

2021/22 sLoLa call: FAQ

Version 1.1 June 2021

Version History

Version	Description	Date
1.0	Initial publication	6 May 2021
2.0	Updated following webinars <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paragraph 3. More detail regarding eligibility of early-career researchers.• Paragraph 7. Further information on rules regarding international applicants.• Paragraph 8. Reworded for clarity.• Paragraph 24. More detail regarding FEC rules for equipment purchases.• Minor edits to improve readability	8 June 2021

This FAQ should be read in conjunction with the information on the UKRI funding finder for the [current sLoLa call](#) and [BBSRC's Grants Guide](#).

Project team

1. Are cross-institutional and cross-departmental bids welcome?

Yes. Applicants are asked to note that both outline and full stage submissions must be made on a single JeS form with one Research Organisation identified as the lead. This Research Organisation will be responsible for the management of the award.

All applicants should consider the management approach and how this will support the effective working of the team and successful delivery of the outcomes where this spans different physical locations.

2. What team size might be acceptable?

The team size and number of research organisations should be appropriate for the delivery of the project – there are no limits on the number of staff. However, clear roles for all applicants must be identified within the proposal and at the full stage, all resources and roles must be fully justified.

3. What do you envisage the contribution of an early-career researcher could be? Could their presence be detrimental to the proposal?

The contributions of individuals to the project should be determined by the need for their expertise, skills and knowledge.

In addition to relevant scientific expertise, we expect the Principal and Co-Investigator team to demonstrate that they have the capability to successfully lead, manage and deliver a programme of work of the proposed scale and complexity. This does not preclude involvement of early career researchers within the co-investigator team.

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Please note that at the time of application, all applicants (PI and Co-Is, including any early-career researchers in these categories) must have contracts of employment at lecturer level or equivalent that extend to beyond the duration of the proposed grant. Alternatively, we require an assurance from the submitting organisation that, if the proposal is successful, a pre-existing contract of employment (or pre-existing formal commitment to provide support if not employed at the organisation) at lecturer level or equivalent will be extended beyond the end date of the grant. These requirements do not apply to Researcher Co-Investigators. Please refer to Section 3 of the BBSRC Grants Guide for further information.

4. Can additional Co-Investigators be added after the registration or outline stage?

Yes, provided they meet BBSRC's eligibility requirements. We recommend notifying BBSRC of such changes before submission. Major revisions to the scope of the project between outline and full stage are not permitted, unless in response to feedback.

5. Is there a minimum requirement for Principal Investigator time?

We do not set a minimum requirement for Principal Investigator time committed to the project. However, it should be appropriate to the delivery of the project and be clearly justified within the text.

6. What is an appropriate track record and critical mass?

Applicant teams will be assessed for their suitability to deliver the sLoLa project. We have not set specific requirements in terms of prior funding but expect a relevant track record of competitively awarded prior support within the team, as well as evidence of relevant research expertise and outcomes from all members of the team. There is no requirement for the PI to have held a sLoLa- scale award previously but they would be expected to be able to evidence that they have the necessary leadership and management skills to lead the project. There is no longer a requirement for a set number of prior BBSRC-funded awards from the PI.

Eligibility

7. Are international applicants allowed?

No. Standard BBSRC eligibility criteria apply, as described in Section 3 of the BBSRC Grants Guide. All applicants must hold a post at an eligible institution.

International project partners, collaborators and subcontractors are allowed. Please refer to Section 2 of the BBSRC Grants Guide for further details and contact us if you require further advice on what is appropriate for your project.

8. Are sub-contracts or project partners allowed?

Yes, our standard rules apply. BBSRC considers eligible institutions to be best placed to

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determine how their work is undertaken. Sub-contracting aspects of the work to non-eligible institutions, for example due to the lack of appropriate expertise in eligible institutions, is acceptable. See Section 2 of the BBSRC Grants guide for further information about sub-contracting.

