

# HIGH VALUE BIORENEWABLES NETWORK FLEXIBLE FUND GUIDELINES

## BUSINESS INTERACTION VOUCHERS (BIV)

## PROOF OF CONCEPT FUNDS (PoC)

### SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

**BIV (Round 8): 10:00am Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**PoC (Round 5): 10.00am Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

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**Open PoC and BIV Call:** HVB will accept applications into the Open Call focussed on industrial biotechnology project areas relevant to HVB's scope.

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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 with a one year extension until December 2024. 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, and
- 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 2023. There are currently two 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. 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 co-funds the project with cash or in-kind contributions. Awards should encourage further collaboration and develop partnerships.

Funding calls are supported by research-driven workshops, consortium building meetings and the HVB annual meeting. HVB will assist members in scoping applications to the Flexible Fund, and Network

Managers are available to discuss ideas and provide guidance on appropriate funding sources. However, we cannot advise on specific partners to build your consortium.

## Project Scope

All projects must be in scope of the HVB Network:

- HVB focuses on the discovery, development and utilisation of high value, low volume (>US\$10/kg; <1000 metric tonne per annum) bio-based chemicals, tools and platform technologies.
- HVB embraces a broad scope of biorenewable feedstocks to support innovative development of new and existing products across a range of industry sectors.
- Applications which have algae as the biological feedstock can be considered by HVB. However, if such applications are recommended for funding, Algae-UK would be notified of the funding intention. It is highly unlikely that HVB will fund research on algae such as the development of algae production platforms or pathway engineering in algae.
- HVB promotes excellent industrial biotechnology (IB) research with a focus on transitional activities to progress to Technology Readiness Levels 3-4, connecting with translational activities and other business development opportunities.
- All projects must be relevant to 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.*

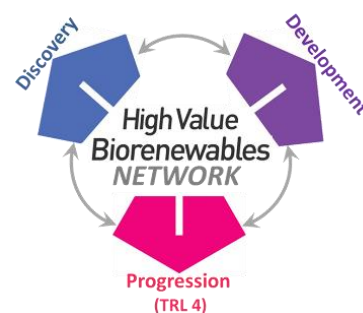
The BBSRC includes the production of anti-microbial compounds and biopharmaceuticals in IB too (see <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/browse-our-areas-of-investment-and-support/bioscience-for-advanced-manufacturing-and-clean-growth/>).

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.

**In designing your project, be aware that the simple 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.**

HVB does not fund screening projects: we are looking for projects that further develop research outputs along the technology readiness levels. However, screening could constitute a component of the project.

**If you want to check the scope of your project** - submit your public summary to the Network Manager as soon as possible but no later than two weeks before the advertised closing date.



## 2. Eligibility Criteria

### 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 an application and who will be engaged in the research can be named as a 'Researcher Co-Investigator' on the application.
- Principal applicants who receive HVB Flexible Funds to support staff costs would not be eligible to receive support under the BBSRC *New Investigator* scheme.

**Applications for a BIV must include an industrial partner.** 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 must provide a clear justification for working with an overseas industrial partner, outline how the project will lead to building international collaborations, and detail how the project will be taken forward leading to inward investment and the benefit back to the UK.

It is expected that that PoC projects will also include an industrial partner, to show that there is industry demand. PoC applications without an industrial partner will be considered, however applicants need to clearly explain why (e.g. if the project is anticipated to be the foundation of a University spin-out). As PoCs are TRL3-4 there needs to be evidence of understanding market need and opportunity (information on TRL levels can be found on the HVB website <https://www.highvaluebiorenewables.net/funding/>).

### Finances: BIV

**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.

- No more than 20% of costs may be subcontracted: facility access charges may be included.
- Equipment is not an eligible cost.
- BIV projects can be up to 6 months duration.
- BIVs may be used to support short term postgraduate research student positions (e.g. 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 are permitted for additional paid work can also be utilised for BIV projects, but this should be a discrete project from their PhD and requires a separate employment contract. BIV cannot be used to subsidise student grants.
- Any award will be paid in arrears to the academic partner.

### Finances: PoC

**The maximum financial support that can be requested as a PoC is £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.
- Any award will be paid in arrears to the academic partner.
- There are rules on who may be employed on a PoC – please see information on the content of the PoC Application Form below (page 7 of this document, section 5: ‘Finances’).

### 3a. BIV Application Process

#### BIV Application Process

Applications for BIV can be submitted at any time and will be reviewed at the next possible Review Panel meeting. 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. HVB requires at least five weeks to process your application so that it can be checked and reviewed.

