Results of Competition: UKRI Ideas to Address COVID-19: Innovate UK Article 25 Dec 2020

Competition Code: 2009_UKRI_IDEAS_COVID19_OPEN_ART25

Total available funding is £5m for projects below £800k

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Participant organisation names	Project title	Proposed project costs	Proposed project grant
WIZDISH LIMITED	The Road to Recovery: Re-energising people 65+ in care homes, deconditioned through Covid isolation, using the medium of virtual reality and social walks.	£276,316	£193,421
Oxfordshire County Council		£39,077	£39,077

Note: you can see all Innovate UK-funded projects here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/innovate-uk-funded-projects
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Project description - provided by applicants
This project provides social VR (Virtual Reality) walks for people 65+ in Care Homes whose choices and opportunities are often limited. The winter months for people 65+ leads to deconditioning in muscle strength and feelings of poor wellbeing through decreased exercise and social contact. These effects have been exacerbated by COVID19 isolation and shielding, extending last winter through summer and winter 2020\. Care Home and Social Service carers are too few and the need too large. There is no possibility of social VR walks with current VR hardware which is limited to room-scale and / or attended immersion. To allow safe, unlimited movement in VR, Wizdish has patented a VR treadmill (the ROVR) clinically assessed to use similar effort and muscle groups to walking. This treadmill teamed with a wireless VR headset comprises a 'ROVR System'. Social VR walks will be created of real-places, familiar and unfamiliar such as museums, art galleries and local tourist destinations. Care Homes, in Cornwall and Oxfordshire will have ROVR Systems installed allowing local pairs within a residence to explore places together. During the project these Care Homes will be linked, enabling geographically distanced groups to explore and socialise together. Social VR walks provide opportunity and choice for people with shared interests to meet, socialise and explore real-places captured as VR models, providing memories of shared experiences and feelings of connectedness. Care Home pilot groups will verify Wizdish ROVR VR treadmills paired with wireless VR headsets and social VR content is a complete self-motivated social and physical exercise solution. The project will initially focus on people able to stand unaided or with a stick. The project seeks to overcome technology barriers and discover psychological drivers for self-motivated and self-actuated social VR walks. This project will measure clinical changes in physical and mental health and self-reported wellbeing and connectedness. Independent clinical assessments and evaluation will be carried out by the University of Oxford and the EPIC Project at the University of Plymouth. The project provides pilot data to gain institutional funding support for Wizdish to offer ROVR Systems as a low cost monthly subscription model (akin mobile phones).

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Participant organisation names	Project title	Proposed project costs	Proposed project grant
OpenBank Innovation Limited	A Revolutionary Fintech Predicted to Dramatically Reduce the Cost of Automated Payments for Businesses and Customers in a Post-COVID 19 World	£479,902	£335,931

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Project description - provided by applicants
In light of the COVID-19 pandemic's social distancing measures, digital payment methods have drastically increased in use. However, the technology has not adapted to the needs of customers, particularly private businesses. OpenBank Innovation Limited (OBI) is developing its project, which will provide a centralised source for various payment processing services and automated reconciliation processes. The OBI platform will help businesses manage their finances better and at less cost, and free up time for finance officers/accountants. A UK-based fintech SME, OBI is forecasting a year-5 post-project revenue of £30M.

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Participant organisation names	Project title	Proposed project costs	Proposed project grant
CUBIC LEASE LIMITED	A Fintech SME Disrupting Consumer Mortgage Financing Through an AI Application That Reduces Application Process Time by Up to 90%	£378,017	£264,612

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Project description - provided by applicants
CubicLease is a rapidly growing UK fintech SME meeting a significant unmet global COVID-19-associated need with its AI application that securely assesses ID&V/affordability and shares the results with all parties involved. The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically slowed the process of property transactions, and conducting business face-to-face is no longer the preferred method, making a contactless way to share information and prevent the spread of COVID-19 more crucial than ever. CubicLease's solution enables the property industry to perform transactions quickly and safely during COVID-19 because it is automated and document-free. Months 3-6 will focus on R&D. In month 12, from feasibility studies conducted in September 2020, CubicLease will have access to 3,000+ mortgage brokers who will be targeted as early adopters at networking events. Month 12-18, CubicLease will save each mortgage broker 36 hours a month equivalent to £748 and will also reduce the initial property purchase steps to 5 minutes.

