interface between AI and chemistry. Funding should be used to catalyse applications to future funding calls and develop new collaborations between academia and industry.

It is essential that your application:

- Aligns with the vision of the Hub,
- Demonstrates the development or application of AI to a chemistry related problem,
- Highlights the progression towards future funding and impact.

What we will fund

Calls to the Alchemy Pump Priming call can come from academics at eligible institutions or a consortium of academics and industry partners. The lead applicant must be an eligible academic. As such, we anticipate funding the following types of activity within this call:

- Academic Research staff costs for up to 3 months (i.e. Directly Incurred staff costs)
- Fully justified consumables

¹ We consider early career researchers (ECRs) within the first 5 years of their first independent research position (taking into account career breaks). For Alchemy Pump Priming calls, PDRAs are also considered ECRs.

- Access to national and other open access facilities
- Software licences
- Costs associated with research data management and sharing
- Impact acceleration and knowledge exchange activity
- Small equipment (up to £10,000 inc. VAT)
- Travel and subsistence in relation to the proposed research e.g. travel to meet collaborators or to access facilities

Please note, this list is **not** exhaustive. If you have ideas for a project but unsure of eligibility, then please contact funding@alchemy.ac.uk to discuss your ideas prior to submission.

What we will not fund

Please note, the following will **not** be funded through the Alchemy Pump Priming call:

- Contributions to the salary of PIs and Co-Is (i.e. Directly Allocated staff costs)
- Contract extensions on existing projects
- Equipment costing more than £10,000 (inc. VAT)
- Fees or stipends associated with Masters or PhD studentships
- Open access publishing costs
- Computer equipment for staff already employed by the organisation
- Bids solely requesting equipment, even if the equipment costs less than £10,000
- Bids solely requesting travel and subsistence, we have a separate funding scheme which will cover such requests – see our [Collaborative Travel Fund 2026](#), which is currently open until 11th December 2026.

How to apply

Applications should be completed using the standard application form available via our [website](#). This should be emailed to funding@alchemy.ac.uk by 17:00, Friday 4th December 2026. This is a one stage application.

The application form has the following sections:

- Project Title
- Core team details (Information not shared with reviewers)
- Project Overview, aims and outcomes
- Proposed work packages, activities and risks
- Budget breakdown and justification

- EDI monitoring form (Information not shared with reviewers)

The review process will be anonymous, with the Core team details and the EDI monitoring forms stored separately and not used within the review process. Applicants are strongly advised **to avoid including any identifying information** within the body of their proposals to ensure the anonymity of the review process. This includes information such as your name or names of your group members, your university, and supporting publications that you are named on.

Following the submission deadline, your application cannot be changed. If your application does not follow the outlined guidance, it may be rejected.

Personal Data

Alchemy will be required to collect personal information to manage application selection and for reporting to external funders, e.g. EPSRC. All personal data will be handled in line with the Alchemy [privacy notice](#) and the overarching data protection policies of Imperial College London and the University of Liverpool.

Publication of outcomes

Alchemy will contact all lead academics with the outcome of their applications, as well as publishing all successful outcomes on our [website](#). For successful proposals, a project summary and details of the project team will be published on our website, specific work package details will not be published. These summaries will be published once all contracts are in place for the awarded projects.

How we will assess your application

All applications will be reviewed anonymously. The Core team details will be removed from the application before being sent out to reviewers.

The following process will be used to assess your application:

Stage 1 check for eligibility: this will be carried out by the Alchemy project management team who will check applications to ensure they meet the call eligibility requirements.

Stage 2 distributed peer review: once the core team details have been removed, the anonymous applications will undergo review via a distributed peer review process, whereby the applicants

themselves make up the reviewer pool and review a sub-section of the applications. Further details of the distributed review process are within the application pack.

A standardised evaluation form will be provided to reviewers to ensure consistency in reviewing. Reviewers will review against set criteria which will consider the following:

1. **Quality and fit of the proposed research:** A well-defined research question; good awareness of the current state of the art and how this will be moved forward; fit with the vision of the Hub to transform the AI-chemistry landscape.
2. **Potential for impact:** Research leading to advancements at the AI-chemistry interface e.g. new applications of AI within chemistry, new software development, new collaborations/partnerships, improved quality and access to data.
3. **Interdisciplinarity:** Aligned with the vision, research should look beyond a single discipline and be focused at the AI-chemistry interface.
4. **Ability to deliver:** Feasibility of the proposal within the resources and timeline requested.

