Department for
Business, Innovation,
Science and Trade

# Critical Minerals Accelerator Competition

Scheme Guidance Document

5 August 2026

# Contents

# About this scheme

## How this scheme supports the Critical Minerals Strategy

In 2025, the UK Government published Vision 2035: Critical Minerals Strategy, building on the ambitions set out in the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy. Together, these strategies recognise the essential role that critical minerals play in enabling growth across key sectors of the economy, including clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and defence.

The Critical Minerals Strategy sets out a long-term vision to strengthen the UK's access to these materials, in the context of increasing global demand, supply chain concentration, and geopolitical risk. A central ambition of the strategy is to grow a resilient domestic supply chain, supporting both economic growth and economic security.

To ensure clear industry and government progress towards delivering Vision 2035 in partnership, we define success as:

- at least 10% of annual UK demand for critical mineral in the aggregate is met through domestic production (primary extraction, processing and refining of critical minerals) by 2035
- 20% of total annual UK demand for critical minerals is met through recycling of products to recover critical minerals by 2035
- supply is diversified, so that no more than 60% of the UK's annual demand for critical minerals in the aggregate is supplied by any one country by 2035

In line with Vision 2035 and as part of our £50m Critical Minerals Programme, the Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade (BIST) is launching the Critical Minerals Accelerator (CM Accelerator) to help build capability across the UK critical minerals value chain. It is designed to:

- deliver the ambitions of the Vision 2035, including growing domestic production and increasing the contribution of recycling and recovery to meeting UK demand
- accelerate innovation and scale-up in critical minerals by supporting the commercialisation of late-stage R&D across the critical minerals value chain
- reduce reliance on dominant overseas suppliers and diversify sources of supply, helping build more secure and sustainable supply chains for strategically important critical minerals.
- support growth, productivity and high-value jobs across the UK, creating economic opportunities in regions with critical minerals-related industrial capability and attracting further investment into the sector
- promote more sustainable and circular supply chains, including through innovation in processing, recycling and recovery technologies

## Overview and scope of the Critical Minerals Accelerator

The Critical Minerals Accelerator is a £25m grant funding scheme, aimed at unlocking the commercialisation of innovation through the scaling up of innovative solutions for critical minerals, spanning extraction, processing and recycling and building on the UK's strengths. Funding will support projects across the UK for all of the minerals on the 2024 UK Critical Minerals List as well as growth minerals essential to the IS8 by 2035, focusing on innovation, scale up and commercialisation Successful projects should increase the security of supply of minerals, boost resilience, create jobs and growth.

The CM Accelerator is focused on companies and projects at Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 6-8 which are close to commercialisation and that face significant barriers in proving unit economics and de-risking their processes. Projects supported will be at the Pilot to Pre-Commercial or Demonstrator to Commercialisation stage of development.

The £25m CM Accelerator grant scheme will support multiple projects through a competitive process. Our expectation is that all approved grants will sit within a range of £150k-£3m.

All projects funded under this scheme are expected to be delivered by March 2030.

The table below sets out key criteria for the two project types eligible for funding through this competition. Applicants with projects that fall outside of the published funding ranges must contact BIST via email no later than 14 working days before the application deadline at criticalmineralsacceleratorgrantscheme@businessandtrade.gov.uk.

| | Pilot to Pre-Commercial projects | Demonstrator to Commercialisation projects |
|---|---|---|
| **TRL level** | 6+ | 8+ |
| **Expected grant funding range** | £1 million to £3 million | £150k to £1 million |
| **Expected project duration** | 18 to 36 months | 6 to 18 months typically |

BIST does not have preconceived ideas about how much of the £25m will be committed in the first round as this will depend on the number and quality of the applications received. We anticipate that a second round will be opened in early 2027 to commit any remaining funding and in this case, unsuccessful applicants from the first round will receive feedback to help them strengthen their applications for this round.

### Key Dates

This table outlines indicative dates for the scheme milestones.

| Event | Date |
|---|---|
| **£50 million programme launch** | 22 June 2026 |
| **First round of applications** | 5 August 2026 – 30 September 2026 |
| **Information session** | August 2026 |
| **FAQ document published (updated weekly)** | August/September 2026 |
| **Latest date for questions to be received** | 16 September 2026 |
| **Notification of first round application outcome** | October 2026 |
| **First round interviews** | October/November 2026 |
| **First round funding decision** | November/December 2026 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Grant funding agreements signed with successful applicants** | December/January 2027 |
| **First grant drawdown (and quarterly thereafter)** | March 2027 |
| **Subsequent application window (TBC)** | 2027 (TBC) |
| **Grant spend period ends** | 31 March 2030 |

# Strategic aims

### What the Critical Minerals Accelerator aims to achieve

The overarching objective of the CM Accelerator is to support research and development innovation (typically projects at minimum Technology Readiness Level 6-8) in extraction, midstream processing and recycling (which currently do not qualify or are unable to attract support from public finance institutions and private finance) to increase validation, commercialisation prospects and scale up in the UK. This objective is underpinned by three strategic priorities:

1. **Driving Economic Growth**
   - Support high-value manufacturing and growth-driving sectors, including clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and defence
   - Support job creation, skills development, and regional economic growth
   - Catalyse private sector investment and expansion across UK critical minerals value chains
2. **Strengthening Economic Security**
   - Reduce vulnerabilities associated with concentrated global supply chains
   - Build sovereign capability in a strategically critical sector
   - Improve resilience against supply disruptions and external economic pressures
3. **Building Domestic Resilience**
   - Reduce reliance on overseas supply chains for critical minerals
   - Develop domestic capability across critical minerals value chains
   - Establish a sustainable ecosystem, spanning production, skills and innovation
   - Promote a circular materials economy by enabling recycling, recovery, and reuse of critical minerals across products' lifecycles

### What the scheme will fund

Multiple projects and organisations will be awarded funding through this scheme. The scheme will adopt a strategic approach, enabling support across different critical minerals and multiple stages of the value chain that best deliver on the Programme's objectives.

