

HIGH VALUE BIORENEWABLES NETWORK FLEXIBLE FUND GUIDELINES FOR PROOF OF CONCEPT PROJECTS

Targeted and Open Call 2019

DEADLINE: 10 September 2019, 16:00

Targeted: Genomic tools for High Value Biorenewables

Open: Industrial Biotechnology projects within High Value Biorenewables Scope

Targeted Call: *Genomic tools for high value biorenewables* - encompasses research that supports and enables genomics in any bio-based system with the ultimate aim of producing a high value product as sustainably and cost effectively as possible. For example, genomic tools could be developed for applications that improve yields in existing bio-based production platforms or in the development of entirely new production platforms in heterologous hosts or by rapid domestication/ industrialisation of existing organisms.

In parallel, the open call considers other industrial biotechnology project areas relevant to HVB's scope – this approach enables HVB to remain open to innovative ideas so that we can fund the best projects.

To support the targeted call, HVB is holding a workshop in June 2019 to explore how genomics impacts on the development of high value biorenewables. There will be opportunities to discuss the funding call and develop collaborations for Proof of Concept proposals and Business Interaction Vouchers through networking breaks and an informal session where Network members can discuss possible projects and applications.

1. Context

The High Value Biorenewables Network (HVB) is one of six Phase II BBSRC Networks in Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy (NIBB) funded for five years from January 2019.

HVB aims to:

- Promote discovery, development and application of bio-based chemicals, tools and platform technologies
- Facilitate partnership and knowledge transfer between UK academia and industry
- Provide inspirational leadership to the industrial biotechnology community in the UK and internationally

Description of the HVB Flexible Fund

HVB's Flexible Fund provides a range of awards that support progression of research within the scope of the Network. The total fund value is £1.2M and we anticipate all funds will have been awarded by 2022. There are currently four types of award:

- **Proof of Concept** (PoC) – for research at TRL 1-4: industry support in terms of cash or in-kind contribution is important, and collaborative, cross-disciplinary projects are preferred. PoC projects should aim to do excellent research with impact.

- **Business Interaction Voucher (BIV)** – these are smaller awards for a defined piece of work undertaken by an academic with an industrial partner who should co-fund the project with cash or in-kind contributions. Awards should encourage further collaboration and develop partnerships.
- **Sandpit Projects (SP)** – these are high impact, collaborative projects that respond to well-defined, industrial challenges and targets. Projects will be developed at sandpit events and should include plans for future inward investment.
- **Progression Fund (PF)** – for successful HVB projects close to impact we may invite applications to the Flexible Funds for a funded project extension to enable feasibility studies, for example, demonstration of scale-up or market analysis.

HVB has a dual mechanism to identify call areas for PoC and SP projects:

- Pull through Leadership Team and industry identifying industrial challenges;
- Push through workshops and research – inspiring innovative ideas.

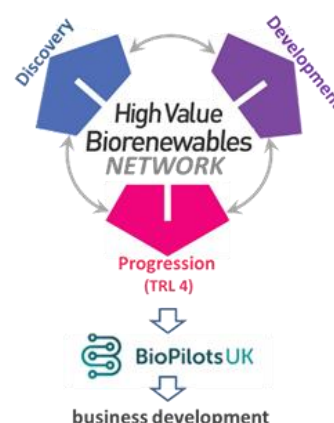
HVB assists its members in developing applications to the Flexible Fund. Specifically, funding calls are supported by research-driven workshops, consortium building meetings and networking and annual meetings. In addition, Network Managers are available to discuss ideas and provide guidance on which funding source might be appropriate. However, we cannot provide advice on which partners you should use to build your consortium.

Scope:

All projects must be in scope of the HVB Network:

HVB focuses on the discovery, development and utilisation of high value, low volume bio-based chemicals, tools and platform technologies. HVB embraces a broad scope of biorenewable feedstocks to support innovation in new and existing products across a range of industry sectors. Applications which have algae as the biological feedstock for a high value biorenewable can be considered by HVB; if such applications are recommended for funding, Algae-UK would be notified of the funding intention. It is unlikely that HVB will fund research on algae – such as development of algae production platforms or pathway engineering in algae.

HVB promotes excellent industrial biotechnology research with a strong influence of translational research bridging the gap to application, enabling work to progress to Technology Readiness Levels 3-4 where it connects with the capabilities of BioPilotsUK or another translational or business development activity.



In addition, all projects must be relevant to industrial biotechnology (IB) as defined by the BBSRC:

IB is a set of cross-disciplinary technologies that use biological resources for producing and processing materials and chemicals for non-food applications. The resources include plants, algae, marine life, fungi and micro-organisms. The feedstocks include renewable materials such as crop residue, animal wastes, food and municipal wastes and perennial biomass.

