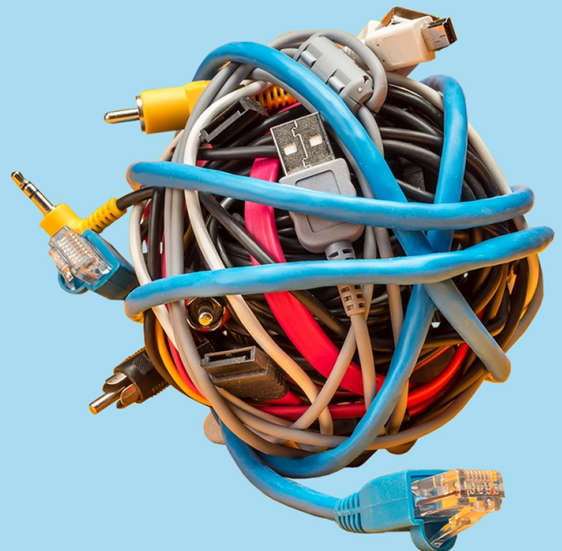




Circular Electricals Fund Applicant's Guide

May 2025



The Circular Electricals Fund aims to support new and innovative projects and initiatives involved in the development and delivery of circular economy principles for electricals, the reduction of environmental impact and the enhancement of resource efficiency.

This guide is for organisations (from industry bodies to non-profits, companies to start-ups, universities to research institutions) wishing to apply for funding from the Fund. Funding is available for organisations working on projects within one or more of the following areas of innovation:

- **Materials:** encouraging the development of technologies and processes that **optimise the use and recovery of raw materials and reduce waste** associated with electronic products
- **Products:** supporting innovations that improve the **durability, repairability, and upgradability** of consumer electricals by extending their useful life
- **Business models:** promoting business models that **prioritise service over ownership**, which can reduce waste and encourage product reuse.

Application process

Before filling out the online form, please prepare your answers using the Word.doc version of the application form available in the Applicant's Pack.

You should then complete all parts of the 41 question online application form, which includes the provision of:

- **Financial evidence:** a statement of expenditure (SoE) or an independent accountant's report (IAR) from the last full financial year
- **References:** letters of support from partners who may be assisting with your project in some capacity or with whom you've worked previously
- **Detailed budget breakdown** for the entire project, including in-kind contributions
- **Risk evaluation** using the template provided
- **Project timeline Gantt chart** – template available
- **Communications plan outline.**

Key dates

| Date | Event |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| 14 May 2025 | Applications open |
| 11 June 2025 | Applicant information webinar |
| 14 August 2025 | Applications close |
| 30 September 2025 | Applicants notified of decision |
| October 2025 | Projects begin |

Support

Please read through the Applicant's Guide and Applicant's Pack before asking for assistance. If you still have questions or require support after that, email funding@materialfocus.org.uk.

Funding available

Up to £150,000 per project

Project duration

We expect the majority of projects to be delivered across a 12-month period, although, where necessary, this may differ. You will need to provide regular progress reports throughout the duration of your project.

Once your project is complete, you'll have three months to finish your final project impact report and exploitation plan, so that the final 20% of funding can be released.

Examples of projects

The fund aims to support industry bodies, start-ups, non-profits, companies and research institutions exploring new, innovative or significantly improved initiatives that apply and develop circular economy principles, reducing environmental impact and enhancing resource efficiency.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:

Materials

- **Advanced recycling technologies:** developing new methods for recovering technology metals and other valuable materials from e-waste
- **Bio-based or sustainable alternatives:** researching and commercialising bio-based / non-fossil alternatives or recycled materials for use in electricals
- **Modular design for recycling:** creating electronic components that can be easily disassembled and sorted for efficient recycling
- **Closed-loop supply chains:** establishing industry collaborations to improve the collection and reintegration of recycled materials into new products.

Products

- **Repairable & modular electricals:** designing consumer electricals (phones, laptops, appliances) with easily replaceable components to extend their lifespan
- **Self-healing materials:** innovating materials that can repair themselves to enhance product durability
- **Right to repair initiatives:** developing open-source repair guides, toolkits, or marketplaces for replacement parts
- **Upgrade-friendly designs:** creating devices with modular upgrades to extend their relevance and functionality over time.

