

ALERT 2025 applicant webinar Q&A

This document summarises the key questions and answers (Q&A) that were raised at the ALERT 2025 applicant webinar on 5th November 2026. Any questions relating to the content should be directed to bbsrcalert@bbsrc.ukri.org

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Applicant team and collaborators

Can an equipment supplier be a project partner?

Yes, an equipment supplier can be a project partner. A project partner is a collaborating organisation who will have an integral role in the proposed project and should include those contributing to the successful establishment of the equipment, rather than researchers intending to use the equipment.

Is there a limit on the number of co-applicants?

No, there is not a limit on the number of co-applicants. However, the principal applicants should be those who are actively involved in the running and operation of the equipment. Collaborators

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can be detailed on the application, but they do not necessarily need to be added to the core team.

Are research officers considered under the RTP job description or title?

Please read BBSRCs updated wording regarding RTPs [on our website \(UKRI.org\)](https://www.ukri.org/our-work/our-funding/bbsrc/) to see whether the Research Officers you have in mind would be eligible. If you are unsure of eligibility, please contact bbsrcalert@bbsrc.ukri.org to discuss.

Regarding the costs section, we have previously received negative comments from panel about not entering staff time - although it can't be funded it does show commitment to maintaining and operating the equipment.

Staff costs are ineligible for ALERT. However, you should indicate the % full time equivalent (FTE) allocated to each applicant named on the project in the Costs and Resources section of the application. This will help the Panel understand how staff time will be used to operate the equipment.

Can you say anything about how EDI should be incorporated into proposals please? There seems to be a change in the guidance to previous years.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) should be discussed in the sustainability section, you should explain how EDI has been considered within the application, for example equitable access in the design and use of the asset. You may wish to reference relevant research organisation strategies and policies which support EDI as they relate to access to equipment and facilities. You should indicate how your proposed project has been designed and will be delivered with broad access in mind.

Fixed grant start date

If the grants are awarded May or June 2026 - what exactly is the 3rd of August 2026 deadline about? It is hard to get equipment in 2-3 months.

May or June 2026 is the date we aim to inform applicants if their application was successful. August 3rd 2026 is the date you need to start the grant by, which then has a 12-month duration. Procurement should be completed and equipment largely installed within the 12-month period.

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Funding and VAT

Does the £200,000 lower limit include the whole cost of the proposal - e.g. equipment plus service contract?

Yes, the minimum you can request from BBSRC is £200,000. We will not consider exceptions.

Is the £200,000 to £1.5 million including or excluding VAT? If the equipment is VAT exempt, should the cost in the application be ex VAT?

You may seek the costs of between £200,000 and £1.5 million in value, including VAT if applicable. Managing VAT exceptions on equipment is the responsibility of the research organisation. If the research organisation is confident that they meet HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) criteria for exemption, then they can submit costs without VAT and state in the application that the equipment is VAT exempt. In such cases, if the value is pushed just below the minimum £200,000 threshold because VAT has been excluded, then this will be accepted, but the equipment must have breached the £200,000 minimum cost before any VAT is discounted.

Is it a direct award to the preferred supplier or a tendered process?

If an application is successful, then funds will be paid directly to the lead Research Organisation who are responsible for the procurement process. Where there are several suppliers, your Research Organisation's procurement processes should guide you on their requirements for a tender process. You must obtain three quotes for the equipment, from multiple suppliers where possible, and use these as the basis for completing the 'Resources and cost justification' section. You are not required to attach quotes to your application. However, if you are successful, we may ask you for quotes prior to award. If there is only one supplier, then you need to explain that there is only a single supplier in the Resources and Cost Justification section of the application and justify your reasoning for the single supplier.

For Institutional support - what weight is given to this by panels? Given the financial situation in many places this is becoming challenging to find.

The institutional support aspect is important to ensure that the host organisation is aware of the application, and that relevant staff support, and space can be provided. The challenging financial situation in HEIs and ROs is recognised and taken into account. Contributions from host research organisations and other external sources are welcome but not mandatory. These may take the form of a cash contribution but can also include e.g. providing training on the equipment.

Additional costs that can be requested

Can a service contract for 3 years (or longer) be included?

Yes, a service contract for 3 years can be included. Service maintenance contracts may extend a maximum of 24 months past the end date of the award (36 months in total), but the contract cost must be paid within the lifetime of the grant (12 months). Where a compelling case can be made for warranties and service contracts extending beyond 36 months, these will be considered if appropriately justified.