The scheme is focused on companies close to commercialisation that face significant barriers in proving unit economics and de-risking their processes. In response, the scheme will support companies at either the Pilot to Pre-Commercial (TRL 6+) or Demonstrator to Commercialisation (TRL 8+) stage of development, where the costs required to demonstrate performance and reduce technical and engineering risk are typically high, while projects often remain too risky to attract conventional debt or private capital.

#### *Pilot to Pre-Commercial (TRL 6+)*

A Pilot to Pre-Commercial plant is a pre-commercial facility in which an innovative technology, process or system is deployed at a representative scale to validate technical performance, operating assumptions and commercial potential. Projects within this category should already have demonstrated proof of concept and be seeking to scale beyond laboratory or small-scale testing.

The purpose of a Pilot to Pre-Commercial plant is to generate the operational evidence needed to support future commercial deployment. Activities may include the construction, commissioning, operation and optimisation of facilities that allow technologies to be tested under increasingly representative conditions and produce limited volumes of product.

The CM Accelerator is intended to support projects that are progressing from pilot-scale activities towards a larger pre-commercial deployment. Applicants should be able to demonstrate a credible pathway to commercialisation and explain how the proposed project will reduce technical risk, improve investor confidence and advance the project towards a commercial operating model.

We recognise that projects at this stage often face difficulties securing private finance, as technologies remain insufficiently proven to attract conventional debt or large-scale investment. We therefore aim to support the capital expenditure and associated activities required to build, test, operate and refine pilot and demonstrator facilities.

We expect projects in this funding stream to last between 18 and 36 months and for grants to be within a range of £1 million to £3 million, with applicants required to provide match funding at the rates set out in this guidance.

### *Demonstrator to Commercialisation plant (TRL 8+)*

A Demonstrator to Commercialisation plant is the first commercial-scale deployment of an innovative technology, process or system. Projects within this category should have already completed a pilot or pre-commercial demonstration stage and be seeking to overcome the final technical, engineering and commercial barriers to deployment at industrial scale.

The purpose of a Demonstrator to Commercialisation project is not to prove a new concept, but to build the evidence, engineering design and investment case required to reach a final investment decision and secure financing for commercial deployment. Applicants should be able to demonstrate that the core technology has already been validated and that the proposed project represents a clear step towards full commercial operation.

Activities within this category may include Front-End Engineering Design (FEED), detailed engineering studies, site integration work, technical validation, commercial assessments, feasibility studies, permitting support and other de-risking activities required to prepare a project for commercial-scale deployment.

Once projects are fully de-risked and ready to enter construction, investors and public finance institutions are often willing to provide significant capital support. However, companies frequently report a funding gap for the technical and commercial de-risking activities required to bridge the transition between a successful pilot facility and a fully commercial operation. The CM Accelerator is intended to help address this gap and support projects in becoming investment-ready.

Projects within this stream would typically be expected to demonstrate a clear route to commercial deployment and a credible strategy for attracting the private capital required to deliver a commercial-scale facility.

We expect projects in this funding stream to typically last between 6 and 18 months and for grants to be within a range of £150,000 to £1 million, with applicants required to provide match funding at the rates set out in this guidance.

## Priority areas

Specific priority areas have been identified for the scheme. We are keen to see applications which focus on one or more of the following:

- Projects which leverage and build upon UK-based value chains and existing capabilities, for example, minerals where the UK has some processing and recycling capabilities.

- Projects which can demonstrate clear engagement across the critical minerals value chain, including evidence of existing or planned commercial relationships, collaboration agreements, offtake arrangements, or partnerships with downstream users and manufacturers.

- Projects which aim to complete a gap in an existing domestic supply chain, building domestic resilience and supporting diversification of supply.

- Projects which have robust strategies to continue scaling and attracting investment needed for commercial, sustainable operation in the longer term.

- Projects which can demonstrate that they align with wider UK government strategies and priorities.

### Expected outcomes of the scheme

All applicants must demonstrate their alignment to the five core outcomes of the scheme which funded projects will support:

1) Accelerate the development, scale-up and commercialisation of critical minerals projects and technologies in the UK

2) Increase UK capability in the production, processing, recycling and recovery of critical minerals

3) Strengthen the resilience and diversity of UK critical minerals supply chains, reducing reliance on concentrated overseas sources of supply

4) Unlock additional private investment by helping projects demonstrate technical and commercial viability

5) Support economic growth, job creation and skills development across the UK critical minerals sector and the Industrial Strategy growth sectors

# Who can apply

## Lead applicants and partners

The lead applicant must be a UK registered business with their operations based in the UK and be committed to developing innovation and follow-on commercial activity within the UK.

Charities, not-for-profits, universities/academic institutions, research and technology organisations (RTOs) and public sector organisations may be included in the project team but not lead a project unless they are also a UK registered business.

Lead applicants are allowed to be involved in only one application in this funding round, either as a lead applicant or as a member of the project team.

You can run your project on an individual or consortium basis. If you run your project as a consortium, you will be asked to set out the rationale for collaboration and explain the structure of your consortium through the application process. Consortium projects will be expected to establish formal collaboration agreements to ensure that all project partners are aware of the need for compliance with the scheme rules and relevant legislation and that all data and assets are appropriately managed.

