



Royal Academy
of Engineering

Enterprise
Hub

Explore

Explore. Connect. Grow.

Applicant guidance notes

Sector focus:
Artificial Intelligence &
Machine Learning

Ecosystem focus:
San Francisco (US West
Coast)

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Key dates and times

Submission deadline: 1pm 7 August 2025

Successful awardees notified: wc 18 August 2025

Awards start: 11 September 2025

Induction day: 11 September 2025

International mission: 13-17 October 2025 (San Francisco)

Please only apply if you are available on the dates specified above for international mission and for the induction day, which will take place in person at our offices in London



Introduction

Explore is an alumni programme designed to increase visibility, unlock high-value networks and connect leaders of bold, IP-rich engineering ventures to global markets.

Explore leverages the Royal Academy of Engineering's unparalleled global network and convening power to open doors to world-class networks, exposure to investment, expertise and leaders. This is offered exclusively to nurture the talent of the Hub Membership.

Each round brings together a small, carefully selected cohort of five entrepreneurs and business leaders for a tailored experience. Co-designed around the cohort's goals and challenges, the twelve-week programme combines thematic expertise, one-to-one coaching and an international mission – all aligned to a specific sector and market.

The result is a targeted, high-impact journey that builds meaningful connections, unlocks new opportunities, exposure to investment and accelerates global readiness.



Round focus

Each round is tailored to a specific industry and ecosystem around which the content, networks and an international mission is focussed.

Networking opportunities and experts are aligned to the industry and are able to share advice, expertise and insights specific to the cohort's needs.

Sector focus:
Artificial Intelligence &
Machine Learning

Ecosystem focus:
San Francisco (US West
Coast)

Explore

What does this programme offer?

Over 12 weeks, Explore delivers a high impact, highly personalised experience aligned to your sector, ambitions and the market in focus:

- **A five-day international mission** to the global market in focus, filled with curated meetings, ecosystem and networking opportunities, relationship building – all to accelerate development of on the ground connections, accelerate market understanding, visibility and strategic alignment
- **10 days of expert-led sessions** on industry insights centred on capital, talent, market and intellectual property - tailored to your sector and growth stage
- **One-to-one strategic coaching** from international and UK coaches to sharpen your goals, challenge your assumptions, and build clarity for what's next
- **Up to £5,000 in equity-free grant funding** for follow-on activity in the market - including follow up visits to nurture connections, partnership development, ongoing learning - all designed to support continued validation of your strategic growth opportunities
- **Introductions to a global network** including investors, corporations, Academy Fellows, expat communities, fellow leaders of bold, IP-rich engineering ventures as well as a tight knit cohort for mutual support.

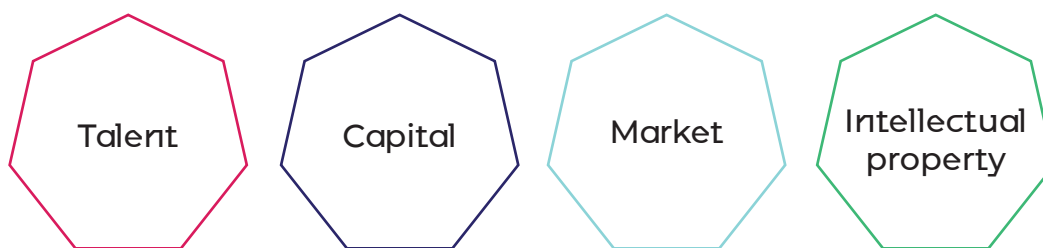


Key growth areas

The content is expert-led and driven by our cohort's needs offering you access to, and insights from, a network of industry experts, investors, and business support providers. While each programme is tailored, the content spanning the sessions, mission and coaching centres on four strategic pillars:

- **Capital:** securing investment and understanding financial landscape
- **Talent:** recruitment, leadership and building operational capacity in new markets
- **Intellectual property:** protecting and optimising IP strategies internationally
- **Market:** market insights, expansion realities, cultural fluency and navigating regulatory and political landscapes

Explore is designed to deepen your understanding of the global market, provided practical and leader-relevant support, and strengthen your social capital through an unmissable international mission to unlock new connections, insights and exposure to investment.



International mission

The week is five days of meetings, visits, dinner and engagement with Academy Fellows, UK government teams, investors, accelerators, experts and those who have successfully entered the market.