Business models

- **Trade-in & refurbishment programmes:** establishing scalable take-back schemes to refurbish and resell used electricals
- **B2B sharing platforms:** developing platforms for businesses to share high-value electronic equipment to reduce redundant purchases
- **Deposit return schemes:** implementing incentives for consumers to return end-of-life products for responsible recycling or refurbishment.

Application timeframe

Circular Electricals Fund applications will be open from the 14 May until the 14 August. We will contact you by the 30 September to let you know whether your application has been successful.

Application review process

Your application will be reviewed against our criteria (outlined below), to establish your project's eligibility for funding. We will inform you if your project doesn't meet our criteria.

Applications for projects that meet our criteria will go on to be reviewed by a panel of experts and industry professionals. Then, once the panel has reviewed your project, we will be in touch to let you know whether your application has been successful or not.

If your application has been successful, we will follow up with next steps, including signing the terms and conditions document and holding a project kick-off meeting.

Criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

1. Circular economy alignment

Applicants must demonstrate how their project contributes to a more circular economy for electrical goods and appliances. This could include:

- **Design for longevity** (e.g., durable, repairable or upgradable products, software updates)
- **Reuse and refurbishment** (e.g., second-life programmes for appliances)
- **Recycling and material recovery** (e.g., closed-loop recycling processes)
- **Enhancing overall recoverability and recyclability** of products
- **New business models** (e.g., leasing, take-back schemes, product-as-a-service)
- **Sustainable use of materials** (e.g. replacing existing materials for more sustainable or recyclable alternatives).

2. Innovation & feasibility

- The project should present a **novel, significantly improved** or innovative approach. In this context, innovation relates to the introduction of new ideas, methods or products to bring resource efficiency improvements, solve problems, and advance the circular economy. Novel may include a new way of thinking or approach, leading to significant improvements in resource efficiency e.g. introducing new concepts, methods, or products and disrupting existing systems
- Project feasibility should be backed up by clear and detailed research, technical or operational plans, or pilot studies.

3. Environmental & social impact

- The initiative should contribute to **more efficient resource use, lower emissions and/or waste reduction**
- Consideration of **ethical sourcing, fair labour practices**, digital **inclusion** and **community benefits** is encouraged
- The ability to measure **social value** or impact is considered an advantage.

4. Business model & scalability

- The project must show potential for **financial viability** (e.g., revenue generation, commercial partnerships, cost-effectiveness)
- The application should demonstrate the project's **scalability potential** (e.g. the extent to which it can be expanded regionally, nationally, or globally, or to other products or product categories)
- The extent to which the project has **versatility** (e.g., the research/approach be applied in a range of environments).

5. Team & expertise

- The applicant should have a **qualified team with a demonstrable track record** in project management delivery, sustainability, engineering, business, or relevant fields
- Collaboration with **industry partners, research institutions**, or **NGOs** is a plus
- Applications are open to any organisation active in this area, with a particular focus on collaborations and partnerships between associations/groups/individuals.

6. Measurable outcomes & monitoring

- Clear metrics for success (e.g., reduced resource use, product life extension, waste diverted, energy saved, units refurbished, industry and consumer uptake)
- A plan for monitoring and reporting progress
- Demonstration of what the applicant will have contributed by the end of their funding period e.g. whether they will produce a finished product/project, or have demonstrated or shown the feasibility of a new concept or innovation.

7. Financial need & use of funds

- A transparent budget detailing how the funding will be used
- Justification for why external funding is needed.

8. Monitoring & success metrics

- You must have robust KPIs and appropriate tracking methods in place to monitor progress and measure outcomes and impact.

Data & reporting required for application form

As part of your application, you will be required to forecast the quantifiable impacts you expect from the project, calculating any figures, and including all mathematics, assumptions, key dependencies and constraints. Please specify the products, appliances or devices you will be working with and include accurate figures within your own calculations.

Below are some examples for reference purposes ('device' is used here to indicate a non-specific product or technological device):

Example 1: **Advanced recycling technology for technology metals**

Impact Metric: Amount of technology metals recovered (kg)

Assumptions:

- A typical discarded device contains 0.025g of neodymium and 0.015g of terbium
- The project will process 1,000,000 discarded devices per year
- The new technology will increase metal recovery efficiency from 30% to 80%.

Calculation:

- Current recovery: $1,000,000 \times (0.025\text{g} + 0.015\text{g}) \times 30\% = 12\text{kg}$ of recovered metals
- Expected recovery: $1,000,000 \times (0.025\text{g} + 0.015\text{g}) \times 80\% = 32\text{kg}$ of recovered metals
- Net impact: Additional 20kg of technology metals recovered annually.