If you are applying on a consortium basis, you must appoint a lead applicant to complete the application form.

If your application is successful, BIST will sign a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) with only the lead applicant. Legally binding agreements between consortium members and the lead applicant must be managed by the lead applicant.

## Who cannot apply

We will exclude your application if it involves funding, or providing any financial benefit to, any individual or entity that is listed on the UK Sanctions List and is directly or indirectly involved with delivery of this project. This could include activities such as procurement, commercial operations, business development, or supply chain engagement involving any organisation acting as a lead, partner, or subcontractor.

As part of the application process, you will also be asked to complete various declarations, including relating to past convictions and breach of various regulations, breach of obligations related to payment of tax or social security contributions and breach of other regulations. If you declare yes to any of these, you will be required to provide an explanation to set out what measures have been taken to demonstrate the reliability of your organisation despite the existence of a relevant grounds for exclusion.

We reserve the right to reject any application where we believe there is sufficient grounds for exclusion.

## Where the project must take place

The project must take place within the UK. Where the project includes extraction of materials outside of the UK, the activities funded through this scheme must take place in the UK.

## Project timescales

The delivery window for the CM Accelerator will run to 31 March 2030 and you will need to have spent all grant funding by this date and delivered agreed outputs/outcomes as set out in the GFA by this point. We expect Pilot to Pre-Commercial projects to take between 18 and 36 months and Demonstrator to Commercialisation projects to typically take between 6 and 18 months.

You should be confident that the proposal you submit can meet these deadlines. As part of the application process, you must submit evidenced project plans showing your ability to complete projects in line with these timescales and consider any risks to the plan.

Projects should be able to mobilise quickly after grant award. If successful, you will be able to claim for spend incurred from offer in principle stage, however any spend incurred before the GFA is signed will be at your own risk.

### Funding available and eligible costs

We expect approved grants under the Pilot to Pre-Commercial funding stream to be within a range of £1 million to £3 million and grants under the Demonstrator to Commercialisation funding stream to be within a range of £150,000 to £1 million.

The grant amount in your project budget must represent good value for money for the activities you are undertaking and for the public purse. The total amount of funding you apply for should be the minimum amount necessary to deliver the project and you will be expected to provide evidence of this through the application process. You will also be required to set out anticipated grant and match funding per financial year of the project as part of the application process.

You can only spend grant funding on eligible costs. These include:

- Pilot to Pre-Commercial plant capital and commissioning costs: equipment, installation, integration, site preparation, initial operations and optimisation needed to validate performance and unit economics at sub-industrial scale.
- Demonstrator to Commercialisation de-risking costs: front-end engineering design (FEED), feasibility studies, detailed cost estimation, site integration studies and the technical/commercial analyses required to reach an investment decision for Demonstrator to Commercialisation plants.
- technical validation and market-enabling tasks: independent product accreditation/quality testing, feedstock qualification and offtake trials, techno-economic studies and other pre-revenue activities that investors routinely require but are reluctant to finance at this risk stage.
- specialist subcontracting and external expertise necessary to complete the above (e.g., process engineering, environmental/health & safety studies), and associated, proportionate project management needed to deliver the funded de-risking activity.
- any other costs, for example rent and utilities or management time, are only eligible where they are directly related to project activities and you will be required to demonstrate that in the reporting process, i.e. if you include 50% of your office costs, you will be required to demonstrate that 50% of the office was dedicated to the project

Where costs relate to research and development, for example, research activities, testing or feasibility studies, these need to be aimed at new findings, based on new concepts or ideas to improve methods or ways of doing things, systematically performed and lead to results that have the potential to be reproduced.

Your indirect costs must be reasonable relative to your grant size and delivery costs should materially exceed management costs. Costs related to management of the project should be at most 10-15% of the overall grant amount.

For the avoidance of doubt, the following are not eligible costs:

- paid for lobbying that is not directly related to achieving the aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the grant, fostering challenge within government on topics unrelated to the aims, objectives and intended outcomes, petitions for funding, activities aimed at exerting undue influence over government policy, party political activities or activities of an exclusively religious nature.

- input VAT reclaimable by you from HMRC, interest or service charge payments for finance leases, fines, penalties, damages or any associated legal costs, depreciation, amortisation or impairment of your assets, purchase or improvement of any assets, equipment or other capital spend unless explicitly provided for in the funded activities, or liabilities incurred before the start of the GFA unless agreed in writing by BIST.

- contributions in kind or gifts.

- payments for work or activities which you have a statutory duty to undertake, or that are fully funded by other sources, bad debts to related parties, payments for unfair dismissal or other compensation.

If your application is successful, you will be required to sign a GFA with BIST which will set out the terms and conditions of payment. Grant payments will be made on a quarterly basis, in arrears, and only after a claim has been submitted and approved by BIST showing defrayed expenditure against agreed eligible costs and delivery of the funded activities as specified in the GFA.

### Demonstrating the need for funding

You should only submit an application where grant funding is necessary for the project to proceed. Your project will not be eligible to receive funding if it is already viable without grant support, or if it would proceed in the same timeframe and at the same scale in the UK regardless of the grant funding.

To ensure you have a genuine case for assistance, you will be asked to set out what would happen if funding were not provided through this scheme as part of the application process. You may be required to provide evidence to support your answer as part of the due diligence process.

Additionally, whilst the total amount of grant available through this scheme is £25 million, the total amount of grant funding you apply for should be the minimum amount necessary to deliver the project. At application stage and through due diligence checks, you will be required to provide evidence to support how you arrived at the figure of the total amount of grant funding you are applying for.

