



CoSTAR

THE UK R&D NETWORK FOR CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY

Applicant Guidance



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

APPLYING TO THE CoSTAR Enterprise & Commercialisation Programme

All you need to know

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(By clicking on any of question you can navigate directly to the relevant section.)

[Welcome to CoSTAR](#)

[Eligibility](#)

[Intellectual Property](#)

[Subsidy Control](#)

[Application Process](#)



Welcome to CoSTAR

Convergent Screen Technologies and performance in Realtime, or CoSTAR for short, is a £75.6 million investment by the UKRI Infrastructure Fund, delivered by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

We are building the UK's first national R&D infrastructure to provide UK creative companies with unique access to specialised facilities, technology, cutting-edge connectivity and a national network of research and industry expertise.

Through open competitions and development opportunities, CoSTAR aims to transform great ideas into market-ready products, driving the continued growth of our gaming, TV, film, performance, and digital entertainment sectors.

The CoSTAR Network is made up of five R&D Labs located across the UK, each with their own research specialism, technical facilities, and expert researchers.

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

Where are the CoSTAR Labs?

National Lab - is the central hub that co-ordinates the collaborative opportunities across the CoSTAR network, and will open a state-of-the-art facility at Pinewood Studios in 2026.

Foresight Lab - is a community of industry leading researchers, policy experts and data analysts working to understand how new tech is shaping games, film, TV, performance, and digital entertainment led by Goldsmiths, University of London.

Live Lab - is a UK hub for developing new technology that makes live performance more immersive, flexible, and impactful, led by the University of York and based in Production Park, Wakefield.

Realtime Lab - is a community of world-leading experts and industry pioneers exploring what's next in virtual production and real-time tech and gaming, based in Scotland and led by Abertay University.

Screen Lab - is a facility for film, TV, gaming, and digital entertainment creators, focused on using technology to open up new ways of telling your stories. Based at Studio Ulster in Belfast and led by Ulster University.



[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

What is the CoSTAR Enterprise & Commercialisation Programme (E&C)?

CoSTAR's Enterprise & Commercialisation Programme (E&C) supports the growth of highly capable, inclusive, and sustainable creative technology businesses to underpin the long-term competitiveness of the UK screen and performance sector. E&C activities have been designed to lower the barrier to entry as well as building capacity and the right capabilities in businesses through targeted support for IP and enterprise innovation and development. Our focus is on:

- Incubating 'high potential' IP, software, tools, and services, building robust, scalable, sustainable, and inclusive business from the ground up. Build on the right foundations
- Accelerating capacity and capabilities in UK businesses that have the potential to scale innovative creative or technical solutions globally. Building competitive advantage in an emerging market
- Unlocking investment into new IP and the capital required for sustainable growth. Support long term business expansion.
- Connecting our CoSTAR enterprises with the best tech and creative executive mentors, investment expertise to deliver world leading creative technology IP, content, products, and services. Create the right relationships to broker success.

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

What is the CoSTAR Enterprise & Commercialisation Programme (E&C)? continued

Applications to the Enterprise & Commercialisation programme should be able to demonstrate a strong alignment with CoSTAR's offer of support, with a thoughtful approach to programme elements from mentorship to access to the CoSTAR infrastructure.

CoSTAR Enterprise & Commercialisation programmes are run either across the CoSTAR Network or by the National Lab. The respective CoSTAR Network Lab will articulate the focus and requirements for any of their programmes in more detail, which can be found on the [Funding and Support](#) section of our website. We also highly recommend attending any workshops or webinars run by the Labs so you can ask questions and hear from teams directly.

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)



ELIGIBILITY

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

What sorts of companies and organisations are able to apply for E&C competitions?

CoSTAR has been designed to support UK business growth across our Creative Economy. Research Organisations, Creative Practitioners and Sole Traders can be included in E&C applications, but the lead applicant must be a UK-based company and demonstrate a high level of ambition to deliver technological advancement and business growth in its application to creative industry challenges.

I'm a freelancer - can I apply?

Only UK-registered companies can be a lead applicant on a PPP call. Freelancers can apply if you are part of an application where the lead applicant is a UK-registered company.

Can companies of any size apply for E&C calls?

Only Micro, Small, and Medium Sized companies may apply for an E&C call and you must be a legal entity based in the UK. The qualifying criteria for company size are included below.

