

SAIC Expression of Interest (EOI) Call: May 2026

Collaborative Research and Innovation Projects for Scottish Aquaculture

Purpose of the Call

SAIC invites Expressions of Interest (EOIs) 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, sector and production capacity, climate resilience and net-zero transition, and the enabling technologies. While aquaculture includes activities such as habitat restoration and conservation, SAIC's primary emphasis is on food production.

The EOI stage is intended to build a high-quality pipeline of projects, confirm eligibility and collaboration, and identify proposals to be invited to submit a full application. Submission of an EOI does not guarantee funding.

Indicative Timetable

Stage	Timing
EOI opens	22 May 2026
EOI closes	26 June 2026, (23:59)
EOI assessment and feedback	July–August 2026
Full application call launches	Post-summer 2026 (target September 2026)
Project awards	From end of 2026

EOI Format

The EOI should be short and proportionate and clearly describe the challenge being addressed, the proposed innovation, the collaborative approach, anticipated outputs and impacts, and the rationale for SAIC support.

Eligibility and Collaboration

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.

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

Projects must start at [TRL 4 or above](#). Applicants should clearly demonstrate expected TRL progression and a credible pathway to adoption or impact within the sector.

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,
- Subcontracted expertise,
- Trials and validation activity,
- And dissemination and knowledge exchange.

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 approval of a claim with supporting evidence of eligible costs.

Intervention Levels and SAIC Contribution

SAIC funding is intended to address innovation risk and market failure and will be provided at intervention levels proportionate to project risk, complexity and potential impact. SAIC funding should complement, not replace, private investment.

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.

Assessment Focus (EOI Stage)

EOIs will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Strategic alignment with SAIC priorities and sector needs.
- Strength and appropriateness of the collaboration.
- Credibility and innovativeness of the proposed approach, including TRL progression.
- Value for money and justification of SAIC intervention.
- Clarity of anticipated outputs, outcomes and sector impact.

Assessment Process

EOIs will be reviewed by SAIC staff and SAIC's independent Science Panel. All applicants will receive written feedback. Invitations to submit full applications will be issued following the EOI assessment process.