



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology



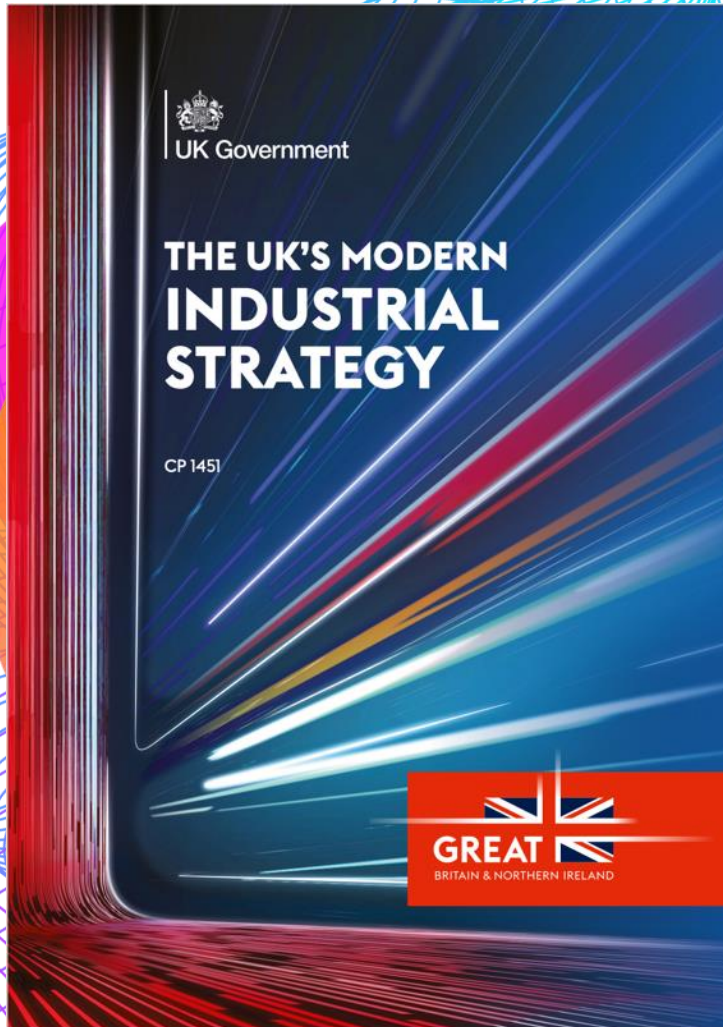
Engineering and
Physical Sciences
Research Council



Innovate
UK

Industry Briefing

Advanced Connectivity Technologies (ACT) R&D Programme



The Modern Industrial Strategy (June 2025)

The strategy document setting out the Government's new economic approach to backing the UK's strengths, with ambitious plans for 8 high-growth sectors (set out in the next slide).



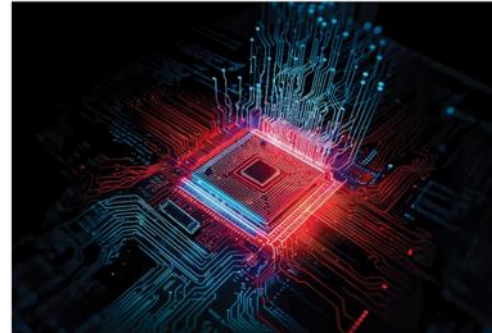
Advanced Manufacturing



Defence



Digital and Technologies



Clean Energy Industries



Professional and Business Services



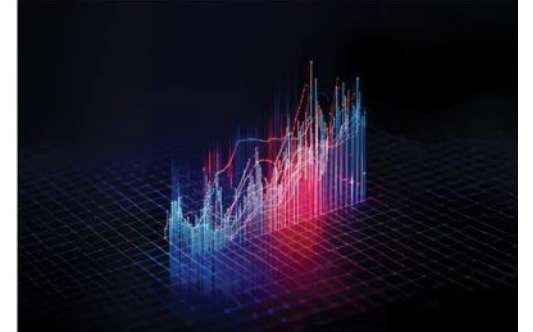
Life Sciences



Creative Industries



Financial Services





Defining ACT

“Advanced Connectivity Technologies (ACT) are emerging and advanced technologies that **enable the transmission of data via communications networks and network infrastructure in an increasingly digitised economy and society, connecting both people and things. These include technologies that make up **advanced wireless systems, such as 5G and the transition to 6G, non-terrestrial networks, and advanced optical networks**”**

2800

Firms in the UK undertaking ACT activity

£11.1
Billion

Global GVA from ACT



What are we trying to achieve?

