



News and Events #21, September 2026

Welcome to our Space sector news, events and funding opportunities update.

1. News

a. **£13m Boost for Next-Generation UK Satellite Communications**

The UK Space Agency has announced £13 million of investment across 16 projects developing the next generation of satellite communications technologies. Delivered through ESA's **Advanced Research in Telecommunications Systems (ARTES)** programme, the projects range from optical and quantum communications and 5G/6G integration to deep-space communications, satellite propulsion and new ground infrastructure. Practical applications include improving broadband connectivity on remote railway routes and developing affordable satellite-enabled sensors to support precision agriculture. ([GOV.UK](https://gov.uk))

The investment will also support technologies with applications in national security, Earth observation and future lunar and deep-space missions, while strengthening UK capabilities and supply chains in this strategically important sector. Of particular interest to the Midlands is the involvement of the University of Nottingham, which is partnering with Exobotics and Archangel Lightworks on the £2.1 million STARS project to develop and demonstrate next-generation optical satellite communications.

[Read the full announcement and see all 16 projects](#)

b. **NSpOC: How the UK Protected Space in July**

The National Space Operations Centre (NSpOC) has published its latest monthly snapshot of the space environment and the risks being monitored to protect UK interests. During July, NSpOC tracked 62 objects re-entering Earth's atmosphere – 17% more than in June – while collision risks to UK-licensed satellites fell by 16% to 1,209 alerts. The number of objects in orbit continued to grow, with 322 objects added to the US Satellite Catalogue, taking the total to 34,751.

July also saw two fragmentation incidents involving payloads in Lower Earth and Graveyard orbits, while space weather activity increased, predominantly through solar flares and geomagnetic storms. Despite this activity, NSpOC reported a consistent overall risk level to UK interests and all warning and protection services

remained operational throughout the month. The regular reports provide an interesting insight into the growing importance of **Space Domain Awareness (SDA)** as the orbital environment becomes increasingly busy and complex. Read the full report [here](#).

c. ESA Seeks Future Use Cases for In-Space Servicing, Assembly and Manufacturing

The European Space Agency (ESA) is developing a new strategic initiative around In-Space Servicing, Assembly and Manufacturing (ISAM), aimed at identifying the most promising future applications and building the foundations for a European in-space services infrastructure. Areas being explored include satellite life extension and debris removal, in-space logistics and refuelling, exploration infrastructure, in-orbit upgrades and maintenance, resilient connectivity and large structures assembled in space.

The initial Request for Information has been used to identify and refine priority use cases, which will now inform the next stages of ESA's initiative. Selected concepts are expected to progress through industry-led Innovation Sprints, with the strongest concepts potentially informing ESA-funded feasibility studies and a wider Concurrent Design Facility study in 2027.

[Follow the ESA ISAM initiative through OSIP](#)

d. UK Space Agency Seeks Views on In-Orbit Pharmaceutical R&D and Manufacturing

The UK Space Agency is seeking input from industry, academia, pharmaceutical end-users and investors on the opportunities and barriers surrounding in-orbit pharmaceutical R&D and manufacturing. The Request for Information (RFI), part of the Unlocking Space for Business programme, aims to better understand the commercial, regulatory and investment challenges facing this emerging market and identify where government intervention could help accelerate adoption. The work builds on recent engagement with regulators and the UK-Swiss Microgravity Biopharma Dialogue.

Responses will help inform future UK Space Agency support and commercial activities in this developing market. Organisations involved in space biotech, pharmaceuticals, microgravity research, enabling technologies or investment are encouraged to contribute, with responses due by 5pm on 7th September. View details [here](#).

e. UK Space Agency and CAA Simplify Ground Station Licensing

The UKSA and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) have introduced changes to simplify the way ground stations are handled under UK orbital space operator licences. Newly granted licences will no longer contain a fixed list of approved ground stations, meaning operators will not need to apply for a licence variation each time they want to change or add a ground station. The change is intended to reduce regulatory

burden, speed up approvals and avoid duplication in security checks, while maintaining appropriate regulatory oversight.

