



Department  
for Environment,  
Food & Rural Affairs



Biotechnology and  
Biological Sciences  
Research Council

# BBSRC Defra Diet and Health: Collaborative Research and Development Grants

## Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for your interest in the [BBSRC-Defra Diet and Health: Collaborative Research and Development Grants Opportunity](#). If you have further questions, please get in touch at [dietandhealth@bbsrc.ukri.org](mailto:dietandhealth@bbsrc.ukri.org).

### **Q1: What type of feedback will be provided by BBSRC after the Notification of Intent (NOI) stage and before the full stage opens?**

A1: We will provide light touch feedback and will let people know whether they have been invited to apply to the full stage.

### **Q2: Will the NOI stage be triaged or scored in any way?**

A2: We won't be scoring the NOI stage but will base the assessment on meeting the scope and remit of the opportunity and on having an appropriate project partner.

### **Q3: Would a pharmaceutical company be considered a suitable industry partner?**

A3: Yes, providing:

- their contribution to the project is clearly outlined and justified and within the scope of the call
- they are registered in or have a manufacturing base in the UK or they will provide the relevant services in the UK
- results will be exploited in the UK

## **Q4: Would this call fund a clinical trial?**

A4: BBSRC may support human studies that investigate normal human physiology, behaviour, or function. Such trials must focus on understanding biological mechanisms in healthy individuals or population groups that are generally healthy. Interventions within these studies must not be designed to diagnose, prevent, or treat specific diseases, nor assess therapeutic effects on clinical conditions.

Eligible trials may include those examining nutritional, behavioural, or physiological responses in generally healthy volunteers, provided that the research aligns with BBSRC's remit and the specific scope of the Diet and Health: Collaborative research and development grants opportunity, and does not constitute clinical or medical intervention related to disease management.

You might like to refer to the [MRC and BBSRC statement on joint working](#) which defines the remit boundary between the two councils.

## **Q5: Does the academic partner need to be a member of one of the OIRC hubs?**

A5: The [OIRC hubs](#) are free to join so we would encourage applicants to join any of the hubs that they are interested in, but this is not mandatory for this call.

## **Q6: Would a food charity who runs a food bank be considered a suitable industry partner? It does not manufacture foods, but redistributes surplus foods to reduce waste and help the poor.**

A6: We would encourage the applicant who has asked this question to go back to the call criteria on industry contributions and consider how they will deliver in terms of scope. If there are any concerns as to the eligibility of a charity for this call as an industry partner, please email us at [dietandhealth@bbsrc.ukri.org](mailto:dietandhealth@bbsrc.ukri.org) and we can provide further detail.

## **Q7: What sort of activities or costs are considered as part of the in-kind contribution of industry partners?**

A7: The [collaborations page](#) on the BBSRC website covers what we consider to be in-kind contributions. It's things like expertise, staff time, or use of facilities.

## **Q8: Are applicants expected to address all outputs or just one or more?**

A8: One or more. We don't necessarily expect projects to fulfil every single one of these outputs because the nature of their research programme might not touch on all these cross-cutting themes. The more themes you can address, the better, but if you address one of these outputs, that would be sufficient in terms of the scope and the remit.

## **Q9: If you have your own small business, can this be your industry partner?**

A9: A small business can be an industry partner, provided they meet the criteria laid out in the opportunity text. If they can contribute the 30%, or part of it if you have other industry partners in your consortium, then a small business is welcome to join on this opportunity. Where there may be a conflict of interest, please note that we would expect a proposed plan for managing that conflict to be included in the most appropriate application section of the Full Stage application as normal.

## **Q10: Are there no costs or justification at the NOI stage?**

A10: No, we haven't asked for costs or justification at this stage because we wanted to keep the NOI stage quite light-touch, but you will have to provide these if you are invited to the full stage.

## **Q11: Do you need to be involved with the Phase 1 or Phase 2 [of the overall Open Innovation Research Clubs programme] to be eligible to apply, or have an advantage?**

A11: This current call is aligned to the main programme. We've discussed membership above, so it's maybe helpful if you are familiar with the hubs and know what has been funded previously/ the type of activities. However, this will not provide an advantage as we will assess applications on the basis of the quality of the science, the scope and remit. You do not have to be involved with Phase 1 or 2.