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Participant organisation names	Project title	Proposed project costs	Proposed project grant
NOAH MEDIA LTD	An Innovative Video Production Application Featuring Image Recognition, Sentiment Analysis and Real-time Guidance Supporting Users in Making Professional Video While Saving Time and Money	£265,881	£186,117

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Project description - provided by applicants
Noah Media Ltd (Noah) is bringing an AI application to the market that will make video creation for small businesses and self-employed professionals' scalable and cost effective. With the COVID pandemic and the rise of the "passion economy", millions of users around the world are creating a demand for innovation in video content creation. Noah's application uses machine learning to provide user-tailored real-time guidance for the assembly of videos. This will result in significant time and money savings businesses and professionals compared to having to invest resources in hiring outside services. A UK-based rapidly growing SME, Noah is forecasting year-5 post-project revenues of £61M and has a core team of Stephanie Demetriou, Philip Werner and Oleg Lenive**.** The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need to offer video services- which is time intensive and expensive. Noah provides individuals and small businesses the tools and technology to make video in a scalable and cost effective way- allowing them to be compete with larger businesses with big budgets.

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FLAIRCUBE LTD	An Innovative and Revolutionary SME Machine-Learning AI-Powered Digital Stage, Predicted to Save 60+ Hours Per Role Cast	£396,421	£277,495

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Project description - provided by applicants
Flaircube Ltd (Flairbox), with a core team of Robert Eades, Elliot Janks and Peter Hickling, is revolutionising opportunities for performing arts professionals to connect and work together remotely. Flairbox's platform combines video sharing with machine learning to allow actors to easily upload videos that casting directors can efficiently sort, saving 60 hours per role cast. This solution will help the industry recover and retool following COVID-19 closures and will lead the way for equitable casting practices. Months 3 & 6, still in R & D whilst providing a digital stage to as many actors as possible, with a target of 5,000 by month 6\. Giving those actors a chance to return to their profession with somewhere to perform and be discovered for their work. By month 12, Flairbox will be utilising collected data in order to power their first iteration of a machine learning AI ranking system that breaks down barriers to entry for up to 7,500 actors and saves up to 60 hours per casting for casting directors. By month 18, Flairbox will have a commercially viable, machine learning AI powered ranking system available to every UK casting director and actor, with 12000 actors already using the platform to perform and find work. This technology will save more than 60 hours per casting, equating to more than £2,400 saved for producers for every role (£40/hr of casting director's time), whilst simultaneously removing current discrimination between actors based on: education, experience, location and socioeconomic background.

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Participant organisation names	Project title	Proposed project costs	Proposed project grant
MONTAGUE SYKES LIMITED	An intelligence system that identifies hidden COVID-19 fraud against Government Departments, Banking, Insurance and Organisations	£170,397	£119,278

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Project description - provided by applicants
COVID-19 has caused a surge in fraud by organised crime groups using multiple or stolen identities. Estimates for pandemic fraud against the UK Government include £3.5bn against the Furlough Scheme (BBC, 2020) and perhaps 26bn of fraud relating to the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (NAO, 2020). An 140% rise in bogus COVID related claims against airlines and hotels claiming negligence in applying the Government guidelines has been identified (Travolution, 2020). Travel related fraudulent COVID-19 claims look set to exceed £365 million, the total cost of claims to the industry in 2017/18 (ABI, 2020). Currently, there is no system that permits record sharing, making it virtually impossible for practitioners to identify multiple and fraudulent claims. Montague Sykes Limited (Montague) is a UK SME specialising in system development that aims to solve this significant, unmet global need. It will use AI to predict fraud and a new claims module to manage illness related fraud that could significantly reduce repeat and hidden fraud against organisations, enhance police capability and generate a year-5 post-project revenue of £5M. Project impacts: 3- 6 months - ongoing user acceptance trials/ feedback 12 months - crime reduction = money and timed saved by users 18 months - resulting savings will strengthen thin industry margins saving jobs saved and new jobs created. Montague will require additional staff to service this market.

