HVB EXPLORER AWARDS

GUIDELINES

DEADLINE: 11.00am Tuesday 12th November 2024

➢ Explorer awards are for short studies to explore a new area of research.

➢ **Two awards are available, of up to £10,000 at 100% Full Economic Cost (FEC); £8,000 at 80% FEC.** No match funding is required unless you have an industrial partner.

➢ Projects **must** be completed with reports and invoices submitted by 30th April 2025.

Contents

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1. Context

Description of the HVB Explorer Awards:

These awards are for short-term studies on a new area of research which may be a new direction inspired by your current research or adoption of a new technology for your existing research. For example, you may wish to undertake a desk study to explore the market for your current research in a new area of application, or you may wish to explore how machine-learning can impact on your research.

In addition, Early Career Researchers may apply to explore a new area which could support their development as independent researchers, for example, developing ideas for a fellowship application. Such applicants will need a sponsor who is eligible to apply for BBSRC funding to be the grant holder. All projects should consider the industrial applications of their work and outline potential for collaboration.

We especially welcome applications from HVB members who have not previously received HVB funding.

Project Scope

All projects must be in scope of the HVB Network and have a continuing industrial biotechnology (IB) component. Key elements to address are that:

- 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 across a range of industry sectors. Applications that utilise algae as the biological feedstock can be considered, however Algae-UK would be notified of the funding intention. It is highly unlikely that HVB will fund research on the development of algae production platforms or pathway engineering.
- **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[1].*

  The simple utilisation of a biological feedstock *is not sufficient* to meet this definition. Applicants must <u>make it clear how the project incorporates or feeds into a biological process/conversion,</u> or how the project outputs could be expected to do this in the future.
- Projects that focus on producing or testing animal feed are not in scope, nor are projects focussing on a single human disease, or projects that simply use plant or biological extracts.
- HVB does not fund screening projects, however screening could constitute a component of the project.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants

- All applicants must be HVB members **at the time of application**.
- The lead applicant must be eligible to receive BBSRC funding[2].
- Early career researchers (ECRs) who wish to apply should be named as the 'co-applicant' and the appropriate box checked on the application form. For the purposes of this call, ECRs should be within ten years of the award of their PhD but we are willing to be flexible should someone wish to pursue an independent research career.
- Note that lead applicants who receive HVB Flexible Funds to support staff costs would not be eligible to receive support under the BBSRC *New Investigator* scheme.

We do not expect projects to include an industrial partner, but you will be expected to explain potential industry interest in your idea. If you wish to partner with industry, we expect industry to make at least a 40% matched contribution (of the 80% FEC rate).

Finances

The maximum financial support that can be requested is up to £10,000 at 100% Full Economic Cost (FEC); i.e. £8,000 at 80% FEC.
- No more than 50% of costs may be subcontracted to service providers: this can include facility access charges, as well as business development services such as market appetite studies, life cycle analysis, techno-economic analysis, regulatory support.
- Purchase of equipment is not an eligible cost.

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[1] see https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/browse-our-areas-of-investment-and-support/bioscience-for-advanced-manufacturing-and-clean-growth/
[2] See https://www.ukri.org/councils/bbsrc/guidance-for-applicants/

- Explorer Awards are short-term, and all reports and completion documents **must be completed by 30th April 2024.** Do not apply for this award if these dates are not achievable for your project – this is not negotiable, we will not be able to pay your invoice after this date.
- All awards will be paid in arrears to the lead applicant.
- There are strict BBSRC rules on who may be employed on a project – refer to 'Finances' under Section 3 Application Process.

3. Application Process

Application Process

Three documents are required for an application:

1. Completed application form – Word document (not pdf)
2. Lead Applicant CV – pdf format
3. Letter of support – pdf format

1. Application form

The lead applicant should complete the application form. If an early career researcher wishes to apply, they should complete the form, ensuring they have support of their sponsor as a lead applicant.

1. Project title
A title for all projects is required.

2. Applicant details and Co Applicant(s):
Name, position, university, e-mail. A contact person in your Finance/ Research Office is also required who will be copied into emails when the offer letter is issued.
Additional co-applicants may be added as required.

Industrial partner(s) details
Name, position, company, e-mail. In addition, supply the URL for the company, employee numbers and annual turnover for the last financial year. Industrial partners are not essential for this call.

3. Public summary of project
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 potentially the BBSRC for public dissemination if the award is funded.
*This section should clearly state **how the project fits within an industrial biotechnology context** and the BBSRC will use this information to check that the proposal matches their criteria for Network funding. The summary is used to check any reviewers' conflicts of interest.*

4. Project dates
Please detail your start date. We anticipate awards will be made promptly, allowing time for awards to be made and any necessary paperwork to be completed. You will have up to one

month to start the project from the award of the grant. We expect projects will be approximately 3 months or less.