## **Q12: Can the application be made as a collaboration from two academic institutions and an industry partner?**

A12: Yes. We need one clear lead applicant, the project lead, but then you are free to bring in more partners (industry or academics or third parties as well). Please make sure you only include eligible applicants in the core team section of the funding service application form. Industry partners must be included in the Project Partners section of the application form.

## **Q13: Are there any expectations regarding IP management and a rising IP, such as patenting?**

A13: Not at the NOI stage, no. Whilst we are still developing the full stage, we do not currently have any specific guidance for this opportunity. However, we do have general guidance applicable to this call available on the [BBSRC collaborations webpage](#). We can also refer you to the [UKRI Terms and conditions: RGC 12 Exploitation, impact and acknowledgement](#), and the [associated guidance](#).

## **Q14: The lead partner and industry partners must be UK-based. I think I also heard that any academic partners must be UK-based. Is this correct, or can international academic partners be included?**

A14: International partners – academic or industry - **must not** be included in the core team because they're not eligible for our standard BBSRC funding. However, you can include them as project partners if they meet that criteria, so they would have to give either a direct or indirect contribution. Please see the [BBSRC collaborations webpage](#) for more information on what is expected of project partners.

## **Q15: Do we need to have a prior successful grant or project with any of the hubs that makes this application more likely to be funded?**

A15: We are not basing the assessment criteria on previous involvement with the hubs. You do not have to have a previously funded project through the hubs to apply, and this does not form part of the assessment criteria.

## **Q16: Do I understand correctly that even if you are not invited to submit following the NOI, you can, in theory, modify your proposal to respond to the feedback and apply anyway, or do you need to be invited to apply to the next stage? [I.e. is the NOI strictly a screening step?]**

A16: Yes, the NOI is a screening step, and it is mandatory, so you will need to be invited from the NOI stage to the full stage. You will not be able to respond if you have been rejected, that will be a hard reject unfortunately.

## **Q17: Could an industry partner act as a subcontractor, as well as provide in-kind?**

A17: There is the capability to have somebody who is both a project partner and a subcontractor. We can consider this a dual role. However, it must be fully justified, and it would be subject to peer review. That means that you could receive recognition as a project partner for the elements of your contribution to the project that are integral which you wouldn't get if you were included only as a subcontractor, and we would expect the project partner costs to be minor. But where there's project work that needs to be undertaken that's more significant and would include other costs, then you could be contracted and therefore included as both. Please see the BBSRC [collaborations page](#) for more details.

## **Q18: I have a question about clinical trials.**

A18: We would, strongly advise you to contact us directly, giving us a brief outline (no more than 2 pages of A4) of what you're intending to do – objectives, work packages, because we need to look at these on a case-by-case basis and can give you feedback. In some cases, we may share these outlines with our sister research councils so that we can be sure whether the remit fits exactly with BBSRC or is better suited to another council.

## **Q19: Is there a minimum award level?**

A19: No. We will fund projects up to £800,000 full economic cost, and BBSRC/ Defra will fund 80% of this £800,000.

## **Q20: Is there a requirement for Technology Readiness Level (TRL)?**

A20: There's no specific requirements for TRL. However, just to emphasize that we will not fund fundamental research as part of this call. So, yes, I would encourage applicants to think in more detail about if this applies to their application.

## **Q21: Does the project need to be full three years, or can it be between two, two and a half years?**

A21: It's up to 3 years, so it can be a smaller amount of time, but the project cannot be over 3 years (36 months).

## **Q22: Is there an expectation for NHS involvement?**

A22: No, again, there are no specific expectations, but if you want to bring eligible NHS bodies to your application as part of your consortium, that's fine.

## **Q23: Are there any specific experience requirements for the chief investigator, and specific requirements for the team?**

A23: The main thing is to check that you meet our [eligibility criteria](#) for each of the different roles. This lays out what we would expect for a project lead, a project co-lead, a researcher co-lead, and so on. My advice would be to go away, read those roles, and if you do have any uncertainty, or you're not sure if somebody's eligible, or whether another role would fit better, of course, please do email us at [dietandhealth@bbsrc.ukri.org](mailto:dietandhealth@bbsrc.ukri.org).

