

## HIGH VALUE BIORENEWABLES NETWORK FLEXIBLE FUND BUSINESS INTERACTION VOUCHERS (BIV) GUIDELINES

### **SUBMISSION DEADLINE:**

**10:00, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

**for consideration at the next review panel meeting in April 2022**

(Note: You may apply at any time, but applications received after the deadline of 29<sup>th</sup> April 2022 will not be reviewed at the April 2022 review panel meeting and will be held until the next review after April 2022)

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## 1. Context

The High Value Biorenewables Network (HVB) is one of six Phase II BBSRC Networks in Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy (BBSRC) 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 £1.41M and we anticipate all funds will have been awarded by 2022. There are currently four types of award:

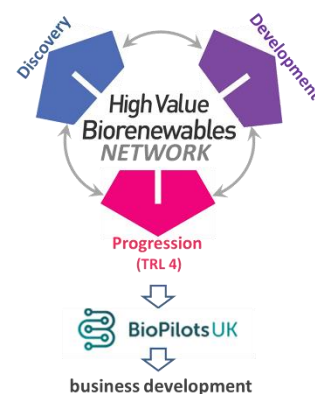
- **Proof of Concept (PoC)** – for research at TRL 1-4: industry support in terms of cash or in-kind contribution is important, and collaborative, cross-disciplinary projects are preferred. PoC projects should aim to do excellent research with impact.
- **Business Interaction Vouchers (BIV)** – these 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 Fund for a funded project extension to enable feasibility studies, for example, demonstration of scale-up or market analysis.

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, the Network Manager, Dr Caroline Calvert is 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 and Industrial Biotechnology:

All projects must be in scope of the HVB Network:

HVB focuses on the discovery, development and utilisation of high value, low volume (low volume (< 1000 metric tonne per annum)/high price (> \$10/kg)) 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 focus 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.

**In designing your BIV Project, please be aware that simply the utilisation of a biological feedstock is not sufficient to fit BBSRC IB scope for Flexible Fund projects. Please make it clear in your application how your project incorporates or feeds into a biological process/conversion or, how the project outputs could be expected to do this in the future.**

**If you want to check the scope of your project** - submit your public summary to the Network Manager at least a week before the advertised closing date.

## 2. Eligibility criteria for HVB BIV 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://www.highvaluebiorenewables.net/>). Post-Doctoral Research Associates who are involved in developing a BIV application and who are to be engaged in the research can be named as a 'Researcher Co-Investigator' on the application. Please note: principle applicants who receive HVB Flexible funds to support staff costs would not be eligible to receive support under the BBSRC *New Investigator* scheme.

The **industrial applicant** should have an R&D or manufacturing site in the UK. This is to ensure there is benefit to the UK research base and the UK economy from the BIV. In exceptional circumstances, where there is not a UK company to exploit the research a BIV may be awarded to support a collaboration with an industrial partner who has an overseas R&D or manufacturing site. The application should provide a clear justification for working with an overseas partner company and outline how the project will lead to building international collaborations, and how the project will be taken forward leading to inward investment and the benefit back to the UK.

## Finances:

The maximum financial support that can be requested as a BIV is £10,000 at 100% Full Economic Cost (FEC; i.e. £8,000 at 80% FEC). The industrial partner must make a matched contribution to the academic partner which is worth at least the value of the amount requested at 80% FEC, either in cash or as an in-kind contribution. Any award will be paid in arrears to the academic partner. No more than 20% of costs may be subcontracted, however, facility access charges may be included. Equipment is not an eligible cost.

BIV may be used to support short term postgraduate research student positions (for example summer placements), provided that the BIV project forms a discrete piece of work and has a separate employment contract from any stipend. The 6 hours a week that PhD students have for additional paid work can also be utilised for BIV projects, again this should be a separate discrete project from their PhD and requires a separate employment contract. BIV cannot be used to subsidise student grants.

## 3. BIV application process

### Completing the application form:

The lead (academic) applicant should complete the **application form** available at <https://www.highvaluebiorenewables.net/funding/> to provide specific details of the project. The application should be led by the academic with input from the industrial partner. The application form requests the following information:

#### 1. Applicant details:

*Lead (academic) and industry applicants:*

*Please complete all details requested.*

#### 2. Project title, public description and start date

- *A title for all projects is required.*
- *The public description should summarise your Project in a way that can be understood by the general public and should not contain confidential or proprietary information. This section should clearly state **how the proposal fits within an industrial biotechnology context**; BBSRC will use this information to check that the proposal fits within their criteria for NIBB funding. Your title and public summary will be circulated (along with applicant details) to the Evaluation Panel in advance of their receipt of your full proposal to ensure that no conflict of interest exists for panel members. If your application is successful and your award is funded, your title, applicant details and public summary will be made publically available on the HVB Network website and may be used for public dissemination by BBSRC.*
- *Please give a reasonable estimate of start date – allowing time for awards to be made and any necessary paperwork to be completed. **BIV Projects must start no later than three months after the award of the grant.** If you are unable to meet this timescale please do not apply for funds. **The maximum project duration for a BIV project is six months.***

