



LAB OF THE NORTH

Call for Associate Members

Inaugural Cohort — September 2026



Call Opens
8th June 2026

Call Closes
17th July 2026

Cohort Launch
September 2026

About Lab of the North

Lab of the North (LoTN) exists to turn breakthrough digital innovation into real-world impact. We are a connected innovation hub, a single front door giving organisations access to the region's universities, testbeds, industry expertise, and public-sector infrastructure, focused on 5G, advanced connectivity, AI, and IoT.

Our mission is practical: to help organisations from the UK and internationally test, prove, and deploy advanced connectivity solutions at a meaningful scale. We convene industry, academia, and the public sector to collaborate on the challenges that matter, from smarter places and industrial applications to skills, sustainability, and digital inclusion.

Founding partners with a presence in the North of England include Adtran, Hitachi Rail, North Yorkshire Council, Port of Tyne, Radio Design, the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield, and York, and the York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority. We are hosted and supported by the University of York's innovation programme.

Turning breakthrough digital innovation into real-world impact and commercial deployment, giving organisations a single front door to test, prove, and scale advanced connectivity solutions.

Why We Are Launching Associate Membership

Lab of the North is entering a new phase. We have established a strong founding network, run our first major public event, and are progressing towards independent legal status. The next step is to formalise relationships with organisations that want to be part of what we are building, not just as observers, but as active contributors. We want to capitalise on organisations from outside the North of England.

We are seeking to strengthen our partner ecosystem with Associate Members, regardless of where you are based. Whether that is in a Yorkshire market town, a Scottish port, or an international industrial campus. We convene industry, academia, and the public sector to collaborate on the challenges that matter most, from smarter places and industrial applications to skills, sustainability, and digital inclusion. If that mission resonates with you, we want to hear from you.

We are launching a call for Associate Members to form our inaugural cohort, commencing in September 2026. We are looking for up to six organisations from the UK and beyond, from industry, the supply chain, or the public sector, who believe in the value of advanced connectivity innovation for the North, and who want to help shape how LoTN grows.

Associate Membership is deliberately designed to be accessible. We are not asking for a major financial commitment at this stage, simply an appropriate donation to support the ongoing running of the organisation.



We are asking for commitment, a specific in-kind contribution, and a willingness to engage, support and promote. In return, you get early access to a network and a platform that is genuinely going somewhere.

Who Should Apply?

We are open to organisations of any size from anywhere in the UK and beyond, from growing SMEs and specialist technology firms to large enterprises and public sector bodies. We are particularly keen to hear from organisations that are new to LoTN and want to understand what we can do together. If you work in or around advanced connectivity, 5G, 6G, IoT, AI, critical comms, smart places, digital infrastructure, or the application of these technologies in industry or the public sector, this call is for you.

What Associate Members Receive?

Associate Membership is a two-way relationship. In return for your commitment, LoTN offers a defined package of benefits designed to provide genuine value, to be part of a community, not just a logo on a website.

1 A seat at the table

Associate Members participate in a quarterly Associate Member Forum, a closed peer group where members shape LoTN's programme priorities, share intelligence, and input into our strategic direction. This is not a passive briefing; it is a working group where your voice carries weight.

2 Early access to funding and bid opportunities

LoTN is progressing towards independent legal status that will allow it to lead and participate in UKRI, Innovate UK, and DSIT-funded programmes. Associate Members are the first organisations we approach when assembling consortia for funded bids. Being part of the inaugural cohort gives you a head start in the competitive funding pipeline.

3 Access to the LoTN partner network

Associate Members gain direct access to LoTN's wider network of industry, university, and public sector partners, including introductions, collaborative conversations, and joint project development. This includes our founding partners across technology, academia, and regional government.

4 Visibility and profile

Members are featured on the LoTN website, credited in publications and reports, and promoted at LoTN events, including the upcoming Smarter Places, Better Decisions series and any future events. Co-branded content opportunities are available.

5 Market intelligence and sector insight

Members receive LoTN's intelligence briefings on advanced connectivity funding opportunities, policy developments, UKRI competition pipelines, and sector research, curated specifically to advance the connectivity ecosystem.