Existing licence holders whose licences contain a ground station list can also contact the CAA about adding new stations under the revised approach. The change, developed through collaboration between government, the regulator and industry, represents a practical step towards making the UK regulatory environment more flexible for satellite operators.

Information on how to apply for an orbital licence can be found [here](#).

f. ESA Awards €543.6m in First European Launcher Challenge Contracts

The European Space Agency (ESA) has signed the first contracts under its European Launcher Challenge, committing a combined €543.6 million to three commercial launch providers. Germany's Isar Aerospace has secured €197.8 million, Rocket Factory Augsburg (RFA) €186.9 million, and Spain's PLD Space €158.9 million. The programme is designed to increase competition and diversity in European launch services and strengthen Europe's independent and resilient access to space. Funding will be unlocked as agreed milestones are achieved, with each provider required to demonstrate a successful orbital launch before 2028.

The funding also highlights the international nature of the programme. Germany is the principal contributor to both Isar Aerospace and RFA, with the UK contributing to RFA's contract, while PLD Space is principally backed by Spain with German support. A fourth challenger, MaiaSpace, remains in the programme, with ESA saying its contract award process is nearing completion. The investment represents an important step towards a more competitive European launch market and could create opportunities across the wider supply chain as the providers move towards operational launch services.

Read the complete article [here](#).

g. UK Space Agency Seeks Input on Future In-Orbit Demonstration Support

The UK Space Agency (UKSA) is seeking input from organisations developing emerging space payloads and technologies that could benefit from In-Orbit Demonstration (IOD). The Request for Information aims to understand the technologies currently being developed in the UK, their technical requirements, the barriers preventing them reaching market, and the commercial or technical opportunities that could be unlocked through demonstrating them in orbit rather than relying solely on ground-based testing.

Responses will help UKSA consider potential future government interventions to support in-orbit technology demonstration. UKSA also plans to hold an in-person industry workshop informed by the RFI, with organisations able to register their interest through their response. This is not currently a funding call, but represents a valuable opportunity for Midlands companies developing payloads, subsystems

and other space technologies to highlight their requirements and help shape future UK support for flight demonstration. Responses are requested by **23rd September**.

View the RFI and respond [here](#).

2. Events and Networking - Midlands

- a. **UK Earth Observation Conference 2026**, 15th – 17th September, University of Warwick

UKEO 2026 will bring together the UK's Earth observation community across research, industry, government and policy to share the latest science, applications and innovations shaping our use of Earth observation data and technology. The conference will provide a key forum to exchange ideas, build collaborations and explore how EO supports national and global priorities. Registration is now closed.

- b. **Introduction to Horizon Europe 2026**, 10:00–11:00, 23rd September, Online

Innovate UK Business Connect is running a free one-hour introductory webinar on Horizon Europe, aimed at organisations with little or no recent experience of the programme. The session will cover how Horizon Europe works, the different funding mechanisms, how to find relevant calls and partners, understand Work Programmes and access available support. Repeated later in 2026 on 29th October, 26th November and 16th December.

Register now: [Introduction to Horizon Europe 2026](#)

- c. **Astra Series: The Power of Partnerships**, 30th September, Space Park Leicester

The Astra Series: The Power of Partnerships comes to Space Park Leicester on Wednesday 30th September, providing an opportunity to explore the role collaboration and partnerships can play in driving innovation and growth. Taking place from 11am–1.30pm, the event offers Midlands organisations the chance to connect with others from across the space ecosystem, exchange ideas and build relationships closer to home.

Midlands Space Cluster members are encouraged to take advantage of this local networking opportunity and join the conversation at one of the region's leading space hubs.

[Find out more and register](#)

- d. **PLACEHOLDER: ESA 101 Workshop**, 27th October, Birmingham, venue tbc

Arrangements are being finalised for a half-day ESA 101 workshop in the Midlands. Delivered by UK Space Agency in collaboration with ESA and the Space Cluster, this event covers essential topics such as ESA's industrial policy, current activity and programmes, basics of ESA procurement and how to navigate through ESA STAR.