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Participant organisation names	Project title	Proposed project costs	Proposed project grant
CLOUDIQ LIMITED	A novel ML Marketing Platform to help SME's benefit from Covid-19 impacted eCommerce.	£995,905	£637,379

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Project description - provided by applicants
The main theme of our project is to improve business and industry efficiency for eCommerce. Covid-19 has dramatically accelerated eCommerce growth by 5 years within 3 months. Our project relates to research into the next generation of AI to help retailers. Geoffrey Hinton, the godfather of deep learning in AI wrote 'Very advanced intelligence is going to involve making communities of intelligent systems because a community can see much more data than an individual system'. The most successful online retailers, like Amazon, Boohoo and Asos all use AI to power growth that is 30% faster than the average but AI is still hard to access and deploy for the vast majority of online retailers. Cloud.IQ want to help all online retailers access cutting edge AI building on our existing conversion rate optimisation solutions, which is currently used by 400 live merchants worldwide. We aim to make the first comprehensive AI platform for eCommerce accessible for small to mid-sized retailers. Cloud.IQ already has the data set, AI engineers and a unique plan to deliver an AI solution for E-commerce which will work out of the box for any online retailer. We have validated our proposal with notable AI practitioners and academics, who confirm that this concept is the next evolution in AI.

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STEP EXCHANGE LIMITED	Financing that enables the post Covid workforce to retrain for new careers	£492,501	£344,751

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Project description - provided by applicants
StepEx is a UK-based SME specialising in student financial services. The core team consists of Daniel George, Henry George, Ariane Bouche and Nigel Glaister, whose skills and experience have enabled them to design a service that has far-reaching benefits for the UK economy and education sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on the global economy, with unemployment hitting record levels. The UK has also seen a drop in higher education enrolment rates, which has only exacerbated the problem. Unfortunately access to higher education is often only possible for the wealthy. StepEx is offering regulated outcome-based consumer credit that will ensure people from a low socio--economic background can obtain qualifications, which, in turn, will improve the current skill shortage. StepEx proposes a year-5 post-project revenue of £40m+.

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GLYCONICS LIMITED	CORMIR: Cost-effective Cloud-based Portable Mid-InfraRed Very Rapid Screening for COVID-19 using nasopharyngeal swabs.	£375,198	£262,639

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Project description - provided by applicants
The development of a Cloud-based real-time screening capability for the presence of the COVID-19 virus in nasopharyngeal swabs using Mid-InfraRed spectroscopy. A system designed around a high resolution fully portable device with internet connectivity.

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THE SUP GROUP LTD	An Innovative Gift Card Infrastructure with Blockchain Technology to Significantly Lower Setup and Security Costs for SMEs, Reducing Fraud, and Costs.	£474,545	£332,182

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Project description - provided by applicants
Gift card fraud is growing at an alarming rate. The lack of standardisation and uniformity in gift card formats mean that innovation of gift card reward programmes is stifled by an insecure and devalued marketplace. Often, it is difficult to trace the authenticity of gift cards because current systems are too expensive and insecure. The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a move from conventional gift card programmes to digital infrastructure, and there is now a dire need for a system that can support this digitisation without compromising the security and value of gift cards. The Sup Group Ltd ('Sup.) aims to create a blockchain-driven system that revolutionises the value chain of gift cards while increasing consumer business's revenues by more than 15%.

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INSURESTREET LIMITED	Renter-focused Open Banking Risk-profiling Model Using Big Data and Machine Learning, improving Credit Scores and a 10–20% Reduction in the Poverty Premium	£466,028	£326,220

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Project description - provided by applicants
InsureStreet Limited (Canopy), with a core team of Tahir Farooqui, Matt Hobbs, Jon Holloway and Lee Power, is a UK fintech SME revolutionising risk assessment modelling for the rental industry. Through the expansion of an open banking-based risk-profiling model, Canopy will allow renters, letting agents and financial institutions to fairly and accurately predict affordability and risk levels, simplifying the process and increasing financial stability for those most vulnerable. During months 1--3, Canopy's proprietary data-driven risk rating model powered by open banking data will be built. At month 3, the beta product will be launched and immediately start ensuring that there are increased tenancies for renters impacted by COVID-19\. This will ultimately reduce homelessness and welfare dependency. During months 3--9, the beta product will be iterated on during the remainder of the project. At month 6, Renters will achieve greater visibility to the financial services sector and as such, improved access to financial products that fit into stretched budgets. This will lead to lower rent arrears in the private sector and less pressure on social housing supply. By month 12 and 18, the project will have delivered its proposition. The impact will be improved accessibility to housing and a reduction to the poverty premium.

