



Freight Innovation Fund: Venture Growth Programme

Delivered in partnership with:



Innovate
UK

Introduction

Freight Innovation Fund

- There is a **disconnect** between the freight and logistics sector and technology innovators:
 - Sector has **limited visibility of emerging solutions**
 - Innovators often **lack insight into the sector's operational needs**

Why does this matter to the DfT and UK Government?

- Government (and industry) have an **incomplete understanding** of how viable technologies can effectively address real-world freight and logistics challenges
- Opportunity to deliver a more **efficient, sustainable**, freight and logistics sector
- Supports UK Government priorities on **growth and carbon**

“ The Freight Innovation Fund supports and promotes the adoption of cutting-edge solutions in the freight and logistics sector.



Freight Innovation Fund

Funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) and delivered by Connected Places Catapult, the Freight Innovation Fund (FIF) is a multi-faceted programme, aimed at enabling and accelerating the adoption of innovative solutions into the freight and logistics sector. This is delivered through the following three strands of the programme: the Network, Accelerator, and Venture Growth, with Venture Growth being the **newest** addition to the programme as of 2026.

Network

Convening and engaging stakeholders in freight innovation (TRL1-9)

**450 members across
365 organisations**

Industry Board
Matchmaking
Insights Sharing
Mentorship

Accelerator

Accelerating technology in the freight and logistics market (TRL 5-7)

Cohorts of 10 innovators with 5 industry partners

Trial funding
Module-based coaching:

- Market research and validation,
- Early-stage investment support
- Marketing and communications

Venture Growth

Scaling up companies to be commercial and investable (TRL7+)

Cohorts of up to 10 enterprises

Industry & investor engagements
Bespoke, business-specific support:

- Product-market fit
- Infrastructure and scale
- Sales pipeline and marketing
- Investment pipeline

Venture Growth Programme

Venture Growth as Follow-on Support

Why are we creating a follow-on programme?

The Accelerator programme helps innovators demonstrate that their solutions can solve a **genuine freight and logistics challenge**. However, validation alone often does not guarantee commercial success.

Many innovators leave the Accelerator having:

- Proven technical feasibility
- Demonstrated customer interest
- Delivered pilots or trials
- Developed a stronger understanding of industry needs

Yet they still face a second set of challenges around growth and commercialisation, including:

- Translating market traction into repeatable revenue
- Stress-testing business models
- Identifying the right routes to market
- Building credible commercialisation and deployment plans
- Becoming investment-ready

Venture Growth aims to support innovators tackle their commercialisation and investment challenges

Eligibility & Suitability

Applicants must have the following:

- A registered UK company address.
- An innovative technology or solution at **Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 7 or above**. [We use Innovate UK's definitions of TRL.](#)
- Demonstrable alignment to one of the challenges being addressed by this programme.
- A willingness to travel on occasion to face-to-face meetings and events as required by the Pilot.
- A willingness and capacity to complete the 4-month programme of bespoke support.
- Be a micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (SME).
- Already operate in the freight and logistics sector
- Have operations in the UK.
- Be VAT registered

This programme is likely to be right for you if you...

- Have demonstrated the feasibility of your product in a real-world freight and logistics environment
- Have validated your product and are looking to commercialise it beyond proof of concept
- Have a strong proposition and are looking to strengthen investment readiness through commercial and financial development
- Have a commercial strategy and are seeking to further reduce commercial and investment risk
- Can demonstrate initial customer engagement, market validation or commercial traction
- Demonstrate leadership commitment, growth ambition, and the capacity to scale
- Demonstrate potential to achieve commercial or investment readiness within the programme



Benefit of Venture Growth Programme

Fully funded, bespoke support for successful innovators



Fully funded in-kind support



Bespoke support, tailored to your business needs



1-2-1 dedicated coaching



Investor Networking & showcasing events



Operator networking & showcasing events



Opportunities for publicity and PR

Venture Growth Programme Scope

Tailored support will identify & focus on improving on specific development areas, with a mix of 121 coaching sessions and workshops.

Broad support areas include:

- **Product-market fit:** Focusing on validating customer demand and refining your commercial opportunity.
- **Infrastructure & Scale:** Focusing on building your capabilities, processes and strategy needed to scale.
- **Sales pipeline & marketing:** Focusing on supporting the development of a repeatable route to market and growing your commercial traction.
- **Investment pipeline:** Focusing on financial and investment preparation, investment strategy, and connection with relevant investors.

