UKRI and BioImagingUK

Expression of Interest (EoI) for Pilot UK Community Access Nodes for Euro-BioImaging

Contents

Overview:

Euro-BioImaging (EuBI) is the European landmark research infrastructure for biological and biomedical imaging as recognised by the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), operating through a hub and spoke model across partner countries and institutions. Through EuBI, life scientists can access imaging instruments, expertise, training opportunities and data management services that they might not find at their home institutions or among their collaboration partners. EuBI was granted the legal status of an ERIC (European Research Infrastructure Consortium) on 29 Oct 2019, and EuBI became fully operational in December 2019, having operated in a limited interim capacity since May 2016.

The mission of EuBI encompasses two main aims:

- To provide access, services and training to state-of-the-art imaging technologies for all life scientists in Europe and beyond
- To foster the liaison and cooperation of all its stakeholders (including scientists, industry, national and European authorities)

This pilot aims to source applicants for a shared "Node" of bioimaging infrastructure for community access within the UK, with successful Nodes dedicating a fair proportion of spare capacity for the wider EuBI community - fostering collaborative opportunities both within the UK and between the UK and EuBI.

Identification of pilot UK Nodes for EuBI is open to all UK-based imaging facilities who are able to offer sufficient capacity for use by EuBI members.

Lead applicants should be eligible to receive UKRI funding and be associated with a UK imaging facility (please see the BBSRC Grants Guide for eligibility guidance). Applicants can either apply on behalf of a single facility, or a group of facilities offering a network that offers added value to the user over access to a single site.

We encourage applications from UK-based imaging facilities that can:

- Demonstrate technical and scientific excellence.
- Describe in detail how the facility will add value to the users' research.
- Demonstrate sufficient capacity to allow additional access through EuBI collaboration.
- Show that named facilities and associated staff are sustainable and supported for at least the next 5 years

This pilot is jointly administered by UK Research and Innovation – Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (UKRI-BBSRC) and BioImagingUK. For any queries, please contact EuBI@bbsrc.ac.uk

Guidance Notes:

1. All sections are **mandatory**, please complete all sections as fully as possible.
2. **No financial information** is required, as funding will not be offered.
3. Please use bullet points/tables as appropriate for readability.

Section Overview:

Section A	Institution & Facility Summary & Document Checklist
Section B	Alignment with assessment Criteria
Section C	Node Portfolio Information
Section D	Privacy Notice

Table 1 - Expression of Interest Form Sections

Section A asks for basic information regarding the institution & facility composition.

Section B addresses how your proposal would align with the assessment criteria. The assessment panel will wish to understand the **particular specialism** of the facility, be it in provision of scarce high-end technologies, methodological or technical expertise, training, storage or interpretation and analysis of results.

Section C concerns portfolio information which will be informative to allow us to understand the make-up of the facilities supported.

How we will assess your application

Applications will be assessed by a multidisciplinary panel of experts covering scientific, technical, managerial and user aspects of equipment provision and management. **External reviews will not be sought.**

Facilities will be assessed based on scientific and technical excellence, ability to offer access and support to external users, and added value offered to user research. In the event that a number of similar applications are received, selection of candidate Nodes will involve a strategic element to ensure a balanced portfolio is offered that aligns with UK national requirements and those of Euro-BioImaging. (EuBI). We advise candidate Nodes to evaluate EuBI's technology portfolio (EuBI's new technologies) and the wider capabilities of EuBI when considering the technology, skills, expertise, and resources of the proposed Node.

While no financial contributions from host institutions are required, statements of support are essential, in particular those that provide assurances of the continuity of support for the facility.

The following assessment criteria (not listed in order of priority) will also apply:

1. Demonstrable technical and scientific excellence of the facility, or the group of facilities submitted.

Applications will be assessed on the stated scientific technical excellence of the facility, and their ability to offer access to outstanding imaging facilities. Applicants will be asked to provide evidence to confirm their statements, which can be in the form of user statements, publications or other evidence (including, for example evidence of technology development or collaborations).

2. The ability of the facility (or facilities) to accept and manage external users and longer-term sustainability

Applicants will be asked to describe the capacity of the facility that can be offered to external users, the sustainability of their facility and how the user access process will be managed.

3. The added value that the facility will provide to the users' research.

Applicants should explain how accessing and using their facility will significantly add value to users' research. This will likely be through usage of advanced technology, but may also be achieved through access to unique training, user support, access to advanced sample preparation or innovative methodologies, or support for data analysis, data management or software.

The final Node structure is intended to be a portfolio of facilities that present a range of distinct capabilities that significantly advance the users' research. Applicants should be mindful of what their outstanding or unique offering will be, taking into account the current UK and European bioimaging landscapes.

Research technical professionals

As the first funder to sign the Technician Commitment, UKRI recognises the value of technical expertise to the UK research workforce and is committed to ensuring 'visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability for technicians working in higher education and research, across all disciplines.'