### Match funding

Applicants are required to contribute match funding towards eligible project costs.

The minimum level of match funding required depends on the size of the organisation receiving funding. Match funding may come from the applicant organisation, consortium partners, private investors or other non-public sources.

For consortium applications, the applicable grant and match funding rates will be determined separately for each consortium member based on its organisation size. Applicants will be required to provide a breakdown of eligible costs and funding requested for each participating organisation.

The table below sets out the maximum rate of grant funding and minimum rate of match funding required.

| Organisation size | Maximum grant contribution | Minimum match funding |
|---|---|---|
| **Small / Micro** | 50% | 50% |
| **Medium** | 40% | 60% |
| **Large** | 30% | 70% |

Grant funding under this scheme will be paid in arrears, following the submission, verification and processing of a claim. Because there is inevitably a gap between incurring project costs and receiving the corresponding grant payment, you must demonstrate that you can fund your project using match funding for the first 6 months from the date of award. This ensures your project is not disrupted while claims are being processed and paid.

You are not required to have secured all of your match funding at application stage, but you must be able to show, as part of assessment, that sufficient funds will be in place to sustain the project through this initial period before the first grant payments are received.

### Subsidy control requirements

Funding via this scheme will need to comply with the UK's obligations and requirements under the subsidy control regime, namely the Subsidy Control Act 2022, and where applicable, the European Union State aid rules and the UK's wider international obligations.

Please note that the UK's subsidy control regime requires granting authorities, in this case BIST, to publish certain information in respect of businesses receiving subsidies (if worth £100,000 or more) for transparency purposes.

# How to apply

### Overview of the application process

You must submit applications through the online application portal (the Grants Hub). If successful at this stage, you will be notified and invited to the interview stage of the application process.

If you do not already have an account, you must register on the Grants Hub to create a login. You will need to provide your name and email address and create a password to do this.

You can find a list of the questions that will be asked in the application form at the end of this guidance document. Progress made in the Grants Hub can be saved and returned to, rather than the whole application having to be completed in one sitting.

The lead applicant can invite collaborators to contribute to the application through the Grants Hub.

You should monitor the email address used to submit your application for updates from BIST. If you need to change the primary contact, contact BIST at criticalmineralsacceleratorgrantscheme@businessandtrade.gov.uk.

Your application will be assessed by a mixture of BIST and external experts. BIST will make the final decision at each stage of the application process.

### Application stage

The competition will begin with an eight-week application window. After this, BIST will shortlist applicants ahead of the interview stage.

The purpose of the application stage is to identify applicants who demonstrate a credible and relevant proposal aligned with the objectives of the Critical Minerals Accelerator. It will ensure that only those applicants with a sufficiently strong strategic fit, capability, required match funding and delivery potential are invited to progress to an interview.

There are certain eligibility screening questions which you must pass in order for your application to be considered. These are in the first section of the application form.

You will also need a director or senior member within the lead organisation to sign off the final application before it is submitted. This must be done within the Grants Hub system so you should allow sufficient time for this as they will need their own login.

A full list of application questions is annexed to this Scheme Guidance document.

Once applications have been assessed, you will be notified of the outcome of your application and receive feedback on our assessment of your application:

- If you are successful, you will then be invited to proceed to the interview stage.
- If you are unsuccessful, you will not progress further in this competition.

### Interview stage

This stage is only open to applicants successful at application stage.

The interview stage is designed to test the quality of the management team, the credibility of delivery plans, strategic fit to the scheme, and the depth of commercial understanding.

Further detail about the interview stage and selection process will be provided if you progress to this stage.

Applicants invited to interview will be given 1-2 weeks' notice of interview dates.

### Due diligence checks

If you are successful at interview stage, we may issue an offer in principle. You will then be required to undergo due diligence checks before a formal offer of funding is made.

These checks will include, but are not limited to, eligibility checks, operational checks, financial checks and governance checks. You may also be asked to provide more information to support the case for assistance and to support any statements you have made in the application process.

Completion of due diligence checks will not (of itself) release funding or entitle you to funding. Any offer of funding will be at BIST's absolute discretion and will be subject to your agreement to the Grant Funding Agreement presented by BIST. The amount of any offer of funding will also be at BIST's absolute discretion.

If, through diligence checks, we conclude that the amount of funding sought is not the minimum necessary to achieve the objectives and enable the project to proceed, we will adjust the grant amount to an amount that we consider (in our absolute discretion) necessary to achieve these objectives.

### Using AI in your application

You are permitted to use generative AI tools to prepare your application, however you should apply caution and the information you provide must be factually accurate.

### How applications are assessed

Each of the scored questions in the application form will be categorised and weighted as set out below, which will contribute to the total score:

- strategic fit: 40%
- value for money: 30%
- delivery assurance: 30%

Applications will be ranked based upon their total score. In general, applications with higher scores will qualify for funding ahead of those with lower scores, with funding provided to as many applications judged as suitable within the budget available.

We will undertake a portfolio review upon completion of all application assessments. This will include a review of the suitability of applications that score well overall but poorly on one or more individual question(s). BIST reserves the right to review the distribution of funding across the priority areas identified for the scheme (as outlined in the strategic aims section of this guidance).

# If your application is successful

### Conditions of funding

To be awarded a grant, you must accept our conditions of funding, which will be further outlined within the Grant Funding Agreement (GFA). These will include (but will not be limited to):

- adhering to our monitoring, reporting and evaluation requirements
- following our payment rules and processes
- only using grant funding on eligible costs
- complying with clawback terms

We will discuss the full terms of the GFA with you, including the reporting requirements as part of negotiation at the time of award. If you ultimately do not accept the terms of the GFA, you will not be able to receive funding.

