

NHS Innovation Accelerator FAQs 2025 Intake Call Updated August 2024

1. When can I apply for the NHS Innovation Accelerator 2025 cohort?

Recruitment for the 2025 NIA cohort opens the morning of 1 September 2024 and closes at 23:59 on 14 October 2024.

2. Who can apply for the 2025 NHS Innovation Accelerator?

The NHS Innovation Accelerator (NIA) is open to innovations of all types, from the UK or elsewhere, and innovators from any background. Innovations should be able to demonstrate an evidence base from clinical trials, pilots and/or real-world use.

The NIA is open to all applicants regardless of their professional or personal background. Applicants could be clinicians, academics, administrators, founders, from a public-sector, charitable or not-for-profit organisation, from a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME), or from a large corporate. You can be the inventor of the innovation, the lead for it within your organisation or simply the representative of an innovation you find compelling, and as such, wish to scale across the NHS.

To apply, you should be able demonstrate the following:

- Significant outcomes for significantly lower cost
- An evidence-base for your innovation that shows it is ready to be diffused across the NHS
- A personal set of strong values as well as a passion for learning and sharing your insight widely
- A commitment
 - to scaling evidence-based innovations for patient and population benefit
 - to understanding health inequalities and to improving equity of access, experience and outcomes through innovation.
 - to engaging with stakeholders, patients and the public at large
 - to supporting the NHS' net zero ambitions

Innovators from all genders, ethnicities and backgrounds are encouraged to apply for our accelerator. We know that many groups have been underrepresented in our past cohorts and we are keen to move toward a cohort of Fellows that better represents the diversity of the people served by the NHS.

3. Is the NIA only for UK-based companies?

No. Applicants from across the UK and overseas are encouraged to apply. Applicants should note the mandatory requirement to attend the NIA launch, summit, and quarterly and Year 1 events in person; as this is the case, the individual representing the innovation should be largely based in the UK, even if the parent company is not. Additionally, the innovation that applicants are representing should have some UK presence, or immediate intentions to establish their UK presence and must have received or is currently receiving support from a Health Innovation Network or a support programme aimed at upskilling their knowledge of the NHS.

4. I am from a start-up; can I apply for the NIA?

The NIA is for innovations that are both ready to scale across the NHS in England, and that have the necessary resources and team to scale across England over a 12-month period and beyond. Your organisation should therefore have sufficient resources, both financially and in personnel, to be able to scale up at pace – and be able to take up opportunities that arise from your participation in the NIA.

5. I am a clinician; can I apply for the NIA?

Yes, the NIA is open to Fellows from any background, and we have supported several clinicians to scale their innovations. If you have queries or concerns regarding the time commitment of 2 days a week for Fellows, we encourage you to contact the NIA team at nia@uclpartners.com to discuss your options.

6. What are this year's recruitment themes?

For the 2025 intake, it is a call open to all innovations addressing a challenge faced by the health system. Whilst there is no specific theme for the 2025 intake, the Addendum in the [Call for Applications](#) document highlights some concerns stakeholders have raised over the past few months; innovations that address one of these key concerns are more likely to be prioritised both in the NIA recruitment call and also within the wider health and social care landscape. However, as priorities change in the health service from one year to the next, all innovations that can show significant impact and potential are encouraged to apply.

All applicants must be able to demonstrate how their innovation actively alleviates health inequalities in practice.

7. How do I apply to join the NIA?

You can apply for the NIA via our Survey Monkey apply online portal. The link to the application will be available on the NIA website's [Apply](#) page from 1 September 2024.

Before applying, please ensure that you have reviewed the [Call for Applications](#) document which provides a useful starting point for learning more about the NIA. You should also read the [Guide for Applicants](#) and review the wording of the contract, which both you and your organisation will need to sign should you be invited to join the NIA.

Please only apply if you are assured that you and your innovation meet the specifications, and that you can commit to the time requirements (including attendance at **all quarterly and Year 1 events**) and have the written support of your employing organisation.

8. Is the NIA for individuals only or can teams/ companies apply?

While the innovation may have been created by a team/company, the NIA focuses on the development and support of an individual representing that innovation as a Fellow. Therefore, all applications must include a sole named applicant who will be the innovation's representative while active on the NIA.

9. Do applicants need the support of a Health Innovation Network (HIN) before they can apply to the NIA?

An application does not need the support of a [Health Innovation Network \(HIN\)](#) prior to submitting an application, unless the innovation has not been used within the UK previously. However, applicants may wish to engage with their local HIN to discuss applications and to seek advice on scaling plans before submitting their application.

For information on your local HIN, please visit the [Health Innovation Network website](#).

10. Why is there a time commitment for Fellows of 2 days a week?

In order to ensure they can take advantage of the benefits of being on the NHS Innovation Accelerator (NIA), Fellows need to be able to commit two days per week **to scaling their innovation**. These two days per week could include for example attendance at quarterly events, producing and

implementing sprint plans, meeting mentors and [Health Innovation Networks \(HINs\)](#), developing stakeholder engagement and marketing plans, building networks, or a health economic case.

For some Fellows, this will be part of their normal day jobs - where scaling their innovation is their everyday business.

For others, particularly those who are based in clinical roles, it might require setting aside the 2 days for the completion of these discreet tasks. Please note that Fellows are **not** expected to come to the NIA offices for these 2 days per week; attendance in person is only required for learning events and other events.

11. What is the selection process?

When submitted, application forms are reviewed by a minimum of four assessors drawn from a range of perspectives including clinical, patient, commercial and implementation. Applications are assessed on the basis of the applicant, the innovation, and confirmation that there is no straightforward or obvious local mechanism for scaling; in other words, there needs to be a clear reason as to why the applicant needs the support of the NIA. Please note that references will be requested during the application process. Two references are required for each Fellow - one of whom needs to be a senior representative from the Fellow's employing organisation and the other should be from a healthcare provider / commissioner site where their innovation is currently in use (this does not need to be an NHS site).