There are two documents required for a BIV application:

- Application form which includes the case for support – Word document
- Letter of support – pdf format

#### BIV application form

The application should be led by an academic with input from the industrial partner. The lead applicant should complete the **application form**, available on the HVB website (<https://www.highvaluebiorenewables.net/funding/>).

The application form requests the following information:

##### 1. Applicant details:

*Lead (academic) and industry applicants: 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 publicly 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 sections:*

- *Outline of the work proposed (750 words)*
- *Project deliverables (200 words)*
- *Description of how your Project fits BBSRC IB scope for PoC/BIV Projects (200 words)*
- *The value of the Project outputs to the Industrial Partner (200 words)*
- *The value of the Project outputs in building a longer term relationship between the partners (200 words)*

### 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 agree 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 – HVB requires a Word format document to enable simple processing of the information for reviewers and the BBSRC reports.

### **Letter of support for BIV applications**

**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.** Both aspects must be covered and failure to do so will prevent your application from being reviewed. This letter must be signed by a person with recognised authority at the University, such as a Head of Department. This may be submitted as a pdf.

### **Submission of BIV applications**

Applications should be submitted by e-mail to: [hvb-network@york.ac.uk](mailto:hvb-network@york.ac.uk).

All applications will be acknowledged within four working days.

All information submitted is held in strictest confidence. The Management Board all sign a Management Board Agreement requiring confidentiality.

## 3b. PoC Application Process

### PoC Application Process

Three documents are required for an application:

- Application form which includes the case for support – Word document
- CV – pdf format
- Letter of support – pdf format

#### PoC Application form

The application should be led by an academic with input from the industrial partner. The lead applicant should complete the **application form**, available on the HVB website (<https://www.highvaluebiorenewables.net/funding/>). The form 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/ Research Office is also required. When the offer letter is issued, this contact will be copied into the email.*

*Additional co-applicants may be added as required.*

##### Industrial partner(s) details

*Name, position, company, e-mail and telephone. In addition, please supply the URL for the company, employee numbers and annual turnover for the last financial year.*

##### 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** as 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. **If you are unable to meet this timescale please do not apply for funds.** The maximum duration of a PoC project is 12 months.*

##### 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 agree 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. Equipment purchases are not eligible costs.*

*Please describe the contribution from the industrial partner – explain how the figure for the total contribution was calculated. For example, include cash contributions or outline how in-kind figures are calculated (daily rates for staff involved, travel costs etc).*

*Applicants are asked to declare whether they have any association or financial interests with the company named in the application. The Conflict of Interest section of this document (page 7) will help you to define what associations should be declared.*

#### **6. Other NIBB2 Funding**

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

*You are also required to declare if you have previously had PoC funding from any BBSRC NIBB (including Phase I) for any research related to the current application. Please explain why further PoC funding is required.*

#### **7. Technology Readiness Levels**

*Assess your project's current level and what level the funding will enable. If your project is funded, you will be asked to assess the level reached after the research has been completed. For The BBSRC's definition of TRL 1-5 are on the HVB website:*

<https://www.highvaluebiorenewables.net/funding/>

#### **8. Case for Support (up to 5 pages)**

*Text should be at least single-spaced, 11 point Arial (or equivalent) with a 2 cm margin. Applicants must use the specified headings so that the proposal can be reviewed against the evaluation criteria. Ensure that you cover all aspects, as marks cannot be given if information is missing. References cited and figures should be contained within the five page limit.*

##### **Context and details of the work proposed**

*(quality of science = 40% of the total marks)*

*Describe background context for the work and any data you have to support your project. You need to list any references cited. If you are relying on unpublished work to make your case, you need to provide enough evidence for reviewers to assess your claims. If you are unable to provide data because it is confidential, please contact us before you submit your application. Your project is unlikely to be funded as we have to be able to assess the scientific quality.*

*Explain what you aim to do and achieve in the project.*

##### **Relevance to HVB scope**

*(relevance to scope = 10% of total marks)*

*Explain what makes the project relevant to HVB and identify the IB elements.*

##### **Ethical, economic, environmental and social impact considerations**

*(economic, environmental and social impact = 10% of total marks)*

*Does the proposed work have any ethical implications? Describe how these will be addressed. Identify the economic, environmental and social impacts of the proposed*



*research and explain how you will deal with these aspects. It is highly unlikely that there will be no considerations.*