ALERT Panel composition

Could you give us an idea of the composition of experiences of those who sit on the Review Panel? I am particularly interested to know if any of these are RTPs and if there are bespoke experts.

The ALERT panel comprises ~30 people, of which several are RTPs, facility managers, researchers with expertise in the use of equipment etc. [BBSRC Research Committee Membership](#) is published online post panel meeting.

Preliminary data

Of the projects listed on the application - how many are expected to contain preliminary data? Can preliminary data be representative of what could be achieved with the proposed equipment? So not necessarily generated using the proposed equipment.

There are no expectations regarding the extent of preliminary data. In the Vision section, the applicant(s) should provide a detailed plan of research which includes a description of the type of projects that will be supported by the equipment, with sufficient experimental detail to allow the panel to assess the quality of the research, including preliminary results where possible.

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Remit and scope

If the use should predominantly be in BBSRC remit does that mean that it should be predominantly used by projects or planned projects currently funded by BBSRC? Or as long as the work is in remit does it matter if equipment users are not funded by BBSRC?

As long as the planned work is predominately in BBSRC remit it does not matter if the equipment users are funded from elsewhere.

For equipment which is relevant for both BBSRC and MRC research areas, how should we assess eligibility? Does at least 50% usage by BBSRC-funded research qualify?

There is not a set percentage amount. The more relevant the usage of the equipment to furthering BBSRC-relevant research, then the more competitive the application is expected to be. As long as the planned work is predominately in BBSRC remit it does not matter if the equipment users are funded from elsewhere. [Read more about the BBSRC remit](#) and the [BBSRC/MRC funding interface](#).

Given that the MRC pulled their equipment call this year - what impact do you see that having on this year's Alert round?

We anticipate that this may cause an increase in applications. We ask that you make sure that your application is predominately in BBSRC remit before you decide to submit. [Read more about the BBSRC remit](#) and the [BBSRC/MRC funding interface](#). We will reject applications that are not within BBSRC remit.

I am somewhat confused by the description of pipeline/platform in the guidance. Could you possibly give me more concrete examples?

There are a few examples of platforms and pipelines that were funded through previous ALERT calls, and you can read about [on our website \(UKRI.org\)](#). Essentially, a 'pipeline' is an end-to-end experimental process made up of several components that may require assembly. Each component of the pipeline could perform separate experiments, but you must demonstrate how the components are used as a whole system, and it must be used in its entirety by a user. A 'platform' is a single piece of experimental equipment that may be constituted from multiple parts - these individual parts are only capable of running experiments when they are assembled to form the final platform. If you are unsure whether your application qualifies as a platform or pipeline, then please contact bbsrcalert@bbsrc.ukri.org.

Resubmissions

We previously applied to replace a key instrument which originally was funded in 2013 BBSRC alert, we applied in 2023, and were not successful, we are preparing to apply by addressing the feedback received - are we eligible to apply in this round?

ALERT does not accept unsolicited resubmissions, please contact bbsrcalert@bbsrc.ukri.org if you intend to resubmit.

Trusted Research & Innovation

Please could you elaborate a bit more on the international partners and trusted research and innovation? As this is capital investment, there may be future research projects for which this will be relevant, but these may not be known at the time of submission of the bid.

You are correct - you cannot know all the research projects that may use the equipment in the future, and these cannot be included in the bid. We would suggest that you reflect on how any new proposed projects will comply with the TR&I principles and expectations and your organisational TR&I policies, identifying potential risks and the relevant controls you will put in place to reduce these risks.

Other

Panels need to be briefed that UKRI has *mandated*** equipment replacement costs in TRAC (although I've seen no real feedback on how this should work and how it affects this call). Last year this didn't seem to be understood.**

Regarding Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC), this is indeed a live and difficult issue. UKRI is currently gathering information about the impact of the proposed changes to TRAC and

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considering how best we can accommodate this in assessment. We will make sure the panel are appropriately briefed.

Will you be providing a recording of this webinar?

Yes, the Webinar recording will be made available in the 'Additional info' section on [ALERT 25 funding opportunity webpage](#).

Is there a final report required if awarded?

We do not request final reports for ALERT funded equipment, but we are always keen to stories about how the equipment is being used.