



Advance 2026

A collaboration between the Royal Academy of Engineering and Global Disability Innovation Hub, as part of the AT2030 programme, funded by UK International Development.

Application guidance notes

Applications open: 2 September 2025. Deadline: 1 October 2025, 12:00PM (BST)

All questions to be sent to info-lif@lif.raeng.org.uk

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About the Royal Academy of Engineering



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.

The world is changing rapidly, with economies, supply chains and security critically dependent on engineering capability. Engineers are uniquely placed to respond to that change and innovate solutions to the challenges it presents.

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.

About AT2030

The [AT2030](#) programme tests ‘what works’ to improve access to life-changing Assistive Technology (AT) for all. Led by Global Disability Innovation Hub (GDI Hub) and funded by UK International Development, we've reached 64 million people across 61 countries, driving a lifetime of potential.

From creating deep community leadership to generating new evidence and insights, AT2030 answers critical research questions and develops foundational methodologies, addressing intersectional challenges and research and evidence gaps.

By incubating future tech inspired solutions and providing venture acceleration, AT2030 brings effective solutions to market - testing new mechanisms and ambitious scaling pathways, while strengthen systems to make inclusion a reality. By embedding disability innovation into national policy landscapes, we stimulate demand, activate country pilots and create enabling market environment in Low-and Middle- Income Countries.

Global Disability Innovation Hub (GDI Hub)

GDI Hub accelerate ideas into impact for a more just world - for disabled people, and all people.

Our vision is for disability inclusion and social justice. We work towards a world without barriers to participation, where everyone has the opportunity to live a joyful life.

AT2030 clusters

Five clusters of activities support the AT2030 programme to test ‘what works’ to improve access to life-changing Assistive Technology (AT) for all.

1. **Include:** Create deep community leadership and engagement.
2. **Inquire:** Generate new evidence and insights. Led by GDI Hub’s Academic Research Centre at UCL (University College London), with partners globally.
3. **Incubate:** Test future tech-inspired solutions and develop vehicles for venture acceleration while building capacity and supporting talent.
4. **Invest:** Bring effective solutions to market.
5. **Integrate:** Strengthen systems to make inclusion a reality by building evidence and driving action.

Introduction to Advance



Advance 2026 is a collaboration between the Royal Academy of Engineering and Global Disability Innovation Hub (GDI Hub) as part of AT2030, a programme funded by UK International Development.

Advance is a bespoke programme of relationship-building and business growth activities for engineering and tech entrepreneurs who are ready to scale internationally. The programme supports participants to grow their businesses responsibly and sustainably, develop their leadership and soft skills, and expand their networks into the UK. The programme provides tailored training, mentoring, and networking opportunities, both internationally and in the UK.

Objectives

1. To support the best engineering talent to achieve their full commercial and social impact potential, equipping them to grow and scale their business.
2. To provide a landing opportunity into the UK's innovation ecosystem for participants who are looking to establish a business in the UK or partner with relevant UK organisations.

Programme structure

Individual pre-diagnostic and needs analysis, and goal setting.

The Advance 2026 programme is specific to the needs of the participants, supporting them to overcome the barriers and challenges intrinsic to commercial growth and scaling social impact. Participants will work closely with their peers, mentors, and trainers to define short and medium-term goals, and build actionable plans to achieve them.

Cohort formation and streaming.

