



Biotechnology and
Biological Sciences
Research Council

2025/26 strategic Longer and Larger (sLoLa) grants: frontier bioscience

Webinar

29 April 2025, 12:00

Welcome: we will be starting shortly

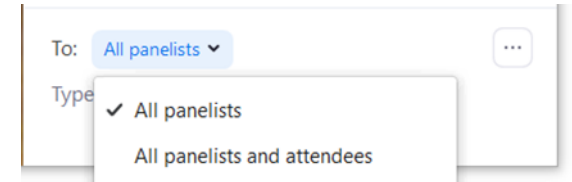
<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/strategic-longer-and-larger-slola-grants/>

Introductions

- Panellists
 - **Megan Rafter**, Senior Portfolio Manager – Rules of Life
 - **Dorothee Kommer**, Portfolio Manager – Rules of Life
 - **Annabel Thompson**, Portfolio Manager – Research and Innovation Funding delivery
 - **Inbal Ringel**, Senior Portfolio Manager – Research and Innovation Funding delivery
 - Peter Burlinson, Head of Strategy – Rules of Life
- sLoLa team point of contact bbsrc.lolagrants@bbsrc.ukri.org

Technical notes

- By default, attendees are muted and video is turned off.
- Submit any questions that arise as the webinar progresses via the **Q&A** function
- Please only use the chat function for any technical assistance during the webinar
 - Bear in mind your zoom name will be visible in the chat