It is designed around your needs and leverages the Academy's global, and prestigious, international network to enable you to make on-the-ground connections backed by the Royal Academy of Engineering's Enterprise Hub.



"The Explore programme and international mission to Boston helped us to bridge our network into the local biotech ecosystem that otherwise seems opaque and impenetrable. This has enabled us to effectively land and expand in Boston and access new business and investment opportunities."

Tom Fleming, COO Arctoris, Hub Member

Eligibility

What we are looking for?

We are looking for:

- Hub Members who have successfully completed an Enterprise Hub programme
- Leaders of bold, IP-rich engineering ventures interested in market expansion

Eligibility criteria:

To be eligible for EXPLORE, applicants must be:

- a graduate of one of the Enterprise Hub's programmes and be able to confirm that they have completed the programme in full (please note: those who will be active on any of the programmes at the time of the award are not deemed eligible)
- a Chair in Emerging Technology award holder with an appropriate company or product.
- a graduate of one of the Leaders in Innovation Fellowships and be able to confirm they have a UK registered company.
- working in a company focusing on area relating to artificial intelligence and machine learning.
- working in a company that is based in the UK and registered with Companies House (For multinational companies, the Head Office must be based in the UK).
- able to commit to the international mission (five full days, excluding travel), if successful.



If you are unsure if you are eligible or if you have any questions regarding the eligibility requirements please contact **enterprise@raeng.org.uk**

How to apply

Online application system

All applications must be submitted by the applicant via the online system, available here: grants.raeng.org.uk.

Applicants will be required to log into the system. If you cannot remember or retrieve your password, click 'Forgotten Password' to be sent a link to reset and access the system. Alternatively, if you have never used the system you will need to provide some basic log-in details to create a profile.

Starting an application

As EXPLORE is an alumni-only programme it won't appear in the main dashboard of open programmes on the system. Therefore, to start please follow the link provided. This will direct you to log in

You will then be able to navigate to your application via 'My Applications' which is situated in the top-left corner of the system view.

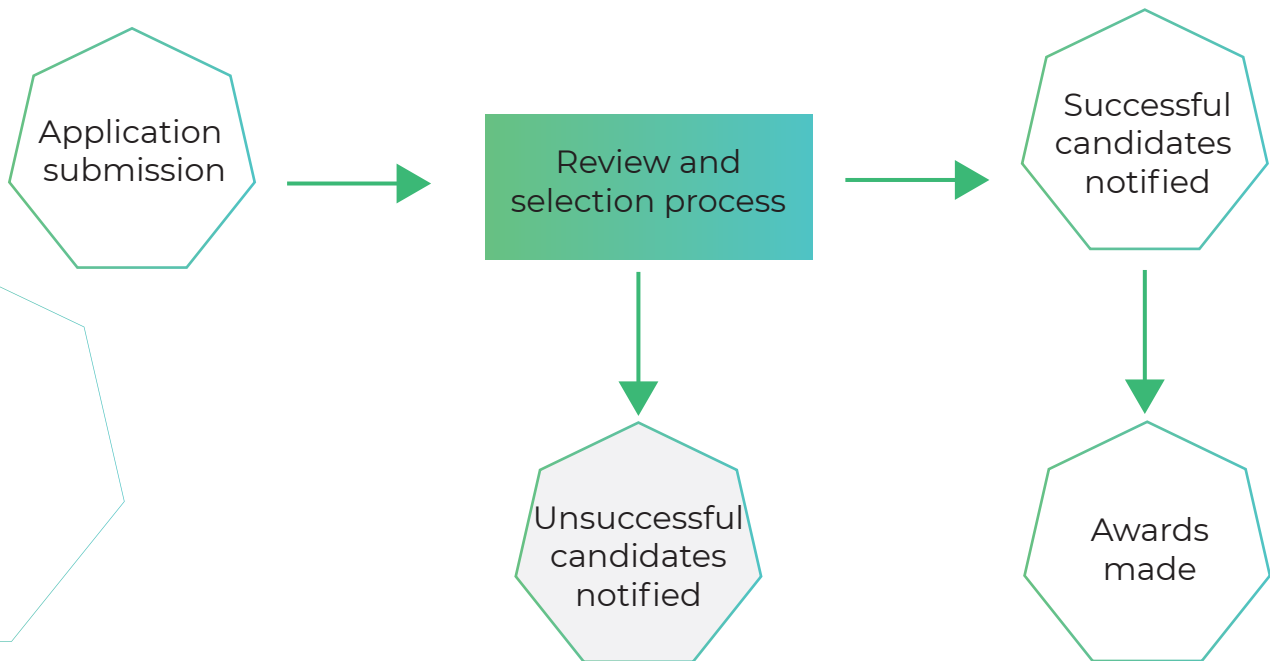
The application process has only one stage as detailed on the next page. At any stage in the application process you can save your work, log-off and return to it at a later time.