We will inform you of details and how to register closer to the date, but in the meanwhile please pencil it into your diaries.

3. Events and Networking – UK and Europe

a. How to Build a Space-Ready Team, 8th September, Online

Deep Tech Education is hosting a free 90-minute online session exploring one of the key challenges facing growing space and deep-tech companies: how to build the right technical team when specialist skills are difficult to find. The session will look at practical approaches to attracting and developing talent, and how companies can turn skills shortages into an opportunity to build stronger teams and capabilities.

Register [here](#).

b. ESA Industry Space Days 2026, 16th-17th September, Noordwijk, the Netherlands

Organised by ESA's SME Office supporting SMEs working with ESA, this event facilitates networking and the establishing of new business contacts. It includes pre-arranged one-to-one meetings, exhibitions highlighting the innovations and expertise of selected SMEs, briefings on business opportunities by large groups and institutional organisations, and conferences on space perspectives and market trends.

Register [here](#). **Deadline 7th September**

c. Aerospace & Defence Meetings 2026, 16th–17th September, Brno, Czech Republic

Organised by BCI Aerospace, this international business convention brings together aerospace, defence and space companies for two days of pre-arranged one-to-one meetings, expert conferences and networking, helping organisations identify new customers, suppliers and collaboration opportunities across the European supply chain.

Registration is now [open](#).

d. ESA Future Space Transportation – UK Industry Day, 21st September, ESA ECSAT, Harwell

ESA Future Space Transportation (FLPP), supported by the UK Space Agency, is holding its first UK Industry Day focused on the in-space transportation and logistics element of In-Space Servicing, Assembly and Manufacturing (ISAM). The event will provide UK businesses with an opportunity to learn more about ESA FLPP activities and funding opportunities in this growing area, alongside information sessions and networking.

The day will also offer bespoke bilateral B2B meetings with ESA representatives, giving companies an opportunity to discuss their capabilities and potential

involvement in future activities. Attendance is free, but advance registration is required and applications are subject to approval.

Find out more and register [here](#).

e. **EU Access to Space Conference**, 23rd September, Brussels

The 2nd EU Access to Space Conference will bring together policymakers, launch providers, industry leaders and researchers to discuss how Europe can strengthen its independent, resilient and cost-effective access to space. Organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS), this year's event will focus on three key themes: aggregating institutional launch demand, accelerating innovation in next-generation launcher systems, and developing the critical ground infrastructure needed to support Europe's future launch capabilities. Registration is now closed.

f. **UK Space Power Conference**, 23rd -24th September, IET Savoy Place, London, and online

Space has never been more important for our defence and economy. At this inaugural conference UK Space Command will outline plans to keep the UK secure in space, and prosperous at home. This new conference is the UK Ministry of Defence's flagship conference for space, bringing together industry, academia, government, and the military.

Read more and buy tickets [here](#).

g. **EURO DEFENCE EXPO (EUDEX) 2026**, 22nd - 25th September, Essen, Germany

The inaugural EURO DEFENCE EXPO (EUDEX) will bring together the European defence and security community at Messe Essen, creating a new platform connecting industry, policymakers and users of military security technologies. Running alongside Security Essen, the event will combine civil and military security technologies, with a programme including conferences, forums, international matchmaking and live demonstrations.

EUDEX will also coincide with the annual **NATO Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC) Conference**, which attracts more than 400 senior military representatives from NATO nations, creating further opportunities for engagement between industry and defence decision-makers.

[Find out more](#)

h. **International Astronautical Congress (IAC 2026)**, 5th –9th October, Antalya, Turkey

The 77th International Astronautical Congress (IAC 2026) will bring the global space community together in Antalya under the theme “The World Needs More Space”. Organised by the International Astronautical Federation and hosted by the Turkish Space Agency, IAC is one of the world's major international space gatherings,

typically attracting more than 6,000 participants from space agencies, industry, academia and government. The programme spans the breadth of the sector, combining technical and scientific sessions, high-level discussions, company presentations, an international exhibition and extensive networking opportunities.

