

Bioscience Big Ideas Pipeline: submission guidance and frequently asked questions

BBSRC is seeking to engage with its broad stakeholder communities to gather and develop ambitious and exciting ideas that could lead to new research and innovation activities and/or help shape the future of UK bioscience.

BBSRC's Bioscience Big Ideas Pipeline is an open call through which any member of the community can engage with us to help inform our future plans and priorities. It is not a funding opportunity or call for proposals, and there is no dedicated funding aligned to this activity. Instead, it is a consultation tool aiming to ensure we remain engaged with our stakeholder's perspectives when we drive forward existing priorities, shape our future priorities, and represent bioscience in the wider research and innovation landscape.

Between October 2023 and January 2024, BBSRC is running a time-limited call for ideas. All ideas submitted during this period will be batched and collectively reviewed and prioritised by a specially convened 'Big Ideas Panel'. After the January closing date, the pipeline will remain open, and ideas submitted will be considered bi-annually by BBSRC's most appropriate Strategy Advisory Panel.

General points of guidance to remember when submitting an idea

- Big Ideas are not individual research projects; they go beyond the scale and scope of what can be supported through BBSRC's existing funding mechanisms, and often require the involvement of multiple stakeholders to be realised.
- The aim of Big Idea is to benefit the community as a whole and thus strengthen the UK research landscape, a Big Idea is not about securing funding for an individual research project.
- Once an idea has been submitted you are giving BBSRC permission to use this information to steer the development of that idea. This might include inviting other people to be involved in (or potentially lead) an idea's development. Or it may involve your idea being drawn together with other ideas, so that they can be developed as a single idea, combining their strengths and leadership to produce something truly transformative.
- In describing your idea, please use non-technical language and consider the audience. The language that is used in the form should be wholly accessible to a wide range of audiences, such as research council staff members, non-experts (including other researchers who are not working in the field/s described) and government.
- Ensure that when describing this opportunity you convey the excitement, vision and inspiration of the idea.
- The submission template provides some guidance as to the sort of information we'd expect to see in each section, and which will help BBSRC fully understand the idea.
- These ideas will develop over time with support and expertise from BBSRC and other experts. We envisage that the wider community will be invited to provide feedback on prioritised ideas and themes.

Frequently asked questions

Is this a call for proposals for funding?

No, this is not a call for proposals. There is no direct funding associated with this activity. This is an opportunity for the community to pitch their Big Ideas to BBSRC.

BBSRC is looking to **generate and prioritise** a number of ambitious and exciting ideas, with potential to deliver or enable transformative scientific, economic or societal impact. These may inform the development of BBSRC strategy, and could potentially attract investment at a later stage, as opportunities arise. Please ensure that when completing this form you write with this in mind – that is, we are looking for ideas at this stage, not a research proposal.

Ideas will need to be championed and driven with the support of the relevant community or communities. Please be aware that, if prioritised, an idea may require other people to lead or be involved in its development. This will be discussed as part of the process of developing an idea further beyond the initial submission.

BBSRC may put you in contact with others who have submitted similar ideas in order to develop the idea further, but will seek your permission to do so first.

What is a Big Idea?

Examples of the nature of the ideas that we would like to receive include (but are not limited to):

- a distinctive and well-defined challenge requiring new impetus to tackle
- discovery research areas that represent a potential step change in knowledge, but cannot be tackled through conventional approaches
- an idea that would be enabling (if successful) and would generate further breakthroughs and outputs in multiple other areas of science
- building research community capability in emerging technologies, research areas and disciplinary interfaces
- ideas that require multidisciplinary approaches or new ways of collaborative working to be delivered

Multidisciplinary ideas are encouraged, but the ideas submitted to BBSRC's Big Ideas Pipeline should demonstrate clear relevance to the advancement of bioscience research or its application.

What is not a Big Idea?

Ideas that meet one or more of the following may be considered out of scope:

- an idea that is achievable now, through existing funding routes
- a research grant proposal
- an idea pursued by an individual working independently without any further engagement from the relevant research and stakeholder communities
- an idea that is completely undeliverable, regardless of the level of investment and resource provided, or which is scientifically impossible
- something that is generally well known already as a challenge, or is already being addressed through dedicated action
- an idea solely addressing a market need where there is no need for input from the broader bioscience community

Who can submit a Big Idea?

Anyone can submit an idea. BBSRC is seeking to engage with its broad stakeholder communities. However, we would recommend that you discuss your idea with a group of interested parties or stakeholders. When submitting an idea, provide as much information within the form as possible.

Is it possible to submit ideas at the interfaces of remits with other funders?

Yes, we would expect submissions to BBSRC's Big Ideas initiative to be focused in the biosciences or, if broader, for the biosciences to play a major role. If you are unsure about the remit of your proposed idea, please contact us at email: bigideas@bbsrc.ukri.org.

However, we recognise that truly Big Ideas will often require working across disciplines and sectors. We work together with UKRI's other councils to identify potential synergies across our remits, nurturing ideas in a connected and agile way, wherever the idea may be submitted. We will engage with colleagues in the other councils, as appropriate, on submissions that cut across council remits.

[Read more about the other councils' ideas processes and pipelines.](#)

BBSRC uses Big Ideas to help inform and shape future priorities. Does this duplicate the work of Strategic Advisory Panels or other horizon-scanning activity?

We take strategic advice from a number of sources, including Strategy Advisory Panels, workshops, community consultations and others. Using Big Ideas to further inform our plans and priorities is one strand of activity that complements our formal advisory channels, and is a route open to all members of our stakeholder community.

What happens to Big Ideas once submitted?

This section provides guidance for the call for ideas October 2023 to January 2024.

- 1) Prior to submission, we encourage you to contact BBSRC to discuss the basis of your idea.
- 2) Submit your idea to us, using the form and guidance provided. We encourage you to:
 - Focus on the potential of the idea
 - Be bold and creative
 - Work with others.
- 3) BBSRC will consider the fit of your idea to the call's scope and BBSRC's remit. You will be contacted to confirm that your idea will progress through the pipeline.
- 4) After 12 January 2024 BBSRC will consider the ideas submitted and convene a bespoke Big Ideas Panel to review submitted ideas. The panel will consider:
 - your written submission's transformative potential, timeliness, potential social and economic impacts, and potential to drive forward BBSRC strategic goals
 - existing activity and investment in the area of your idea
 - themes emerging from the portfolio of submitted ideas
 - potential next steps toward realising your idea

- 5) BBSRC's Executive Leadership Team and BBSRC Council will oversee the prioritised longlist and consider the advice of the Big Ideas Panel. Originators will be informed of an idea's priority status and potential next steps.
- 6) Ideas that are considered of high priority may require additional scoping and community consultation, we envisage that this will happen in the late spring of 2024.
- 7) Submissions that are not considered to be of high priority will be held on a longlist and reviewed regularly by BBSRC's Strategy Advisory Panels. Should their priority change, you will be notified regarding next steps.
- 8) We will publish the longlist of ideas on UKRI's website including the idea's title, short summary, and your name as its originator.