9. Are investigators eligible if they are partly based abroad but have positions at UK HEIs?

Yes, if they meet the criteria (including the requirement for residency) as described in Section 3 of the BBSRC Grants Guide.

10. Can PhD studentships be included as part of a proposal?

No. Studentships and/or student resource may not be requested, or included, on BBSRC research grant proposals, including sLoLa projects. BBSRC studentships are only available through application to the various BBSRC training award schemes. Further information is available on the BBSRC website (bbsrc.ukri.org/skills/).

11. What is the definition of early career in the context of sLoLa?

BBSRC does not apply a strict definition of ECR in the context of the sLoLa call. There are no eligibility criteria applied in relation to ECR involvement, other than BBSRC's standard eligibility criteria.

12. Can we include researcher co-investigators to these proposals?

Yes, this is permitted. Information on research co-investigators is available in BBSRC's Grants Guide, Section 3.11.

13. Can UKRI Future Leader Fellows be part of the team of applicants (while continuing their fellowship)?

UKRI Future Leader Fellows can be on the team of applicants but they must refer to the terms and conditions of their award for the time commitment they can give to other projects as well as BBSRC's standard eligibility criteria. We recommend you contact UKRI's Future Leader Fellowships Team if further information is required fellows@ukri.org.

14. If a PI from a previous sLoLa round is successful can they be a Col on a new sLoLa proposal?

Yes. As outlined in the call text, restrictions on eligibility apply to investigators only being eligible as PI on a single sLoLa. Investigators may be co-investigators on other sLoLa projects provided they are able to make the necessary time commitment.

Call registration

15. Does the PI or the institution submit the registration?

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While either the PI or Institution can submit a registration, we expect that the PI should engage with their university research office and any sift or prioritisation process that is in place at their Research Organisation **at all stages** of the application process.

BBSRC will notify the designated university contacts of every registration submitted at the same time as confirming to the Principal Investigator. This will enable universities to have a clear picture of registrations from their Research Organisation.

16. Can a previously unsuccessful proposal from a sLoLa or other call be resubmitted for the current call?

Identical resubmissions are not permitted. This will be a highly competitive call and substantive changes to the work programme would be expected for this to be considered. Please email the sLoLa team if you have questions related to a previously unsuccessful outline or full stage proposal prior to submission.

17. Will small changes be allowable post-registration? For example, addition of co-investigators when additional expertise is deemed necessary during the development of the proposal?

Yes. At the registration stage, only information about the anticipated team is required.

18. Is it worth applicants contacting BBSRC before registration to talk through their proposal?

Please email the sLoLa Team inbox bbsrc.lolagrants@bbsrc.ukri.org with your questions in the first instance. Where necessary, we would be happy to arrange to speak with applicants.

Scope

19. Would proposals that build on previous large investments (which are no longer active) be permitted or disadvantaged, due to similarity with previously funded work?

We expect proposals to make a distinctive, major contribution to the BBSRC portfolio in the context of current and/or previous investments where relevant. Providing it is appropriately recognised and justified, work that builds on previously funded programmes will not be disadvantaged. New proposals developed from prior large investments should be able to demonstrate that they will deliver an appropriately transformational step change in meeting the aims of the sLoLa scheme.

20. Are bids expected to contain a significant outreach element to confer impact?

A range of actions to ensure impact is realised should be considered for all proposals, appropriate to the nature of the proposed work. Resources can be requested to support this provided they are justified. We recognise there are many forms of impact and that these can be delivered through a range of measures, though the scope of the call means projects are unlikely to be directly translational. BBSRC's updated guidance on impact is available at <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/update-impact-in-ukri-bbsrc-grant-applications/>

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Resources and budget

21. What financial information is required at the registration stage?

No financial information is required at the registration stage.

22. What financial information is required at the outline stage?

Only indicative costs are required by UKRI-BBSRC at the outlines stage. Research Organisations are therefore advised to take a pragmatic approach to costings as these may be revised in the full application and do not undergo detailed assessment at the outline stage.