*Our ambition by 2035 is for **more technologies developed in the UK** to be used in networks around the world, and to have **built a thriving UK ACT ecosystem of homegrown and global companies** that crowds in private sector investment.*

*We have also committed to **maximising the benefits of 5G and gigabit broadband** and made the UK a leader in developing ACT by leveraging areas of UK strengths.*

ACT R&D Programme

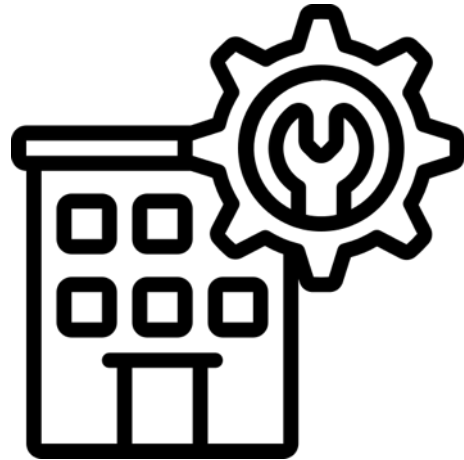
The programme will deploy a range of funding interventions to:

1. Support the UK's world-leading academic research base and keep the UK at the forefront of ACT research.
2. Provide early-stage, pre-commercial funding to help move ideas from research towards commercial viability.
3. Support challenge-focused solution development so Government funding tackles real-world needs, drawing on UK industry expertise and investment to develop ACT products and services.
4. Support the growth and scale-up of industrial solutions by helping UK SMEs attract private capital and expand the UK's global ACT footprint.

How?



R&D



**Labs and
Facilities**



Spectrum



International

Supporting the UK's World-Leading Academic Research Base

Future Connectivity Hubs

A UK coordinated effort to drive the national ecosystem from early-stage Future Connectivity research onto further translation.

The programme aims to:

- Advance cutting-edge technologies
- Strengthen commercialisation from academic excellence
- Leverage shared infrastructure to accelerate large scale experimentation
- Unify skills pipelines
- Expand UK industrial competitiveness
- Position the UK as a global leader in advanced connectivity technologies.

Expected (Invite Only) Call Launch: Q1 2026/27*

Optical Wireless Communications Test and Research Facility

A facility to accelerate the development, validation, and deployment of Optical Wireless Communications (OWC) technologies and their convergences that are a foundational enabler for both national security and all IS-8 priorities.

Supported by the Integrated Security Fund, the facility aims to enhance the maturity of testbed capabilities and strengthen the UK's internationally recognised strengths. It will enable breakthrough research, support technology maturation, and enhance sovereign resilience in key dual-use areas of the ACT programme, targeted on national security ACT issues.

Expected Open Call Launch: Q1 2026/27*

Providing early-stage, pre-commercial funding

Providing targeted support to commercialise research through:

ACT Proof of Concept Fund

A fund to accelerate early to mid-stage commercialisation of new or improved technologies, products, processes and services arising from EPS research. It enables researchers to apply existing research to real-world use cases through licensing, company creation, and other commercialisation pathways.

It provides support for translational and impact-focused activities that help bridge the divide between fundamental research and user adoption.

Expected launch: Q1 2026/27*



Academic Startup Accelerator Programme

A programme of support to provide academics with the expertise, knowledge and training needed to convert their research into technologies, products and services. Based on the successful Cyber ASAP Programme, now in its 10th year.

Expected launch: Q1 2026/27*

New Innovators

A competition designed to offer targeted support to enable ambitious UK registered micro and small businesses to develop affordable, adoptable and investable ACT Solutions.

Expected Launch Q2 2026/27*



(*Subject to ACT Programme Board Approval)

Support challenge-focused solution development

Contracts for Innovation (Formerly SBRI)

Contracts to develop near-term, testable solutions that advance the UK's Secure and Resilient & Sustainable Networks Grand Challenges.

Expected Launch: Q1 2026/27*

Collaborative R&D

R&D grants to accelerate the development, demonstration and commercialisation of next-generation communications technologies that strengthen UK security, resilience, sustainability and long-term competitiveness.

Expected Launch: Q1 2026/27*

(*Subject to ACT Programme Board Approval)

Supporting the growth and scale-up of industrial solutions

Investor Partnerships

Investor Partnerships will support UK based highly innovative, high potential companies to scale up and bridge the gap to commercialisation.




This programme will assist innovators with access to capital, paired with a derisked investment for the funding community.

Expected Launch: Q2 2026/27*

Innovate UK ACT R&D Calls - Timeline

Competition Name	TRL Stage	Project Length	FY26/27			
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Contracts for Innovation	4-7	12 months	🔒		>	>
Collaborative R&D	4-7	24 months	🔒		>	> >
Investor Partnerships	5-8	18 months		🔒		>
Academic Startup Accelerator Programme	2-4	11 months	🔒	>	>	>
New Innovators	2-4	6 months		🔒		>

Note: These timelines are indicative and subject to change and Programme Board approval

-  Competition opens
-  Expected start date
-  Competition underway

Live Opportunities

SNPN (Closes 01/04/26) – [SNPN 5G Assured Integration \(CR&D\) - Innovate UK Business Connect](#)

Coming Soon

Optical Wireless Communications Test and Research Facility

EPSRC Proof of Concept Fund

CR&D: Solution Development for Advanced Connectivity Technologies

Contracts for Innovation: Advanced Connectivity Technologies (ACT) – Call 1

Useful Links

[Innovation Funding Service \(Guidance\)](#)

[Innovate UK Applicant Guidance](#)

[UKRI Funding Service](#)

Contacts

EPSRC: future.communications@epsrc.ukri.org

Innovate UK: support@iuk.ukri.org

DSIT: act@dsit.gov.uk