The Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards celebrate the partnerships between business, third sector, and public sector organisations and academia. Now in its 11th year, this flagship event recognises and rewards exceptional collaborations that deliver economic, environmental and social benefits for Scotland.

**Trailblazing AI Collaboration 2026**

This award celebrates the partnerships driving innovation at the forefront of Scotland’s data and AI ecosystem. Awarded for an innovative product, process, or service which has been adopted/will be quickly adopted and represents significant value to Scotland.

Collaborative outputs should be developed using data and AI, between a business, public, or third sector organisation and a university, college, or research institute.

This award is run in partnership with The Data Lab.

**Criteria:**

* Applications should clearly demonstrate the impact on all partners and show how the business-academic partnership was essential to the development of the innovative product, process, or service
* Applications should be able to demonstrate how this collaboration and its outputs are ‘Trailblazing’. This means demonstrating novelty and highlighting how the collaborative output marks a step change in current business as usual.
* To be considered eligible, collaborations must meet one of the following conditions within the period from **August 2023 to August 2025**:
	+ **Active Engagement**: Demonstrated joint activity such as co-delivered project objectives, shared research or development work, or sustained partnership operations
	+ **Impact and Outcomes**: Evidenced measurable outcomes or clear impacts resulting from collaborative efforts, including but not limited to innovation, economic, environmental or societal impact, or strategic advancement for the academic and/or business partner
* The judging panel decision is final. The panel reserves the right not to make an award in a specific category if the standard is deemed to be of insufficient quality
* Previous award winners are not eligible to apply to a category that they have won in the past.
* If shortlisted, you will be required to complete a 60 second video overview of the project
* Note: Use of business throughout the application includes public sector and third sector organisations

**Please email your completed application to** **marketing@interface-online.org.uk** **by**
**5pm on Thursday 11th December 2026.**

**Key Dates:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Submission Deadline: | 5pm, Thursday 11th December 2025  |
| Shortlist Announced: | Wednesday, 11th February 2026 |
| Awards Ceremony: | Thursday, 19th March 2026MacRobert Arts Centre, University of Stirling |

If you have any questions, please contact **marketing@interface-online.org.uk**

**Collaboration Partners**

**Lead applicant** (main point of contact that the Interface team will liaise with)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name**  |  |
| **Job Title** |  |
| **Business name**  |  |
| **Email**  |  |
| **Contact number**  |  |
| **What date did the collaboration commence?** |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Tick the check box to indicate which eligibility criteria this application meets.** To be considered eligible, collaborations must meet one of the following conditions within the period from **August 2023 to August 2025.** If applicable tick both. |
| **Active Engagement**: *Demonstrated ongoing joint activity such as co-delivered project objectives, shared research or development work, or sustained partnership operations.* |[ ]
| **Impact and Outcomes**: *Evidenced measurable outcomes or clear impacts resulting from collaborative efforts, including but not limited to innovation, economic, environmental or societal impact, or strategic advancement for the academic and/or business partner.*  |[ ]

**Business Partner(s)** (if more than one partner please duplicate the box)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name**  |  |
| **Job Title** |  |
| **Business name**  |  |
| **Business address** |  |
| **Email**  |  |
| **Contact number**  |  |

**Academic Partner(s)** (if more than one partner please duplicate the box)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name**  |  |
| **Job Title** |  |
| **Name of university, research institute or college**  |  |
| **Email**  |  |
| **Contact number**  |  |

**Application Form**

**To ensure that applications can be considered on equal terms, please ensure that you follow the word limits specified below. Exceeding the word count may lead to your application being discounted by the judging panel.**

However, if you would like to add any assets in support of your application (such as images, diagrams or video links), please include these within this submission as an appendix.

|  |
| --- |
| **Section 1 - Please provide a summary of the background to the business and the challenge / issue you were seeking to address.** (*250 words)* |
|  |
| **Section 2 - Please provide a summary of the trailblazing product, process or service you have developed in collaboration with the academic team** *(250 words)* |
|  |
| **Section 3 – When did the collaboration with the academic team commence,** **what activity (if any) has taken place in the last 2 years (Aug 23 - Aug 25) and what support did the academic team provide that you could not source elsewhere / in-house?** *(300 words)* |
|  |
| **Section 4 - Describe the main features of the trailblazing product, process, or service, in particular, outlining why it is innovative and how data and AI have been used in the development.** *Things to consider: What is the USP, who are the key customers, what is the current stage of development? How does this make a step change on current business as usual? (400 words)* |
|  |
| **Section 5 - How is the trailblazing product, process or service protected?** e*.g. design, patent rights. (This information may be used by the judges to gauge the level of innovation e.g. can it be easily replicated, future potential) (200 words)* |
|  |
| **Section 6 – How does the trailblazing product, process, or service progress the businesses growth ambitions?** *Outline tangible and intangible benefits e.g. turnover, number of new/safeguarded jobs, sales, expansion to new domestic & international markets and societal or environmental benefits?*  |
| Benefits achieved to date with timelines (300 words) |
| Future benefits predicted (300 words) |
| **Section 7 – How has the academic or academic team benefitted through the collaboration?** (e.g. teaching & learning, student employability, curriculum, research income, public engagement) *(300 words) (please outline timescales)* |
|  |
| **Section 8 – Has the project led onto further research or collaborations with the same academic or new academic partners? If so, please give details (Grants, KTP’s etc)** (200 words) |
|  |
| **Section 9 - What next?** *Outline the key milestones for the next phase of the collaboration. (200 words)* |
|  |

**Pre and Post Award Promotion:**

The Interface and The Data Lab Marketing and Communications teams will endeavour to raise the profile of your organisation, the Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards and the Interface service through pre and post Award promotion. By submitting this application/nomination form, you are agreeing for the details to be used in any related press and marketing materials. We recommend, therefore, that there should be no IP or confidentiality issues which would restrict publishing details of your application.

|  |
| --- |
| **To assist with the application promotion which will be used for the shortlist announcements, please provide a brief summary of your collaborative project below** (maximum *60 words*). For examples see the 2025 project summaries [here](https://interface-online.org.uk/news/scottish-knowledge-exchange-award-winners-showcase-collaboration-at-its-finest/). |
|  |

**Data Protection:**

By completing this application/nomination form, you accept and consent to the use of your data by Interface and any individuals, i.e. judges, those involved with the delivery, audit, review and evaluation of this application/nomination form.

It is the lead applicant’s role to ensure that all parties, whose details are included in this application form, are aware of and agree to this submission.

Interface’s full privacy statement can be read [here](https://interface-online.org.uk/privacy-and-cookies).

**Please email your completed entry forms to:**

**marketing@interface-online.org.uk**

**by 5pm on Thursday 11th December 2025**