Find out more and register [here](#).

i. **14th European Space Power Conference (ESPC 2026)**, 5th–9th October, Estoril, Portugal

The European Space Agency's 14th European Space Power Conference (ESPC 2026) will bring together specialists from industry, space agencies, academia and research organisations to explore the latest developments in electrical power systems for space applications. Key themes include power management and distribution, solar generators and photovoltaic technologies, energy storage and nuclear power systems, with a focus on future technologies, innovative technical solutions and advances in space power electronics.

Find out more about ESPC 2026 [here](#).

j. **PLACEHOLDER: ESA Open Day**, 10th October, ESA ECSAT, Harwell Campus

This free public event offers a rare opportunity to go behind the scenes of ESA's UK centre, meet space scientists and engineers, and discover the missions and technologies shaping the future of space exploration. Visitors will be able to enjoy interactive exhibits, talks, demonstrations and family-friendly activities covering everything from Earth observation and telecommunications to planetary science and human spaceflight. In Harwell, find out how satellite telecommunications and integrated applications power the technologies we rely on every day.

Registration will open later this year - mark the date in your calendar and watch for further announcements [here](#).

k. **Franco-British Aerospace & Space Industry Seminar**, 27th October 2026, London

GIFAS, the French Aerospace Industries Association, is bringing a major industrial delegation to the UK in October, led by GIFAS Chairman and SAFRAN CEO Olivier Andries. More than 60 French companies will participate, representing the full civil aerospace, defence and space ecosystem, from major prime contractors to suppliers, SMEs and start-ups. French government representatives, including the DGA – France's defence procurement agency, will also join the delegation.

As part of the visit, GIFAS and ADS will host a Franco-British bilateral seminar in London. The programme will include senior-level keynotes, roundtable discussions and an extensive B2B matchmaking session, providing UK companies with an excellent opportunity to build relationships with potential French customers, suppliers and partners. Participation is free but subject to validation and availability. [Register now](#)

l. Global MilSatCom 2026, 2nd – 5th November, Riverbank Park Plaza, London

Global MilSatCom 2026 will bring together more than 700 senior military, government and industry representatives from over 45 nations to discuss the future of secure military satellite communications. Now in its 28th year, the conference provides a major international forum for engagement between defence customers and the satellite communications industry, with more than 80 speakers covering topics including COMSATCOM, hybrid networks, spectrum, resilience, emerging threats and international cooperation. (asdevents.com)

The four-day event begins with a dedicated SATCOM On-The-Move Focus Day, followed by the three-day main conference and exhibition. Find out more and register [here](#).

m. NEXT Space, 9th November, Gothenburg, Sweden

Next Space 2026 will bring together international space industry leaders, entrepreneurs, investors and policymakers for a major new conference focused on the commercial future of space. The inaugural event will examine how nations and businesses can better leverage space technologies and services to create new capabilities, accelerate innovation and strengthen economic competitiveness.

The one-day conference will feature discussions on national strategy, commercialisation opportunities, cross-sector collaboration and emerging business models across the global space economy. Designed to showcase real-world applications of commercial space services while helping build stronger international partnerships and investment opportunities within the rapidly evolving space sector. Read more and register [here](#)

n. Space Tech Expo Europe 2026, 17th - 19th November, Bremen, Germany

Space Tech Expo Europe, Europe's largest B2B space event, returns to Bremen this November, bringing together the international space supply chain to showcase technologies, source solutions and develop new partnerships. The exhibition covers the breadth of the sector, including satellite operations, launch services, communications and ground systems, manufacturing, materials, subsystems, components, software, optics and engineering services, alongside a programme of conferences exploring the latest industry trends, technologies and challenges.