The panel of experts who review applications are external to the Academy. They are carefully chosen for their expertise and reputation in the sector, but might not have entered into a confidentiality agreement for their role as, given the scale and nature, it is often impractical to do so. It is at your discretion to decide on the information you are comfortable sharing.

If you have any questions about the application process or starting your application please contact **enterprise@raeng.org.uk**

Assessment of applications

The assessment process is as follows:



Application form

Places on the programme are gained through a competitive application process and are awarded without charge. We do not charge fees or take equity.

Applications consist of the following sections. Each section is considered in the review process when successful candidates are selected:

- **Eligibility**
- **The applicant**
- **The enterprise**
- **The programme**
- **Declarations**

Applicants will be expected to outline how they would intend to use grant funding to embed the learning from the programme. This may include, but is not limited to, visits for the purpose of relationship building with partners, access to advisory support or consultants and/or pivoting companies' plans.

Please note, travel and subsistence costs for the international mission and Enterprise Hub organised events will be covered by the Royal Academy of Engineering. These do not need to be included in the grant justification.

Further information about assessment criteria and eligible costs can be found on pages 10-11.

What to expect

Training and mentoring

- You will receive approximately 10 sessions of expert sessions over the course of the award.
- The programme will be interactive, involving individual coaching and group sessions (hybrid) with your cohort.
- Awardees are required to attend all training days and the international mission.
- You will work with a personalised coach to undergo a diagnostic session, assess where you are in your journey and to create an individualised action plan.
- While applying for and taking part in any Enterprise Hub activities, make sure you only share information with the Academy or any external parties which you're free to share. For example, you might have agreements with co-founders, shareholders etc. where you need their consent before sharing certain information.

Your commitment

- Awardees are expected to be fully engaged and committed.
- All mandatory training days must be attended and prioritised.
- All days of the international mission must be attended. Time is built into the schedule to enable you to schedule your own meetings as well.
- Awardees are expected to keep in regular contact with the Enterprise Hub team and their mentor, strive to be a role model, adhere to the Code of Conduct and seek to engage with their peers in the cohort.

Signposting

We will be on hand throughout the award period and beyond to signpost additional opportunities available through the Academy and our network, such as:

- Grant/funding programmes.
- Networking events.
- Pitching opportunities.
- Introductions to expert advisors

Reporting

Check in calls will be scheduled half way through and upon completion of the programme.

You will also be required to complete short reports:

- Final report
- Annual follow up

Programme and mission details

Key dates and times

Submission deadline: 1pm 7 August 2025

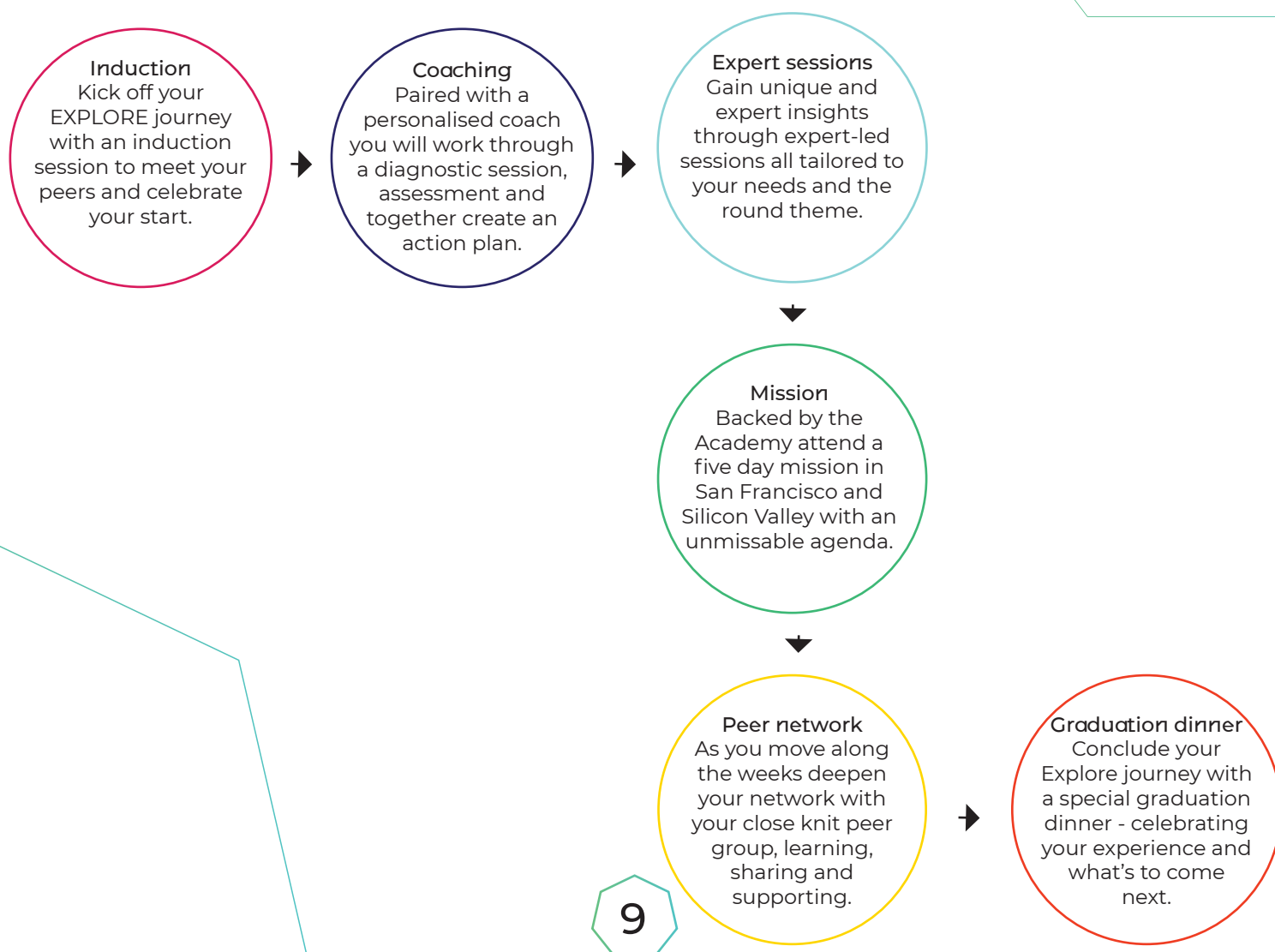
Successful awardees notified: wc 18 August 2025

Awards start: 11 September 2025

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International mission: 13-17 October 2025 (San Francisco)

Programme journey



Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria

The selection panel will take into consideration a number of factors, including the extent to which the application complies with the aims and objectives of the award, as well as:

- quality and ambition of the applicant.
- potential impact of the award on the applicant.
- potential of the innovation to contribute to a sustainable society and inclusive economy in line with the Academy's 2030 strategy.
- impact the award and mission would have on the success of the applicant, their enterprise, and potential impact on the engineering sector and UK economic growth.
- potential shown by applicant to engage with market and ecosystem in focus.
- potential shown by the applicant to make valuable use of the award and implement learning points and to act as an ambassador for the Enterprise Hub and its pursuit of excellence in engineering.
- applicant's enthusiasm to give back to the Royal Academy of Engineering and participate in events.

Eligible costs

During the programme, after the mission successful applicants will put together a plan for their grant funding for review by the Explore steering group review. Successful participants can be awarded up to £5,000 in equity free grant funding and have 12 months to spend the funds.

Applicants do not need to outline their use of their grant funding at the point of application but the eligible costs are included for information.

This grant must be used to support ongoing training or travel, both to nurture and further develop the awardees' skills and connections made through the programme, including connected value-add activities.

The eligible costs for this programme are as below:

Training costs

We will cover reasonable travel and accommodation costs incurred attending compulsory training days, so do not include such costs. These costs are eligible for reimbursement in line with the Academy's expenses policy.