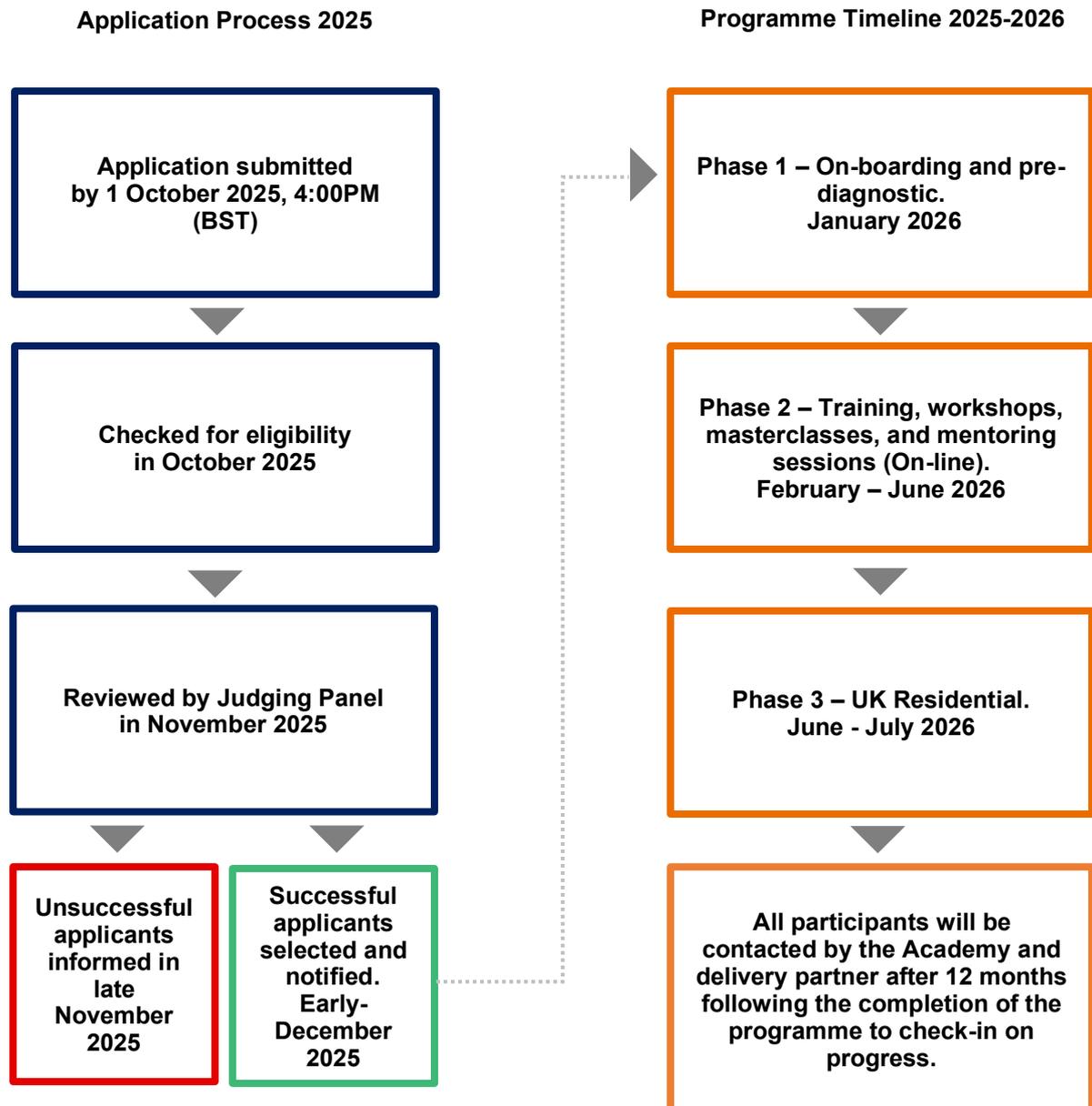
The emphasis in Advance 2026 is on the formation of a strong, supportive cohort. While all participants receive individualised support, they will also benefit from relationships and shared experiences with programme peers. The 2026 cohort is aligned with a theme of global importance.

Strategic relationship-building support.

Advance 2026 participants will be expected to have made considerable progress in their business model and product design since their prior participation in an Academy programme, if they belong to the alumni community. To accelerate their next phase of growth, Advance 2026 will provide the tools and opportunities to meet with key stakeholders in the UK such as investors, regulatory authorities, manufacturers, and distributors.

Application, timelines and key dates

The application process will run from 2 September, when applications open until 1 October 2025. The final cohort will be selected the last week of November. Finally, the programme will end in summer 2026.



Advance 2026 theme

Advance 2026 is open to participants whose innovations leverage technology to build a more accessible and inclusive world for people with disabilities and the benefit of all society.

In addition to supporting participants to achieve their full commercial potential, the Advance programme will equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to address the complex challenges of scaling their ventures. To ensure the benefits of these innovations are equitable and sustainable, the programme will also offer crucial opportunities to connect with the UK's dynamic innovation ecosystem.

About the theme

Globally, 1.3 billion people experience a significant disability¹. Technology holds the power to dismantle the barriers they face, but only when it is designed, developed, and delivered inclusively. This theme is a call to innovators creating engineering-led solutions that challenge convention and drive social, economic, and environmental justice for disabled people.

By engaging with real-world problems and co-designing solutions with disabled people, innovators can create products and services that open access to education, improve livelihoods, and build more resilient societies. This work directly supports the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)².

Advance 2026 is calling for innovations that address the following key topics, which reflect alignment with the strategic goals and priorities of the Royal Academy of Engineering, GDI Hub and AT2030³. The specific technologies listed below are intended as illustrative examples; we strongly encourage applications with other innovative solutions that align with the broader ambition of each topic.

- Inclusive Infrastructure & Smart Environments:
 - Your innovation should make our physical and digital worlds more accessible and resilient. From transportation to public spaces and digital platforms, the challenge is to engineer systems that are inclusive by design, ensuring everyone can participate in community life safely and independently, particularly in the face of climate change.
 - Your innovation is working towards smart and accessible urban mobility solutions; inclusive digital infrastructure (e.g., IoT, public information systems); assistive

¹ World Health Organization (2022). *Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities*.

² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Sustainable Development Goals*. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

³ Global Disability Innovation Hub (2022). *GDI Hub Strategy 2022-25*



hardware for navigating public or private spaces; or technologies that promote the climate resilience of the disabled community.