6 Priority access to testbed and trial environments

As LoTN's testbed and demonstration capabilities develop, Associate Members receive preferential access to testing and validation environments, supporting your own product development and commercial activities.

7 Recognition as a founding Associate Member

The inaugural cohort of up to six organisations will be recognised as founding Associate Members of Lab of the North, a distinction that signals early commitment to a growing national platform for connectivity innovation.



What We Ask of Associate Members

Associate Membership requires two commitments from your organisation. Both are intentionally modest; the bar is set to be accessible, not to deter. What matters to us is that your commitment is genuine and specific.

1. Inaugural Donation Fee: Donation Fee that fits the opportunity

The inaugural cohort donation supports LoTN's ongoing work. Above all, we value your commitment, contribution, and active involvement.

The donation is due when the Associate Member Agreement is signed and covers the 12-month membership period from September 2026 to August 2027.

This commercial model reflects LoTN's current stage: an early-stage organisation seeking commitment rather than investment. As LoTN grows and its capabilities expand, we expect future cohorts' financial contribution to rise accordingly.

2. An In-Kind Contribution

Alongside the fee, each Associate Member commits a specific in-kind contribution for the membership year. This is the part of your application we will scrutinise most closely, because it is where you can contribute something that genuinely strengthens the network.

Your in-kind offer should be:

- Specific - not 'support and engagement' but 'four days per year of RF engineering expertise from a named senior engineer'
- Deliverable - something you can genuinely commit to within your normal operations
- Relevant - something that adds value to LoTN's mission, its members, or its programme activities
- Quantified - in days, hours, value, or units wherever possible

Examples of in-kind contributions that would be welcome:

- Access to a specialist or technical environment (lab space, testbed, equipment)
- Personnel time from a named expert (e.g. RF engineering, systems integration, policy, commercial development, marketing, business development)
- Hosting or co-hosting a LoTN event or partner meeting
- Access to a live deployment or pilot site for learning/demonstration purposes
- Contribution to a LoTN publication, research report, or case study
- Mentoring or advisory input to a LoTN-supported project or team

In-Kind Is Not Optional

The in-kind contribution is a core part of the Associate Membership agreement, not an add-on. We are building a network whose strength comes from what members bring to it, not just from what they receive. Applications that do not include a specific, credible in-kind offer will not be progressed.



How to Apply

Applications are made by completing and submitting the application questions below by email to info@labofthenorth.tech by 5pm on Friday 17 July 2026.

There is no formal application form, we ask you to respond to the questions below in a document of up to four sides of A4. We are interested in the quality and specificity of your answers, not their length.

If you have questions before applying or would like an informal conversation with the LoTN team before submitting, please contact us at info@labofthenorth.tech.

We actively encourage prospective applicants to get in touch; we would rather answer your questions before you apply than after.

Associate Membership is open to any organisation, regardless of where you are based.

Application Questions

1 Tell us about your organisation.

Who you are, what you do, the sectors and technologies you work in, and your geographic focus. Keep it brief, two or three paragraphs is sufficient. We are particularly interested in your connection to advanced connectivity, 5G, AI, IoT, or the application of these technologies in the North of England.

2 Why do you want to be an Associate Member of Lab of the North?

What draws you to LoTN at this stage? What do you hope to contribute to and gain from the network? This is not a trick question, honest, direct answers are welcome. If you are new to LoTN and still finding your feet, say so.

3 What is your in-kind offer?

Describe your in-kind contribution specifically. What will you provide, how much of it, when, and who from your organisation will deliver it? Please be as concrete as possible. If your offer is personnel time, name the individual or the role and the number of days. If it is facility or equipment access, describe what and on what terms. This is the question we will scrutinise most carefully, and a strong, specific in-kind contribution is one of the clearest ways to differentiate your application. We are looking for proactive members who are ready to contribute meaningfully to the network from the outset.

4 What does success look like for you after 12 months of membership?

What would you hope to have achieved, contributed, or progressed through your Associate Membership by September 2027? This helps us understand your expectations and ensure the membership will be genuinely valuable to you.

