

UKRRIN 2 Pilot

PROPOSAL GUIDANCE

The **UK Rail Research and Innovation Network (UKRRIN)** was established in 2018, designed to create powerful collaboration between academia and industry. UKRRIN aimed to provide a step-change in innovation in the sector and accelerate new technologies and products from research into market applications globally. Financial support from government and ongoing commitment from private organisations has built a strong foundation for partnership that we can further build upon together.

Working towards the next chapter

The contractual arrangements underpinning UKRRIN will come to an end in 2028. The rail industry has changed radically since UKRRIN was established, presenting new opportunities to strengthen the partnership and ensure better coordination for members.

As part of rail reform UKRRIN can play a stronger and more inclusive role in coordinating and delivering research & development. But there is uncertainty about the future research pipeline and associated funding. A key risk is that academic resources valuable to the railway will be lost, facilities will be redeployed, and both will be difficult to replace.

There have also been significant changes in the financial situation of many universities, meaning a different and deeper approach to collaborative research is needed.

Two opportunities have been identified: a stronger and independent voice to promote UKRRIN and its capabilities; and one-stop-shop to engage between universities and funders with a clear understanding of academic capabilities, and the ability to provide easier ways to engage.



Moving toward UKRRIN 2

RSSB and Network Rail are paving the way for improved trilateral arrangements between academia, public organisations in the rail industry, and the private sector by trialling new arrangements for a UKRRIN network. New academic and industrial partners, and funders new to UKRRIN, are invited to engage, alongside existing interested UKRRIN academic and industrial partners.

<p>What it means for UKRRIN universities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Better visibility of funders research pipeline  Ability to shape and secure long term relationships  Propose research against the topic areas and specific challenges  Lead or be part of research delivering team 	<p>What it means for UKRRIN industrial partners?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Gain visibility for planned research and work bank  Ability to propose research  Leverage other funders' contributions and expertise  Competitive advantage in the market
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A successful UKRRIN 2 pilot will be targeting to deliver:

<p>New insights and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Visibility of other funders research pipeline and aspirations in the topics ✓ Visibility and opportunity to steer universities' initiatives and activities in the topics 	<p>Making R&D funds to go further</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Leverage private funders contributions on suitable asks sitting under the topics ✓ Secure separate public funding (e.g. EPSRC funds, Innovate UK, Horizon) on these topics
SUCCESS MEASURES	
<p>Outputs that make an impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ High quality proposals ✓ Ability to adjust scope and outputs depending and emerging findings to extract maximum value ✓ Clear route for findings to be taken-up and generate impact, thanks to involvement of UKRRIN industrial members 	<p>Future long-term commitments from private and public funders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Funders committing money on other topics / on a longer-term basis

UKRRIN 2 Pilot Scope

Three topics areas have been selected for the pilot, covering a mix of strategic and tactical research. The three topics are selected to be:

- Of significant relevance to both Network Rail and RSSB
- Able to draw collaboration across multiple potential funders.
- Of interest to multiple universities.

The Topic areas are:

- Vehicle / Track
- Electric traction power
- Telecoms and positioning

Within each of these topics, technical experts from RSSB and Network Rail, supported as appropriate by relevant Cross Industry groups, have identified specific asks within these three topics. Summaries of each of these asks can be seen below, and in more detail here (<https://ukrrin.org.uk/engage-with-the-ukrrin-2-pilot>).



Vehicle / Track

Continuing to improve vehicle and track system interaction to reduce costs and enhance safety

Many organisations across the industry research ways to reduce costs and improve safety and comfort at the wheel/rail interface, and relationships with the academic community are already strong.

The presence of this topic in the pilot aims to test how to build on these strengths and create synergies between the research asks of different organisations



Electric traction
power

Addressing new challenges and opportunities for the efficient and effective management of electric traction power on the rail network

New knowledge is needed to deliver and make the most of electric traction power, particularly as more battery and multi-mode trains are introduced.

This topic has been chosen for the pilot as there is significant scope for academic input, from both rail and energy research groups, as well as opportunities for collaboration with key industry stakeholders including train manufactures and ROSCOs



Telecoms and
positioning

New technologies have the potential to reduce cost and improve performance of signalling and communications in rail

The rail sector engagement with academia in this area is mostly transactional. Ensuring rail needs inform cross-modal and cross-sector research opportunities can bring big benefits to the industry. By including this topic in the pilot, steps will be taken to establish trusted long-term relationships that enhance rail access to experts, additional funding, and applicable work from other sectors.

Submission Guidance

Eligibility and consortia requirements

To be eligible for funding as part of this UKRRIN 2 Pilot, the academic lead must sign up to the UKRRIN 2 Pilot framework agreement. A draft version of the UKRRIN 2 Pilot framework agreement will be made available by the end of May at the latest. A lead university must submit the proposal and are encouraged to review the agreement prior to submission. A channel for asking questions will be provided, clarifications and questions will be addressed, however, to ensure consistency, any changes will only be accepted under special circumstances.

Universities that do not sign up to the UKRRIN 2 Pilot framework agreement can still be part of consortiums but not lead a proposal.

