

Where SafePlate can apply, and why we qualify

Every open or upcoming UK grant that fits SafePlate today, what makes us eligible, what could block us, and the dates. Most of these are only reachable if we stop describing ourselves as a restaurant tool and start describing what we are: a safety layer that sits between any kitchen and the people it feeds.

The short answer

1. **Main bet: BridgeAI Deployment Catalyst (closes 8 Dec).** We qualify as the lead today. The blocker is the deployer partner: restaurants are not an eligible sector, but a hospital, care group or defence caterer is. Start partner outreach this week.
 2. **Rolling, big ticket: EIC Accelerator (EU, up to €2.5m grant).** UK companies are eligible for the grant. Our stage (a working product tested in simulated service, ready for its first live kitchen) is eligible, but without a live customer we would be weaker. Best submitted after a first deployment.
 3. **Optional research bets (11 and 18 Nov):** two Innovate UK AI research calls fit only if we pitch a genuinely new technique, such as Mia's engine-verified safety layer. Long odds; one person, two weeks.
 4. **Free money we should claim regardless:** R&D tax relief on this year's engineering, and SEIS/EIS advance assurance before the next raise.

Dates

Days left as of 13 Oct 2026.

Fri 16 Oct	3 days	Briefing, Efficient, Structured & Controllable AI (11:00, online)
Wed 21 Oct	8 days	BridgeAI Deployment Catalyst opens (all three strands)
Mon 26 Oct	13 days	BridgeAI collaboration event: where to meet a deployer partner (register)
Tue 27 Oct	14 days	BridgeAI online briefing (11:00)
Wed 11 Nov	29 days	Frontier AI: SME Champions, Phase 1 closes (11:00)
Wed 18 Nov	36 days	Efficient, Structured & Controllable AI closes (11:00)

Tue 24 Nov	42 days	Last sensible day to email BridgeAI@iuk.ukri.org with scope questions (10 working days before close)
Tue 1 Dec	49 days	UK-Germany bilateral R&D closes (needs a German SME partner)
Tue 8 Dec	56 days	BridgeAI Deployment Catalyst closes (11:00)
Wed 16 Dec	64 days	UK-Singapore collaborative R&D closes (needs a Singapore business partner)
Wed 20 Jan	99 days	Eureka Globalstars Japan closes (needs a Japanese SME partner)
Mon 1 Feb	111 days	BridgeAI results
Wed 3 Feb	113 days	EIC Accelerator first full-proposal cut-off of 2027 (provisional; the short proposal must be approved first)
Thu 1 Apr	170 days	Latest start date for BridgeAI and the two AI research projects

Opportunities

// apply

BridgeAI Deployment Catalyst: AI for Operational Systems

Innovate UK · £100k-£200k grant per project · 3-5 months · £5m pot · invitation to Phase 2 (up to £1m) and Phase 3 (up to £2m)

[Strong fit]

[Closes 8 Dec · 56d]

// why we qualify	// the catch	// next step
- UK-registered SME with a working AI/ML product: allergen detection model (99.77% recall), Mia, till and kitchen display. - Validated in simulated service (369,262 requests across ten simulated restaurants), which is TRL 5. Not in any live kitchen yet, so it is clearly "not in widespread deployment". - This grant would fund exactly the step we are missing: the first real deployment. - The strand is "AI that performs, controls or coordinates operational activity". SafePlate physically stops an	- The deployer must be in health, financial services, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, defence, professional & business services or creative industries. Restaurants are not eligible. - The AI must be central. Lead with the model and Mia doing the work; the rules engine is the safety rail. - We can lead only one application across all three BridgeAI strands.	- Approach an NHS trust or hospital catering team: allergen errors in patient meals are a patient-safety problem, so it is core to their operations. - Ask BridgeAI@iuk.ukri.org to confirm hospital catering counts as "health and life sciences". - Attend the 26 Oct collaboration event.

unsafe order. That is
the definition.

→ [Competition page ↗](#)

BridgeAI Deployment Catalyst: AI for Assurance and Compliance

Innovate UK · same rules and money as above · the alternative strand, not an extra one

[Possible]

[Closes 8 Dec · 56d]

// why we qualify	// the catch	// next step
- "AI that monitors, verifies or evidences compliance": Mia's spoken food-safety diary, the compliance PDF, the override audit trail and near-miss log.	- Choosing the wrong strand makes the application ineligible, and it cannot be moved. We pick one: Operational (the refusal) or Compliance (the evidence).	- Put both framings to Innovate UK in the same email and go with their steer.

→ [Competition page ↗](#)

EIC Accelerator

European Innovation Council · grant up to €2.5m (UK companies get the grant, not the equity part) · short proposal any time, then full-proposal cut-offs

[Possible]

[Cut-off ~3 Feb · 113d]

// why we qualify	// the catch	// next step
- Built for a working product heading to market (TRL 5-8) with a European-scale story: the 14 EU allergens are one regulation across the continent.	- Competitive: about 13% of full applications reached interview in one recent round.	- Write the short proposal in November so it is approved in time for the first 2027 cut-off (allow about 10 weeks).
- The EIC expects traction evidence; a live deployment first	- The 2027 cut-off dates are not official yet.	

(BridgeAI) makes this much stronger.

- No sector restriction like BridgeAI's.
- [Programme overview ↗](#)

// stretch: research bets

Frontier AI: SME Champions, Phase 1

Innovate UK · £150k-£250k project costs, up to 70% funded · 1-3 months · single SME · route to Phase 2 (up to £1m)

[Stretch]

[Closes 11 Nov · 29d]

// why we could qualify

- Theme 4, "AI safety and assurance": runtime control of AI agents and runtime verification. Mia already forces a voice agent's safety answers through a deterministic engine. Generalising that into a new runtime-control method is in scope.