Register [here](#).

o. Beyond the Moon 2026, 19th - 20th November, London & Online

The British Interplanetary Society's 6th Beyond the Moon Symposium will explore the challenges and opportunities involved in expanding human activity beyond lunar bases and into the wider Solar System. Bringing together scientists, engineers, policymakers and other space professionals, the two-day event will consider both technical and societal challenges, including radiation protection, sustainable habitats, advanced propulsion and governance, while exploring the

technologies and long-term strategies needed to enable a sustained human presence beyond Earth.

The symposium takes place at BIS HQ in London, with online participation also available via Zoom. A Call for Papers is also open, inviting researchers and industry experts to submit abstracts covering relevant projects, ideas and perspectives for consideration by the programme committee. See more [here](#).

p. **SpaceCom 2027**, 13th –14th January, Orlando, Florida

SpaceCom 2027, held in collaboration with NASA, will bring together leaders from government, defence, commercial and international space to develop partnerships, explore procurement and investment opportunities and accelerate the commercialisation of new space technologies. The event expects 5,000+ attendees, 200+ speakers and 250+ exhibitors from more than 80 countries, with the programme covering priorities including lunar and cislunar exploration, commercial LEO, orbital manufacturing, robotics, space traffic management, resilient supply chains and future power and propulsion.

SpaceCom forms part of Commercial Space Week 2027 at the Orange County Convention Center, alongside the Space Mobility Conference and Global Spaceport Alliance Spaceport Summit. The wider exhibition runs from 12th–14th January.

Learn more [here](#).

q. **Small Satellites & Services International Forum (SSSIF 2027)**, 16th – 18th February, Málaga, Spain

The 8th Small Satellites & Services International Forum (SSSIF) will bring together the international small satellite community in Málaga for three days of technical discussion, knowledge exchange and networking. The forum attracts designers, engineers, scientists, developers, suppliers and launch providers, with panels and technical sessions exploring the latest technologies, market developments and future trends shaping the small satellite sector.

Opportunities are available to participate as an exhibitor, sponsor or speaker, as well as to attend the forum. Find out more [here](#).

r. **In-Orbit Servicing, Assembly & Manufacturing (ISAM) Conference**, 23rd February 2027, Excel London

One day before Space-Comm Expo, the ISAM Conference 2027 will bring together industry, academia, government and the wider space community to explore the technologies and capabilities enabling the next generation of activity in orbit. The conference provides a forum for discussion and collaboration around in-orbit servicing, assembly and manufacturing, including the technologies, applications, regulation and commercial opportunities that will support a more sustainable and capable space economy.

Read more and register [here](#).

s. **Space-Comm Expo Europe 2027**, 24th – 25th February 2027, ExCel London

Space-Comm Expo Europe returns to ExCeL London in February 2027, bringing together the commercial space sector with senior representatives from government, defence, international space agencies and investment. More than 6,000 attendees from 50 space nations are expected, providing a major platform for companies to showcase capabilities, understand emerging market and procurement priorities, and build relationships with customers, partners and decision-makers from across the global space sector.

Registration for 2027 opens in December, but organisations can register their interest now to receive updates and early access [here](#).

4. Funding and Support Opportunities

a. **UKSA C-LEO Call 3 – £42m for Next-Generation Satellite Communications**

The UK Space Agency has launched the third Connectivity in Low Earth Orbit (C-LEO) funding call, with up to £42 million available to UK businesses developing and industrialising advanced satellite communications technologies. UKSA expects to award a handful of projects approximately £4 million–£25 million each, with matched funding required. Projects should focus on one or more of five priority areas: on-board regenerative processing, active antennas, optical links, networking and routing, and user terminals.

The call is aimed primarily at technologies at TRL 4–6, with projects expected to advance towards TRL 7 and above and demonstrate a clear route to market and credible plans for industrialisation. Lead applicants must be UK-registered organisations, with SMEs specifically encouraged to apply. Projects are expected to begin in early 2027 and must complete by 31st March 2030. The Stage One application deadline is 12 noon on **7th September 2026**.