BBSRC has included the production of anti-microbial compounds and biopharmaceuticals in IB too (see <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/priorities/ibb-industrial-biotechnology/>).

Projects that are focused on producing or testing animal feed are not within scope, nor are projects focussing on a single human disease or projects that simply use plant or biological extracts. We do not fund screening projects – we are looking for projects that further develop research outputs along the technology readiness levels.

If you want to check the scope of your project – submit your abstract to the Network Manager at least a month before the advertised closing date.

2. Eligibility Criteria for HVB PoC Awards

Applicants:

Funding is available for HVB members who are eligible to receive BBSRC funding (<https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/grants-guide/>). All applicants must be HVB members **at the time of application** (registration is free and simple to complete online at <https://highvaluebiorenewables.net/>).

Please note: principal applicants who receive HVB Flexible funds to support staff costs would not be eligible to receive support under the BBSRC *New Investigator* scheme.

Finances and duration:

Applications are invited for awards of up to £50,000 at 100% Full Economic Cost (FEC) (i.e. £40,000 at 80% FEC). Projects should have some financial support from industry, this can be a cash contribution or in-kind funding. We may consider projects that do not have industrial support but these will be exceptional.

No more than 20% of costs may be subcontracted, however, facility access charges may be included. Equipment is not an eligible cost.

PoC projects can be any duration up to 12 months.

3. PoC Application Process:

There are three documents required for an application:

- Application form which includes the case for support
- CV
- Letter of support

Application form:

For round one, the applicant should download and complete the word document **application form**: this is designed to capture specific details of the project and for successful projects will form the basis of the final report. The application form requests the following information:

1. Project title

A title for all projects is required.

2. Applicant details and Co Applicant(s):

Name, position, university, e-mail and telephone. A contact person in your Finance Office is also required.

Industrial partner(s) details

Name, position, company, e-mail and telephone.

3. Public summary of project

You should describe your project in a manner that can be readily understood by a lay audience. Do not include any confidential information as this information will be used by HVB and may be used by the BBSRC for public dissemination if the award is funded.

*This section should clearly state **how the project fits within an industrial biotechnology context** because BBSRC will use this information to check that the proposal matches their criteria for NIBB funding. The summary is also used to check with reviewers that they are able to review the proposal.*

4. Project dates

Please give reasonable estimates of start dates, allowing time for awards to be made and any necessary paperwork to be completed. You will have up to three months to start the project from the award of the grant (for Call 1, award letters will be issued around mid-November 2019).

If you are unable to meet this timescale please do not apply for funds.

5. Project finances

Complete the table on the form – detailing costs at 100% FEC and 80% FEC. All awards will be made at 80% FEC with the host University responsible for providing the 20% contribution. If there are co-applicants from a different institution, please discuss how the 20% shortfall will be funded before you submit the application.

Write a short justification of costs in the box below. PoC funds are not available to support PhD students unless it is for a short period (depending on their stipend conditions) and they must be under an employment contract for this work. PoC projects cannot be used as part of a PhD, incorporated into results used in a PhD or used to top-up or extend a PhD. You may not fund researchers currently working full-time on BBSRC projects.

6. Other NIBB2 Funding

Please detail any other applications that you have pending or if you have any funded projects.

7. Case for Support (up to 5 pages)

Text should be at least single-spaced, 11 point Arial (or equivalent) with a 2 cm margin. Please use the specified headings so that your proposal can be reviewed against the evaluation criteria. Please ensure you cover all aspects, as marks cannot be given if information is missing.

Curriculum Vitae:

A two-page CV of the principal applicant should be submitted. This CV should include details of relevant publications.

Letter of Support:

A letter of support from the applicant's University is required confirming both acceptance of the 80% FEC rate and that the applicant is eligible to receive BBSRC funding. Please do ensure your letter of support covers both these aspects, failure to do so will prevent your application from being reviewed. Please do not send any additional documents, support from industry should be covered in the application and demonstrated by in-kind funding or cash contributions.

Submission of applications and further information:

Applications should be submitted by e-mail to: hvb-network@york.ac.uk; all applications will be acknowledged within three working days.

Deadline: All applications must be submitted by 16:00 on 10 September 2019.

All information submitted is held in strictest confidence; the MB all sign a Management Board Agreement which requires their confidentiality.

For further information about the PoC funds, please contact Network Manager, Dr Caroline Calvert (caroline.calvert@york.ac.uk).