All projects <u>must</u> be completed and finalised paperwork returned to HVB by 30th April 2025 (see section 6 – reporting and payment).

> ****** do not apply for an award if you are unable to meet this timescale******

<u>5. Project finances</u>

- *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, you must agree how the 20% shortfall will be funded before you submit the application.*
- *Write a short justification of costs. HVB 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. 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.*
- *For projects with an industrial partner, detail the match funding and 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). Match funding from an industrial partner must be at least 40% of the amount applied for (at 80% FEC).*
- *Applicants must declare whether they have any association or financial interests with any industrial partner named in the application. The Conflict-of-Interest section of this document will help you to define what associations should be declared.*

<u>6. Technology Readiness Levels</u>

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

<u>7. Project details (maximum 3 pages)</u>

Text should be at least single-spaced, 11-point Arial (or equivalent) with a 2 cm margin.

Applicants should 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 three-page limit.

If you are relying on unpublished work to make your case, you must provide enough evidence for reviewers to assess your project.

Headings:

Project plan – describe what you aim to explore - research ideas or application of technology *(= 40% of the total marks)*

Explain what you aim to do and what this will achieve, including future ambitions for research or personal development.

Briefly describe any background context to indicate why you are a suitable candidate for the award.

Relevance to HVB scope *(= 10% of total marks)*
Explain what makes the project relevant to HVB and clearly identify the industrial biotechnology element.

Ethical, economic, environmental and social impact considerations *(=10% of total marks)*
Identify the ethical, economic, environmental and social impacts of the proposed activity and explain how you will deal with these aspects.

Impact *(= 20% of total marks)*
Describe the impact of your project and how you will achieve this. Indicate how your project will enable you to collaborate with industry and how it may impact on different sectors.

Project management *(= 10% of total marks)*
How do you plan to deliver this short project? Marks will be awarded for projects that give confidence that the work will be completed within three months. Explain any risks and what you might do to mitigate these.

Dissemination plan *(= 10% of total marks)*
We are interested in projects where you can share your non-confidential learning with the Network – how will you do this? There will be an opportunity for award-holders to present at the 2025 HVB Annual Meeting.

2. Curriculum Vitae

A short CV of the lead applicant (or the ECR applicant if the lead applicant is just acting as a sponsor) should be submitted.

3. Letter of support

A letter of support from the applicant's University is required confirming both acceptance of the 80% FEC rate <u>and</u> that the lead 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.

Submission

Applications should be submitted by e-mail to: hvb-network@york.ac.uk.
All applications will be acknowledged within one working day.
All information submitted is held in strictest confidence.

4. Evaluation Process

Initial checks

We will check your application is complete and that it is in scope. If we have further questions, we will contact you immediately. If we cannot resolve these issues, your application will not be reviewed. Note that the BBSRC has the final decision on scope.

Conflict of interest checks

Details of applicants, together with the public summary, will be circulated to reviewers to check for any conflicts of interest. Anyone who has a conflict of interest will recuse themselves from the review process.

Review process

A review panel of three will be drawn from the HVB Management Board and HVB Directors. All applications will be reviewed following scoring guidance. All applications will be discussed and ranked. Two applications will be submitted to the BBSRC for funding approval.

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

Criteria	% contribution to total score	threshold level required
Novelty of research ideas or application of technology	40	24
Relevance of application to HVB scope	10	6
Impact	20	12
Economic, environmental and social impact consideration	10	6
Project management, confidence to complete work	10	6
Dissemination plan	10	6

5. Notification of Review Outcome

The Network will notify applicants of the outcome of their application once the BBSRC has approved funding and the BBSRC NIBB Extranet has been updated with award details. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed promptly. The Network may pass on specific feedback if the panel makes this available. We will not offer comprehensive feedback.

6. Post-award Administration

Confirmation of award

The Network will send an award letter to lead applicant's institution, summarising the terms and conditions governing the transfer of funds and confirming project start date. **Projects cannot start until this has been accepted**.

Awards are conditional upon the project <u>starting within 1 months of the date on the offer letter</u> with the actual start date 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.**

Applicants 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 this.

Reporting and payment

Two documents must be completed by the Principal Applicant at the end of the project:
1. a short final report form, including an expenditure statement
2. an invoice from their institution

These must be submitted in one single email to: <u>hvb-network@york.ac.uk</u> by 30th April 2025. There is <u>no alternative</u> to this reporting process, and part-claims will be returned until all the required

documents are presented together. You will not be able to claim the award if it is submitted after the deadline.

Final project reports are approved by the HVB Executive Group.

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 HVB reviewers and HVB staff, who use information provided in processing of 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 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 X, LinkedIn 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 UKRI's 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 reviews. Examples of a conflict of interest include:

- being 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),
- being in receipt of personal remuneration more than £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.

For applicants

All academic lead applicants or co-applicants must declare any conflicts of interest with any named company. This information should be detailed on the application form where indicated.