- **EdTech & Inclusive Learning:**
 - Your innovation should focus on technologies that create customisable and adaptive learning environments, from primary school to vocational training. The aim is to ensure every learner, regardless of physical, sensory, or cognitive differences, has the tools needed to acquire knowledge and skills for life.
 - Your innovation is working towards cost accessible, scalable assistive devices for educational settings; AI-powered platforms that provide personalised learning paths; hardware that serves as an alternative input method for educational content (e.g., eye-tracking, switch-adapted tools); or virtual and augmented reality tools for immersive, accessible skills training.
- **Next-Generation Assistive Technology:**
 - Your innovation should be dedicated to user-led, high-quality assistive technology that enhances capability and independence in all areas of life. We are seeking innovations that go beyond incremental improvements, offering new paradigms for how technology can support health, wellbeing, and economic participation⁴.
 - Your innovation is working towards next-generation prosthetics, orthotics, or mobility aids; smart adaptive hardware for the home or workplace; sensory assistance devices that augment or replace impaired senses; or accessible platforms that promote financial inclusion and create new livelihood opportunities.

The foundation of your innovation must be the creation of systems and fair solutions that give disabled communities access to equitable and sustainable opportunities.

⁴ World Health Organization & United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2022). [Global report on assistive technology](#)

Eligibility criteria

We actively encourage applications from all under-represented backgrounds and demographics. The Academy is committed to making adjustments to remove barriers that hinder participation. This can include things like childcare responsibilities, physical accessibility, neurodiverse accessibility and more. If you have questions regarding this, or any specific needs, please contact the team at info-lif@lif.raeng.org.uk.

All applicants should:

- **Be working on an innovation that meets the theme.**
- **Be from an eligible country⁵**
 - Applications from AT2030 priority countries, sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia will be prioritised, but we welcome applications from all eligible countries.
 - For this programme it is NOT a requirement to have participated in a previous Academy programme, although we welcome applications from those in an eligible country who are part of the LIF alumni community (*LIF 1-7, LIF Global 22-25*) or the APEI alumni community (*Cycles 1-11*).
- **Have progressed the innovation with which they are applying to the programme to at least TRL 7.** The innovators must show evidence of a prototype in an operational environment in the application. They should also be able to show initial customer engagement and proof of business concept.
- The applicant's innovation can be a product, technology, or service, which must address the "Accessible, Assistive and Inclusive Technologies" theme.
- **Have established a business around their innovation.** Applicants will be required to provide evidence of business incorporation in their application. Candidates must be the original innovator and own majority of the shares in the company created.
- The innovation should have the potential to benefit the applicant's country, and/or other LMICs in terms of improving social and economic welfare, in particular disability inclusion, and may also have the potential for global benefit.
- The primary application of the innovation must NOT be in the defence, military, security, or fossil fuel-based energy sectors.
- **Time commitment and expected behaviours.** Failure to behave respectfully and to meet a minimum attendance requirement will result in removal from the UK residential and follow on support. Please read [Annex C. Terms and conditions](#).
- Applicants must be able to commit to travel internationally. Foundational travel costs for each participant in the Advance 2026 programme (economy flights, accommodation, and food) will be paid for by the Royal Academy of Engineering, using funding from the AT2030 programme, **except for visas and travel insurance**. Participants will be asked to purchase a travel insurance

⁵ Eligible countries: AT2030 priority countries (**AFRICA:** Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe. **ASIA:** Indonesia, South Asia), or another LMIC that is eligible for ODA funding, or any other country that is eligible for ODA funding. [List of countries eligible for ODA funding](#).



covering as a minimum: GP access⁶, medical emergencies, and personal accidents⁷. Other requirements or support will be assessed on a case-by-case basis⁸ within the parameters of the programme.

- **Candidates will need to demonstrate fluency in English** to participate. This will be a key assessment metric. The application must be written and uploaded in English to avoid being unable to gain a place on the programme. Please note that the residential programme will be conducted entirely in English.
- **Applicants must be aligned to the [Academy values](#)**, which include: progressive leadership, equity, diversity and inclusion, excellence for impact, collaboration first, and creativity and innovation.
- Applicants must be **interested in exploring partnership, funding, or other development opportunities in the UK innovation ecosystem**, or establishing their business in the UK.

⁶ Access to a General Practitioner in the UK.

⁷ Coverage if following an accident your injuries lead to death, total loss of sight/limb or permanent disability. An accident must be caused by something external and visible.

⁸ Please contact the Academy if assuming the cost of visas and travel insurance would prevent you from taking part in the Advance programme.

Diversity statement

The Royal Academy of Engineering is committed to diversity and inclusion and welcomes applications from all under-represented 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
- Gender and sexual orientation

The Advance programme welcomes applications from everyone in the LIF and APEI alumni communities who meets the eligibility criteria, as well as non-alumni from eligible countries. Women entrepreneurs are encouraged to apply.

Before you begin 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, non-attributable 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.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Before the beginning of the programme, the participants must submit a form to create a baseline that supports their journey throughout the programme. It covers subjects such as your knowledge of the contents of the programme, mentoring and advising. At the end of the programme, applicants will be contacted to monitor the stage of their start-up after the training, each awardee should share their growth, company progress, and awards. A report will be created comparing the baseline and the post-programme growth, and the impact of the programme on the awardee.