4. Evaluation process for applications

i. Initial checks

The Network Manager will check all applications to ensure they are complete. If there are any minor problems, the Network Manager will contact the applicant to request further information or changes,

however if this cannot be easily remedied (within three working days) the application will not be reviewed – please ensure you are contactable (or nominate a colleague) during this time.

ii. Scope checks – industrial biotechnology context and relevance to HVB

Applications will be checked for scope; if a proposal is out of scope, a reviewer may be asked to consider the proposal and see if there are any features which would bring the proposal into scope. The BBSRC will have the final decision on scope.

iii. Conflict of interest checks

Details of applicants together with the public summary will be circulated to the reviewers to check for any conflicts of interest.

iv. Review process

For each application, two reviewers will be selected from the HVB Management Board (MB) and Executive Group (EG); external expertise will be sought if necessary. Details of the current Board membership can be found on our website: <https://www.highvaluebiorenewables.net/about-us/>. Review scores and notes are submitted to the Network Manager before the review meeting. If there are large discrepancies in the scores, a third reviewer may be sought. Quorum for the review meeting is the Chair plus 5. If a reviewer cannot attend the meeting, the Chair will accept written reviews.

During the review meeting, all applications are discussed (anyone who has a conflict of interest will recuse themselves from the discussion of that particular application) and final scores are awarded. Following review of all applications, a ranked list is used to select applications for funding. Those applications recommended for funding will be submitted to the BBSRC for their final approval.

Review criteria for PoC projects are as follows:

Criteria	% contribution to total score	Threshold level required:
Quality of science and technology application	40	24
Relevance of application to HVB scope	10	6
Industrial support and pathway to impact	25	15
Economic, environmental and social impact consideration	10	6
Project management	10	6
Value for money	5	3

For each individual criterion, a threshold score of 60% is required to be considered for funding.

At the review panel’s discretion, an application could be part-funded, particularly if it is considered that a critical milestone needs to be achieved to fulfil the project. If this is the case, the Network Manager will contact the applicant to discuss the funding offer.

5. Notification of review results

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application once the Network Manager has updated the BBSRC NIBB Extranet with award details and the BBSRC has approved funding.

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed promptly and the Network Manager may pass on specific feedback if the review panel makes this available. We will not offer comprehensive feedback on proposals submitted. Re-submission of proposals is permitted providing the case for support clearly outlines the changes made to the application, advice should be sought from the Network Manager on how to format re-submissions.

6. Post-award administration

Contracts and agreements: The University of York will issue a simple contract for the awardee, assigning all rights to the awardee's University or consortium partners. Projects may not start until this contract has been signed. Projects must start within 3 months of the date on the offer letter and the actual start date must be confirmed by email to their assigned Network Manager. Funds must be spent as detailed on the application; virement of funds will not be permitted.

Before a project can start, projects with multiple applicants or industry partners must consider whether a collaboration agreement is required for the project. If required, collaboration agreements must be in place before the project starts and this status should be confirmed by email to the Network Manager. In addition, at the start of a new project, the PI will need to assess their project's Technology Readiness Level (TRL) – this will then be compared to the level after the project is complete. Guidance on TRL will be sent with the award letter.

Reporting: At the end of the project, the Principal Applicant will complete a final report form and expenditure statement on HVB's website and upload an invoice from their finance department. There are no alternatives to this reporting process.

Final project reports are checked by the Network Manager and approved by the HVB Executive Group; summaries of the reports are provided to the Management Board.

HVB does not require receipts to be submitted but these must be kept by the host institution as they may be required for possible future audits. The grantee's host institution must follow their standard procedures for financial accounts.

It should be noted that funds are paid by the BBSRC to the University of York in quarterly arrears, therefore invoices could take up to six months to pay.

7. Data protection and usage

Copies of proposals are made available to the HVB evaluators (members of the HVB Management Board and Executive Group and external reviewers where applicable), who use information provided in the application for processing the proposal, the award of any consequential grant, and for the payment, maintenance and review of the funds.

BBSRC use this information for research related activities, including but not limited to, transfer of funds, statistical analysis in relation to evaluation of the BBSRC NIBB, study of trends and policy and strategy studies.

To meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of successful Flexible Fund awards may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

8. Conflict of interest guidance

In cases of conflict of interest, there are specific alternatives to the stated guidance – these are referred to throughout the document.

Examples of a conflict of interest include:

- Employed by the same institution as the applicant(s)
- Actively involved in research collaborations with the applicants(s)
- Working closely with the applicant(s), for example as a co-author or PhD Supervisor, or has worked closely in the last 4 years
- Holding a current position on the governing body of or an honorary position within the institution(s) of the applicant(s)

- In receipt of personal remuneration in excess of £5,000 per annum from the applicant's organisation
- Personal/family relationship with the applicant(s)

In addition, reviewers may declare a conflict of interest if they consider the area of research to be too close to their own research. In this case, they may recuse themselves from all discussions of the project.