See the full guidance and [apply](#).

b. **UKSA International Bilateral Fund – Call 3**

The UK Space Agency has launched Call 3 of the International Bilateral Fund (IBF), with at least £12 million available to support international collaborative space projects. Individual projects can receive up to £1.5 million and run for up to 18 months, with between 8 and 12 projects expected to be funded. The call aims to strengthen international partnerships while supporting UK economic growth, market access and exports, building priority UK capabilities and protecting national security. Partnerships with Canada, France, Germany, India, Japan and the USA are particularly encouraged, although proposals involving other countries are also welcomed.

An optional but encouraged Expression of Interest should be submitted by **14th September**, with full applications closing on **4th November** and successful projects will begin on 1st April 2027. An information webinar will be held on **8th September 10:00-10:45**. Book the webinar [here](#) and learn more about the call [here](#).

c. UKSA Space Clusters Infrastructure Fund – Call 2

The UK Space Agency is preparing for the next round of the Space Clusters Infrastructure Fund (SCIF), which will provide at least £37 million for R&D infrastructure projects that strengthen UK space capabilities. Funding will support infrastructure for areas such as testing, validation, manufacturing and scale-up, helping businesses commercialise technologies, attract investment and strengthen supply chains. At least 65% of funding is expected to be invested outside the Greater South East, subject to proposals meeting the required quality threshold.

The deadline for informal EoIs has passed, but formal outline proposals are expected from later in September, with grants awarded from February 2027. Midlands organisations considering an application are encouraged to engage with us in the Midlands Space Cluster, to help identify potential collaborations and strengthen proposals ahead of the formal competition. See more [here](#).

d. Innovate UK Innovation Challenges: Next-Generation Resilient Timing Technologies

Innovate UK Business Connect has launched a series of five iX innovation challenges seeking novel technologies for highly accurate and resilient timing and synchronisation. The challenges cover measuring ultra-precise timing signals, distributing stable time and frequency over optical networks, generating precise timing offsets, resilient switching between critical timing sources, and comparing and validating high-precision signals at scale. These capabilities have potential relevance across sectors including space, defence, telecommunications and critical national infrastructure.

All five challenges are open to innovative solution providers, with applications closing on **18th September 2026**.

Explore the opportunities and apply [here](#).

e. ESA BASS Funding Opportunities for UK Organisations

UK organisations can access funding through the ESA Business Applications and Space Solutions (BASS) programme to develop commercially viable products and services that use space assets such as satellite communications, navigation or Earth observation. Current UK-supported routes include the permanently open Proof-of-Concept Studies and Pilot Projects call, alongside selected thematic Calls for Proposals, Enabling Studies and Competitive Invitation to Tender (ITT) opportunities. Proof-of-Concept studies help businesses validate market opportunities and develop an MVP, while Pilot Projects support testing with customers in real operational environments.

Enabling Studies and Competitive ITTs typically support more detailed Proof-of-Concept feasibility studies, generally lasting up to nine months, with ESA budgets typically in the region of €200,000–€300,000. UKSA normally provides up to 50% co-funding, although rates can vary by opportunity. Organisations interested in an Enabling Study or Competitive ITT should contact the UK Space Agency before developing a proposal to confirm that the particular call is supported and to obtain the required Authorisation of Funding.

View the current ESA BASS opportunities supported by the UK Space Agency [here](#).

f. ESA Call to Shape Future Lunar Exploration

A Request for Information is inviting ideas for **commercial lunar data products** that could support science, exploration and future lunar services, with a submission deadline of **29th September 2026**.

This is open to industry, academia and research organisations, providing a chance to influence ESA's future lunar exploration strategy and develop technologies for upcoming missions. Commercial lunar data products [RFI](#).

g. Leonardo Solvers Wanted – Funding and Co-development Opportunities

Leonardo, one of Europe's leading aerospace, defence and security companies, is seeking startups, researchers and innovators to help develop emerging technologies through its Solvers Wanted programme. Three new challenges cover sustainable space operations and lunar resources; photonic technologies, optical processing and advanced materials; and AI, advanced computing, future sensing, low-observability and resilient materials. Rather than simply procuring existing solutions, Leonardo is offering the opportunity to co-develop technologies with potential strategic applications across its international business.