We regularly report back to our funders on the progress of the programme. All personal information is aggregated for monitoring of KPIs; individual data is not identifiable unless featured in, for example, an agreed-upon case study.

Reports during the programme will be created by the delivery partner. Awardees should be prepared to speak with the evaluators regarding what may be viewed as confidential information. This would include the support they have received and the impact it has had on their own skills and business.

Awardees must agree to be contacted by any of the programme partners for up to 5 years following the programme, regarding the support they have received and the impact it has had on their own skills and on their business.

Application assessment

The process summary is as follows:

- The Academy team will first review the applications against the programme's eligibility criteria.
- Following the eligibility criteria, longlisted applications will be assessed by independent external reviewers based on:
 - Alignment with the programme's theme and objectives.
 - The innovation's potential for commercial growth and social impact.
 - The applicant's demonstrated ambition and potential to leverage the UK ecosystem.

The external reviewers will shortlist the applicants.

- Finally, a selection panel will select the Advance 2026 cohort. The panel includes Fellows of the Academy with significant entrepreneurial, industrial, and thematic experience, along with leading representatives from the UK innovation ecosystem.



Artificial Intelligence (AI) guidelines

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.

How to apply

All applications must be submitted via the online Grant Management System (GMS), available here: <https://grants.raeng.org.uk/>.

Account creation

Applicants must register through the system before applying. Once you have created your account, you will automatically be sent a verification email. Please use the link to verify your account. Once verified, please log in to the [GMS](#) to activate the account.

If you have applied to an Academy programme before, you may already have a GMS account. Please use your existing GMS account if possible or follow the instructions on the [Login Page](#) if you cannot remember your username or password.

The application form has six sections and will take approximately 1 – 1.5 hours to complete on GMS. More time will be required to gather relevant supporting documentation and prepare answers offline.

After logging in to GMS, please select **LIF Advance 2026**. This will take you to the 'Instructions' screen.

On the Instructions screen, you will see some general instructions on how to use the system as well as the six sections of the application form:

1. Personal details
2. Time Availability
3. Innovation
4. Business
5. Advance
6. Statements and declaration
7. Marketing

Do not forget to save your work!

At any stage in the process, you can save your work and return to it later. The system will automatically save your work when you change pages, but we recommend that you also save your work manually to avoid loss of data.



You can answer the questions in any order, so you may skip sections and return to them later if you wish. You may prefer to compose your answers offline and copy and paste them into the form.

To submit your application, all sections and all required questions must be completed. Once you have completed all sections and required questions, a 'Submit Application' button will become available at the bottom of the summary page.

Troubleshooting

If you try logging in and GMS displays the message below, please try clearing your cookies and browser history, closing the window, and opening the page again in a new window.

Login

You are already logged in.

If you are persistently getting this message when you are trying to navigate to a secured section of the website or the Grant Management System, please try closing all instances of your browser (clearing cookies) and login again.

Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Logout

Alternatively, you can try using a different browser or opening your application in an incognito window.

If you are still having issues after trying the above steps to resolve the problem, please contact the LIF team at info-lif@lif.raeng.org.uk or esteban.jaramillo@raeng.org.uk, or the APEI team at africapriz@raeng.org.uk.

Completion

Please note that even if your application shows as 100% complete, it is not considered submitted until you click the '**Submit**' button. You will receive a confirmation email once your application has been successfully submitted. If you do not receive this email, it means that your application has not been submitted.

Support

We want to ensure all applicants can participate and present their best selves during the application process. Please let us know if you are experiencing any barriers as part of the application process so that it is comfortable for you.

Contact us at info-lif@lif.raeng.org.uk or africapriz@raeng.org.uk so we can identify how best to support you throughout your application.

Annex A. Application questions

1. Personal details

This section asks for your details, such as your name, contact details and LIF or APEI year.

	Question	Information
1.1	Preferred Name*	Please give your preferred first name(s) and surname(s). Please include any titles you want to appear and ensure it is spelt correctly. For Example: Dr Michaela Jones.
1.2	Which country are you from? *	Please select your country from the drop-down list.
1.2.a	In which city are you based?	Please state in which cities you reside more than 6 months a year and your business mainly operates.
1.3.	Which year of LIF or APEI did you participate in? *	Please select the year of LIF that you participated in. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• LIF1: 2014/15 – APEI Cycle 1 [2014 - 2015]• LIF2: 2015/16 – APEI Cycle 2 [2015 - 2016]• LIF3: 2016/17 – APEI Cycle 3 [2016 - 2017]• LIF4: 2017/18 – APEI Cycle 4 [2017 - 2018]• LIF5: 2018/19 – APEI Cycle 5 [2018 - 2019]• LIF6: 2019/20 – APEI Cycle 6 [2019 - 2020]• LIF7: 2020/21 – APEI Cycle 7 [2020 - 2021]• LIF Global: 2022 – APEI Cycle 8 [2021 - 2022]• LIF Global: 2023 – APEI Cycle 9 [2022 - 2023]• LIF Global: 2024 – APEI Cycle 10 [2023 - 2024]• LIF Global: 2025 – APEI Cycle 11 [2024 - 2025]• If you have participated in both, please choose "I have participated in both". You will be asked to state which years you participated.• If you are not an alumna or alumnus, select the option "I am not alumni from LIF".
1.4.	English skills *	<p>Please indicate what your English language skill level is: beginner, intermediate, advanced or fluent/proficient. Click on the following link for some guidance on language levels: English proficiency Levels.</p> <p>It is important that you answer as honestly and openly as possible because the whole programme will be conducted in English including application, training and follow-on support. You will be required to interact with others in English and present in English.</p> <p>If you have selected Beginner or Intermediate, you are ineligible for this programme.</p>