Once the application forms are reviewed, shortlisted applicants are invited to an online panel interview. At the same time, the [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#) informally review all shortlisted applications. The applications will also be reviewed from a Health Inequalities, Patient and Public Involvement (PPIE) involving NHS patients, and Carbon Reduction perspective. After the interviews, a final decision panel chaired by Professor Sir Stephen Powis, National Medical Director at [NHS England](#), and Chair of the NIA Programme Board, consider the recommendations from all aspects of the review process to agree which applicants will be offered a conditional place on the NIA.

At this stage, the NIA will undertake a period of due diligence, and request - where relevant - two years of annual accounts, a list of company directors and published annual reports. All Fellows will be asked to sign an agreement with [UCLPartners](#) (who host the NIA) before being formally announced as an NIA Fellow. An example contract will be available on the application page of the NIA website when the Call is launched. Applicants should check that they and their employing organisation would be happy to sign this contract before applying.

Additionally, all Fellows will be reviewed against a Maturity Matrix to establish how their activity compares to the asks of the health system. For example, whether they are on any frameworks that will allow easier access for NHS organisations to procure them, have undertaken PPIE activity at the levels recommended by PPIE experts, have completed a carbon reduction plan as advised by Greener NHS, etc. The Maturity Matrix criteria will be provided to Fellows when conditional offers are made; the results will be used to understand how to better support the individual Fellow in their scaling journey.

12. How many Fellows will be selected to join the NIA 2025 intake?

Up to 24 individuals will be selected to join the NIA 2025 intake. These individuals will join the existing Fellows from the 2023 and 2024 cohorts, who have progressed to Years 2 and 3 of the Fellowship.

13. Are there opportunities to connect with the NIA team before I apply?

There are a number of 'Meet the NIA' online information events during the recruitment period that you can join to find out more.

These online Q&A sessions are open to anyone, but we do ask that you register via Eventbrite beforehand. The interactive sessions will provide detailed information about the NIA, the recruitment process and this year's application. Slides will be made available and there will be an opportunity for Q&A with the NIA core team.

Dates for Meet the NIA online sessions:

- Friday, 6 September: 13:00 - 14:00
- Tuesday, 17 September: 12:00 - 13:00
- Friday, 27 September: 13:00 - 14:00
- Monday 7 October: 12:00 - 13:00

Please register for a session on Eventbrite [here](#). Joining details will be sent to you in the confirmation email upon registration.

If you have any questions you need answered ahead of these events, please feel free to email us at nia@uclpartners.com.

14. Will I receive feedback if my application is unsuccessful?

Unsuccessful applications will receive feedback by the end of February 2025. The level of detail of the feedback will depend on the stage to which the application progressed e.g. applicants that have not progressed to the full assessment phase will receive basic feedback whilst those fully assessed will receive detailed feedback.

15. What are the key dates for this year's call?

The key dates are as follows:

Activity	Date
NIA opens for applications (6 weeks)	1 September 2024
'Meet the NIA' informational webinars	6 September 2024 - 13:00 – 14:00 17 September 2024 - 12:00 – 13:00 27 September 2024 - 13:00 – 14:00 7 October 2024 – 12:00 – 13:00
Application deadline	23:59, 14 October 2024
Application form assessment	23 October – 17 November 2024
Papers to Board	2 December 2024
Sustainability, PPIE, NICE and Health Inequalities reviews of applicants to be interviewed	25 November 2024 – 4 January 2025
Shortlisting panel	9 December 2024
Invitation to interviews	11 December 2024
Unsuccessful applicants notified	12 December 2024

Interviews	8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15 January 2025
Final decision-making panel	22 January 2025
Outcomes communicated to applicants	23 January 2025
Due diligence and contracting	29 January – 14 March 2025
Deadline for due diligence docs	5 February 2025
Feedback sent to unsuccessful applicants	12 February 2025
Feedback sent to successful applicants	13 February 2025
<i>The following dates/ sessions are a mandatory part of the NIA. You will not be able to take up a fellowship unless you are able to attend all of them.</i>	
Induction and preparation day for NIA Launch	17 March 2025
Launch Event and 10 th Anniversary Celebration (Manchester)	26 March 2025
NIA panel session	10 April 2025
New Fellow 1:1 meetings with NIA team	w/c 14 April 2025 (can discuss panel day feedback)
Quarterly events	Tuesday 6 May 2025 Tuesday 1 July 2025 Tuesday 7 October 2025 Tuesday 3 February 2026
Year 1 learning events	Tuesday 3 June 2025 Tuesday 9 September 2025 Tuesday 3 March 2026

16. When will the panel interviews take place?

Panel interviews will take place virtually throughout 8, 9, 10, 13, 14 and 15 January 2025. As interviews are scheduled around the limited availability of clinicians, applicants are asked to ensure that all these dates are kept free in their diaries until further notice.

17. I have not completed an application form like this before. Where can I go for support?

UK based Applicants

Your local Health Innovation Network may be able to provide support and advice in applying for the NIA. Find your local HIN here: <https://thehealthinnovationnetwork.co.uk/>.

International Applicants

You should contact [Healthcare UK](#) to access the dedicated support on offer for international companies looking to come to the UK.

For more information about the NIA, please review our [programme FAQs](#). You are also welcome to email us at nia@uclpartners.com.

Follow the NHS Innovation Accelerator on LinkedIn [NHS Innovation Accelerator](#) and on X (formerly Twitter) [@NHSAccelerator](#).