The evaluation form also includes a confidence level score for the reviewer to fill out. In cases where all reviewers of an application have low confidence in the subject area, we will request an additional review by a member of either our ECR Committee or Leadership Committee, who are more confident in that subject area, to ensure that the low confidence scores have not distorted the scoring.

Reviewers will also be asked to provide feedback on each application, which will be provided back to the applicants.

Stage 3 panel review: Applications then be ranked according to their review scores, prior to a final panel review by the Alchemy Leadership Team. This panel will make the final decisions on which applications are funded, taking into account the Alchemy flexible fund principles as follows:

- 20% of all funds allocated to researchers new to AI for Chemistry field
- 60% of all funds allocated to developed state-of-the-art for the field
- 20% of all funds allocated to projects led by ECRs
- Fund the most innovative research in an inclusive, transparent fashion

Review timeline

5 th October 2026	Call opens
4 th December 2026	Call closes at 17.00
w/c 4 th January 2027	Reviews sent out
29 th January 2027	Deadline for return of reviews
w/c 15 th February 2027	Panel meeting and final funding decisions
w/c 22 nd February 2027	Applicants contacted regarding funding outcomes

Details of the funded projects will be announced once all contracts are in place.

We have ensured that we have followed the [UKRI principles of assessment and decision making](#) when designing this assessment process.

Reporting Structure

Within one month of project completion the academic lead for each successful project must submit a written report outlining the successes and challenges of the project alongside a complete financial expenditure report. A reporting template will be shared in due course.

Contact details

For questions related to this funding opportunity please contact the Alchemy management team at funding@alchemy.ac.uk

Additional information

Background

The Alchemy (AI for Chemistry) Hub is funded by EPSRC as part of their strategic investment in AI technologies and their applications within science.

Alchemy's vision is to pioneer and normalise the use of AI in chemical research. To do this, Alchemy aims to address three key barriers to success:

- a lack of data standards, data curation and data availability for the AI community
- a lack of day-to-day collaboration between chemistry and AI researchers
- a lack of training and access to equipment / datasets

As part of the Hub, Alchemy has a flexible fund to allow other researchers across the UK to engage in developing AI applications in chemistry research. Within the flexible fund, Alchemy has run three different funding schemes: our Frontier Fund, which funded projects up to £1.25M; Pump Priming calls for up to £25K, and a Collaborative Travel Fund for ECRs, PDRAs and PhD students. Further details of our funded projects and open calls are available via the Alchemy [website](#). Note that this will be the last Pump Priming call to be offered by the Hub, with Collaborative Travel Fund calls running twice a year until the end of 2027.

Alchemy Pump Priming Call: Proposal

Please complete using 10pt Calibri font, convert to PDF and send to funding@alchemy.ac.uk by 5pm on Friday 4th December 2026.

Proposal should be no longer than four pages in length.

Project ID Number: For office use only

Title of project (25 words)

Project Synopsis

Provide a project overview, stating your project aims and expected outcomes (the "Project").

(500 words maximum.)

Describe the work packages and proposed activities, resources to be committed, risks.

(500 words maximum.)

Project alignment to Alchemy: AI for Chemistry Hub

How does your project align with the vision of Alchemy?

(100 words maximum.)

The Alchemy Hub's Pump Priming Fund aims to foster new collaborations across academia and industry and develop the application of AI within chemistry research. How does your proposed project support these aims?

(200 words maximum.)

Costing information

State the level of funding requested up to £25,000 in the table below:

Please provide the costing information on which your application for funds is based, and which has been checked by your Research & Finance (R&F) team. Include a cost breakdown for salaries, travel, consumables, equipment, facilities access and any other project costs. Please also include a justification for all requested resources.