	Questionnaire	Information
1.5.	Your Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Details *	I have completed the DEI form: https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/G0yAFZsxhU . Access the form via the link.
1.6.	Do you have a full or part-time job outside of your innovation? *	Please state what is/are the other job(s), position, and provide your time availability.

Questions with an asterisk (*) next to them are required and must be completed.

2. Other programmes

On this section, you will share with us the details of other accelerator programmes you have or that you are currently applying to. As well as acknowledging the time availability for Advance 2026.

	Question	Information
2.1.	Have you participated in accelerator programmes before? *	Please list your answer and provide details where, when, and in which organisation did you participate. Do not list other programmes at the Royal Academy of Engineering.
2.2.	Are you applying to other accelerator programmes happening in between January and July 2026? *	Please list your answer and provide details where, when, and which organisation runs the programme to which you are applying.
2.3.	Please acknowledge that you have time to participate in Advance 2026. *	The programme will run from January to July 2026.

3. Your innovation

In this section, please provide the key details on your innovation and the technology behind it.

	Question	Information
3.1	Innovation title*	Please provide the title of your innovation.
3.2	Business name*	Please give the name of your business or company.
3.3	Current team details*	Please list your details and those of any other key team members who are currently working with you on your innovation. If you are applying as an individual, please complete your own details here.
3.4	If you are an alumna or alumnus, is this the same business, innovation, or product you originally came to the LIF/APEI programme with? *	If you are working on a different innovation to the one you brought to the LIF/APEI programme originally, you will be asked to briefly describe why you decided to change projects.
3.4.a.	How is your innovation different?*	Please explain any pivots you have made in your product since your original LIF/APEI programme. If you have not participated in LIF or APEI before, please answer "Never been involved with either".
3.5	One-line pitch *	Please provide a one-line pitch for your business. Use the following questions as a prompt: what is it, who is it for and how will it change the world?
3.6	Which of the subjects within the ' Accessible, Assistive, and Inclusive Technologies ' theme are you addressing?	Please select as many as apply.
3.7	What problem does your innovation address? *	Please justify and describe how your innovation is addressing an issue within the theme. You can describe the problem in any way you like, but you may want to address the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it match the theme(s)? • What is the scale of this problem? • How urgent is this problem? • Who is experiencing this problem?
3.8	Innovation Summary *	Please describe your innovation. How does it solve the problem you outlined in the previous question? Which inclusive and/or co-design principles and processes have you used in developing your innovation and/or taking it to market?
3.9	How does your innovation work? *	Please give a brief description of the science or technology that underpins your innovation. Please

		avoid over-technical language – keep the text simple and at an appropriate level for a non-technical audience.
3.10.	Is your innovation a device, a product, a platform, a service, or something different? *	Please describe what type your innovation is and if you produce it.
3.11.	Technology Readiness Level *	Please choose from the drop-down list the Technological Readiness Level (TRL) that best describes your innovation at your current stage. The innovation must be at TRL 7 or above. If your TRL is less than seven, you are ineligible to continue with your application. If it is between 4 and 6, please read the Guidance Notes to check your eligibility.
3.12.	Why do you think that your innovation is at the TRL you just chose? *	Please justify your TRL. Please add technical drawings and videos in English.
3.13.	What is the intellectual property and how is it protected?	Please describe what you have done to date to identify and protect the intellectual property for your innovation. Provide details of any patents, trademarks, licence agreements and/or copyrights you currently hold or are in the process of applying for. Please also specify where this intellectual property protection applies.
3.14.	Which of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is most relevant to the problem your innovation addresses? *	Please select from the drop-down list the main United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) your innovation is contributing towards achieving.
3.14.a	Secondary Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)	If required, indicate which other SDG your innovation is relevant to.
3.14.b	Describe the alignment with the primary SDGs with which you are aligned. *	You have selected two SDGs, a primary and a secondary, please describe your alignment with those.
3.15.	Additional material about your innovation *	Please upload or link to any documents that further describe your innovation or demonstrates how it works. You may wish to share: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical videos, schematics, and diagrams that show how your innovation works. • Short videos or pictures that show your innovation in action. • Your organisation's logo

4. Your business

In this section, please provide details on your business plan, including the business model, customers, market, stakeholders, and sales pipeline.