Allowed costs under the programme

- Travel costs
- Consultancy fees
- Advisory fees
- Marketing
- Training (including participation in accelerator programmes)
- Conferences

Disallowed costs

- Salary costs, of yourself or anyone else
- Manufacturing costs
- Product testing and prototype development
- Rent and utilities

Reporting

Successful awardees are expected to provide progress reports and regular updates to the programme team. You will be required to provide an expenditure statement at the end of the award spend period (12 months) detailing how the grant funding was used.

Application form

Section 1 - The Applicant

The lead applicant details will be populated and will require you to check they are correct. Please note the lead applicant must be a Hub Member, this cannot be another person working in a Hub Member enterprise.

You will be asked to confirm you meet the eligibility criteria for the award.

This includes confirming you have successfully completed an Enterprise Hub programme, meet the requirements for the programme and you are available to attend the international mission dates (22-26 September 2025).

Section 2 - The Enterprise

Following completion of basic information about your enterprise and your role in it, including number of employees, Companies House registration number, and when it was established, you will be asked to answer the following questions:

- Please provide a concise description of what your company does, including your product or service, who it is for and the problem it is seeking to solve.
- Which sectors or industries does your enterprise currently operate in?
- How does your enterprise apply artificial intelligence or machine learning within these sectors?
- What is your business model?
- What is your current go-to-market strategy?
- What is your intellectual property strategy?
- What are your key growth or development goals over the next 12–18 months?
- Do you currently have any international operations, partnerships or market activity?
- What challenges are you currently facing, or envisage, in growing your business internationally?
- What is your five-year vision for your deep tech enterprise, and how do you plan to achieve it?
- How have you considered gender equality in the project or activity design?
In line with the UK Government's Gender Equality in Research and Innovation Policy, all successful applications to this scheme must demonstrate consideration of the activities on gender. All funded activities will, and at a minimum, ensure that no harm is done to gender equity.
- Please outline turnover in the last financial year.
- Please note how much equity funding , grant funding and/ or any other funding your company has raised to date.

Section 3 - The Programme

- What do you hope to gain from participating in this programme?
- Why are you interested in taking part in this international mission?
- What opportunity do you see for your enterprise in the US West Coast market?
- How do you envisage this programme will help accelerate your growth or strategic plans in the next 12–18 months?
- To help us tailor the programme and mission, please indicate the types of individuals or organisations you would most like to meet - both in the US and in the UK.
- How will you support and contribute to the peer group and Academy throughout the programme, including during the international mission?

Academy policies

Diversity and inclusion

The Royal Academy of Engineering is committed to diversity and inclusion and welcomes applications from all underrepresented groups across engineering. It is the Academy's policy to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged or receives less favourable treatment because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Before you commence your application, you will be asked a few diversity monitoring questions to help the Academy monitor and assess our diversity and inclusion policy. It will only be used for statistical purposes with access restricted to staff involved in processing and monitoring the data. No information will be published or used in any way that identifies individuals. The Academy will retain personal information as per our Data Retention Policy in line with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

The information will be treated as strictly confidential, nonattributable and will not be seen by anyone involved in any selection processes. You will need to complete the diversity monitoring section before you can see the grant application form, but can choose "prefer not to say" as responses.

Confidentiality

Please note people on the panel of experts who review applications will be external to the Academy. They are carefully chosen for their expertise and reputation in the sector but might not have entered into a confidentiality agreement for their role as, given its scale and nature, it is often impractical or disproportionate to do so.

It is at your discretion to decide on the information you are comfortable sharing in the application form. We recommend including enough information that proves your solution works and is an engineering innovation/invention.



National Security

The Academy is the UK's National Academy for engineering and technology and seeks to increase the potential positive benefit that innovations can have for society, whilst reducing the risks of harm. Hence, in all our activities, we seek to minimise the risk that technology developed as part of work that we support could be misused by a foreign state to build a capacity to target UK interests in a hostile fashion or to control or repress their population. There is a risk that for some grant activities, failure to protect IP and a lack of due diligence into collaborators could result in sensitive technology being transferred to and misused by a hostile or repressive foreign state. As such all applicants should ensure they are familiar with the Academy's Policy on National Security-Related Risks.

Subsidy control

The UK subsidy control regime began on 4 January 2023. As part of this regime, the Academy is required to report to the UK Government on how award funding is being used when applications collaborating with commercial enterprises are awarded. The regime determines the lawfulness of monetary awards made using public sector resources when given to businesses and other organisations that are engaged in economic activity.