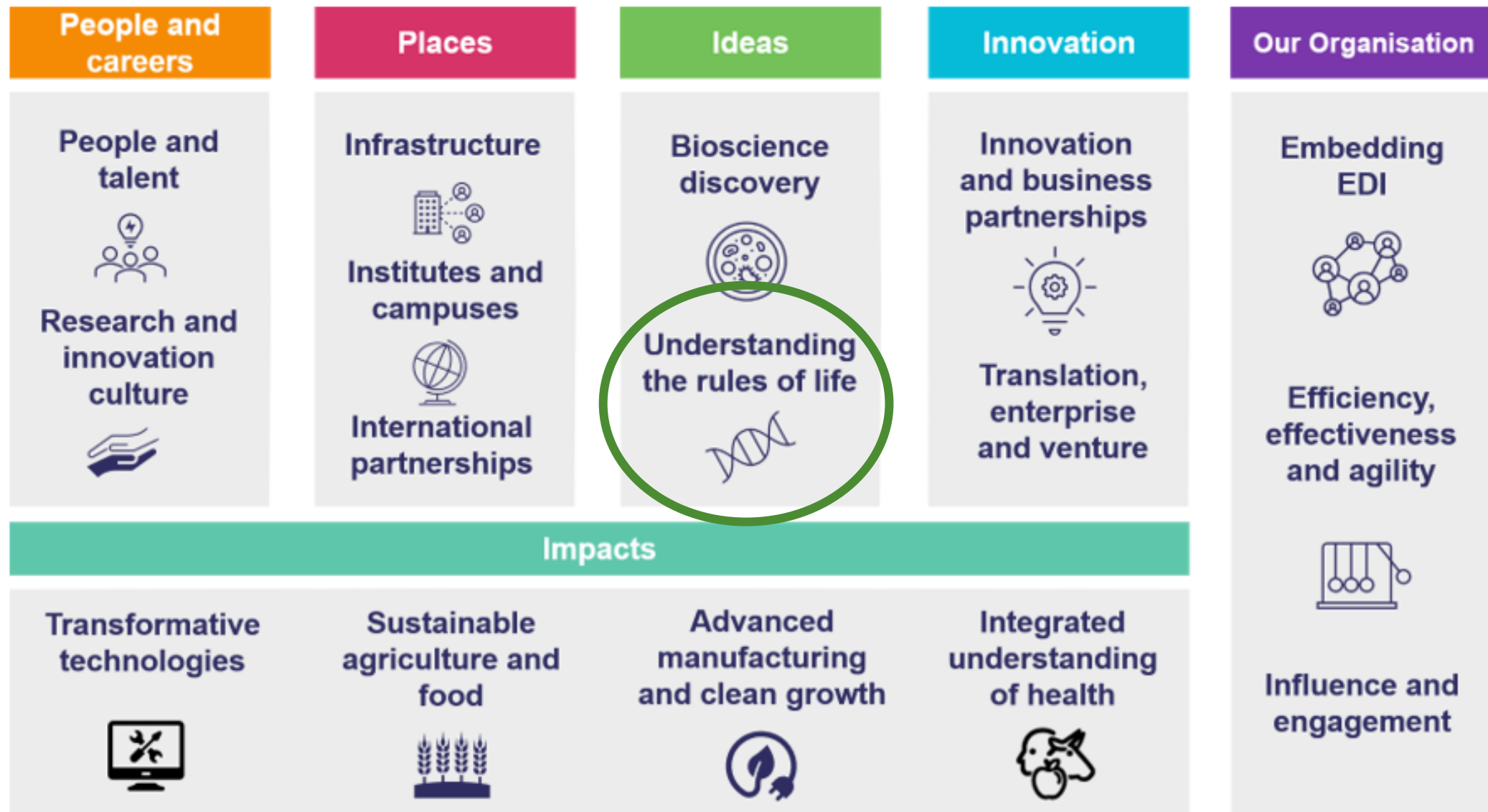
Questions

- You can submit questions during the webinar via the **Q&A** function
- Questions can also be submitted to bbsrc.lolagrants@bbsrc.ukri.org at any time
- Detailed questions about a specific proposal which are unlikely to be relevant to other attendees should also be sent to the inbox
- Questions about the UKRI Funding Service system should be emailed directly to support@funding-service.ukri.org

Purpose of the webinar

- Provide an overview of the 2025/26 sLoLa funding opportunity
- Highlight key expectations
- Ensure applications are appropriately targeted

Background – Frontiers sLoLas and BBSRC strategy



What is BBSRC looking for in a Frontiers sLoLa?

- **Exceptional science** at cutting-edge of field
- Addresses the **frontier bioscience** scope of the call
- Employs a **team science approach**
- **Requires a longer- and larger-scale research programme** to achieve aims
- Strong strategic case for funding – potential to **significantly enhance the capability and capacity of UK bioscience**

Frontier bioscience scope

- Potential to lead to major breakthroughs in our fundamental understanding of living systems
- Generates knowledge with broad and long-term significance to bioscience
 - May be no route to identifiable applications
- Likely to require or develop cutting-edge approaches or methods
- Likely multidisciplinary



Team science

- An opportunity to bring together multiple researchers to address a complex challenge
- Your team should be the best team to deliver the proposed programme of work in a national context
 - Typically, involving multiple research organisations or departments
 - Bringing together researchers from range of backgrounds and different career pathways and stages
 - Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) should be considered
- Complementarity and ‘added value’ of each team member should be clear
 - Covering all experimental, analytical, managerial and leadership requirements

Team science leadership

- Project Leads are **not required** to have led a similar scale research programme previously
- Applicants can adopt distributed leadership and management models to share opportunities and responsibilities across the sLoLa team.
- The sLoLa team (project leads and co-project leads collectively) should demonstrate competency to lead a complex, multi-site project
- Plans for mentoring, support and professional development of researchers in their early career stage and technicians in relation to leadership, management and scientific writing should be highlighted within the application

Longer and larger scale

- The sLoLa mechanism is designed to support integrated programmes of research over a longer timeframe and at a larger scale than a standard grant
- Must demonstrate that the work requires a single larger scale award to be carried out
 - Clear synergy and interdependency between work-packages
 - Plan for integration of outcomes from individual work-packages
 - Project summary diagram in 'Approach' section
- Full justification for every element of research programme



Strategic case

- Research programmes should be distinctive and outline how they will significantly enhance the capacity and capabilities of UK bioscience
 - For example: impact on knowledge, generation of resources, skills development
- Proposals that overlap with existing large-scale investments will be at competitive disadvantage
- Should identify and justify distinctiveness vs any other existing large-scale programmes within the research landscape
- Describes plans for ensuring long-term legacy and uptake of project outputs