5 Who will be your named primary contact for the Associate Member relationship?

Please provide the name, title, and contact details of the person in your organisation who will be the primary point of engagement with LoTN. Associate Membership works best when there is a committed, senior individual championing the relationship.



Key Dates

8 June 2026	Call opens This document is published, and the call for Associate Members is open.
Throughout June	Informal conversations welcome Contact to info@labofthenorth.tech to discuss the call or arrange a conversation with the LoTN team.
17 July 2026	Application deadline 5pm. Submissions by email to info@labofthenorth.tech only. Late applications will not be considered.
20 July – 14 Aug	Application review LoTN reviews applications against the published criteria. LoTN may request a meeting to confirm alignment of mutual objectives before final decision.
August 2026	Decisions communicated All applicants notified of the outcome. Successful applicants receive draft Associate Member Agreements for review.
September 2026	Inaugural cohort commences Associate Member Agreements signed, fees invoiced, and first Associate Member Forum held.

How Applications Are Assessed

Applications will be assessed by a small panel against five equally weighted criteria. We will be transparent about what we are looking for.

Criterion	What we are looking for
A Mission alignment	Does your organisation's work connect meaningfully to LoTN's focus on advanced connectivity, 5G, AI, IoT, and real-world deployment? We are not looking for perfect alignment; we are looking for genuine relevance and a clear story about why this matters to you.
B Quality of the in-kind offer	Is your in-kind contribution specific, credible, and genuinely useful to the LoTN network? This is the criterion that most distinguishes strong applications. Vague offers of 'engagement' score poorly; defined commitments of specific resources score highly.
C Complementarity with the cohort	Does your organisation bring something different from other applicants? We are consciously building a diverse cohort across sectors, geography, size, and expertise. Applications from organisations that fill a gap in the network will be advantaged over those that duplicate existing strengths.
D Commitment and seniority of engagement	Who in your organisation will champion this relationship? Is there evidence of genuine intent to engage, not just to hold a badge? We are looking for organisations where Associate Membership will be actively used, not passively held.
E Donation Fee commitment	Is your proposed donation fee clear, proportionate, and aligned with the opportunity? We are looking for a commitment that reflects a genuine intent to support LoTN's development at this stage.



The selection panel will comprise the LoTN Chair, four members of the LoTN Founding Partner group. Decisions are final. All applicants will receive brief written feedback on the outcome of their application.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do we need to be an existing LoTN partner to apply?

No. The Associate Member call is open to any organisation, not just from the North of England, existing partners and new contacts alike. We actively welcome applications from organisations who are encountering LoTN for the first time through this call.

Can public sector organisations apply?

Yes. Local authorities, combined authorities, NHS bodies, and other public sector organisations are welcome to apply. We recognise that public sector decision-making processes may take longer and are happy to discuss timelines informally before submission.

Can we apply as a consortium or group of organisations?

Each application must be from a single organisation. However, if two or more organisations are interested in applying together, we are happy to discuss what that might look like. Please contact us before submitting.

What happens if we are not selected in this round?

Unsuccessful applicants will receive written feedback and will be warmly invited to apply in a future cohort. We intend to run a second Associate Member call in 2027, with an expanded number of places.

Will the 'donation fee' model apply in future cohorts?

The inaugural cohort represents the current state of LoTN. We plan to transition to a membership model for future cohorts, and this will be assessed closer to the time based on the success of the first cohort. Founding Associate Members who renew their membership will receive favourable consideration during the transition to the new membership fee structure.

What legal form will the Associate Member Agreement take?

Successful applicants will receive a simple, plain-English Associate Member Agreement covering the membership term, donation, in-kind commitments, benefits, and governance rights. This will not be an onerous legal document; we want the relationship to be straightforward and easy to manage on both sides.

We are interested but not sure our in-kind offer is strong enough. What should we do?

Talk to us first. Contact info@labofthenorth.tech and we can have an informal conversation about what you might offer and whether it fits. We would rather you ask the question than talk yourself out of applying.

Ready to apply or want to know more?

Send your application or get in touch:

info@labofthenorth.tech

<https://labofthenorth.tech>

Application deadline: 5pm, Friday 17 July 2026