### How your project will be monitored

You will be required to agree to BIST's reporting requirements which will support oversight of delivery and evaluation of the scheme.

This includes (but is not limited to) ongoing regular reporting on key performance indicators for a period of up to 10 years from the start of the grant funding period such as:

- TRL progression from 6-9 to commercial readiness.
- private investment leveraged.
- new products/prototypes.
- collaboration across the critical minerals ecosystem.

You will also be required to support evaluation activities run by BIST or partners on our behalf to assess the impact of the scheme.

All monitoring and evaluation requirements will be set out in the GFA.

You will be assigned a monitoring officer who will be your primary point of contact. They will ensure that the project is being run in accordance with the GFA terms and in line with financial due diligence.

You will be expected to meet with the monitoring officer on a regular basis to discuss delivery progress, risks and review financial forecasts. You will also be required to facilitate site visits as necessary. The frequency of meetings will be based on project risk assessments but these will be at a minimum of quarterly.

### How payments will be made

Grant payments will be made in arrears after a claim has been submitted to show defrayed expenditure against agreed eligible costs and deliverables, and only after BIST has verified the claim and evidence.

You will be able to make grant claims on a quarterly basis and will need to verify that the grant has been used for delivery of the funded activities and eligible expenditure as specified in the GFA.

### How clawback provisions will work

BIST will include standard provisions around clawback in the GFA that allow for the recovery of grant funding in certain circumstances, for example default, non-performance, breach, fraud and insolvency. These are standard requirements that are a normal part of issuing public funding, in order to comply with HM Treasury's Managing Public Money guidance.

As part of the application process, you will be required to provide adequate and appropriate security, for example a Parent Company Guarantee, to ensure that the funds would be recoverable if clawback is required.

# Contact us

If you require clarification on the scheme or information relating to your application, please email criticalmineralsacceleratorgrantscheme@businessandtrade.gov.uk and the team will endeavour to respond within 48 hours during the working week.

The latest date for questions to be received is 16 September 2026 to enable us to respond in sufficient time ahead of the application window closing date. We will also publish a FAQ document on gov.uk.

# Application questions

This is intended to be used to inform potential applicants of the information they will need in order to apply for grant funding through the Critical Minerals Accelerator. Guidance on how to answer the questions and what kind of information or level of detail is required can be found in the application form in the Grants Hub.

## *Section A – eligibility questions*

1) What is the project Technology Readiness Level (TRL) currently?

2) What is the expected project Technology Readiness Level (TRL) at the end of the grant funding period?

3) What is the project Commercial Readiness Level (CRL)?

   *Guidance: This is so that we can understand that any innovations have reached the appropriate stage of development for this grant scheme.*

4) Is the application from a UK registered business with its primary operations based in the UK?

   *Guidance: The lead applicant must be a UK registered business with their primary operations based in the UK and be committed to developing innovation and follow-on commercial activity within the UK.*

   *Charities, not-for-profits, universities/academic institutions, research and technology organisations (RTOs) and public sector organisations may be included in the project team but not lead a project, unless the organisation is also a business.*

5) Provide the full address, including postcode, of the site where all, or most of the activity associated with the project will take place, if known.

6) When will the project start?

7) When will the project end?

8) What are the total project costs (including any assumed grant)?

   *Guidance: Rounded to the nearest pound.*

9) How much grant funding are you requesting?

   *Guidance: We expect approved grants under the Pilot to Pre-Commercial funding stream to be within a range of £1 million to £3 million and grants under the Demonstrator to Commercialisation funding stream to be within a range of £150,000 to £1 million. Where your application falls out of these funding ranges, you must contact BIST in writing no later than 14 days before the application deadline at the following email address criticalmineralsacceleratorgrantscheme@businessandtrade.gov.uk.*

   *You should also review the scheme guidance on match funding and grant funding ratios and ensure your application is compliant.*

10) Is this the minimum amount of grant required to deliver the project?

## *Section B – project details*

1) What is the title of your project?

   *Guidance: Enter a short, descriptive project title. This will be used to identify your application. 100 words max.*

2) Provide a brief summary of your project.

*Guidance: Provide a clear and concise description of your proposed project. Describe the main aim of your project and what it involves. 250 words max.*

3) What critical/growth mineral(s) will the project target?

*Guidance: List all that apply. 250 words max*.

4) Which stream are you applying to?

*Guidance: Pilot to Pre-Commercial or Demonstrator to Commercialisation*

Describe what will be delivered by your project and provide estimated numbers against the outputs where you can. For example a certain amount of critical minerals production, new or retained jobs, industry partnerships, co-investment, commercialised IP, businesses spun out.

5) Tell us about the outputs of your project.

*Guidance: Describe the specific outputs that your proposed project will deliver. Be as specific as you can. 250 words max.*

a) Production capacity (tonnes/year) if applicable.

*Guidance: Baseline (current), end of project, 3 years post project, confidence. 100 words max.*

b) Processing capacity (tonnes/year) if applicable.

*Guidance: Baseline (current), end of project, 3 years post project, confidence. 100 words max.*

c) Volume of critical mineral produced/processed (tonnes/year) if applicable.

*Guidance: Baseline (current), end of project, 3 years post project, confidence. 100 words max.*

d) Percentage of output supplied to UK customers (%).

*Guidance: Baseline (current), end of project, 3 years post project, confidence. 100 words max.*

e) Number of UK customers (count).