23. What financial information is required at the full stage?

A full breakdown of the requested costs and resources is required at the full stage and all requests need to be fully justified.

24. Can one request large equipment (above OJEU limit) on a sLoLa?

Equipment may be sought as part of a sLoLa proposal, where the items of equipment requested are necessary for the successful delivery of the proposed research. Items of multiple-use equipment (i.e. where the equipment is necessary for the pursuit of the proposed research but will not be fully occupied on it) may also be sought. The proposal must set out the other proposed uses and explain the overall benefit to BBSRC science of the equipment investment being sought.

Equipment of value *below* £10,000 will be funded at 80% FEC. Equipment of value *above* £10,000 will normally be funded at no more than 50% FEC.

Items of equipment to be used in the development of new instruments may be funded at up to 100% FEC. Please contact us to discuss whether your request would be eligible under this exception. More detail on what constitutes instrument development can be found in the UKRI guidance: <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/UKRI-261120-EquipmentGuidance.pdf>

Applicants should refer to the guidance on equipment in Section 5 of the BBSRC Grants Guide for detailed information <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/grants-guide/>

25. Do you expect institutional commitment / financial contribution on sLoLa?

Our normal fEC rules apply to the sLoLa scheme. There is **no requirement** for a financial contribution from the institution. At the full stage, a letter of support from the Head of Department (or equivalent) is required confirming any relevant institutional support.

26. Is there an upper limit for individual proposals?

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Proposals must be over £2 million (100% FEC project value) and can be up to five years in duration. We anticipate awarding 3-5 sLoLa grants in the 2021/22 call and the indicative total budget is £16 million. **No upper limit** is specified for the value of individual proposals, though resources and justifications for the project to be delivered via a single sLoLa award (rather than a series of smaller awards) form part of the assessment criteria. Previous sLoLa total award values have ranged from approximately £2.0 million – £6.6 million.

27. Will the budget allocated to the individual Committees for the RM selection round be influenced by the possibility to have sLoLas in that round?

The indicative budget for the sLoLa call is in addition to the budget allocation for standard responsive mode proposals and not linked to a particular Committee.

Assessment

28. How quickly will feedback be given after registration?

Feedback on proposals will be given as soon as possible after you have registered. Registering in advance of the deadline will give you more time to take onboard any feedback from the registration provided by the office. We will aim to get back to all applicants within ten working days of registration; however, our ability to respond in this timeframe will be dependent on the quantity of registrations that we receive which typically peaks close to the closing date.

29. What is the expected composition of the Strategic LoLa Committee (SLC)? Are members selected from Responsive Mode Committees?

The SLC membership will be tailored to the submissions received to the 2021-22 call. The SLC membership typically includes members of BBSRC Council, Responsive Mode Research Committee Chairs, members of BBSRC's Core Committees and Pool of Experts, and additional co-opted expertise as required. The membership is overseen by BBSRC's Appointments Board.

30. Are all assessment criteria weighted equally?

Proposals will need to meet **all** the assessment criteria to a high level to be competitive. We have provided indicative section lengths in the guidance for the Case for Support to help guide the appropriate amount of information to include in relation to each of the criteria. There is no explicit weighting of individual criteria.

31. Who attends the interview?

The interview is attended by the Principal Investigator and up to two Co-Investigators.

32. How important are the interviews to the decision-making process?

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Interviews form the final stage of assessment by the SLC. The SLC will consider all aspects of the full stage of assessment, including documentation, external reviewers' comments and the PI response to these, the full stage panel assessment as well as additional information from the interview in making its final funding recommendation to UKRI-BBSRC.

33. What feedback is given to applicants during the call process?

Feedback is provided at registration, outline and full stages.

Future calls

34. When will the *next* call be?

Future calls are subject to confirmation but will likely have a similar timetable. While the scope for a future call may remain in Frontier Bioscience, it will be subject to review and will incorporate learning from previous sLoLa calls.