

# Engineering Biology Breakthrough Awards

## Frequently Asked Questions

These frequently asked questions are provided as guidance to applicants on common queries. Applicants should contact us if further clarification is required or if they have queries which are not covered here or in the main call text.

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### Scope

#### 1. What is the purpose of the Breakthrough Awards?

Engineering biology has the potential to impact across a wide range of sectors and applications and this opportunity aims to build on the UK's world leading position and promote multi- and inter-disciplinary research, seeding the development of high-risk, breakthrough ideas that have associated high pay-off.

As UKRI partners continue to develop the case for a National Engineering Biology Programme, this is the first opportunity that will build on the thematic focus, identified in consultation with the UK engineering biology community, and will lay the foundations for future opportunities.

Projects are expected to be small and of short duration and accommodate risk.

#### 2. I wish to propose the development of an idea in a field outside of my areas of expertise. Is this appropriate for the call?

Yes, while capability to deliver is assessed, this is based on the identified expertise and skills offered by the applicant teams, rather than the track record of individuals. The primary assessment criteria is the quality of the breakthrough idea.

#### 3. I already possess preliminary data, would my breakthrough idea be considered novel?

Perhaps, this is subject to your written application. It should be explained in your Case for Support why your proposed idea is novel and not an incremental adaptation or improvement on existing research. The novelty and risk of the idea will be considered by the panel. Preliminary data does not exclude your participation.

#### 4. I wish to generate some preliminary data for a subsequent application to UKRI competitions. Is this appropriate for the call?

Yes, in principle. This competition will support early stage investigations into novel ideas in engineering biology and the generation of data that could form the basis of future proposal is accepted, however it should not be the focus of the application. The high-risk nature of this opportunity should encourage applications that have a chance to succeed, and develop impact, and also projects that will generate negative results. As such, generation of preliminary information should not be the main driver of this competition.

#### 5. My proposed research isn't entirely within UKRI-BBSRC's remit, what should I do?

This opportunity is being delivered by UKRI-BBSRC on behalf of UKRI partners. As long as the application is within the scope of the competition and aligned with the discovery-

inspired engineering biology themes in the call text, the remits of the associated UKRI partners (UKRI-BBSRC, UKRI-EPSC, UKRI-NERC and UKRI-MRC) will not impact the potential of the application. If you are unsure about whether your planned research would be appropriate for this call, please send an outline (no more than 2 sides of A4) of what you plan to do to [engbio@bbsrc.ukri.org](mailto:engbio@bbsrc.ukri.org) and UKRI staff will be happy to advise you.

## Assessment

### 6. What is the membership of the assessment panel?

The streamlined assessment will use a broadly-based, multi-disciplinary panel with appropriate expertise. The panel membership will be published once the assessment is concluded.

### 7. Will I get an uplift as a New Investigator or with an industrial collaborator?

No, these uplifts do not apply in this call.

## General

### 8. Can a series of scientifically linked proposals be submitted together?

This is not advised. All applications are assessed separately, and each proposal must be able to stand alone and not rely on the successful funding of other related applications.

### 9. I am currently eligible for New Investigator status, will a successful application to this competition impact on my eligibility?

Potentially. Different UKRI partners employ distinct policies and practices, please explore the respective guidance documents to establish whether this opportunity will impact on your eligibility. The following summarises some intricacy that you may want to consider when developing your application:

- o A person receiving competitive funding from any source as a PI on a grant that includes staff support costs for a Postdoctoral Research Assistant (PDRA), will no longer be eligible to apply for to UKRI-BBSRC or UKRI-NERC as a New Investigator.
- o As the grant is less than three years in duration, under current criteria this will not exclude a person receiving competitive funding from being eligible for a UKRI-MRC New Investigator Research Grant.
- o Your eligibility for EPSRC New Investigator Awards will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, if you have lead on a project which includes more than 6 months PDRA time, capital equipment in excess of £20k or single research grants over £100,000 (fEC). You would need to provide EPSRC with information on the value of the project and what your role was, both in terms of obtaining the funding and on the project itself to consider whether you would be eligible as a new investigator.

### 10. I previously submitted a grant application that was unsuccessful. Can I submit the proposal to this call?

Any proposal related to a previously unsuccessful grant application must comply with UKRI-BBSRC's resubmission policy (see [UKRI-BBSRC Grants Guide](#)). Exceptions to this rule apply, whereby an application was rejected previously for being too high-risk to receive funding. Applicants are advised to contact the office prior to submitting an application if they are concerned that their project may be considered a resubmission.

Applications that are deemed to constitute uninvited resubmissions will be rejected from the call.

**11. Can I involve industrial partners in my application?**

Yes. Private sector and international partners are welcomed in the involvement of applications. This opportunity will not fund businesses nor international partners, as such the nature of the collaboration and the role of the industrial partner should be made clear in the case of support. Please note that UKRI-BBSRC is only able to provide funding to eligible research organisations (see [UKRI-BBSRC Grants Guide](#) for further information).

**12. When is the outcome of the call likely to be known?**

We are unable to give a precise date by which outcomes will be announced. It is anticipated that we will be able to notify applicants in October.

**13. Will applying to this competition restrict the possibility of me receiving further funding from the upcoming Transition Awards opportunity?**

The two funding opportunities are distinct with independent eligibility criteria and review processes. Assuming that you meet the eligibility criteria for both opportunities, you can submit an application towards both opportunities and participation in the breakthrough awards will not hinder your application towards the Transition Awards. Further information on the eligibility of the Transition Awards will be available upon the launch of that competition.

**14. Will there be any opportunity to seek further support for ideas beyond this opportunity?**

After completion of these 12-month awards, UKRI-partners will explore further opportunities to support the development of breakthrough ideas in engineering biology. As we continue to develop the proposed National Engineering Biology Programme, further opportunities to support breakthrough ideas may arise, however applicants should also consider the range of responsive and open opportunities offered by UKRI partners as means to further develop novel ideas.

## Contact

If your question has not been answered by the information given above, please contact UKRI-BBSRC staff on [engbio@bbsrc.ukri.org](mailto:engbio@bbsrc.ukri.org) and we will do our best to answer your question.

**UKRI-BBSRC on behalf of UKRI**

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