This Award is offered as a permitted subsidy under the terms of Subsidy Control Act 2022 by the Academy who have made an assessment of the against the principles of the Act. This scheme is published on the transparency database and an assessment will be published and will be made available on request.

Use of generative AI tools in funding applications and assessment

The Academy has aligned with other UK funders around the use of generative AI tools in funding applications through the Research Funders Policy Group joint statement.

Regarding the use of AI, applicants are fully responsible for all the content presented in their grant applications. The grant process does not penalise the use of generative AI tools, but it is imperative to ensure that the application reflects the applicant's own voice and ideas. It is not acceptable to solely rely on generative AI tools to write the entire grant application from start to finish. While these tools may be used to assist in various aspects, the application must primarily represent the applicant's own work.

Applicants must provide clear acknowledgement if they have used generative AI tools in the process of writing their grant applications. This includes disclosing the name of the tool used and describing how it was utilised.

The following style should be employed for referencing:

I acknowledge the use of [insert AI system(s), version number and link] to generate materials for background research, styling, proofreading, etc.

Or,

I acknowledge the use of [insert AI system(s), version number and link] to generate materials that were included within my final assessment in modified form.

About us

Who are we?

The Royal Academy of Engineering Enterprise Hub supports talented entrepreneurs and decision makers to transform breakthrough engineering innovations into disruptive spinouts, startups and scaleups.

We look for bold, IP-rich innovations from all areas of engineering and technology that can solve the world's most complex environmental, economic, and societal challenges.

Why are we different?

Our entrepreneurs benefit from the unique, prestigious national and global network of the Royal Academy of Engineering that brings together expert Academy Fellows, industry pioneers, like-minded innovators, funders, business leaders, researchers, and policy makers.

We have delivered 10 years of success, enabling our members to form a powerful, thriving, and supportive community. We run four programmes at multiple stages, from ideation to scaleup, with support for entrepreneurial engineers at different career points. We don't take equity, fees or IP. Thanks to our charitable status, we can focus on supporting excellence in engineering by helping innovators to fulfil their potential, founding and leading enterprises.

What do we offer?

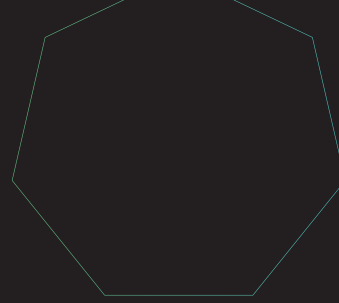
We offer smart and flexible training, and access to the unique mentoring capability of the highly talented engineers and business leaders that make up the Fellowship of the Academy, and the Hub's network of experts. The Enterprise Hub provides a dedicated presence across the UK, with hubs located in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, that embed training and opportunities into the local ecosystem. Hub Members gain long-lasting benefit and support from the Academy's global network and unmatched convening ability. Once you're part of the community, you're a Hub Member for life.

Background

The Enterprise Hub was formally launched in April 2013. Since then, we have supported over 500 researchers, recent graduates, and leaders of SMEs to start and scale up businesses that can give practical application to innovative engineering solutions. We've awarded over £16 million in grant funding, and our Hub Members have gone on to create almost 3000 jobs and raise over £3.1 billion in additional funding.



Royal Academy
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Hub



The **Royal Academy of Engineering** creates and leads a community of outstanding experts and innovators to engineer better lives. As a charity and a Fellowship, we deliver public benefit from excellence in engineering and technology and convene leading businesspeople, entrepreneurs, innovators and academics across engineering and technology. As a National Academy, we provide leadership for engineering and technology, and independent, expert advice to policymakers in the UK and beyond.

We have three goals:

Sustainable and Innovative Economy, where sustainability drivers, innovative industries and resilient infrastructures are aligned to drive growth and productivity that will support better lives for all.

Technology Improving Lives, where technology in all its forms is used to meet the most important human needs, avoid harm, support fairer societies and break down barriers to opportunity.

Engineering Community Fit for the Future, where our community reflects society in its diversity, commits to creating inclusive cultures to help drive engineering excellence, and has the skills to meet future needs safely, securely and ethically, and to keep pace with innovation.

For further information about the programme
or to connect with us:

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