	Question	Information
4.1	Business stage*	Please select from the drop-down list the stage that best fits your business.
4.1.a	What is the current stage of your organisation?	Please state if your organisation is legally registered.
4.2.	Is your company legally registered?	Please select Yes or No.
4.2.a.	Organisation type *	From the drop-down list, please select the type of organisation that best fits your business.
4.2.b.	When did you start working at your organisation?	Please tell us since which year have you been active in the organisation.
4.2.c.	What is your role in the organisation? *	You should hold a founder, co-founder, C-level or managerial position in the company. e.g., CEO, founder, CTO, COO, Managing director.
4.3	Employees*	Please tell us how many full-time and paid employees are currently working in your organisation. If none, put zero (0).
4.4	Other employees*	Please tell us how many others, including part-time staff, volunteers or consultants are working in your organisation. If none, please put zero (0).
4.5.	What is the most significant weakness in your current team or business plan, and how do you plan to address it?	Please describe the situation and the strategy to mitigate.
4.6.	Why are you and your team uniquely suited to solve the problem your innovation addresses?	Please describe why your team excels at addressing the problem.
4.7.	Fundraising	
4.7.a.	How much funding has your organisation raised to date? *	Please enter the amount of funding raised in each of the following categories to date. If none, put zero. Please provide this number in GBP, you can convert local currencies to GBP at: https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal savings/ family and friends • Academic grants • Other grants or awards (from governments, corporates, foundations, etc.) • Angel investors

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business incubators and accelerators • Crowdfunding • Venture Capital funds • Bank loans • Other
4.7.b	Desired amount of funding	Please tell us how much total funding you aim to raise for your business/innovation to reach full commercial operations, in GBP.
4.8.	How much was the revenue in 2024 and 2025; and what is the expected for 2026? *	Please provide an answer in GBP.
4.9.	Profit margin	If relevant to your stage, please provide your profit margin in GBP (https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/).
4.10.	Business valuation	Please give an estimation of the business value before external investment, in GBP. Please explain how you have made this valuation.
4.11.	What is your business model? *	Please outline your business model, providing details on the following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main revenues • Your value proposition • Cost structures • Why you think it will succeed
4.12.	Please describe the current market, the market opportunity, competitors, and your competitive advantage. *	Please describe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The market size for your innovation • What is already available (competitors) • Why is your solution better? • Any opportunities to scale.
4.13.	Who are your customers? *	Please describe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who your customers are. • Your preferred route to market. • What channels you will use to reach your customers? • What evidence can you share that customers are willing or committed to buying or using your solution? • Any details on customer research you have done (if applicable).
4.14.	What is your marketing strategy? *	Please provide details of your marketing strategy, and how this aligns with your overall business plan.
4.15.	Please upload your one-pager business plan. *	It could be a Business Model Canvas or any other templates available to illustrate it.



4.16.	Business documents	If relevant, please upload any documents to further support your application e.g., pitch decks, awards, or grants.
4.17.	Website and social media	If you have a website or social media page for your business, please provide the link(s). Please only provide links to active, business accounts. Do not provide links to personal accounts or inactive pages.

5. Advance 2026

In this section, please describe why you are interested in the Advance programme and how it might benefit your business.

	Question	Information
5.1.	How is your business impacting your community and geographic region?	Please describe the desired impact or the one you are already achieving.
5.2.	What are your priorities for development in the next 6-12 months? *	Tell us about your plans for the coming year. Please elaborate on any important business or professional milestones you want to achieve.
5.3.	What are your global expansion plans?	Explain if you are already working in two (or more) countries or your short-term (2 years) plans to expand and to which countries.
5.4.	What is your competitive advantage?	Please describe your advantages over the competition which are essential to the development and growth of your organisation.
5.5.	What do you hope to gain from Advance? *	<p>The Advance journey has been designed for you to grow, scale, and connect your business globally. First, enhancement of the entrepreneurial, leadership, and soft skills; followed by strategic thinking and stakeholder mapping. Then, we will work on improving the engineering skills, to finally work in measurements on impact and communication skills.</p> <p>Please reflect on the Advance journey and describe how the programme activities might support you to achieve your goals.</p>
5.6.	What connections are you hoping to make with the UK's tech ecosystem, and how will they support your business? *	You may list specific individuals or organisations you wish to connect with, or specific programmes you would like to apply for (e.g., UK Innovator Visa). If you do not yet have specific connections in mind, please share industries, universities, governmental departments, researchers, or any one you might want to connect in the UK.

6. Statements and declarations

In this section, you must declare that you adhere to the terms and conditions of the Advance programme in order to submit your application.

	Question	Information
6.1.	Enterprise Directorate Applicant Declaration	Please read the declaration carefully, sign your name and position and tick the checkbox to proceed, confirming you agree with the conditions of the Advance programme.
6.2.	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.
6.3.	Please state the name and position of the person who has made the declarations above.	By ticking the above checkboxes, you acknowledge the conditions outlined above and agree to them for the purposes of participating in Advance.

7. Marketing

The answers you provide in this section will help the LIF or APEI team market the programme in the future.

Please note that any answers you provide in this section **will not** impact your application.

	Question	Information
7.1.	How did you hear about this scheme?	Please select the primary source from the list below.