Selected participants will receive €50,000 in initial funding, alongside opportunities for technology validation, future industrial collaboration and inclusion within Leonardo's supplier ecosystem. Participants can also access internationalisation and grant-funding support, innovation networks and increased visibility within the Leonardo Group. Application deadlines are **15th and 30th September 2026**, depending on the individual challenge.

[Apply through the Leonardo Solvers Wanted programme.](#)

h. Innovate UK Funding to Accelerate Quantum Sensing and PNT

Innovate UK has launched a new competition providing up to £14.3 million to accelerate the adoption of quantum-enabled sensing and Position, Navigation and Timing (PNT) technologies. Projects must address a specific technical or commercial barrier to adoption and focus on one of three areas: quantum sensing for healthcare; quantum-enabled PNT; or quantum sensing for transport, telecoms, energy or defence. Individual collaborative projects can request between £1 million and £3 million in grant funding and run for 12–24 months.

Projects must be led by a UK-registered business and include at least one UK SME claiming grant funding, with universities, RTOs, public sector organisations and other businesses able to participate as partners. The competition closes at **11am on 16th September 2026**, with successful projects expected to start by 1 December 2026.

See more via the [Innovate UK competition page](#).

i. Innovate UK Knowledge Transfer Partnerships – 2026/27 Round 3

Innovate UK has opened the latest Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) competition, with £12.5 million available to support collaborations between innovative UK businesses and universities, further education institutions, RTOs or Catapults. KTPs bring academic expertise and new skills into a business to deliver a strategic innovation project, with projects generally designed to run for up to 24 months.

SMEs can receive up to 67% of eligible project costs, while large companies can receive up to 50%. Applications must be led by an eligible knowledge base working with a UK-registered business and supported by a Knowledge Transfer Adviser. The competition is open now and closes at **11am on 14th October 2026**.

See more [here](#).

j. Coming Soon: New UK–Florida Space Innovation Fund

A new UK–Florida space partnership will create opportunities for UK companies and researchers to collaborate with organisations in one of the world’s leading space ecosystems. Announced by the UK Space Agency and Space Florida at Farnborough International Airshow, the partnership includes a new £300,000 joint innovation fund designed to help collaborative projects progress from concept towards demonstration and commercialisation. Areas of particular interest include space transportation, satellite systems, in-space research, advanced exploration technologies, and in-orbit servicing and manufacturing.

The formal funding call is expected to open in **Autumn 2026**, with successful projects selected in 2027. Projects will need to involve at least one UK organisation and one Florida-based partner and demonstrate clear commercial potential.

[Read the UK Space Agency announcement](#)

k. UK National Delegate support for ESA ARTES Invitations to Tender

UK organisations can now apply for National Delegate support to access funding through the European Space Agency's ARTES (Advanced Research in Telecommunications Systems) programme. ARTES supports the development of innovative satellite communications technologies, products and services, with eligible ESA Invitations to Tender (ITTs) offering up to 100% funding for early-stage technology development and innovation.

The opportunity is open to UK companies, universities and research organisations applying to UK Space Agency-supported ESA ARTES calls. Organisations should first check that their chosen ITT is supported by the UK Space Agency before applying for National Delegate approval, which is a mandatory step before submitting a proposal to ESA. Further details, supported activities and application guidance are available [here](#).

l. ESA General Support Technology Programme (GSTP)

The UK Space Agency is inviting UK organisations to access ESA's GSTP, which supports the development and maturation of innovative space technologies across almost all space domains, from early-stage concepts through to mission-ready hardware. The programme is open to businesses, universities and research organisations developing technologies with strong commercial or strategic potential, helping bridge the gap between research and deployment.