## **Q24: If adding international partners, the research must still focus on the UK?**

A24: Yes, because we've asked that the results will be intended to be used for the UK, and again, thinking of Defra's involvement and the new food strategy, we're very much looking at delivering against national UK strategy through this call as well, so it would have to be quite UK-centred. Please note that international collaborators must not be added to the core team as this would render the application ineligible. However, it may be appropriate to add international collaborators as a project partner if they provide the expected contribution. You can find out more details on the [BBSRC collaborations page](#).

**Q25: If you are invited to submit a full application, will the proposals be reviewed by academics or industrial experts? And what about the panel composition? How many grants will be funded?**

A25: We're intending to have a mix of both academic and industrial experts, because that's fundamentally what we're asking you to apply with, and therefore we want to make sure we have the right expertise to be assessing everything you're putting in. The large advantage for us of the notification of intent stage is we will be able to have foresight of the types of things you're intending to put in, and therefore we can match our panel expertise to what we're expecting to receive. In terms of what we're expecting to fund, the total fund for this opportunity is £3 million.

**Q26: What is the total funding available for this call? And a related question is, do you have any estimate on how many proposals will be awarded under this opportunity?**

A26: The total funding available is £3 million co-funded with Defra (£1.5 million each from BBSRC and Defra). We are looking to fund between 5 to 8 projects.

**Q27: Are the outputs intended to be pre-competitive, i.e. of broad benefit to industry, or can they be more specific to a single product-specific business?**

A27: The answer here is both because we're very much looking at novel food products and innovation, and again, because there are no requirements in terms of TRL, this can be at a pre-competitive stage, but if they are a little bit higher on the TRL ladder, and can go for specific product development, this would be in scope as well.

**Q28: We have a couple of questions about the eligibility of organisations.**

A28: Please could we ask you to look at the [eligibility guidance on UKRI's website](#). If anyone has any eligibility queries, whether as an applicant or as a research organisation, please do not hesitate to get in contact with us via email at [dietandhealth@bbsrc.ukri.org](mailto:dietandhealth@bbsrc.ukri.org). We would advise early engagement with us so that we can provide timely advice.

## **Q29: Does the proposal need to fulfil all four pillars of Good Food Cycle?**

A29: Because there are quite a few cross-cutting themes, we want applicants to demonstrate how their innovation or novel food products might contribute to the four pillars. The specific project might not contribute directly to the four pillars, but it's also considering after the innovation has happened, considering a forward look as well. We do not stipulate that you must fulfil all of them, but we do want applicants to clearly articulate how they could potentially fulfil several of these pillars. Again, this is sort of looking at the overall application and how this can contribute to national priorities.

## **Q30: Is it important to demonstrate that the proposed research will directly benefit the industrial partner?**

A30: Here it's about fostering industry-academia collaboration, so it is important to demonstrate the benefit to industry and the academic partner or the wider consortium. Another consideration is national priorities and looking at the scope of the opportunity, the big picture and how your project can overall contribute to healthier more sustainable diets for the UK. This is the broader element that we're looking into through this call.

## **Q31: What is the minimum number of collaborators that can be included in a proposal?**

A31: Two minimum as there will be the lead applicant (academic) and industry partner. If you have a bigger consortium, that's fine as well, but two is the strict minimum here.

## **Q32: Is there a preference on who should be the lead applicant, i.e., industry or academic or permanent contract?**

A32: The lead applicant, project lead, would need to be somebody who meets our eligibility criteria. So, generally this would be an academic, but there's full list on the website. All members of the core team need to meet the [BBSRC eligibility criteria](#). Although we're asking for industry

partners to be part of this call, they must not be entered in the core team section on the funding service application form. They need to be included in the project partners section because industry partners are not eligible for standard BBSRC funding.

### **Q33: Are researchers from other backgrounds, such as biophotonics, are they applicable?**

A23: You are more than welcome to bring different disciplines on your application, as long as the project presented is in scope and in BBSRC remit.

### **Q34: Are there any restrictions on the number of bids per institution?**

A34: No. While there are no restrictions on the number of bids per institution, we strongly advise you to engage actively with the Research Office at your institution. Please also bear in mind that we will be funding a maximum of 5-8 awards.