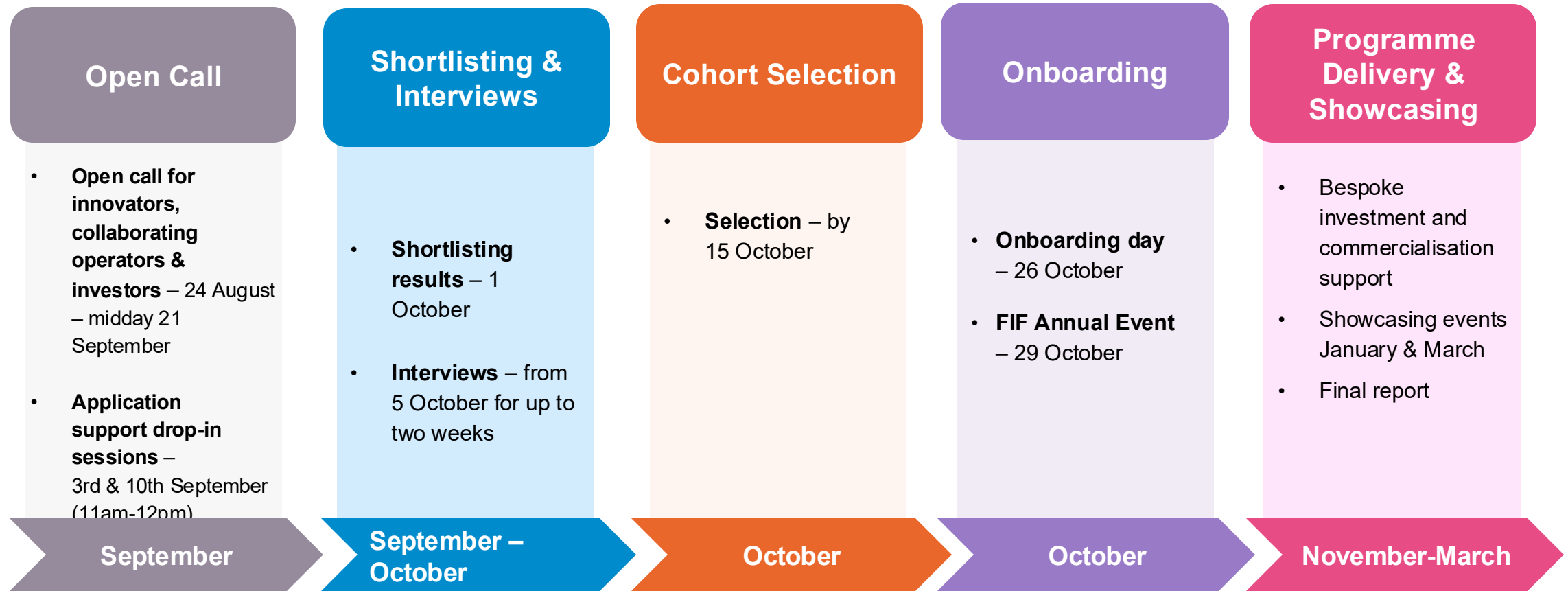
“This addition to the Freight Innovation Fund creates an end-to-end innovation pipeline, that moves beyond solution validation to providing the final stage of commercial and investment readiness that move innovation gains from incremental to transformational”

– Sameer Savani, Transport & Infrastructure Managing Director at Connected Places Catapult

Timelines



Venture Growth Key Dates



Challenge Areas



Challenge Areas

Candidates must demonstrate an alignment to one of the freight & logistics challenge areas listed to be eligible



Challenge 1 - Improving Multimodality

- Improving the movement of freight across ports, rail, road, maritime and logistics hubs through better coordination, visibility and interoperability. **Solutions must be intermodal.**



Challenge 3 - Next-generation Transport Management and Distribution

- Focuses on operational deployment and execution, improving how freight is transported, handled, stored and distributed through better use of vehicles, warehouses, equipment and workforce resources.



Challenge 2 - Digital Freight and Logistics Systems

- Focuses on operational infrastructure (data, AI and digital technologies) to improve visibility, planning, forecasting, and decision-making across freight and logistic operations.



Challenge 4 - Energy and Infrastructure

- Supporting the transition to a lower-carbon and more resilient freight system through smarter energy, charging and infrastructure solutions

Challenge Focus 1: Improving intermodality

Efficient and Connected Transport Systems:

Improving the movement of freight across ports, rail, road, maritime and logistics hubs through better coordination, visibility and interoperability.