Annex B. FAQs

Q: What kind of innovations fall under the theme ‘Accessible, Assistive, and Inclusive Technologies’?

A: The main eligibility criteria and thematic eligibility criteria for the programme are set out in the sections above. In general, you should ask yourself:

- Is my innovation making physical or digital environments more accessible; helping people navigate public transport and urban spaces safely; ensuring digital platforms are inclusive by design; or promoting the climate resilience of people with disabilities?
- Is my innovation creating customisable and adaptive learning environments; providing alternative ways to access educational content; personalising learning paths for students with diverse needs; or making vocational skills training more accessible through EdTech?
- Is my innovation a next-generation assistive device that enhances independence; a smart hardware solution for the home or workplace; a technology that augments or replaces impaired senses; or a platform that creates new economic and livelihood opportunities for people with disabilities?
- Is my innovation fundamentally changing a system to make it more equitable; creating new pathways for people with disabilities to participate in economic or social life; or challenging a conventional approach to inclusion through a novel application of technology?

If you are still unsure, you are welcome to contact the team at info-lif@lif.raeng.org.uk to discuss your application. We do not accept innovations with a primary application in the defence, military, or fossil-fuel-based energy sectors.

There is a drop-in session happening on September 23, 2025, where you can speak directly with the programme team about Advance 2026. You can sign up by following this [link](#).

Q: What is the review process for Advance applications?

A: All applications to the Advance 2026 programme are first checked for eligibility by Academy staff members. Following the eligibility criteria, longlisted applications will be assessed by independent external reviewers based on alignment with the programme’s theme and objectives, the innovation’s potential for commercial growth and social impact, and the applicant's demonstrated ambition and potential to leverage the UK ecosystem. The external reviewers will shortlist the applicants.

Finally, a selection panel will select the Advance cohort. The panel includes Fellows of the Academy with significant entrepreneurial, industrial, and thematic experience, along with leading representatives from the UK innovation ecosystem.



Q: If I am accepted on to the Advance programme, will I need to travel?

A: Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Advance programme will be carried out remotely (online).

Phase 3 of the programme is the UK residential stage. For phase 3, yes.

Our residential programme takes place in the UK so that participants can take advantage of proximity to the UK tech ecosystem to build connections and develop networks.

Q: What is the cost to participate in Advance?

A: There is no fee or tuition for the Advance programme.

Foundational travel costs for each participant in the Advance 2026 programme (economy flights, accommodation, and food) will be paid for by the Royal Academy of Engineering, using funding from the AT2030 programme, **except for visas and travel insurance**. Participants will be asked to purchase a travel insurance covering as a minimum: GP access⁹, medical emergencies, and personal accidents¹⁰. Other requirements or support will be assessed on a case-by-case basis¹¹ within the parameters of the programme.

If the cost of obtaining a visa and arranging travel insurance would prevent you from taking part in the programme, please contact the programme Team on info-lif@lif.raeng.org.uk.

Q: What is the Academy's policy around sustainable travel?

A: The Academy acknowledges its responsibility and commitment to minimising the impact of its activities on the environment as an intrinsic part of its ambition to harness the power of engineering to build a sustainable society and inclusive economy that works for everyone.

Q: My internet is sometimes unstable. Can I still participate in the Advance programme if it is delivered virtually?

A: The programme team will support applicants where possible to ensure an unstable internet connection does not become a barrier to application to the programme. If you think you will have a problem connecting to the online training programme, please let us know by contacting the team at info-lif@lif.raeng.org.uk.

Q: I was unsuccessful last year. Can I apply again?

A: Yes. You may submit a new application every year, provided your innovation meets the thematic and general eligibility criteria for the new Advance programme round.

⁹ Access to a General Practitioner in the UK.

¹⁰ Coverage if following an accident your injuries lead to death, total loss of sight/limb or permanent disability. An accident must be caused by something external and visible.

¹¹ Please contact the Academy if assuming the cost of visas and travel insurance would prevent you from taking part in the Advance programme.



Q: I have multiple products or innovations. Can I apply more than once?

A: No. Applicants may only submit one application per Advance round.

Q: I am working on a different innovation to the one I brought to the original LIF programme.

Am I still eligible to apply?

A: Yes. If your innovation meets the thematic and general eligibility criteria, you are welcome to apply to the Advance programme.

Q: I participated either on the LIF Global 2025 or APEI Cycle 11. Am I still eligible to apply?

A: Yes. All LIF and APEI participants whose innovations meet the thematic and general eligibility criteria are invited to apply for the Advance programme, alongside all other eligible applicants. LIF Global 2025 or APEI Cycle 11 participants considering applying to the Advance programme may wish to take the following into account:

- The Advance programme is bespoke to each participant. The programme delivery team will work with you to co-design a programme that meets your individual needs. You will have a willingness to scale and grow your business and goals for the future to fully participate in this process.
- Getting the most out of the Advance programme will require a considerable time commitment, including international travel. You may want to reflect on whether you have the time to devote to this.

