

**Manufacturing Research Hub for a
Sustainable Future (VaxHub
Sustainable)**

Platform Funding

Call outline

January 2025



ABOUT THE MANUFACTURING RESEARCH HUB FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE (VAXHUB SUSTAINABLE)

The Manufacturing Research Hub for a Sustainable Future, VaxHub Sustainable, was officially launched in September 2023. This seven-year research programme, which is funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), aims to establish the UK as the global centre for integrated discovery through to bioprocess manufacture of next generation vaccines in preparation for the next pandemic, building on a technological innovation culture.

VaxHub Sustainable focuses on developing new tools and technologies to speed up vaccine manufacture and facilitate efficient distribution, storage and administration and vaccine life-cycle management. To meet the VaxHub vision as a sustainability leader in the sector, research will also focus on tools that support better understanding of the impact on the environment and will facilitate waste re-use and facility design for (re)manufacture.

The VaxHub aims to transform vaccine manufacturing by mitigating risks through innovation around five promising platform technologies: viral vectors, VLPs, subunit, RNA and glycoconjugate. VaxHub Sustainable brings together key academic institutes (University College London, University of Oxford, University of Manchester, University of Leeds and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) and industry partners. More information about VaxHub deliverables and research impact can be found on our [website](#).

PLATFORM FUNDING CALL

INTRODUCTION

This document contains the key information pertaining to the call including the type of project, scope, ambition and impact that applicants are expected to address.

VaxHub Members (i.e. those who have signed the VaxHub Agreement or intend to join the VaxHub during the call period)¹ are invited to submit applications to support platform funded projects. A platform funded project could focus on testing or demonstrating research results (experimental methods, analytical techniques, etc.) generated on a VaxHub related vaccine technology (viral vectored, VLP, mRNA and conjugated vaccines). Projects must be related to VaxHub themes and could address research questions derived from prior academic study or respond to industry identified needs in the manufacture of vaccines. Projects focusing on fostering new collaborations or supporting training and upskilling objectives are also accepted. Further information can be found under "[Scope](#)".

Eligibility

Only VaxHub members² are eligible to apply for platform funding. Proposals may be submitted independently by VaxHub members and/or are invited from VaxHub members working in collaboration with VaxHub academic partners with prioritisation given to projects that can show a novel collaboration that would not otherwise be possible. Organisations that are not currently members of the VaxHub but would be interested in joining to be able to access funding opportunities and other benefits, are invited to contact vaxhub@ucl.ac.uk

Please note the following additional eligibility requirements:

- Individuals can submit one application as the lead applicant per funding call, but there is no limit on the same **entities** (institution/organisation) submitting multiple applications to each call.
- There is no limit on being a collaborator on multiple applications to the same call.
- Other HEI academics (for example, permanent members of academic staff) can lead a project, provided they are committed to ongoing interactions with the VaxHub.
- VaxHub PDRAs/RAs cannot apply for/lead a Platform Funded project, but they could be a co-applicant, with their Co-I, who would be on an open-ended contract, as the lead.

Specification

- **Value** - Proposals should be submitted for projects with a value of between £75,000-£100,000 (inclusive of VAT). If your project is lower than this amount then we encourage you to explore other opportunities for funding.

¹ Please contact vaxhub@ucl to sign-up as a member to the VaxHub.

² Applications will be accepted from organisations that are in the process of joining the VaxHub but awards will be made subject to the completion of the required documentation by 4 April 2024, the closure date of the call.

- **Duration** – Projects should last between six and 12 months. Details of project start and end dates can be found in the table below.
- **Number of projects funded** – Up to four in each call.
- **Matched funding** - There is an expectation from the EPSRC, the funder, that funding will be matched by the VaxHub. As such, applicants must demonstrate a 20% contribution to the project. For further details, visit the '[matched funding](#)' section.
- **Payment of funds** - UCL will transfer funds to the lead organisation and up to 2 partner organisations per project. Payments will be made in two stages, the first following the award and the second following a satisfactory mid-term report for the project.

FUNDING SCHEME NAME	VALUE	NUMBER OF PROJECTS FUNDED IN EACH CALL	DURATION
Manufacturing Research Hub for a Sustainable Future (VaxHub Sustainable) Platform Funding Scheme	Maximum of £100,000 per project, including VAT (where applicable)	Up to four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects should last between 6 and 12 months. • Projects must be completed by 30 June 2026 • An extended duration is not guaranteed, and additional funds would not be available to cover any additional time granted.