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VECTOR AI LTD	Next-Generation Algorithm Training Research to Expedite AI Adoption and Accelerate Pandemic Resilience in Trade	£926,966	£583,989

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Project description - provided by applicants
Since medieval times, freight forwarders have organized transportation on behalf of a) shippers, by air, ocean or land, and b) carriers, to get physical goods from A to B. The traditional labour-intensive paper driven approaches result in long turn-around times, little formal knowledge capture and high operational risk. CargoLogik acknowledges the "current processes are an immense time and overhead killer... still largely manual ...which result in lost time for freight forwarders and a clunky, poor customer experience." The World Economic Forum (WEF) highlighted that COVID-19 exposed these systemic weaknesses in Logistics' physical and manual data-processing operations, primarily email and trade-document driven workflows. The pandemic compounds existing inefficiencies and lack of scrutiny, costing Fortune 500 companies $81 billion of unnecessary supply chain costs each year (JPMorgan 2017 Trade Outlook). Whilst the WEF recommendation of digitisation innovations offer remedies to improve desperately needed business resiliency, there are challenges to effective adoption. The Logistics industry has been notably slow to adopt AI, only 12% of organisations currently leverage AI (MHI Industry report, 2020). One major reason for the lack of AI adoption is that the Logistics sector has ever-changing, non-standard and complex information, which poses massive algorithm scalability challenges. This project aims to address AI accessibility and adoption by developing a no-code, end-to-end automated algorithm-training pipeline. The tool will be in-built into our existing logistics' machine learning operations workflow platform and the pipeline will operate in the background, automatically re-training our data-extraction algorithms to customers' evolving email and document content, thus encouraging rapid adoption via scaling ease and efficiency.

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APIS ASSAY TECHNOLOGIES LTD.	Specificity enhancing reagent for robust SARS-CoV-2 serology testing	£423,227	£253,936

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Project description - provided by applicants
As part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, measuring the presence of an immune response to SARS-CoV-2 will be widely used to determine whether individuals have acquired immunity. Antibodies bind to specific sites on viral proteins. Measuring the presence of antibodies that can bind SARS-CoV-2 proteins in the plasma and serum can provide information about whether an individual is immune. This is a critical testing approach for monitoring the effectiveness of vaccines during clinical trials and after launch. The challenge is that common coronaviruses that cause the common cold are widespread in the population and have similar viral protein structures to SARS-CoV-2\. This means that for some individuals, when they are tested for immunity, their existing antibodies against common coronavirus proteins may bind SARS-CoV-2 proteins, generating a measurable signal and an incorrect result. This individual will be told that they have immunity against SARS-CoV-2 when they are not immune and may expose themselves to a higher risk in their daily activities. Ultimately, this will lead to a higher rate of avoidable infections and associated hospitalisations, with wider economic and social impacts. Apis Assay Technologies Ltd. aims to develop a novel, innovative reagent to block common coronavirus antibodies from binding SARS-CoV-2 viral protein. This means that any measurable signal generated from antibodies binding SARS-CoV-2 proteins will be due to the presence of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies, therefore drastically reducing the likelihood of an incorrect result. This innovative reagent has potential to address a large global vaccine monitoring market with high return on investment. Apis Assay Technologies Ltd. plans two commercial product launches - **1)** a stand-alone reagent that can be used to adapt and improve performance of any compatible 3rd party immunity test; **2)** a highly competitive immunity test with the reagent integrated. For maximum penetration of the market, Apis Assay Technologies Ltd. strives to fast-track product development to facilitate early access to these products.