Dependencies & constraints:

- Success depends on collection rates of discarded devices
- Market demand for recovered materials must remain stable
- Scaling may require regulatory approval and /or investment for new recycling processes.

Example 2: **Repairable device design**

Impact Metric: Reduction in e-waste (tonnes)

Assumptions:

- Average device weight: 2.2kg
- Typical replacement cycle: Every 3 years
- New modular design extends lifespan to 6 years
- The company sells 50,000 devices per year.

Calculation:

- Without intervention: $50,000 \text{ devices} \times 2.2\text{kg} = 110 \text{ tonnes}$ of e-waste per year
- With intervention: Lifespan doubles, cutting annual replacement demand by half → 55 tonnes of e-waste per year
- Net impact: 55 tonnes of e-waste prevented annually.

Dependencies & constraints:

- Consumer adoption of repairable models must be high
- Availability of repair services and spare parts
- Potential increase in upfront costs affecting sales.

Example 3: **Social value of a trade-in & refurbishment programme for devices**

Impact Metric: Jobs created & skills development

Assumptions:

- Refurbishing 100,000 devices annually requires additional labour
- On average, one full-time technician can refurbish 5,000 devices per year
- Supporting roles (customer service, logistics, sales, etc.) add 1 additional job per 3 technicians.

Calculation:

- Technicians needed: $100,000 \div 5,000 = 20$ full-time jobs
- Support staff needed: $20 \div 3 = \sim 7$ additional jobs
- Total jobs created: 27 full-time roles.

Social value considerations:

- Provides employment opportunities, particularly in regions with high unemployment
- Increases skills in repair and refurbishment, which can be transferable to other industries
- Encourages a shift towards a circular economy, increasing job security in sustainable industries.

Costs & restrictions

Private companies must factor VAT into the bid.

As grant funding for public bodies (such as local authorities) and charities is not subject to VAT, such applicants should quote all costs under 'How much are you applying for?' ex VAT.

The funding is not available for the purchase of any major capital assets, such as vehicles, property, or machinery. If your project involves the use of vehicles or machinery, these will need to be rented.

Marketing & promotional materials

1. Communications considerations for funded projects

While not all funded projects will involve public-facing communications, we recognise that many will generate insights, findings, or outcomes that could be valuable for wider audiences. If your project has a communications component - whether during implementation or upon completion - it is important to align with our branding and messaging guidelines.

As such, we ask all applicants to:

- Indicate in their application whether their project is expected to have any **public-facing outputs** (e.g., reports, events, campaigns, tools, educational resources)
- Consider potential **communications opportunities** that may arise after research or implementation phases.

2. Intellectual property & marketing rights

- As a condition of funding, Material Focus/Joint Trade Association retains ownership of the intellectual property (IP) arising from funded work, unless otherwise agreed in writing
- Any **public communications, media engagement, or promotional activity** related to the funded work must be done in **collaboration with Material Focus/Joint Trade Association** to ensure consistency and accuracy in messaging
- We may actively support or lead on communications activities related to project outcomes, including **press releases, case studies, social media, blogs, reports, and events.**

3. Branding & acknowledgment

- Where applicable, we ask that **Material Focus/Joint Trade Association's branding** is included in promotional materials, presentations, and outputs linked to the funded project
- Recipients may also be asked to provide **attribution or acknowledgment** in reports, presentations, or publications, as well as to share insights that could be featured in our communications.

4. Case-by-case review

- Given the diversity of funded projects, communications plans will be reviewed on a **case-by-case basis**. We encourage applicants to **discuss their anticipated communications needs** with us early in the process
- If a project does not initially require external communications but later generates results that warrant dissemination, we will work with the funding recipient to ensure appropriate visibility and impact.

Material Focus is an independent, not-for-profit organisation on a mission to save valuable, critical and finite materials inside electricals from going to waste. We do this through...

Insights

We identify, produce and share insights to improve the UK e-waste system and inform policy decisions.

Investments

We identify and fund projects that make it easier to reuse and recycle; or that encourage circular design.

Inspiration

We inspire, educate and encourage the UK public to fix, donate, sell and recycle their unwanted electricals through our Recycle Your Electricals campaign.

www.materialfocus.org.uk