

Questions and Answers relating to the EO4MCM Announcement of Opportunity

Most of the answers to the questions below can be found in the detailed sections of the EO4MCM AO which can be found on the CEOI website ceoi.ac.uk.

Please note that state subsidy intervention rates are not determined or set by STFC, CEOI or UKSA. They result from the UK's acceptance of the World Trade Organisation rules, and are mandated by the UK Government subsidy control regime (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/subsidy-control-regime>)

Q: What is PDR?

Ans: Preliminary Design Review - after Phase A, but before commencement of detailed design.

Q: What are the issues for new entities and start-ups?

Ans: New companies and new entrants are allowed to bid but there are conditions:

1. We cannot fund organisations in financial difficulty,
2. A new start-up would need to prove financial robustness, e.g., by providing preliminary accounts.
3. They would also need to establish credibility to perform the work, and so the CV/track record of the individuals who own the new company would be considered.
4. We would consider the credibility and track record of the consortium as a whole.

In addition: Overseas participants cannot receive UK funding, but can participate under their own funding, especially in a bilateral context.

Q: For academia, the match funding expected is 20% and if there is a consortium with industry, each industry type will have a different intervention rate, and depends on the activity of the project?

Ans: Yes - see the AO sections on state subsidy for detailed information. The intervention rate depends on size of organisation, the closeness to market of the activities proposed, and the degree of collaboration involved. Note that the rates for SMEs is under review at the moment and we will be taking advice.

Q: Do we need to follow STFC process via Je-S?

Ans: Yes - we hope that the Je-S route will be a formality, and not subject to further academic peer review.

Q: For the registration of interest, what level of detail re the project is required at that point?

Ans: We want to know the subject domain, and basic size and shape of the activity. There is a template on the CEOI website ceoi.ac.uk. We ask for this so that we can engage suitably expert reviewers, and to judge the likely response to the Call to allow us to manage our effort. It is not intended to be proscriptive, and you can still bid if you do not submit an Lol.

Q: A question on constellation development: if a company has a single instrument in orbit but wants to develop a constellation, with future satellites, can the development of the constellation be eligible (assuming the constellation as a whole will need development to be treated as a new instrument).

Ans: This opportunity is primarily for instrument technology for payloads, rather than satellite builds. In practical terms, we do not have enough money to fund satellite and constellation build, and that would require a procurement pitch to UKSA or HMG in some form, and/or a pitch for commercial money to fund build, launch and operations. We expect these activities to occur after Q1 2025, depending on the state of the mission concepts at project end.

Q: The next stage for our EO sensor is to test it in space (IOD). Would this be eligible as part of this RFP?

Ans: Probably not, although this is not impossible e.g., for a very small cubesat. Again our funding is limited. We might fund airborne demonstration if it fits in the EO4MCM funding envelope. We imagine a next phase after Q1 2025, although funding for this is TBD.

Q: The DSIT funding and timeline is very short, is it expected that after 2025 we have a launch in the plan?

Ans: Agreed the funding window is short, but HMG is constrained by the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) cycle. We believe there may be more money post CSR, but we will need to show strong impact in the short term, to feed into business plans that will have to go into HMG. Development of an outline plan for build and launch with ROM costs as part of your project would help STFC and UKSA to estimate possible future needs.

Q: There were a few remarks pertaining to support for business plan development.

Ans: CEOI has a new member who can help with business plan development. We are looking into the idea of holding a half day or 1 day workshop to look at the specific requirements for preparing business plans for space activities. The requirements are different depending on whether the Plan is aimed at government, commercial or venture capital funding.

Q: What other opportunities are there?

Ans: We will have other CEOI and UKSA opportunities soon, and we can't stop you bidding into all of them! However, we will cross check, and make sure we are not funding the same thing twice.