The UK's freight system remains highly fragmented, creating inefficiencies as goods move between transport modes, logistics facilities and supply chain partners. Around 30% of HGV kilometres are run empty, highlighting significant unused capacity and inefficiencies in how freight flows are coordinated across the wider transport network. At the same time, the UK has set an ambition to grow rail freight by at least 75% by 2050, with Network Rail estimating that much of this growth can be accommodated through better use of existing infrastructure and capacity rather than major new construction. Meanwhile, UK ports

handle around 95% of the country's international trade by volume, placing increasing pressure on port infrastructure, landside operations and onward distribution networks. Together, these challenges highlight the need for more connected and integrated freight networks that make better use of existing capacity, improve the movement of goods between transport modes, and support more efficient, resilient and sustainable supply chains. This challenge seeks solutions that improve coordination, visibility and interoperability across road, rail, maritime, air and logistics networks.

Example use cases:

- Decision support tools that can identify multimodal alternatives for moving freight as a way of improving multimodality (i.e. rail opportunities, carbon-optimised routes, cost-carbon trade offs etc.)
- Intermodal planning tools that handles long-haul, containerised freight and manages the schedules of vehicles/vessels
- Port and terminal scheduling systems that coordinate the arrival, loading, and unloading of ships at marine terminals
- Multi-modal freight exchange platforms that focus on transactional matching of available cargo to available vehicle
- Digital marketplace for freight capacity sharing such as warehouse space or fleet assets
- Freight data-sharing platforms that enable ports, terminals, hauliers and other operators to exchange information and improve multimodal freight movements

Challenge Focus 2: Digital Freight and Logistics Systems

Better Information and Optimised Decisions:

Focuses on operational infrastructure (data, AI and digital technologies) to improve visibility, planning, forecasting, and decision-making across freight and logistic operations.

Freight and logistics operators continue to face challenges caused by fragmented data, disconnected systems and limited visibility across increasingly complex supply chains. Industry research suggests organisations can lose significant operational efficiency due to poor data quality, manual processes and disconnected information flows, while studies indicate that only a small proportion of organisations have end-to-end visibility across their supply chains. Operators similarly identify access to reliable operational data and interoperability between systems as key barriers to improving performance

and adopting advanced technologies such as AI and automation. As freight networks become more interconnected, the ability to generate timely insights and support better operational decisions is becoming increasingly critical to competitiveness and resilience. This challenge seeks solutions that improve visibility, planning, forecasting and decision-making across freight and logistics operations through technologies including, but not limited to, AI, digital twins, data-sharing platforms, real-time monitoring and operational intelligence tools.

Example use cases:

- System integration or dynamic technologies to connect siloed freight and logistics systems
- Freight coordination platforms that connect data across operators to predict disruption impacts and support real-time decision-making
- Operational dashboards and analytics tools to provide real-time performance insights
- Fleet analytics software that combines GPS telematics, fuel usage, and driver safety and behaviour data
- Digital twins that model freight networks, terminals, warehouses and logistics operations

Challenge Focus 3: Next-generation Transport Management and Distribution

Integrated Operations and Streamlined Performance:

Focuses on operational deployment and execution, improving how freight is transported, handled, stored and distributed through better use of vehicles, warehouses, equipment and workforce resources.

Freight and logistics operators face increasing pressure to improve productivity, reduce costs and maintain service levels across increasingly complex supply chains. The UK freight network moves around 206 billion tonne-kilometres of domestic freight each year, placing growing emphasis on operational efficiency, resilience and the effective use of assets and resources. Operators consistently highlight fleet utilisation, warehouse productivity, asset management and operational resilience as key challenges, reflecting the need to move

and distribute more goods through existing networks, facilities and assets without increasing cost or complexity. As freight volumes grow and customer expectations continue to rise, there is increasing demand for solutions that help operators deliver more efficient, reliable and scalable transport and distribution operations. This challenge seeks solutions that improve how goods are transported, handled, stored and distributed through more efficient use of vehicles, warehouses, equipment and workforce resources.

Example use cases:

- Load condition monitoring and management infrastructure to reduce damage to temperature-sensitive or high-value freight
- Warehouse automation technologies and robotics that improve productivity and throughput
- Yard management ecosystems to reduce congestion at depots and logistics facilities
- Route optimisation ecosystems to reduce fuel consumption, mileage, and delays

Challenge Focus 4:

Energy and Infrastructure

Efficient Energy and Infrastructure:

Supporting the transition to a lower-carbon and more resilient freight & logistics systems through smarter energy, charging and infrastructure solutions.

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Example use cases:

- Offshore power and port electrification solutions
- Renewable energy technologies to support on-site generation at depots, terminals and logistics facilities
- Smart charging technologies that optimise electric freight vehicle charging based on capacity, demand and cost signals
- Infrastructure capacity planning tools that model future energy demand from freight electrification
- Energy resilience modelling platforms that assess vulnerabilities and improve the reliability of freight infrastructure
- Microgrid and energy storage solutions that improve resilience at depots, terminals and logistics hubs