→ [Competition page ↗](#)

// the catch

- Must start at TRL 1-3: new research, not our product.
- Needs a named baseline and numeric targets.
- The page itself estimates about a 2% success rate.

// next step

- Only if someone can own a two-week write-up without slowing the main BridgeAI application.

Efficient, Structured and Controllable AI Systems

Innovate UK · £50k-£150k project costs, up to 70% funded · 1-3 months · single SME

[Stretch]

[Closes 18 Nov · 36d]

// why we could qualify

- "Causal and intervention-grounded models": a model of how a supplier's

// the catch

- TRL 1-3 research with ablations and a falsifiable hypothesis.

// next step

- Pick at most one of the two research calls.
- The briefing on 16 Oct will show whether this

recipe change ripples through ingredients, dishes and seats is a causal problem we have real data for (17,067 ingredients).

- Prompt engineering and agent orchestration are excluded.

framing lands.

→ [Competition page ↗](#)

// only with an overseas partner

International bilaterals: Germany, Singapore, Japan

Innovate UK with partner agencies · UK side up to £2.4m / £3m / £2m pots

[Possible]

[First closes 1 Dec · 49d]

// why we could qualify	// the catch	// next step
- Germany runs on the same EU allergen rules.	- Each needs a separate, unconnected business in that country as a partner.	- Pursue only if a partner already exists.
- Singapore is a dense food-service market.	- Germany: a German SME applying under its ZIM scheme.	- Japan (20 Jan) leaves the most time.
- Japan has its own mandatory allergen list, a natural test of Passport travelling between countries.	- Japan: a Japanese SME.	

→ [All competitions ↗](#)

// watch

Knowledge Transfer Partnership, SMART: SCOTLAND, SBRI Healthcare, FSA

Calls that fit but are not open to us right now

[Watch]

// what they are	// why not yet	// next step
- KTP: a university embeds a graduate in our team to work on the allergen model. The current round	- SBRI Healthcare: no catering or allergy challenge is open.	- Line up a university partner for the next KTP round.

closes 14 Oct, too soon.	- FSA: its innovation programme ended in May 2026 and it is not funding new projects.	- Ask the FSA for a letter of support rather than money.
- SMART: SCOTLAND: a replacement fund is expected late autumn, if we have a Scottish base.		

### Claim regardless: R&D tax relief and SEIS/EIS			[Do now]
HMRC · not competitive, no deadline pressure			

// why we qualify	// the catch	// next step	
- The engine, Mia and the allergen model are qualifying R&D.	- Claims must follow the accounting year and current HMRC rules.	- Brief the accountant this month.	
- Loss-making, R&D-heavy SMEs can get a cash credit.	- Have an accountant confirm the scheme and rate.	- Apply for SEIS/EIS advance assurance before the next raise.	

Beyond restaurants

The same engine refuses an unsafe meal wherever food is served to someone with a declared allergy. Each row below is a market where SafePlate works as it is today. It is also a deployer type that opens funding a restaurant cannot.

where	who serves the food	safeplate surfaces	eligible bridgeai deployer?
Hospitals	NHS trusts, hospital catering teams	Engine on patient meal orders; Passport attached to the patient; kitchen display on the ward kitchen	Yes , health
Care homes	Care groups (medium or large)	Resident allergy profiles; Mia for kitchen checks; owner approvals	Likely ; confirm health covers social care
Defence	Military dining facilities and their contractors	Engine and kitchen display at scale; full audit trail	Yes , defence
Workplaces and events	Contract caterers and facilities firms	Till plus Passport for staff; estate-wide owner view	Possible , as business services

where	who serves the food	safeplate surfaces	eligible bridgeai deployer?
Food production	Ready-meal and dark-kitchen manufacturers	Ingredient database and recipe-change tracking; label checks	Possible , as advanced manufacturing
Insurance	Insurers of hospitality venues	Near-miss and override data as a risk signal; cheaper cover for SafePlate venues	Yes , financial services
Travel	Airlines, rail, cruise caterers	Passport that follows the traveller; engine at the galley	No; grants via other routes
Universities	Campus catering	Student Passports across every outlet on campus	No; good KTP partner
Everyone else	POS vendors, menu apps, delivery platforms	The engine and ingredient data as an API	No; this is the platform business

Rules that decide what we can do at the same time

One BridgeAI lead

SafePlate can lead one BridgeAI application, across all three strands. A deployer can join up to three, each for a different use case.

One application per research call

Frontier AI and Controllable AI each allow one application per SME. They are separate competitions, but writing both at once is not realistic.

No subcontractors

All three Innovate UK calls ban subcontractors. Work has to be done by consortium members or our own team.

Start dates line up

All three would start by 1 April 2027. If more than one is won, the team has to deliver them in parallel.

Sources

- Innovation Funding Service: all competitions
- BridgeAI: AI for Operational Systems

- BridgeAI: AI for Assurance and Compliance
- Frontier AI: SME Champions, Phase 1
- Efficient, Structured and Controllable AI Systems
- Digital Catapult: BridgeAI programme
- Deloitte: EIC Accelerator 2027 call and EIC Accelerator overview
- FSA 2026/27 Annual Plan and Budget
- Smart grants status and alternatives
- SMART: SCOTLAND
- SBRI Healthcare

Checked against the official competition pages on 13 Oct 2026. Rules change between rounds, so confirm on the competition page before you write.