Annex C. Terms and conditions

This section sets out the terms and conditions under which the Advance programme is being offered. Please ensure you fully understand the eligibility criteria and have read this document in full before applying.

General

This project is delivered in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Engineering as part of AT2030, a programme funded by UK Aid and led by Global Disability Innovation Hub.

The Academy is not-for-profit entity and takes no stake in any business or innovation accepted onto the programme.

The Selection Panel will be convened by the Academy solely for the purpose of selecting participants for the Advance programme and will make the final decision.

There is no cash award available for any participants on the Advance programme.

The programme will run subject to continued receipt of funding from the relevant funding bodies.

Applications

By applying for the programme, applicants will be deemed to have accepted and agreed to be bound by these Terms and Conditions.

Any applications that are incomplete, late, do not adhere to the guidelines or contain false information will be rejected.

By applying to be considered for selection on to the programme, applicants warrant that all information submitted is true, current, and complete. The Selection Panel reserves the right to verify the eligibility of all entrants, and the veracity of all statements made.

Time commitment

Applicants must be able to commit to Advance for

- a **minimum of 10 hours during the ‘welcome week’** of the onboarding and beginning of the remote training (early-January),
- **at least 20 days for training and mentoring** between January and July,
- a **minimum of 13 days for the UK Residential** in June-July 2026.

This implies being able to secure availability to attend the programme if selected.

Failure to meet a minimum attendance requirement will result in removal from the UK residential and follow on support



Expected standards of behaviour

Many programmes at the Royal Academy of Engineering (the Academy) deliberately foster an informal, collaborative atmosphere. All participants involved in the Leaders in Innovation Fellowships (LIF) programme, including innovators, staff, mentors and partners have the right and responsibility to engage in open dialogues within a framework of mutual respect. To ensure a successful, professional programme where no one feels uncomfortable, threatened, demeaned or excluded, we do not tolerate behaviours that fail to treat all persons fairly and respectfully.

These behavioural expectations are for all persons involved in the LIF programme and are applicable during in person and online activities. This should be read in conjunction with the [Academy's Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy](#) and [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#). It also sets out procedures to take if inappropriate behaviour is raised, and how to do so.

Expectations

During the LIF programme, the following behaviours will not be tolerated:

- The use, possession or attempt to purchase illegal drugs;
- Illegally downloading or viewing objectionable internet material;
- Making statements about the attractiveness or personal characteristics of others;
- Making statements that draw attention to disability, skin colour, sexual orientation, gender, gender reassignment, ethnicity, nationality, age, religion, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or other characteristics in a way that could cause offence or exclusion;
- Engaging in inappropriate behaviour of harassment, bullying or discrimination;
- Sexual or physical harassment;
- Disrespecting other cultures;
- Showing violent, aggressive or threatening behaviour or language;
- Initiating uninvited physical contact.

This list is not exhaustive, and other behaviours may also lead to action if judged inappropriate or unprofessional.

Please note that the Academy will be particularly alert and responsive in case any of the following subtle, but no less harmful, behaviours are witnessed or raised:

- Participants questioning the relevance and credibility of a participant based on their gender, age, ethnicity, academic discipline or professional background;
- Participants refusing to listen to/take into account another participants' contribution to a group activity due to their gender, level of seniority, or lack of academic experience;
- Participants purposefully excluding a participant from taking part in a group activity or preventing them from voicing their opinion on the grounds that they are female, less senior or lack relevant academic training.



The Academy treats violations of these standards of behaviour with the utmost seriousness. There are a range of outcomes possible, including but not limited to:

- No action
- Exclusion from future activities
- Removal from the programme
- Removal from the LIF Community

Liability

Protection of any intellectual property rights in any content submitted is the sole responsibility of the owner of such rights. The Academy recommends that no application is made before the protection of any such rights has been considered. All applications are made at the applicant's own risk, and the applicant agrees to release the Selection Panel, the Academy, its employees, and all other connected persons from any liability relating to infringement (whether actual or threatened) of any such rights by a third party anywhere in the world.

The applicant is solely responsible for the content of their application.

In submitting an application to be considered for the Advance programme, applicants agree to fully indemnify the Selection Panel, the Academy, its employees and all other connected persons in respect of all actions, claims, costs, damages, demands, expenses, fines, liabilities, losses, penalties, sanctions, amounts paid in settlement, out of pocket expenses, interest, penalties, and all legal and other professional costs and expenses that may be incurred by any of them in respect of any claims that the nomination and the content that it contains infringes the proprietary rights of a third party.

Data protection

As part of our agreement with our funders and partners (or their representatives), the personal data provided in your application will be used in accordance with the Academy's privacy statement.

The Academy and programme partners may also publish basic details of successful awards and prizes on its websites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists. Any images taken during the Advance 2026 programme may be used in reports, publications, or on the Academy or partner websites, subject to the consent of the individuals involved.

When you complete the Advance 2026 programme, we will keep in touch with you about opportunities, events and news.

For full details of how we use your data, please refer to the Academy [General Privacy Notice](#).

If you have any questions regarding the way we use your personal information you can contact the Compliance Manager at cm@raeng.org.uk.