*Baseline (current), end of project, 3 years post project, confidence. 100 words max.*

f) Jobs - full time equivalents (FTE) (number).

*Baseline (current), end of project, 3 years post project, confidence. 100 words max.*

g) Private investment leveraged (£).

*Baseline (current), end of project, 3 years post project, confidence. 100 words max.*

6) What stage(s) of the value chain will this project cover?

*Select all that apply: extraction, processing, refining, recycling, downstream.*

7) Describe the import substitution potential of your project, including how it could reduce UK reliance on imported critical or growth minerals, products or processing capacity. Quantify impacts where possible.

*Guidance: Provide an approximate percentage. 250 words max.*

8) What will be the main UK sectors supplied?

*Guidance: List the main sectors that your project will supply and an approximate percentage split. 100 words max.*

9) Set out the current import reliance.

*Guidance: If applicable. 100 words max.*

10) Has this application or an application for the same project been previously submitted for UK Government funding?

    a) If yes, what is the name of the project previously submitted for UK Government funding?

    *Guidance: 25 words max.*

    b) If yes, what scheme or schemes was this project submitted under?

    *Guidance: 100 words max.*

The remainder of the questions in this section are intended to help DBT understand whether Article 10 of the Windsor Framework applies.

The meaning of "enterprise" is as defined under [section 7 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022](section 7 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022).

If you are unclear on any of the questions or would like further support, see the Guidance on the scope and application of Article 10 of the Windsor Framework and contact criticalmineralsacceleratorgrantscheme@businessandtrade.gov.uk.

11) Does your enterprise trade in goods or wholesale electricity?

12) If you are a service provider, is this service specifically tailored to the needs of a particular company or a sector that trades in goods in Northern Ireland?

13) Is your enterprise (i.e. the legal entity seeking the subsidy) incorporated and registered in Northern Ireland?

    *If the answer to this question is no:*

    a) If you are a Small or Medium Sized Enterprise, is the maximum estimated value of the subsidy greater than £3 million? OR If you are any other enterprise, is the estimated value of the subsidy greater than £10 million?

    b) Does your enterprise currently have (or will the subsidy result in) 10% or more of the market share in Northern Ireland?

    c) Will the subsidy lead to the relevant goods being sold in Northern Ireland at below market price?

    Does your enterprise – and any active subsidiaries or parent company - have locations (i.e. some form of physical presence) in Northern Ireland or does it plan to in the future?

    *Guidance: This does not include back-office functions (such as human resources, IT services, accounting etc).*

    *If the answer to this question is yes:*

    d) Has your enterprise implemented appropriate ringfencing arrangements to prevent the economic benefit passing through to your Northern Ireland operations?

    *Guidance: Ringfencing arrangements to evidence that the benefit is not passing through might include transfer pricing, separate accounting, separation of entities or a combination of these methods.*

e) If you answered yes to the question above then provide further information on this.

*Guidance: Ringfencing arrangements to evidence that the benefit is not passing through might include transfer pricing, separate accounting, separation of entities or a combination of these methods.*

## Section C – scored questions

### Strategic Fit – weighting 40%

1) Describe how the proposed project aligns with the strategic priorities: driving economic growth, strengthening economic security, and building domestic resilience.

   *Guidance: 300 words max. Weighting 10%.*

2) Explain how your project will fill a gap in an existing UK domestic supply chain and the competitive landscape, including how innovative the process/technology being used in the project is.

   *Guidance: 300 words max. Weighting 15%.*

3) (For non-extractive projects) Explain the origin of your feedstock and set out opportunities and plans to increase UK sourcing over time.

   *Guidance: 300 words max. For information.*

4) Include a description of the project's current Technology Readiness Level and explain why the project is suitable for deployment.

   *Guidance: 300 words max. For information.*

5) Explain the near-term commercial plans post project and how this will lead to economic growth and supply chain diversification. Your response must include an explanation of how the outcomes for the project will be commercially exploited, what the business plan and route to market is, and what your expectations are for market potential and future sales.

   *Guidance: Please provide evidence to support your answer (document upload). 500 words max. Weighting 15%.*

### Value for money – weighting 30%

6) Explain how you have arrived at the expected project cost.

   *Guidance: You should outline how appropriate the proposal is financially, how realistic and justified the budget is in terms of the aims and methods proposed, and explain how the costs provide fair market value. You should provide a copy of any business case/business plan/finance plan that supports this (document upload). 500 words max. Weighting 10%.*

7) Describe your funding and investing position.

   *Guidance: Explain the sources of funding available to the project and the level of commitment secured to date, how the required match funding will be provided, including any public sector funding, any remaining financing gaps and how these will be addressed, and how the project will support future investment and commercial deployment. If applying for Demonstrator to Commercialisation funding, explain how the project will support a Final Investment Decision and unlock future investment. 500 words max. Weighting 15%.*

8) Describe the case for the added value of public funding and why a grant is needed to deliver the project.

   *Guidance: Explain why public funding is necessary to unlock your project and what would happen without it. Explain why your project cannot be funded internally or through other private sources, providing supporting evidence (document upload). 250 words max. Weighting 5%.*

9) If your project does not receive a grant award, what would happen to it?