VaxHub Call Dates

CALL NUMBER	CALLS	CALL OPENS	CALL CLOSES	PROJECT START DATE FROM	PROJECT END DATE
1	SUSTAINABLE CALL 2025/2026	13/01/2025	04/04/2025	JULY 2025	JUNE 2026
2	GLOBAL CALL 2025/2026	07/04/2025	27/06/2025	OCTOBER 2025	SEPTEMBER 2026
3	GLOBAL UK-ONLY CALL 2026/2027	29/09/2025	19/12/2025	APRIL 2026	MARCH 2027
4	GLOBAL CALL 2027/2027	06//07/2026	25/09/2026	JANUARY 2027	DECEMBER 2027
5	SUSTAINABLE CALL 2028/2028	05/07/2027	24/09/2027	JANUARY 2028	DECEMBER 2028
6	SUSTAINABLE CALL 2028/2029	10/01/2028	31/03/2028	JULY 2028	JUNE 2029

Please be mindful of the timelines above when planning your submissions throughout the overall Platform Funding timeline, to ensure that you have sufficient, and dedicated/unique resources for each project you are applying for.

Briefing Webinar

A briefing webinar will take place on 24th January 2025. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to register for the event as it forms an important opportunity to understand more about the call and what is expected. You can register to attend the briefing webinar by using this Eventbrite link [VaxHub Platform Funding Information Session](#).

Key dates

CALL 1 - DATES	DATE
SUSTAINABLE CALL 2025/2026 OPENS	13 JANUARY 2025
SUSTAINABLE CALL 2025/2026 CLOSING TIME AND DATE FOR APPLICATIONS	23:59 UK TIME (BST) 04 APRIL 2025
ONLINE BRIEFING WEBINAR	24 JANUARY 2025
REVIEW OF PROPOSALS AND ELIGIBILITY CHECKS	FROM 7 APRIL TO 12 MAY 2025
NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME	BY 12 MAY 2025
PROJECT DURATION DATES	FROM 1 JULY 2025 TO 30 JUNE 2026
PROJECT END DATE	BY 30 JUNE 2026

Scope

The VaxHub is pleased to offer funding to support projects which may choose to focus on one or more of the following vaccine technologies and research areas to support manufacturing:

- VLPs, subunit, glycoconjugates, viral vectored and mRNA vaccines
- Technology improvements
- Analytical development
- Upstream and downstream bioprocessing optimisation
- Scaling up/down
- Formulation and thermostability
- Environmental sustainability
- Life-cycle management
- Health economics
- Policy and regulatory systems
- Decisional tools (cost of goods, supply chain management, etc.)

VaxHub Sustainable projects are expected to focus on research and development studies that concentrate on developing and/or facilitate, new tools and technologies to speed-up vaccine manufacture. Projects aligned to the Hub Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) priorities, those delivering sustainability objectives within the company that could be applied to the wider sector and initiatives supporting employees' development and upskilling are encouraged.

Applicants must demonstrate how proposed projects will:

- Contribute to VaxHub Sustainable aims and objectives
- Regular interactions with the VaxHub during and after project completion
- Benefit their business in the long-term
- Enable them to apply for follow-on initiatives
- Explore early technologies (at TRL 1-3)
- Generate pilot data for follow-on funding or test feasibility with key stakeholders.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

VaxHub is committed to equality of opportunity and values diversity and a culture in which inclusion is promoted. There is an expectation that steps will be taken within funded projects to go above and beyond the routine EDI activities of the project teams and applications will be assessed on whether further steps are being demonstrably taken to promote equality, diversity or inclusion.

The VaxHub acknowledges that there are individual contexts that could lead to different cultural/ gender dynamics and this will need to be a consideration when assessing projects. We still endeavour to promote best practice and expect this to be considered in project proposals, as an example, to promote gender equality we expect there to be no "all male" working groups for VaxHub projects.

Due Diligence

In line with UCL's Due Diligence policy for research funding and in adherence to funder requirements, UCL undertakes full due diligence checks on all active grants within the VaxHub. All applicants³ receiving funds will be required to complete an enhanced Due Diligence questionnaire based on the amount of funding they are applying for; links to the Due Diligence questionnaires are available on the [VaxHub website](#). Completed forms should be returned at the application stage.

Ethical Approval

Applicants should use the Ethical Information section on the application form to demonstrate to reviewers that they have fully considered any ethical issues concerning the material they intend to use, the nature and choice, current public perceptions and attitudes towards the subject matter or research area. VaxHub funds must be used in compliance with EPSRC rules on ethics and we will not fund a project if we believe that there are ethical concerns that have been overlooked or not appropriately accounted for.

Outputs

Outputs are most likely to be in the form of a report, publication, tools, new products/processes/methods or proof of concept. Data is likely to be an important feature of most projects, and we recommend that a **data management plan** is put in place to ensure that data is appropriately curated, stored and made available for future research, where feasible.

Requested Resources

The **budget sheet template** should be used to list and describe the resources that are required to undertake the proposed Project. The justification for these resources should also be made clear in the application form.

Eligible Costs

Costs that can be funded include:

- Staff salaries
- Travel and subsistence, exclusively for the progression of the funded project
- Other direct costs (consumables, facilities fees, etc.)

Specific Exclusions

³ Please note Third-party due diligence checks will not apply to any of the following:

- When the third party is an individual
- When the third party is on the [Higher Education Statistics Agency \(HESA\) list](#) of UK higher education providers
- When the third party is a [UK Government department, agency, or public body](#), or local authority in [England and Wales](#), and [Scotland](#).