#### 3. Project details

*Your application should provide specific information under the following headings:*

- *Outline of the work proposed*
- *Project deliverables*
- *Description of how your Project fits BBSRC IB scope for PoC/BIV Projects*
- *The value of the Project outputs to the Industrial Partner*

- *The value of the Project outputs in building a longer term relationship between the partners*

#### 4. 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.*

**Academic institute costs:** *A full cost breakdown under the headings of staff costs, consumables, equipment use/hire (if applicable) and travel (if applicable), must be given. Additional headings and narrative text can be used as required to fully describe Project costs. No more than 20% of costs may be subcontracted, however, facility access charges may be included. Equipment purchase is not an eligible cost.*

**Industry matched contribution:** *The contribution can be made in cash or in kind but the value of the contribution must be given as a breakdown using appropriate headings, for example, staff time (e.g. number of days at a given daily rate), consumables, equipment use/hire and travel. Additional headings and narrative text can be used as required to fully describe Project costs.*

Do not submit a pdf of the application form – we need a Word format to enable simple processing of the information for reviewers and the BBSRC reports.

#### Additional documents:

**In addition to the application form, a letter of support from the lead applicant's University confirming acceptance of the 80% FEC rate and the lead applicant's eligibility to receive BBSRC funding must be submitted.** Please do ensure your letter of support covers both these aspects, failure to do so will prevent your application from being reviewed. Please note, the person signing this letter should be a recognised authority at the University, such as a Head of Department. This may be submitted as a pdf.

#### Submission of applications:

Applications must be submitted by using the application form available at <https://www.highvaluebiorenewables.net/funding/>; applications will be acknowledged within three working days. Please submit the form as a Word document.

For further information about BIV funds, please email [hvb-network@york.ac.uk](mailto:hvb-network@york.ac.uk).

Applications for BIV can be submitted at any time and will be reviewed at the next possible Review Panel meeting – these take place quarterly, however, we need at least five weeks to process your application so that it can be checked and reviewed. The closing date for receipt of applications for review *at the next panel meeting* are advertised on the Network website and in the Network's email newsletter. Any applications received after the published closing date for the next review meeting will be held for review at a future meeting. **Forthcoming deadlines: Applications should be submitted by 10:00, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022 for review in April 2022.**

#### 4. Evaluation process

The Network will circulate details of applicants together with the public summary to the reviewers, who are required to declare any conflicts of interest before they are given sight of the full application. The full application will then be circulated to non-conflicted reviewers for evaluation. All information submitted is held in strictest confidence; the Management Board all sign a Management Board Agreement which requires their confidentiality.

A Review Panel will usually comprise a minimum of two representatives from the Executive Group (EG) and one representative from the Management Board (MB). In cases where insufficient members of the EG are available to review an application due to conflict of interest, the MB Chair will join the panel or, if they are also conflicted (or if more than one replacement is required), will suggest a suitable MB nominee to evaluate the application. Each BIV application will be reviewed by a minimum of three representatives from the EG/MB Leadership Team. Any application recommended for approval by the BIV Review Panel will be subject to formal approval by BBSRC before the award can be made.

#### **BIV Assessment criteria:**

- Relevance of the application to BBSRC's definition of IB and HVB scope
- Quality of the work proposed
- Value of the proposed work to the Industrial Partner
- Value of the cash or in kind contribution by the industrial partner
- Overall value for money of the project
- The potential for building a longer term relationship between the partners

### **5. Notification of Review Outcome**

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. Successful applicants will be notified who will be their primary contact for any support required to ensure the project is a success and for reporting.

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed promptly and the Network Manager may pass on specific feedback if the review meeting makes this available. We will not offer comprehensive feedback on proposals submitted, re-submission of proposals in future funding rounds is permitted providing the cover letter clearly outlines the changes made to the application.

### **6. Post-award administration**

#### **Confirmation of award:**

The Network will send an award letter to the Institution of the academic partner which summarises the terms and conditions governing the transfer of funds and confirms the project start date. The academic and industrial partners are required to confirm that they have a signed consortium agreement in place before the agreed project start date. The Network does not take responsibility for negotiations between partners regarding the development of a consortium agreement.

**Awards are conditional upon the Project starting within 3 months of the date on the offer letter and the actual start date must be confirmed by email to the Network.** Funds must be spent as detailed on the application; **virement of funds between cost headings will not be permitted.**

#### **Reporting and payment:**

At the end of the project, the Principal Applicant will complete the final report form and expenditure statement and submit an invoice from their Finance Department **in one single email to: hvb-**

**network@york.ac.uk.** There is no alternative to this reporting process, and part-claims will be returned until all the required documents are presented together.

Final project reports are checked by the Network Manager and approved by the EG; 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 reviewers, who use information provided in processing the application, the award of any consequential grant, and for the payment, maintenance and review of the funds. HVB will upload details of all applications to the HVB secure area of the BBSRC Extranet. If a project is funded, HVB will publish the names of Project partners, Project title and Project public summary on the BIV section of the Network website.

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.