*Guidance: Select all that apply. For information.*

a) The project would go ahead as planned without a grant

b) The project would go ahead with other public sector grant support to deliver the project as planned

c) Other (non-public sector) sources of finance would be sought out to fund the project without causing delay or a reduction of scale

d) The project would go ahead outside of the UK

e) The project would go ahead but at a significantly reduced scale

f) The project would go ahead but would be significantly delayed

g) The project would be abandoned (i.e. it would NOT go ahead)

h) A different project altogether would go ahead instead

10) Please explain your answer to the question above

*Guidance: 250 words max. For information.*

### Delivery assurance – weighting 30%

11) Describe your proposed project and approach, including methodology, delivery partners and how the technical approach proposed is appropriate. Explain timescales, key stages and milestones, as well as the confidence in achieving the milestones and any dependencies associated with these.

*Guidance: Outline any key decisions (including the expected final investment decision), dependencies, actions or outcomes that are required before final investment decision can be taken. Explain the status of all delivery partners and supply chain and whether these are in place. Explain the status of any permits and permissions and whether these are in place (E.g. planning permission). Include why the technical approach proposed is appropriate and explain why the milestones are realistic. Attach a copy of your project plan (document upload). 750 words max. Weighting 20%.*

12) Explain the key technical, commercial, or operational risks for this project and how they will be managed. Explain the key technical, commercial, or operational risks that must be addressed to progress beyond this grant funded project and explain how the grant will help to de-risk these.

*Guidance: This response should be supported by submission of a risk register (document upload). 500 words max. Weighting 5%.*

13) Describe the skills and experience of the delivery team and subcontractors, including relevant commercial, technical, and operational experience, including experience in scaling industrial technologies. Describe any capability leadership gaps that you will need to fill to be able to execute your project and how you plan to address these. Describe the relationships between different organisations involved in this application.

*Guidance: Outline the experience the project team has of delivering projects of a similar scale and complexity, or outline other relevant transferable experience. Explain any collaboration agreements in place or planned, or other agreements necessary to support collaborative working between organisations. 250 words max. Weighting: 5%.*

14) Where applicable, provide copies of the following supporting evidence:

- site maps / plans
- planning application and consent evidence including grid connections, if applicable
- investor engagement / commitment

- letters of support from any partners including potential offtakers
- health and safety risk assessments (if applicable to project)
- project team structure
- collaboration agreements or similar.

## *Section D – project costs*

1) Provide an estimated cost breakdown of total project costs, including grant spend and match funding, against the categories below:

    a) Direct delivery costs.

    *Guidance: These are costs that are directly attributable to delivering the funded activity and usually form the core of the budget. Examples include staff costs directly delivering the project and materials, equipment, or supplies used exclusively for the project.*

    b) Capital Investment.

    *Guidance: Capital investment costs are one off costs for buying, building, or upgrading assets that will be used over the longer term, rather than for day to day running of the project. Examples include purchase of buildings, land, or major equipment and construction, refurbishment, or significant upgrades to buildings or facilities.*

    c) Research and Development.

    *Guidance: For example research activities, testing or feasibility studies. There are five criteria that identify R&D. The activity must have elements of all of these:*

- *Novel: costs/activities aimed at new findings, including acquiring new knowledge directed towards a specific aim or objective, or experimental development projects aimed at creating knowledge in support of the development of new concepts and ideas related to the design of new products or processes.*
- *Creative: costs/activities based on new concepts or ideas with the objective of improving on existing knowledge.*
- *Uncertain: costs/activities that are uncertain about their final outcome.*
- *Systematic: costs/activities that are systematically performed.*
- *Transferable and/or reproducible: costs/activities that lead to results that have the potential to be reproduced.*

    d) Any costs not attributable to the above categories.

    *Guidance: For example rent and utilities or governance that are used completely for the project*.

    e) Provide further detail on your response to the above.

    *Guidance: For example, how you arrived at these costs and what sources you used to validate that these are accurate estimates. 250 words max.*

2) Provide a breakdown of estimated costs per financial year of the project.

3) What is the source of the match funding in this project and is it planned, pending, or confirmed?

*Guidance: Because there is inevitably a gap between incurring project costs and receiving the corresponding grant payment, you must demonstrate that you can fund your project using match funding for the first 6 months from the date of award. This ensures your project is not disrupted while claims are being processed and paid.*

*You are not required to have secured all of your match funding at application stage, but you must be able to show, as part of assessment, that sufficient funds will be in place to sustain the project through this initial period before the first grant payments are received.*

4) How much match funding is being invested into the project?

5) What percentage of the total project costs does this match funding represent?

*Guidance: The total costs in the project from a large-sized organisation must include at least 70% of match funding. The total costs in the project from a medium-sized organisation must include at least 60% of match funding. The total costs in the project from a small-sized organisation must include at least 50% of match funding.*

6) Provide a breakdown of estimated grant spend per financial year of the project.

## Section E – applicant details

1) What is the name of the organisation that is the lead applicant?

2) What is the SIC code of the lead applicant?

*Guidance: The Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) is a system for classifying industries. More details about SIC codes can be found here.*

3) What is the UK company / organisation registration number of the lead applicant?

4) What are the lead organisation details?

*Guidance: You must add at least 1 organisation(s) with a name, organisation type, complete address, phone number and email specified.*

5) What is the size of the lead applicant?

*Guidance: The definitions for the different sizes of business are as defined by Companies House, in sections 10.1 and 12.1.*

6) What are the main activities of the lead applicant?

*Guidance: Provide a brief description of what your organisation does. This should cover your core business activities and the sector(s) you operate in.*

*Your answer should give assessors a clear picture of your organisation's normal commercial operations, separate from the specific project you are applying for funding to deliver. Where your organisation operates across multiple business areas, focus on those most relevant to this application.*

7) What is the position of the lead applicant in the critical minerals value chain?

*Guidance: Extraction, processing, refining, recycling or downstream.*

8) What is the NACE code of the lead applicant?

