

MOBILITY PATHFINDER INNOVATION PROGRAMME

APPLICATION NOTES

With funding from [Innovate UK](#), the UK's Innovation agency, Design Age Institute's **Mobility Pathfinder Innovation Programme** invites innovators, businesses and entrepreneurs from across the UK to propose solutions that offer more accessible, affordable and sustainable personal mobility options for later life that can be supported towards the market by investment in good design.

The Mobility Pathfinder Innovation Programme builds on the Institute's successful [Pathfinder Innovation Programme](#), providing funding and design management to accelerate ideas for products and services that support healthier and happier ageing from concept and prototype towards market.

What we will provide to awardees:

- Funding of between £50k - £70k* to support projects towards market
- Design management support and mentoring (not project management) from our team of experts in design for healthy ageing. The role of the Institute's Design Management team is to advise, scope and facilitate the design process. They are from a design background but do not provide design services on the programme. Your proposed budget must allocate funds for design activities including any design consultancy required.
- Access to existing research, exclusive insights into the healthy ageing marketplace, and peer-networking
- Skills development and training opportunities
- Support to run two research development sessions with end users

* Note that while £70k is the maximum that can be applied for, we are looking for a breadth of entries on cost, and value for money will be a key assessment criterion.

** Note that VAT is excluded from seed funding and cannot be claimed.

What is the difference between personal mobility and transport?

Personal mobility is something you have. Transportation is something you do.

Personal Mobility: the ability of a person to move or be moved freely i.e. personal mobility can be supported by devices like a walking stick, shoe, app, stairlift or wheelchair.

Transport: moving things and moving people i.e. trains, buses, taxis, planes, boats, cars, as well as systems like roads, tracks, airports, and the ways we navigate them whether using a bus schedule or an app.

No matter our age, whether on foot, wheels or rails, good design has the potential to transform how we socialise, work, and navigate the cities, towns, offices, neighbourhoods and homes.

REQUIREMENTS

Design Age Institute will fund and support design interventions for proposals at ideation and proof of concept stage onwards that meet the following criteria:

1. Individuals or enterprises applying for funding must be based in and trading in the United Kingdom.
2. Proposed projects must be suitable for the healthy ageing marketplace.
3. Applicants must be able to demonstrate the ability to find a pathway from ideation or prototype towards market.
4. Applicants will be asked to demonstrate that receiving the award, and working with the Institute, would form a critical part of their success.
5. Applicants should aim to start proposed projects by 31 July 2023 in accordance with our funding from Innovate UK.
6. Applicants should aim to have completed proposed projects by 31 Jan 2024.
7. Applicants must be able to demonstrate how they meet at least one of our key objectives linked to the UK Grand Challenge on an Ageing Society.
 - a. Enjoy five extra healthier, independent years of life at home
 - b. Support people to retain their mobility, transport and social connections.
8. Applicants must be able to demonstrate how they address one, or more, of the following factors which can impact the support for personal mobility in later life. The following factors are based on research and evidence from *Barriers and facilitators of older adults' usage of mobility devices: a scoping review* by Dayeon Lee & Sunghee H. Tak, 2022.

a. Environmental factors

How does the context and environment contribute to, or block effective use of personal mobility aids. Things within the home like steps, thresholds, handrails, lighting. Externally these are also important and additionally things like signage, flat or gently sloping, non slippery or reflective floors

- *Negative examples:* uneven and poorly lit areas, narrow doors and aisles in public spaces, limited and uncoordinated transport, personal weather protection
- *Positive examples:* curb ramps, provision of public seats and well maintained toilet facilities, signage and wayfinding

b. User perceptions

Many devices or products that are clinically prescribed for improving personal mobility perform well. However they carry a stigma which prevents people choosing them when they could be a benefit. Users only use them when they cannot manage without. Too many people view a personal

mobility device as a sign of disability and dependence with a product aesthetic far removed from one's daily/household/personal choice.

- *Negative examples:* walking frames and rollators, electric mobility scooters, support shoes and lower limb joint braces
- *Positive examples:* tablet pcs, cross chest shoulder bags, rear entry trainers

c. Products - emotional responses

Products can often be engineered to perform without due consideration of their aesthetics or emotional fit into a household. They can also carry a high selling price for individual units, with a lack of choice, colour and materials that reinforce negative stigmas

- *Negative examples:* household handrails, shower seats and bathing accessories
- *Positive examples:* multi generational kitchens, lightweight folding wheelchairs,

a. Other exclusion factors as applicable:

We are interested in projects that are based on demonstrable evidence of need. If your project meets a need not outlined above please select this theme and provide evidence in your application.

9. Design Age Institute aims to fund and support proposals from idea and proof of concept stage onwards that meet the following criteria:

- Towards market ready and launch
- Commercially viable inventions
- Demonstration of creativity, innovation, distinctive from other ideas in the market.

10. Funding must be used to support design interventions and design related activities including external design consultancy, user insights and evaluation, which should be reflected in the proposed budget.

11. The Institute is not able to fund or support:

- Salary costs (unless for design and bringing to market costs)
- Stand-alone research
- Feasibility studies
- Experimental development

12. Applications received after **12:00pm (GMT) on Monday 15 May** will not be considered.

Please review our [Terms & Conditions](#) before submitting your application.

Where necessary we will review an applicant's legal status and financial stability prior to approving an Award. We will verify claims around previous funding, endorsement or partnership prior to approving an Award.

ASSESSMENT AND AWARD

Design Age Institute aims to support commercially viable projects where design can transform an idea from an early concept stage to a prototype and towards market.

Selection process

Our selection process aims to be transparent, open and fair, following a phased approach.

Each application is scored by a minimum of two assessors.

Phase 1 - Assessment

Applications submitted through the Mobility Pathfinder Innovation Programme will be scored against the following criteria based on the clarity of achieving each goal and managing associated risks.

- 1. Credible** - *problem, solution and desire (weighted 20%)*
- 2. Feasible** - *support and funds (weighted 20%)*
- 3. Deployable** - *route to market, marketing and sales (weighted 20%)*
- 4. Sustainable** - *profit or self-sustaining (weighted 20%)*
- 5. Value** - *value for money and value that Design Age Institute can add (weighted 20%)*

Phase 2 - Invitation to interview

Up to eight applicants will be selected for interview from those passing initial assessment based on the scores from the five criteria above.

Phase 3 - Interview and Award

Applicants shortlisted for interview will be assessed by a panel composed of experts in design, personal mobility and innovation.

The panel will ensure that decisions map to our objectives and criteria across a distinctive and diverse range of outcomes, and that enable the Institute to have a significant impact on the project.

Responses at interview will be scored as follows, and applicants will need an average score of three or above to be Awarded funding.

- 1** - Unclear, unsuitable for funding
- 2** - Partially clear but unresolved in key areas, doesn't meet objectives
- 3** - Adequate to some degree meets objectives, but questions to resolve
- 4** - Quality idea, meets objectives, but some questions to resolve
- 5** - Excellent, exciting idea, meets objectives, route to market

Up to four projects will be awarded between £50-£70k, depending on proposal quantity and quality.

Award administration:

A Collaborative Project Agreement with each awardee will outline planned project activity; staged milestones; and reporting dates linked to payment instalments.

If you have any questions please email Melanie.Andrews@rca.ac.uk and visit designage.org for all the latest news and opportunities.