The funding will not cover:

- Fees for undergraduate or postgraduate courses
- First class and business class travel costs or priority visa fees.
- Travel/trips which show no real outputs for professional development.
- Applications made on behalf of applicants without the applicants' agreement.
- Capital or infrastructure expenditure is not an eligible cost.
- Equipment

We will not support proposals that:

- Do not align with the vision and aims of VaxHub
- Do not demonstrate sustainability
- Fund associated studentships
- Include new, external recruitment (except for casual/consultancy appointments).

Matched funding

There is an expectation from the EPSRC, the funder, that funding will be matched by the VaxHub. As such, applicants must demonstrate a 20% contribution to the project. For example, if you request £80,000 in funding, we expect to see an additional £16,000 contribution from the applicants to the project budget. Examples of contributions to the project could include staff time, supply of consumables/ equipment, provision of travel or accommodation, etc.

Contracts

All funded projects will be subject to the terms of the VaxHub Collaboration Agreement, in compliance with the clauses around Intellectual Property (Section 6), Publication and Confidentiality (Section 5). If you believe any further contractual requirements will be needed for your proposal, please contact vaxhub@ucl.ac.uk to discuss this as soon as you are aware of any potential additional needs.

Reporting

Successful applicants will be required to provide updates on progress (if requested) and to comply with mid and end of project reporting requirements. Reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants. These shall include commentary on whether aims have been achieved, methods used, data produced, publications or other outputs, other outcomes, impact achieved and planned, problems encountered, and forward plans. **It is a condition of funding that successful applicants must give a presentation about their project to members of the VaxHub community.**

Successful teams will also be expected to:

- **Participate in VaxHub events, as required.** This may include presentations to the VaxHub Users Group or International Advisory Board.

- **Promote VaxHub through VaxHub and own networks.** The VaxHub Project Manager will maintain contact with successful teams to receive updates and to ensure that important information and announcements are disseminated widely.

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

Selection Process



Important note: VaxHub reserves the right to reject proposals that are incomplete and that do not meet the requirements highlighted on the checklist before sending them to reviewers. The checklist can be found in the Application Form.

Scoring

In addition to assessing the ethical information, there are six primary criteria against which all proposals shall be assessed. The key points are shown below. All applications shall be assessed against the same criteria, regardless of the funding amount requested. Proposals shall be scored against each of the six criteria on a scale of 1- 3, as follows:

- 1 = sub-criteria not met
- 2 = sub-criteria partially met
- 3 = sub-criteria fully met

Scoring Criteria

SECTION 1: NOVELTY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the problem that is to be investigated, with reference to the evidence base and describe its fit to the aims of VaxHub Sustainable. • State clearly the aim and objectives of the project, its level of ambition, novelty, the expected addition to knowledge. • Explain the need for this particular project and note why your approach is the most appropriate and how, if relevant, it might be scalable.
SECTION 2: QUALITY

- Describe and justify the research approach/method to be taken, making clear which team members will be responsible for delivery.
- State the proposed outputs and expected outcomes from the project.

SECTION 3: MANAGEMENT

- Justify why this team is the most appropriate to deliver the project, with reference to their expertise and track record/s.
- Explain whether a novel collaboration has been established that would not be possible without this funding opportunity.
- Explain (with a timetable and work package/task structure) how the team will ensure delivery of the project on time.
- Provide an account of the key risks and how these will be managed (including any risks in respect of ethics, data management, and staffing).

SECTION 4: VALUE FOR MONEY

- Provide a clear justification for all resources requested.
- Explain why your request is appropriate, given the scope and ambition of the project.
- State how you will contribute to the aims of the VaxHub Sustainable, making reference to your long-term plans for follow-on funding and collaboration.
- Provide details, including values, of your additional 20% contribution to the project in line with our matched funding requirements.

SECTION 5: IMPACT

- Describe the long-term effect that you expect your project to have on the vaccine manufacturing/research agenda, and how you would expect this impact to be measured or recognised.
- Explain your overall approach to industry engagement and/or collaboration, including which people/organisations you will involve and how you will ensure this engagement.
- Detail how, both during and after the funded project has ended, you will engage with the VaxHub more broadly and other VaxHub members, specifically.
- Set out your pathway/s to impact, including your target audience/s and beneficiaries, how you will reach them and what change is expected.

SECTION 6: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- VaxHub is committed to equality of opportunity and values diversity and a culture in which inclusion is promoted. Describe how you have taken this into account when planning your project.
- Please refer to specific actions to be taken within the project to enhance or improve EDI in relation to project activities.

Submission

- To download an application form and budget sheet template, visit the [VaxHub website](#).
- The deadline for submissions is 23:59 UK time on 04 April 2024.
- Submissions must be submitted via the website using [MS Forms](#). If you have issues with online submission, please use the Word application form and return all documents to: vaxhub@ucl.ac.uk

Contact

Please direct enquiries about the call to vaxhub@ucl.ac.uk