Funding opportunities are available through a range of GSTP activities, with support levels varying depending on the type of project. Organisations wishing to apply should review the current calls and submit a Statement of Interest to the UK Space Agency for National Delegate approval before applying to ESA. Full details, including submission dates and guidance, are available [here](#).

m. ESA NAVISP Supports Next-Generation Navigation Technologies

The UK Space Agency is inviting organisations to apply for funding through ESA's Navigation Innovation and Support Programme (NAVISP), which supports the development of innovative Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT) technologies. The programme is open to UK businesses, universities and research organisations developing commercially focused products, services and technologies across the space, ground and user segments, with opportunities ranging from competitive tenders to open calls for proposals.

The programme is open year-round, with funding available across three NAVISP elements. Support can range from up to 100% funding for some early-stage research activities to co-funded commercial innovation projects, depending on the funding route. Organisations must obtain UK Space Agency National Delegate approval before submitting proposals to ESA and are encouraged to engage with the UK Space Agency at the earliest opportunity. Read more [here](#).

n. Horizon Europe work programmes

You can view available work programmes for 2026-27 now at [Horizon Europe work programmes - Research and innovation](#)

Work has been going on behind the scenes to make the opportunities more accessible for SMEs, start-ups and new applicants. Of particular interest are - Cluster 4 which covers Digital, Industry and Space and Cluster 5 which covers Climate, Energy and Mobility.

o. UKSA Accelerating Investment Export Pathway

The Accelerating Investment Export Pathway (AIEP), developed by the UK Space Agency and supported by KPMG, is designed to help high-potential UK space SMEs prepare for international growth and become export-ready. Up to ten businesses will receive targeted training and support covering international market selection and entry, overseas procurement, export regulations and trade barriers, alongside guidance on accessing wider Government export support and Department for Business and Trade missions. Participants will also receive a tailored Export Guide and programme materials.

The programme is aimed at UK-registered and headquartered early-stage space businesses with a market-ready product or service, proven commercial activity and ambitions to grow internationally. Companies should have an existing customer base, sufficient financial capacity to support export activity and be able to commit to the programme's training, mentoring, workshops and networking activities. Applications are currently available through KPMG and spaces are limited.

Find out more and apply [here](#).

p. Mercia Ventures looking to invest up to £10m into Midlands companies

Mercia Ventures is a proactive venture capital investor focused on being the first-choice partner for growth. Mercia Ventures makes equity investments of up to £10million across all sectors, with specialisms in Software, Consumer, Healthcare and Deep Tech, and are looking to build their portfolio in the Space Sector.

Contact Amrit Sami at amrit.sami@merciam.co.uk

q. The ESA Proposal Advice Service (ESA PAS)

Designed to support UK-based organisations bidding for European Space Agency contracts and improve the quality, completeness, strategic alignment and consistency of bids - thereby aiming to strengthen the bidder's application for funding - by providing free, non-technical advice to organisations through a thorough review of their draft bid (before submission).

Organisations should apply as soon as they have taken a decision to bid for a specific opportunity. Read more [here](#)

r. UK Innovation Science Seed Fund (UKI2S)

UKI2S focuses on nurturing and adding value to innovative ideas that shape the future alongside investing in groundbreaking technology companies. UKI2S invests in innovations that are in the UKIS strategic priority areas or from the UK's publicly funded science and knowledge base. They focus on those with high growth potential at pre-seed and seed stages – to get the most groundbreaking technologies and ideas to market.

If you are interested in learning more and applying visit [Space – UKI2S](#)

s. **Made Smarter**

The "Made Smarter" program offers funding and support to UK manufacturers, particularly SMEs, to help them adopt digital technologies and improve their operations. This includes match-funded grants of up to 50% (with a maximum of £20,000) for equipment and/or advice to implement projects, as well as access to digital technology advice and workforce development

Read more [here](#).

Sign Off

If you have had a success or reached a milestone in your space sector project or business, we would love to share your news here and on our website news page:

[Latest News and Newsletters at Midlands Space Cluster](#)

Get in touch!

Nicola Deards
Midlands Space Cluster Manager

Mobile: 07713 832217
Midlands Aerospace Alliance Tel: 024 7643 0256
nicola.deards@midlandsaerospace.org.uk