Qualifying criteria for company size

| Company Category | Staff Headcount | Turnover OR | Balance Sheet |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| Micro | <10 | <€2m/£1.76m | <€2m/1.76m |
| Small | <50 | <€10m/£8.8m | <€10m/8.8m |
| Medium Sized | <250 | <€50m/£44m | <€42m/£38m |
| Large | >250 | >€50m/£44m | >€42m/£38m |

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

Does the applicant company need to have been registered as a UK company for a certain period prior to application?

We are aware that some companies won't have been trading long enough to have submitted any accounts or may have submitted abridged accounts if turnover is not of a sufficient level. This should not prevent you from applying to the programme, as long as your company is registered with Companies House. This has been communicated to the judging panel and will not affect the judging process.



[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

In summary.....

CoSTAR invites applications from teams comprising a variety of UK-based companies, technologists, researchers, and creative practitioners, however, the lead applicant must be a UK-based company.

Projects must focus on the UK's screen and/or performance sectors and demonstrate a high level of ambition to deliver technological advancement and business growth in its application to creative industry challenges.

Organisations applying must;

- have a lead applicant that is an enterprise or legal entity registered and trading in the UK
- be from or support the screen and/or performance sectors
- have an operations and/or project team based in the UK
- intend to carry out any project work arising from this award in the UK
- intend to exploit the results of work from or in the UK
- only include eligible project costs in their application
- not attribute more than 75% of project costs to subcontractors. Such subcontractors should in all normal circumstances be based in the UK.





SUBSIDY CONTROL

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

Why is subsidy control a consideration for the E&C programme?

The UK subsidy control regime is a legal framework that regulates how public authorities award financial assistance to businesses. CoSTAR E&C grants are delivered through the Research, Development and Innovation Streamlined Subsidy Scheme which is part of this regime. For projects to qualify for funding under this scheme there are eligibility criteria, evidence requirements and cost rules that must be applied.

Why do I need to declare any previous subsidies I have received for this project or activity?

The Subsidy Control Act 2022 which came into effect on 4th January 2023 applies to any subsidies granted by a public body (including any university) to a company. The public body needs to consider any previous subsidy awarded to a company when it awards a grant that is a subsidy to the company

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

What are the eligible costs that I can use my E&C grant for?

For more detailed information on budgeting and eligible costs please read the budget guidance documentation included in this application pack.

Subsidies given under this sub-category can only be used to fund the specified costs listed below.

- personnel costs; researchers, technicians and other supporting staff to the extent employed on the project.
- costs of equipment, instruments, buildings and land, to the extent of, and for the period used, for the project.
- costs of conducting research and of external consultancy and contractual research or other knowledge assets, including patents bought or licensed from outside sources.
- any other project operating costs and project overheads; including costs of materials, supplies and similar products, incurred directly as a result of the project.

Is there a way for me to quickly calculate what the grant offer is likely to be if I'm successful?

Unlike other CoSTAR programmes, E&C programmes have a flat grant total of 50% of the programme costs with set programme costs and set business development awards.

For example:

£10,000 total value of the programme per company participating

£5,000 = value of programme inclusive of workshops, mentorship (in kind)

£5,000 = business development award + travel stipend (grant)



Why is our company asked to make a 'Company Contribution'?

Leverage and in-kind contributions represent the value your company brings to the R&D project. This shows CoSTAR that you already possess the foundational tools and operational baseline required to deliver the project successfully and that any public investment is unlocking a greater sum of total economic activity.

Company Contribution

Your required contribution may be provided as:

- In-kind labour
- Materials
- Use of internal equipment
- Hired equipment, facilities or other costs

Contributions must be:

- Identifiable
- Auditable
- Not sourced from other public funding



INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

How is data related to the R&D I am proposing in my application treated?

Your data will be managed according to our Data Protection Privacy Policy which can be found [here](#).

Will I own the IP of the output or product developed via this E&C award?

Successful applicants will own any new IP created through their projects. The owner of any Background IP will own any improvements to the Background IP used in any E&C project.

If there is 3rd party IP to clear, when would that be done?

If there is a 3rd party IP, owned by a party that is not a part of your project consortium then the clearing of this for usage in your E&C project will rest with the lead applicant. It is the responsibility of the lead applicant to make certain that they have all the necessary rights and permissions in place to work with third party IP if this is requirement for your project.