*Guidance: Enter a four-digit NACE classification code, e.g. 29.10. NACE (Nomenclature des Activitiés Economiques dans la Communauté Européenne) is a European industry standard classification system similar in function to Standard Industry Classification (SIC) and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) for classifying business activities. A list of NACE codes can be found here*

9) What is the VAT registration number of the lead applicant?

10) What is the PAYE registration number of the lead applicant?

11) How many people (Full Time Equivalents) are currently employed by you, the applying company at the site proposed for the investment and elsewhere in the UK?

    *Guidance: An FTE job is one of 30 or more hours a week. If the role requires any additional hours this still only counts as 1 FTE. Two part time jobs of 15 hours or more count as equivalent to one full time job. Any part time jobs of 15 hours up to 30 hours should be stated as 0.5 of an FTE.*

12) What is the turnover of the lead applicant?

13) Is this a joint application with one or more other organisation?

14) If yes, provide the full name, organisation type, any UK Company / organisation registration numbers and full registered address of each joint organisation

15) Provide a rationale for applying as a consortium.

    Guidance: Why is a consortium application the best structure for this project? What will this achieve in comparison to the lead applicant applying as a sole applicant? 500 words max.

16) Does the applicant company have an Immediate Parent Company?

    a) What is the name of the Immediate Parent Company?

    b) What is the registered address of the Immediate Parent Company?

    c) In which country is the Immediate Parent Company incorporated?

    d) What is the NACE code of the Immediate Parent Company?

    e) What are the main business activities of the Immediate Parent Company?

    f) Is the Immediate Parent Company aware of (and supportive of) this application?

17) Does the company / organisation have an Ultimate Parent Company which is different from the Immediate Parent Company?

    a) What is the name of the Ultimate Parent Company?

    b) What is the registered address of the Ultimate Parent Company?

    c) In which country is the Ultimate Parent Company incorporated?

    d) What is the NACE code of the Ultimate Parent Company?

    e) What are the main business activities of the Ultimate Parent Company?

    f) Is the Ultimate Parent Company aware of (and supportive of) this application?

18) If you have an Ultimate Parent Company or Immediate Parent Company, is the Ultimate Parent Company or Immediate Parent Company able to sign a reasonable parent company (or bank) guarantee in respect of any grant awarded?

19) Is the applicant the legal entity who will own the asset(s)(where applicable), hold contracts of employment and carry out the agreed project activity?

20) Has any public sector funding support been received by the applicant in the last 3 years?

    a) Name of the fund or scheme that provided the funding.

    b) Name of the body or government department that provided the funding.

    c) Amount given (rounded to nearest £1).

    d) Date the award was made.

    e) Detail any existing conditions from these awards that are still in place.

    *Guidance: 250 words*

21) Name of project contact.

22) Project contact job title.

23) Project contact telephone number.

24) Project contact email address.

25) Alternative contact name.

26) Alternative contact job title.

27) Alternative contact telephone number.

28) Alternative contact email address.

29) (Optional) Provide the lead applicant's annual turnover associated with critical minerals activities and the percentage of total turnover this represents.

30) (Optional) Provide the percentage of the key inputs of the lead applicant that are sourced from UK suppliers.

31) Provide a list of other organisations who will be involved in the project (excluding consortium members).

    *Guidance: For example, expected suppliers or delivery partners. 100 words max.*

## *Section F – declarations*

1) I agree to external partners working on behalf of UK Government partner organisations having access to the application information (as determined appropriate by DBT team).

2) I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure the project is compliant with the UK's subsidy control requirements.

3) In the past five years, have you, your organisation (this includes the lead applicant and any joint applicants involved in this project), or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control in the organisation (this includes the lead applicant and any joint applicants involved in this project) been convicted anywhere in the world of any of the offences within the summary below. If you answer Yes to any of the points below, have measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of relevant ground(s) for exclusion?

    a) Participation in a criminal organisation.

    b) Corruption.

    c) Fraud.

d) Terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities.

e) Money laundering or terrorist financing.

f) Child labour and other forms of trafficking in human beings.

*Guidance: If you have answered yes to any of the above questions, provide further details.*

4) Has it been established, for your organisation by a judicial or administrative decision having final and binding effect in accordance with the legal provisions of any part of the United Kingdom or the legal provisions of the country in which the organisation is established (if outside the UK), that the organisation is in breach of obligations related to the payment of tax or social security contributions?

*Guidance: If you have answered yes to the question, provide further details.*

5) Have you paid, or have entered into a binding arrangement with a view to paying, the outstanding sum including (where applicable) any accrued interest and/or fines?

6) Indicate if, within the past three years, anywhere in the world, have any of the following situations have applied to you, your organisation (this includes the lead applicant and any joint applicants involved in this project) or any other person who has powers of representation, decision, or control in the organisation

a) Breach of environmental regulations.

b) Breach of social obligations.

c) Breach of labour law obligations.

d) Bankrupt or is the subject of insolvency or winding-up proceedings, where the organisation's assets are being administered by a liquidator or by the court, where it is in an arrangement with creditors, where its business activities are suspended or it is in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure under the laws and regulations of any State.

e) Entered into agreements with other organisations aimed at distorting competition.

f) Aware of any conflict of interest (whether perceived or actual).

If you answered Yes to any of the above, without disclosing any personal information, provide further detail on the selected response(s) and explain what measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of a relevant grounds for exclusion.

7) I declare that all the information I have provided in this form is correct to the best of my knowledge.

a) Signed

b) Name of signatory

c) Job title

d) Date

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