The 2025/26 sLoLa call

- £20M available in total for projects each >£2M
 - Our budget is limited (expected to fund 4-6 projects)
- Application and assessment process is designed to identify and prioritise the most robust proposals of the highest quality at each stage
 - Conduct peer review effectively and efficiently
 - Manage time and effort for applicants
 - Manage reviewer, committee member, and BBSRC office resources
- We are looking for world-leading research programmes

Application process

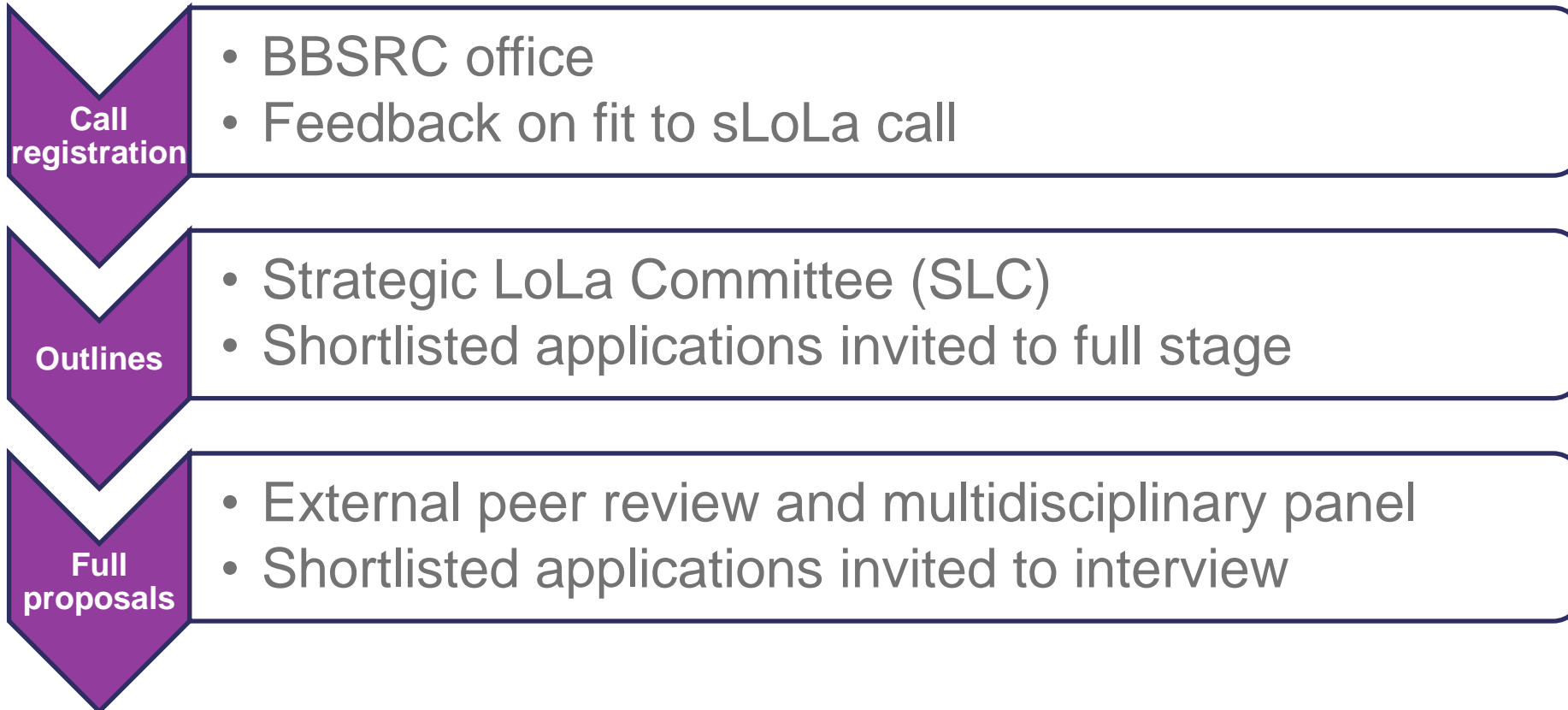
Call registration is mandatory
Full information is on the call webpage



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Assessment process

Details of what happens at each stage are in the call guidance document



Call registration

- We are using the call registration to:
 - Ensure all potential outlines are appropriate for the call
 - Provide an early indication of the research areas and overall level of demand
- You will receive feedback and advice on whether we recommend you submit an outline application, within 10 working days of the registration deadline.
- There is scope to adjust objectives and teams after registering, provided the overall focus is broadly the same.