	Total Project Costs	Total Funding (100% FEC) Max £25,000	Requested Funding (80% FEC) Max £20,000
<u>Directly Incurred</u>			
Staff			
Consumables			
Travel & Subsistence			
Equipment			
Other DI costs			
<u>Indirect & Estates</u>			
Indirect costs			
Infrastructure			
Technicians			
Estates			
<u>Other</u>			
Industry match or in-kind funding			
<u>TOTAL FUNDING</u>			

Resource Justification:

(250 words maximum.)

Industrial Partner Contribution (where applicable)
Please give a summary of the Industrial partner background and involvement in the project, including any physical or 'in-kind' contribution (200 words maximum)

Alchemy Pump Priming call: Team details and declaration

Please complete using 10pt Calibri font, convert to PDF and send to funding@alchemy.ac.uk by 5pm on Friday 6th December 2024

Project ID Number: For office use only

Title of project (25 words)

Details of academic lead (PI)

Name:	
Higher Education Institution:	
Department:	
Email:	
Contact phone number:	<i>Should we need to contact you after the application deadline for more information on your application</i>
Career stage:	☐ PDRA ☐ ECR ☐ Mid-career ☐ Established
PDRA Researcher Approval: (Only required if lead applicant is a PDRA)	☐ By ticking this box, you (the PDRA) confirm that PI/line manager approval has been granted and the necessary support is in place to complete the proposed project.

Academic co-applicant name(s), job title and institution (if applicable) and declaration

Co-applicant Name	Higher Education Institution	Department	Email Address

Details of Industrial partner:

If no industrial partner present, please leave this section blank.

Organisation name (the "Partner"):	
Contact name:	
Job title:	
Contact email address:	
Address:	
Organisation website:	
Industry sector:	

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring

Please can all applicants (both academic and industry) complete the anonymous EDI monitoring form found via this link: [EDI Monitoring Form](#)

This information is used to monitor and report funding allocation. Please ensure applicants include the project title when completing the form as this information will be used to monitor and report data on successful and unsuccessful applications. This information will not be shared with reviewers.

Details of any known conflicted reviewers, e.g. close collaborators, family members etc. Please include their full name and institution.

Academic declaration

As an academic applicant I agree to adhere to EPSRC and Alchemy's call guidelines, terms and conditions (below) and reporting requirements:

Applicant Name	Date	Signature

Terms and Conditions

The Alchemy Hub (the “Hub”), acting through the University of Liverpool and Imperial College London (the “Universities”), upon successful peer review will contribute the sum indicated in this pump priming funding scheme Application Form (the “Form”) to support the proposed project outlined above (the “Project”) to be conducted by you (the “Partner”) in the interests of promoting knowledge exchange and collaborative working, under the following terms and conditions. Hereinafter the Universities and the Partner shall be singularly known as a “Party” and jointly as the “Parties”. IT IS HEREBY AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

1. All awards shall be subject to EPSRC standard terms and conditions.
2. If following peer review the Partner is successful, the Hub through one of the Universities will contribute the sum indicated on the Form in exchange for a contribution to the Project by the Partner, as detailed in the Form. Payment to the Partner will follow signing of an award agreement including associated payment terms.
3. The Parties may disclose information concerning its operations to each other in the course of the Project which each Party shall use reasonable endeavours not to disclose to third parties, subject to clause 5 and 6.
4. Applications shall follow the call guidance application process. Details of the successful awards may be included on the Hub website.
5. The Partner shall submit a non-confidential summary report on completion of the project that the Hub may use to promote the results of the Project. In the event that the Partner wishes to publish any activity from the project in normal academic practice, the Partner must make reference to the Hub and the Universities. The Partner shall submit a final statement of expenditure within one month of the award end date.
6. All pre-existing information and know-how used in connection with the Project shall remain the property of the Party introducing the same. The Hub makes no claim over results generated which shall be owned by the Partner.
7. It's the sole responsibility of the lead applicant and the awarded higher education institution to ensure that all required export control checks and licences are conducted prior to starting the project. Additionally, it is the sole responsibility of the lead applicant and awarded higher education institution to continually monitor the project and assess the need to adhere to export control regulations.
8. The lead applicant acknowledges and agrees that the submitted application will be subject to a distributed peer review process.
9. The lead applicant and all co-applicants agree to participate in the distributed peer review process ensuring that review is conducted in a fair, unbiased and confidential manner.