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)



APPLICATION PROCESS

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

Do I have to use Submittable to complete my application?

For your planning and for accessibility we have provided a PDF of the [Application Questions](#) in your applicant pack.

These are for information purposes only. Please note we do need your application to be completed via the Submittable platform.

If for any reason you need support to submit your application, please apply for one of our [Access Support Bursaries](#) or contact us by emailing costar.enterprise@rhul.ac.uk to discuss your needs further.

What documents are required at the time of application?

In your application you will need to respond to the set questions, there is also an optional file upload where you can upload any supporting documentation such as a pitch deck, teaser video, or product images.

If we require any additional clarification or supporting evidence to your application, we will contact you.

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

I want to include more detail than a section in the application form allows, is this permitted?

No, only the information contained within the application form and within page limits specified for each section will be evaluated when selecting proposals. This is to ensure all proposals are scored fairly and equally and helps assessors to more easily compare proposals.

Are you able to provide reasonable adjustments and support where needed?

Yes, we encourage applicants to let us know about any reasonable adjustments they may require for the application process or their proposed project.

CoSTAR provides [Access Support Bursaries](#), based on a disability, health condition, or access need, to support those making applications to, or participating in, our Access Programmes.

For more information and how to apply please click [here](#) or to discuss your needs further please contact costar.enterprise@rhul.ac.uk.

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

Can I use AI in my application?

We adhere to the [UKRI policy on the use of generative artificial intelligence in applications](#). Please read this policy carefully before using AI tools in your application.

Applicants may use AI to support drafting; however, they remain responsible for ensuring that the content is accurate, original, free of fabricated references, and reflective of their own ideas and expertise.

Use of AI in your application will not impact the outcome, however any use of AI should be transparent and appropriately acknowledged where relevant. There will be the opportunity to declare AI usage within the application form.

Can I speak to someone from the team before submitting?

Please ensure you have read the full brief and have attended or watched the Webinar recordings. If you still have a specific question, please email us at costar.enterprise@rhul.ac.uk.

We cannot provide individual guidance on your application or specific feedback on your ideas in advance of your application.

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

How do you assess my application?

Firstly, your application will be checked to confirm it meets the eligibility criteria and fits the competition scope. If so, it will proceed to assessment.

Your application is then reviewed by two independent experts from business or academia, selected for their relevant expertise. They assess applications independently, cannot see previous feedback, and cannot view each other's scores or comments.

All CoSTAR assessors are trained, must declare any conflicts of interest, and handle applications confidentially in line with data protection rules.

Shortlisted applications are then reviewed by an industry expert panel against the competition's portfolio criteria. The panel recommends projects for funding, with final decisions made by the CoSTAR Lab/Challenge Lead.

You will be notified of the outcome by email.



[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

Is there an interview stage?

Typically, the Submittable application form is the only stage in the selection process. If there is an interview stage this will be clearly stated in the Call specific information provided on the website.

However, we may contact you if we require any clarification regarding the information provided in your application.

Will I receive feedback on my application if I am unsuccessful?

Feedback cannot always be provided, but where available feedback will consist of assessor overall comments (not specific to each question), and with a focus on highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

Please note there will be further opportunities to engage with our CoSTAR Access Programmes and we encourage you to re-apply for subsequent calls if you are unsuccessful in this round.

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)



EQUALITY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

How important is our company's approach to Inclusion (EDI) and Sustainability in our application?

Environmental Sustainability and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are central to our work at CoSTAR and all our Access Programmes. All projects, regardless of their main R&D focus, are expected to have a demonstrable engagement with either EDI, sustainability or both. This will be supported by CoSTAR training and mentorship in social impact areas that include; equitable design, developing environmental sustainability principles and working with diverse user groups.

Why do I have to complete personal EDI questions to apply?

The CoSTAR Network monitors the diversity of the applications we receive to ensure we are reaching and serving appropriately diverse audiences. This information also enables us to provide anonymised demographic reporting to funders, partners and stakeholders to ensure that we are open and accountable in our commitment to diversity and equality.

[* RETURN TO CONTENTS](#)

CoSTAR National Lab

Stay in touch



bit.ly/CoSTARwebsite



bit.ly/CoSTARLinkedIn



bit.ly/CoSTARInsta

NEWSLETTER



SIGN UP