80% of the overall funding is required to be for work carried out by academic institutions. Up to 20% can be for other costs and work delivered by non-academic institutions where they are bringing specific necessary capabilities and/or facilities.

Industry collaboration is highly recommended, and for some Asks is necessary for a successful proposal.

Each consortium must appoint a lead organisation, who will be responsible for receiving and managing the funding. RSSB acting as UKRRIN will contract directly with the lead organisation.

Funding availability

The pilot scheme will run for 2 years. The duration of projects funded are expected to be between 6 and 18 months (see topic overviews for more details on the project requirements).

Projects seeking funding are expected to be costed at 80% FEC (Full Economic Cost) with academic staff rates utilising an approach aligned to the [TRAC \(Transparent Approach to Costing\) methodology](#).

Co-funding from industry partners, either in the form of in-kind or cash, is always welcome, and in some cases regarded as essential. This will be considered in the value for money assessment of proposals.

What are the types of costs that the Grant contribution could cover?

- Labour costs: these include the costs of personnel from the consortium organisations working directly on the project. The costs of project management as well as report writing are eligible and should be included within the labour totals.
- Travel and subsistence: these are costs incurred exclusively for progressing the project.

- **Subcontractor costs:** these include any work that is essential to the success of the project and that is outsourced (beyond the partners on the consortium). The reasons for employing each subcontractor must be clearly outlined in the proposal.
- **Capital equipment:** this includes capital equipment and tools bought or consumed on the project.
- **Materials:** these are the materials to be consumed on the project and purchased from third parties.

The project should take into consideration time and resources required for regular project meetings (on a quarterly basis or at other periodic recurrence, depending on the project length) and dissemination opportunities. It is expected that the project team will proactively seek these, however RSSB will make relevant dissemination opportunities available throughout the life of the project.

The following are ineligible costs:

- Interest, e.g. hire-purchase interest
- Patent costs
- Advertising
- Certifications
- Entertainment
- Training

Proposal format and guidance

We are expecting good quality proposals, clearly written and formatted. You must use the proposal template provided, which is available via the webinar hub.

Your proposal should be between 8-12 pages long and should include the following:

- **Project description:** this section includes the project scope and objectives; methodology; breakdown of tasks; description of expected deliverables for each task and associated delivery dates.
- **Project plan:** a Gantt chart or other graphic representation comprehensive of milestones, tasks and link to deliverable dates.
- **Costing:** clear and transparent breakdown of costs, using the template provided.
- **Impacts and benefits:** this section includes a high-level description of the overall implementation journey of the project outputs, linking this with expected impacts and benefits. Size of benefits should be included if possible. This section is expected to be kept live during the life of the project, if successful.

- **Consortium members, and industry support and contribution:** a list of all consortium members and supporters. For the consortium members, it should specify the relevant expertise that each will bring to the project. Specify any in-kind and cash support from industry this work will receive.

Please note that the assessment panel may request additional clarifications or ask that a proposal is resubmitted, if it does not match the format or address the stated required points.

Scoring

All proposals will be reviewed by a panel of experts from RSSB, Network Rail and if appropriate UKRRIN Industry members.

All proposals will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- **Quality of proposal** based on:
 - Clear and effective methodology that demonstrates how the ask will be addressed and valuable outputs will be produced.*
 - Evidences the ability of the proposed team to deliver the scope of work and outputs outlined.*
 - Soundness of the risks and mitigations identified.*
- **Working towards implementation** based on:
 - Evidence of clear and actionable plans for different stakeholders in taking the outputs forward*
 - Demonstration of sound understanding of how benefits will emerge as outputs are implemented, including costs and risks associated with take up*
- **Strength of industry support:**
 - Evidenced by the level and nature of contribution from industrial members beyond RSSB and Network Rail.*
- **Value for money** based on:
 - Delivery cost being clearly identified and justified.*
 - The level of commitment of co-funding (in-kind and/or cash).*

Expressions of Interest

An optional Expressions of Interest (EOI) stage is included. This provides an opportunity for proposers to get early feedback on how well aligned the emerging research proposal aligns to the research ask.

Feedback on EOIs will be provided, indicating if proposals are well aligned, partially aligned or misaligned with the research ask. Feedback will include a brief commentary providing a rationale for the feedback.

EOIs should be a maximum of 2 pages, including:

- **Participants:** list all proposed researchers
- **Summary of proposed research:** an overview of the research idea, including a high-level methodology and outputs.
- **Industry support:** expected industry support (this may not be confirmed at this stage). Include both in-kind support and potential cash contributions, if known.

Please note the EOI stage is completely optional.

How to apply

Application templates can be found on the UKRRIN website, along with links to information packs for the topics for research.

The timeline for projects (outline below). The deadline for full proposal is 10th July, with the projects kicking off in October 2026. Please regularly check the UKRRIN website for updates and the latest on the news on the timeline.



Any questions can be directed to UKRRIN@RSSB.co.uk

A list of FAQs will be maintained on the UKRRIN website

Templates and supporting materials can also be found on the UKRRIN website
www.UKRRIN.org.uk