Applicants should detail how staff roles will support the use of the equipment and how they will be supported in their careers. Please refer to the UK Research and Innovation statement of expectations for technology/skills specialists and UKRI-BBSRC's website https://bbsrc.ukri.org/skills/developing-careers/research-technicians-technology-skills-specialists/

The table below dictates an outline of Section B where assessment criteria should be addressed:

Section	
B1	Information regarding applicant's overall technical excellence
B2	Defining added value to the user of facility access, up to and beyond hardware access (scientific areas, technological progress, relevance to UKRI priorities).
B3	Detailing user access pipeline and logistics, including training requirements, collaboration prerequisites.
B4	Quality Control of Node Activities (user satisfaction and project success)
B5	Defining intra-facility administration processes (Node creation and operation)
B6a	Future Node administration (engagement with EuBI project)
B6b	Community Interaction (plans for broader national community engagement)

Table 2 - Assessment Criteria (Section B) Overview

Supporting Documents

Supporting documents must be included (see table in section A) in **PDF format.** For multi-institutional Nodes, supporting documents must be provided by all hosting institutions (in a single PDF file).

Guidance for Letters of Support (LoS)

Please ensure that all letters of support are on headed paper and that they are signed and dated **within 6 months** of the date of submission of the proposal. Only directly relevant letters of support should be submitted. **A maximum of 10 letters of support** combined from prospective and existing users (see table below) demonstrating community demand should be provided. Collaborative letters of support may be provided as necessary. All letters of support plus a tabulated summary should be collated and attached as a **single PDF.**

UKRI-BBSRC expects letters of support aimed at demonstrating demand to explain clearly the impact and benefit of the proposed resource on the writer's research and the associated community and if possible where this research has demonstrated particular scientific, economic or societal impact. Letters of support that fail to do so, in particular template letters indicating generic support without identifying a particular usage, are of negligible value for the assessment and should not be submitted. Carefully chosen letters containing relevant evidence of the requirement/ benefit to be gained, are of greater value than a large numbers of letters.

Guidance for Letters of Commitment (LoCs)

Letters of Commitment must confirm the following from all facilities comprising the proposal:

1) The proposal is supported in full by all named facilities.
2) Facilities are suitable to host users at the capacity stated within the application.
3) The named facilities and associated staff are sustainable and supported for at least the next 5 years.
4) All facilities understand there is no financial commitment from UKRI-BBSRC at this moment.

Deadlines & Contact Details

Please submit all required documents via email to EuBI@bbsrc.ac.uk **by Monday 26th July 2021, 4pm**

If you have any questions, please feel free to email us at EuBI@bbsrc.ac.uk

Section A: Institution & Facility Summary

A1: Applicant Details

INSTITUTE	
CONTACT POINT / ADMINISTRATIVE LEAD FOR NODE PROPOSAL (name, role and e-mail address)	
NAME OF EXISTING FACILITY (where applicable):	
ADDITIONAL INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED AND ASSOCIATED CONTACT POINT (if a multi-sited Node is proposed)	

A2. Document Checklist

Attachment ID.	Attachment Description	Included?
AT1	Letters of Support from Node users for whom new or expanded capacity is planned[1,2]	☐
AT2	Letters of Support from Existing Users[1,2]	☐
AT3	Letter(s) from host institution(s) confirming capacity, open access capability, and sustainability at least until 2026 (Letter of Commitment)[1,3,4]	☐
AT4	List of publications, outputs, activities in support of excellence statements excellence and added value)[5]	☐

[1] Multiple Letters of Intent (AT1, AT2, AT3) should be included as a single PDF wherever possible.
[2] AT1 and AT2 combined can total **no more than 10 letters**
[3] Please ensure AT3 is signed by the legal representative of the applying institution and stamped accordingly
[4] In the case of multi-sited Nodes, AT3 should be provided by **all hosting institutions**.
[5]Please ensure research publications and outputs directly reference host institutions wherever possible

Section B: Assessment Criteria

B1. Scientific Research Excellence of the Facility

Please summarise the expected scientific and technical impact of providing the agreed degree of access[5] to your imaging facility, including the key scientific areas where your Node expects to be able to support users and make world-class contributions - e.g. for the addressed research field and other fields, significant technological progress, new and improved connections to industry, and relevance to UKRI strategic priorities (max 1000 words). Please also consider how the technical excellence of the associated staff and their training/skills contribute to the overall excellence of the facility.

[5]EuBI may expect access up to 50% of available facility capacity, though available capacity can be defined by the given institution

B2. Added Value of the Facility Beyond Technical Excellence

Please describe the value added to the user and their research from utilising the facility. This may include (but not limited to) value beyond access to advanced technologies, e.g. access to advanced sample preparation techniques or facilities, training, methodological support, or post-imaging analysis. If you are proposing to establish a multi-sited Node, please specify the added value this model provides to the user over a structurally simpler single-sited Node model for the offered technology / technologies (max 500 words).

B3. Facility Access, User Journey, and Associated Logistics

From the user's point of view, please describe the expected procedure for users to access your Node and associated services, i.e. will this be in person or virtual, which facilities are available for physical visits, what is the data ownership model (does the user own data or does the Node demand collaboration?). (max 250 words).