Outline stage

- **Application sections:**
 - Vision
 - Approach
 - Strategic case
 - Applicant and team capability to deliver
- No letters of support, management plans or costs required at this stage
- Will be assessed solely by the **Strategic LoLa Committee** (no external peer review)
- Feedback will be provided to all applicants regardless of outcome

Full stage

- More detailed 'Approach' section plus other sections:
 - Management strategy
 - Resources
 - Animal use, Ethics, Letters of Support, etc.
- Changes to team from outline allowed (following BBSRC approval).
- Two assessment stages:
 - **Full proposal** assessed by **external peer review** and **multidisciplinary panel**.
 - **Interview** by **SLC** for those teams whose projects are recommended by the multidisciplinary panel
- Full stage launch will be supported by webinar

Assessment criteria

Outline and full stage criteria

- **Vision**
- **Approach**
- **Strategic case**
- **Applicant and team capability to deliver**

Additional full stage criteria

- Management strategy
- Resources and cost justification

Summary

- Read the guidance text on the funding finder page.
- Address all aspects of the assessment criteria and the call scope.
- Ensure you communicate your proposal clearly, for both subject specialists and a more general scientific audience.
- Consider team composition carefully. Collaborative teams need to be able to demonstrate full synergy and capability to work together effectively.
- **If in doubt, please contact us for advice: bbsrc.lolagrants@bbsrc.ukri.org**



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Common questions and answers - 1

Q. Can researchers outside the UK be included in the core team?

A. No. To be eligible as project lead or project co-lead, applicants must meet BBSRC's eligibility criteria and be based at an eligible UK organisation. The "Project co-lead (International)" role is not available for the sLoLa scheme.

For further details about eligibility see:

[Organisation eligibility – UKRI](#)

[Applicants and co-applicants – BBSRC – UKRI](#)

Q. Can researchers outside the UK be included as project partners?

A. Yes, international researchers can be included as a project partner. Please note that no costs can be claimed on behalf of project partners.

Additionally, international subcontractors are allowed. Please refer to [BBSRC guidance for applicants](#) for further details.

Common questions and answers - 2

Q. Is it possible to include funds for PhD students and postdocs on sLoLa projects.

A. Funds associated with PhD students are not eligible on sLoLa grants. Postdocs can be costed on sLoLa applications as a “Research and innovation associate”, or “Researcher co-lead”.

Q. Can applications come from one research organisation? If so, does it have to be multi-departmental?

A. Applications can be submitted by a team from a single research organisation. There is no requirement for the project to be multi-departmental, but sLoLa applications by nature multidisciplinary, so it would be unusual for an application to meet the requirements for an sLoLa if it was from a single department.

Q. How many applications would you expect to be invited through to the full stage?

A. We typically receive 40 applications to the outline stage, of which approximately 15 will be invited to submit a full application.

Common questions and answers - 3

Q. As sLoLa projects are focussed on fundamental science, would applications involving stakeholders be at a disadvantage as they might be seen as applied?

A. No, so long as the project clearly outlines how their work will improve our fundamental understanding of living systems.

Q. What is the typical length of an sLoLa project

A. The maximum award is 5 years. Most sLoLa projects are 4 or 5 years.

Q. Can time for an administrative project manager (non-academic) be included on the application?

A. Yes, we encourage the inclusion of grant managers to support the delivery of projects of this size. The time required would vary by the project and team involved, and their inclusion should be justified and subject to peer review.

Common questions and answers - 4

Q. Is geographical spread of participating organisations assessed?

A. No. The team should be the right team to deliver the proposed project.

Q. What is the expected team size of an sLoLa project?

A. There is no expected team size, we expect applicants to bring together suitable teams for the proposed research that are sufficiently justified in their application. We have funded teams from 10 – 23 team members in previous sLoLa opportunities which includes research and innovation associates and support staff.



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Thank you

Please use the Q&A function to ask
any questions

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/2025-to-2026-strategic-longer-and-larger-sola-grants/>