SAIC Funding Call: August 2026
Application Guidance Notes

Collaborative Research and Innovation Projects for Scottish Aquaculture

Purpose of the Call

SAIC invites full application submissions for collaborative research, development and innovation projects that address priority challenges and opportunities within Scottish aquaculture. Projects should support the sustainable development, productivity, resilience and international competitiveness of the sector, and align with SAIC's strategic priorities – finfish health and welfare, shellfish, seaweed and other species, environmental sustainability, and sector and production capacity. Projects addressing climate resilience, net-zero transition, or enabling technologies may be eligible where there is a clear application to aquaculture and evidence of recognised need and sector demand. Please note that while aquaculture includes activities such as habitat restoration and conservation, SAIC's primary emphasis is on aquaculture for food production.

Indicative Timetable

Process stage	Key documents / notes
Call opens	w/c 24 August 2026
Call closes	1 October 2026, 23:59
Project award announcements – target date	w/c 7 December 2026
Project start/end dates	Start by 15 January 2027

Eligibility and Collaboration

Applications are invited from eligible legal entities with the appropriate scientific, technical, and/or research expertise relevant to the call topic.

Eligible applicants include universities, research institutes and public research bodies, not-for-profit organisations, and companies or other private sector organisations.

Projects must be led by Scottish organisations. Organisations based outside Scotland may participate as project partners but cannot act as the lead partner. Where non-Scottish partners are included, applicants must clearly demonstrate the specific expertise and experience they bring to the project.

Projects may be industry-led or academic-led. Collaboration is mandatory and proposals must involve two or more partners. There is no requirement for an Academic Partner, provided that the consortium can demonstrate access to appropriate technical, scientific or innovation capability.

It is a requirement of the funding application that all project partners are SAIC Consortium members – details must be logged in the application Appendix.

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

Projects must progress between TRL 4 and 7. Applicants should clearly demonstrate expected TRL progression and a credible pathway to adoption or impact within the sector.

Finance guidance of completion

Each application must include the completed **Excel spreadsheet (SAIC Funding Call Finance Form – August 2026 FV)** to support the financial ask of the project, without which the application will be ineligible for review. The following should act as guidance for completing the Funding Call Finance Form.

Each partner is asked to submit a record of proposed spend for their part of the project, breaking down against the eligible categories supplied in the table. Please use the appropriate sheet depending on what best describes you as a project partner.

NOTE: do not complete the table within the Summary and Guidance Sheet, this will populate from the other tabs. However please complete the Project Name etc.

Academic Partners who are based in Scottish research institutions should complete the Academic Partner Sheet, spreading their costs at 100% FEC (Full Economic Cost) across the financial years that cover the duration of the project (using the blue boxes only) from this the grant will automatically be calculated at 80% FEC. The 20% contribution made by the Academic Partners is not included as match funding, but will contribute to the final overall project cost. The remainder of the Academic Partner Sheet will populate using in-built formulae. If there is no Academic Partner involved in the project, please ignore this tab.

Scotland-based SME Partners who intend to claim grant funding from SAIC should complete the SME ONLY Partner Sheet, spreading their costs at 100% across the financial years that cover the duration of the project (using the blue boxes) from this the grant will automatically be calculated at the percentage entered (up to a maximum of 50%). The remainder of the SME ONLY Partner Sheet will populate using the in-built formulae. SME Partners should also specify the breakdown of their match-funding contributions, clarifying cash or in-kind.

Industry Partners should complete the Industry Partner Sheet, spreading their costs across the financial years that cover the duration of the project (using the blue boxes). The remainder of the Industry Partner Sheet will populate using the in-built formulae. Industry Partners should also breakdown their contributions, specifying cash or in-kind.

There is an expectation that the total grant funding provided by SAIC is matched by commercial funds (cash or in-kind) at a rate no less than 1:1.15 – the 20% contribution made by the Academic Partners is not included as match funding, but will contribute to the final overall project cost.

Please ensure that each partner is named within each table on each sheet, to make this clear to the assessment panel.

Please note that only Academic Partners and SME Partners who are Scotland-based are eligible to claim grant funding from SAIC, all other partners should complete a table in the Industry Partner sheet.

Please ask SAIC if you require more partner tables to be added to the sheets, or have any other queries on completing the Funding Call Finance Form via projects@saicinnovations.org.uk

Eligible Costs

Eligible costs will be assessed at the full application stage and must align with SAIC's agreed funding framework. Indicative eligible costs may include;

- Staff time,
- Equipment and materials,
- Sub-contracted expertise,
- Trials and validation activity,
- And knowledge exchange within the lifetime of the project.

SAIC grant funding is provided as a genuine grant and is outside the scope of VAT. Applicants should therefore not apply VAT to the grant funding requested from SAIC.

Applicants should ensure that VAT is treated appropriately in project budgets as follows:

- VAT may be included as an eligible project cost only where it is non-recoverable.
- Where a project partner is VAT-registered and able to recover VAT (in full or in part), any recoverable VAT must be excluded from project costs.

Payments are released quarterly in arrears, subject to satisfactory progress against agreed milestones and submission of a quarterly financial and technical report.

Intervention Levels and SAIC Contribution

Applicant type	Indicative maximum SAIC contribution
Universities, research institutes	80% FEC where applicable
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	Up to 50% of eligible project costs

Match Funding (Mandatory)

All projects must include match funding at a minimum ratio of 1:1.15. This means that for every £1 of SAIC funding requested, at least £1.15 must be provided from project partners.

Match funding may include cash and/or clearly defined and auditable in-kind contributions such as staff time, facilities, equipment, access to sites, materials or data. In-kind contributions must be directly attributable to project delivery.

Intellectual Property (IP)

Intellectual Property generated through SAIC-funded projects will be retained by the project partners. Consortia must have clear, fair and transparent IP arrangements covering access, exploitation and dissemination of results.

Freedom of Information Act 2000: Considerations

Publicly-funded bodies in the UK are generally subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and may receive requests for information they hold in connection with funded projects. Information provided by project partners to a public body may fall within the scope of an FOI request.

This does not mean that all information must be disclosed. The FOI Act contains a number of exemptions, including protections for trade secrets and information where disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice commercial interests. Any request would be considered by the public authority in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Assessment Focus

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Sector challenge and commercial need.
- Science innovation and technical approach.
- Methodology – deliverables, milestones etc.
- Knowledge dissemination plan.
- Economic output, outcomes, and impacts.
- Risk identification and management.
- Strategic alignment with SAIC priorities and sector needs.
- Strength and appropriateness of the collaboration.
- Value for money and justification of SAIC intervention.

Assessment Process

Full application will be reviewed by SAIC's independent Science Panel and SAIC. All applicants will receive written feedback following the assessment process.

Successful Applicants: External Communications

If successful, information provided in the application form (under section E1. Project Summary), will be used to create a project abstract for the SAIC website. Any abstract published will be agreed by all project partners prior to publication.