B4. Quality Control of Node Activities

Please provide a plan for quality control of Node activities (covering monitoring of user satisfaction/gathering, considering, and acting upon feedback, and project success in terms of published results, follow-on grants etc). Please state if such systems are already in place in your facility and proposed Node structure (max 250 words).

B5. Facility Administration

Please describe how you will manage all relevant aspects of administration and coordination of Node creation and operation, including organisation of a single point of contact at the Node (max 250 words).

B6. Future Node Administration and Community Engagement

B6a. Future Node Administration

Please describe how the future Node will manage engagement with the EuBI project. In particular, you should address whether they are willing/able to interact with EuBI via a consortium model through a single UK point of contact, or prefer to interact with EuBI individually via a point of contact based at the facility itself (max 250 words).

B6b.Community Engagement

Please describe how the facility plans to engage with the broader national community, including future plans for community engagement (max 250 words).

Section C: Node Portfolio Information

C1: Node Type

Please tick/complete as appropriate:

	Single Site (Will provide the complete service package in a single location)	Multiple sites(Service package distributed across multiple sites)
Single Technology Flagship Node	☐	☐
Multimodal Technology Node	☐	☐

C2. Imaging Technologies and Data Science Capabilities

C2a. Imaging Technologies

Please select Keywords that match your facility. If your facility is multi-modal technology, please select all that apply. For "other" technologies, please write in the text box provided.

Biological Imaging:

Correlative Light Electron Microscopy	☐
Functional Imaging, In Vivo Optical Imaging	☐
High Throughput/Content Microscopy	☐
Mesoscopic Imaging	☐
Multi-modal Advanced Light Microscopy	☐
Super-resolution Microscopy	☐
Other	

Molecular Imaging:

Hybrid technologies	☐
Multi-Modal Molecular Imaging Including MRI/MRS	☐
PET/SPECT	☐
Preclinical Imaging	☐
Ultrasound / CT	☐
Other	

Medical Imaging:

High-field MRI	☐
MRI-PET	☐
X-ray Phase-Contrast Imaging	☐
Other	

C2b. Data Science Capabilities

Imaging Data Types Supported	
Electron Microscopy	☐
Light Microscopy	☐
Medical Imaging	☐
All Data Types	☐

C3. Fields of Excellence

Please select any of the below scientific fields in which you consider your facility has a track record of technical excellence.

Cell Biology	☐
Clinical Research and Clinical Studies	☐
Developmental Biology	☐
Interventional Radiology	☐
Microbiology	☐
Neurobiology	☐
Physiology	☐
Plant Biology	☐
Preclinical/Animal Research	☐
Structural Biology	☐
Other	

C4. Additional Facilities

Please select any additional facilities / capabilities that apply to the proposed Node below. Please bullet additional facilities available to users not listed where relevant.

Containment Level 3 Lab	☐
Tissue Culture	☐
Data Analysis	☐
Computing Resources	☐
Software Expertise	☐

Other	

C5. Offered Instruments & Quality Assurance

Please summarise/list the technologies (make/model of instrument) that you are intending to offer. Further information regarding how the facility manages quality assurance (QA) (covering maintenance of instrumentation, services, and procedures) should be included in the field below (max 250 words).

Instrument Type	Manufacturer	Pre-existing QA processes?

C6. Instrument Capacity

Please specify the technical and staff capacity the proposed Node can provide, focusing on up to five core technologies of the Node. Please refer back to section C2 for Instrument Types, and provide capacity values in User Hours per Calendar Year unless otherwise stated.

Instrument Type	Data	Hours per Calendar Year
	Number of Current Users	
	Total Instrument Capacity	
	Spare Instrument Capacity	
	Spare Technical Staff Capacity	
	Number of Current Users	
	Total Instrument Capacity	
	Spare Instrument Capacity	
	Spare Technical Staff Capacity	
	Number of Current Users	
	Total Instrument Capacity	
	Spare Instrument Capacity	
	Spare Technical Staff Capacity	
	Number of Current Users	
	Total Instrument Capacity	
	Spare Instrument Capacity	
	Spare Technical Staff Capacity	
	Number of Current Users	
	Total Instrument Capacity	
	Spare Instrument Capacity	
	Spare Technical Staff Capacity	

Section D: Privacy Notice

UKRI BBSRC carries out the processing of personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 (functionally equivalent implementation of EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in UK Law).

The information that you provide as part of this application process will only be used by BBSRC and BioImagingUK for the purposes of assessing your application and informing our understanding of the current portfolio. Your contact details will be used to inform you of updates to the process and as a record of your participation in the process for audit purposes.

If you do not agree to your data being used to this effect, please let us know in your response.

Information gathered will be used by BBSRC, alongside data gathered through other exercises, to provide a dialogue that facilitates strategy development. The personal data provided will be retained on our systems for as long as is required to carry out processing for the purposes outlined above. By providing your information you are consenting to its use as detailed above. You can access a copy of the UKRI Data Protection Policy here.