#### **Project management**

*(project management = 10% of total marks)*

*Detail how the project will be managed and describe the roles of all partners. List and describe milestones and deliverables within a timescale. Identify any critical milestones and risks and explain mitigation strategies.*

#### **Impact**

*(industrial relevance and pathway to impact = 25% of total marks)*

*Describe the impact of your project, paying particular attention to the industrial partner(s) or industries you will or hope to engage with. There is no need to attach letters of support from industry: evidence of support should be indicated through financial (cash or in-kind) contributions.*

*Describe your pathway to impact and how you will achieve the impact you describe.*

#### **Curriculum Vitae for PoC applications**

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

#### **Letter of support for PoC applications**

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. Ensure your letter of support covers both these aspects as 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 PoC applications**

Applications should be submitted by e-mail to: [hvb-network@york.ac.uk](mailto:hvb-network@york.ac.uk).

All applications will be acknowledged within four working days.

All information submitted is held in strictest confidence. The Management Board all sign a Management Board Agreement requiring confidentiality.

## **4. Evaluation Process for BIV and PoC**

### **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. Applicants must ensure that they are contactable (or nominate a colleague) during this time.

## 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.

## 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.

## Review process: BIV

A Review Panel will comprise a minimum of two representatives from the Executive Group (EG) and one representative from the Management Board (MB). Details of the current membership of both of these groups can be found on the HVB website (<https://www.highvaluebiorenewables.net/about/>).

In cases where insufficient members of the EG are available to review an application due to conflict of interest, an additional MB member will join the panel. 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.

BIVs are assessed by the following areas:

- 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

## Review process: POC

For each application, at least two reviewers will be selected from the Management Board and HVB Directors. Details of the current membership of both of these groups can be found on the HVB website (<https://www.highvaluebiorenewables.net/about/>). Review scores and notes are submitted to the Network Manager before the Review Panel. If there are large discrepancies in scoring, a third reviewer may be sought. If the third reviewer agrees with one of the original reviewers, the review panel may decide to adjust scores or may disregard scores that do not follow the scoring guidance. Quorum for the Review Panel is the Chair plus 5. If a reviewer cannot attend the meeting, the Chair will accept written reviews.

All applications are discussed at the Review Panel, and anyone who has a conflict of interest will recuse themselves from the room for discussion of that particular application. 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.

The review threshold for funding consideration for each individual criterion is 60%, 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

## 5. Notification of Review Outcome

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application once the BBSRC has approved funding and the BBSRC NIBB Extranet has been updated with award details. Successful applicants will be notified by the Network Manager, 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. The Network Manager may pass on specific feedback if the review meeting makes this available. We will not offer comprehensive feedback on proposals submitted.

### Resubmissions

Re-submission of proposals is permitted. Please complete the relevant section on the front page of the application form, detailing how the new proposal differs from the previous version.

## 6. Post-award Administration

### Confirmation of award

The Network will send an award letter to the Institution of the academic partner, summarising the terms and conditions governing the transfer of funds and confirming project start date. The University of York, as host of HVB, 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 has been signed.

**Awards are conditional upon the Project starting within 3 months of the date on the offer letter with the actual start date confirmed by email to the Network Manager. Funds must be spent as detailed on the application; **virement of funds between cost headings 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. The Network does not take responsibility for negotiations between partners regarding the development of a collaboration agreement.

### Reporting and payment

Three documents must be completed by the Principal Applicant at the end of the project: a final report form which includes a case study template to be completed, an expenditure statement, and an invoice from their Finance Department. These must be submitted **in one single email to: [hvb-network@york.ac.uk](mailto:hvb-network@york.ac.uk) within six weeks of the agreed end date.** 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 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. Note 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 (whether funded or not) 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 or PoC section of the Network website as appropriate. Case studies from completed projects will be used to promote the Networks outputs, for example, on the HVB website, in written reports, via Twitter and other media outlets.

BBSRC uses the supplied 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

### For reviewers

There are specific systems in place to safeguard the review process in cases of conflict of interest for reviewers. Any reviewer with a conflict of interest will declare it and will not participate in the review of that application. They will leave the room during the review panel. They may be present for the final discussion of the ranked list (unless they are a named applicant on the application).

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 review and all discussions of the project.

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. In this case, they may recuse themselves from all discussions of the project.

### For applicants

All academic Principal Investigators or Co-Investigators must declare any conflicts of interest with the named company. This information should be detailed on the application form, at the end of the Academic Finance sections