Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council

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ALERT 2026 Applicant Webinar Q&A

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ALERT 2026 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

Additional costs that can be requested

Would training costs be eligible?

Training can be included only if it is a one-off cost that forms part of the manufacturer/supplier's offer and is fully justified within the Resources and Costs Section. Standalone training costs that fall outside the scope of normal installation and commissioning activities are not eligible.

I am applying for a piece of equipment that cost just under £200k, but when service is included that brings the total over £200k. Is this allowed?

Yes, that is within the rules of the opportunity. Service contracts are an eligible cost, and their inclusion brings the total value of the application above the minimum expenditure threshold of £200k.

Can specialised consumables specific to the equipment requested be included?

No, consumables are not an eligible cost.

Can I include cost associated with local infrastructure such as upgrading network speed upload capability and room renovations?

Any requested costs related to supporting data acquisition or refurbishments may be eligible providing these are critical to the proper functioning of the equipment and fully justified within the application. We advise contacting the ALERT inbox (bbsrcalert@bbsrc.ukri.org) to discuss eligibility.

If the grant is for 12 months, how should I include a maintenance contract of 36 months in my application?

You may include one-off costs for maintenance contracts and warranties, and these can be up to 36-months in duration. However, all costs must be incurred within the 12-month lifetime of the grant, and you must ensure that you enter the grant duration as 12 months in the UKRI Funding Service (TFS).

Applicant team and collaborators

In previous rounds, group leaders whose research would be supported by the equipment were included as researcher co-leads and their planned research was described in the Vision section. Is this still the expected approach, or should these individuals no longer be included as researcher co-leads?
Those named on the application as part of the Core Team should be those individuals involved in the delivery and operation of the requested equipment. Researchers may still be included as project co-leads if they have a role that aligns with this definition. Details of the research that will be supported by the equipment, including by specific users (group leaders/research groups/labs), should be included in the Vision section.

If a proposed core team member is currently employed as a postdoctoral researcher but is expected to take up an RTP role before the project starts, how should their technical contribution and commitment be evidenced in the application?
Applicants should include the RTP in the Core Team and clearly explain how the individual will provide technical leadership, specialist skills, or support for research infrastructure. Written confirmation of the appointment, the expected timing, and technical responsibilities should be provided in the Host Organisation statement of support.

Is there an expectation for the number of people in a Core Team?
No, there is no expectation on the number of people in the Core Team. The Core Team should include those individuals involved in the delivery and operation of the requested equipment.

Does BBSRC have a definition of RTPs? At my organisation several people act as technical professionals but range from technicians to tenured academics (for example, we have Assistant Professors who are also simultaneously facility managers).
No, BBSRC does not have a specific definition of an RTP. In line with UKRI, we broadly consider RTPs as specialized staff who provide essential intellectual input, technical skills, and operational management to deliver cutting-edge research and innovation. You can find more information on applicant eligibility on our website Individual eligibility – UKRI. If you are unsure about an applicant's eligibility, then we advise contacting the ALERT inbox (bbsrcalert@bbsrc.ukri.org) to discuss.

Can I add a Post Doctoral Research Associate (PDRA) as a Researcher Co-lead?
Yes, you can include a PDRA as a Researcher Co-lead provided they meet the role description and responsibilities set out in the UKRI Funding Service. Roles in funding applications: eligibility, responsibilities and costings guidance – UKRI

I have a collaborator who would contribute to the project as an in-kind external consultant if the application is funded. They are a recognised specialist in this area of equipment and are based at a public research institution in another country rather than a commercial organisation. Should they be listed as an international project co-lead, or as a project partner with an accompanying letter of support?
As the individual is contributing to the application, they can be included as a project partner and supply a letter of support. Project partners may be in industry, academia, third sector or government organisations in the UK or overseas, including partners based in the EU. Information on what they need to include in the letter of support is available on the ALERT 2026 funding opportunity webpage.

Can an equipment vendor/manufacturer/supplier be a project partner? If so, should they supply a letter of support?
Yes, an equipment vendor can be a project partner if they have a role that aligns with the definition. A project partner is a collaborating organisation who will have an integral role in the proposed research. This may include direct contributions for example cash, donated equipment and resources, or staff seconded to the project, or indirect and in-kind contributions for example use of project partner's equipment, datasets, or facilities. Project partners may be in industry, academia, third sector or government organisations in the UK or overseas, including partners based in the EU. If the equipment vendor is included as a project partner, they will need to provide a letter of support. Information on what they need to include in the letter of support is available on the ALERT 2026 funding opportunity webpage

I plan to apply with three other academic institutions as co-leads, for a regional piece of equipment. Do their institutional support statements need to be incorporated in the single Host support statement?
If the multiple research organisations wish to provide a statement of support, this should be included in the Host Organisation's Support section and within the specified word limit.

In the absence of letters of support, how should demand from other academic institutions be evidenced? Are expressions of interest sufficient, and should this be captured within the Host Organisation support statement?
Evidence of user demand should not be included in the Host Organisation support statement. Demand from other organisations can be captured at several points in the application, for example a description of the users and projects that will be supported by the equipment can be provided in the Vision section.

Does the Host Organisation Statement of support need to be signed?
No, the Host Organisation Statement does not need to be signed. However, the information in the statement should have been approved for submission by an appropriate institutional authority. You must also include the following details:

- full name

- their position or role
- the department, school or institute they lead
- their contact details

Can the same individual lead an ALERT and an EPSRC application?
ALERT does not fund applications that are similar to another application currently under assessment by another funder. We advise contacting the ALERT inbox (bbsrcalert@bbsrc.ukri.org) to discuss your application.

Remit and scope

Can an ALERT application include coordinated scientific workflows with existing complementary research infrastructure, without compromising the call's single-platform eligibility requirements?
Yes, that would be in scope providing that you fully justify in the application how the new equipment would integrate with the existing equipment and how it will be managed together as a single platform. This means demonstrating that the instruments will be experimentally linked, that is, that they will all be used together to conduct research, rather than being used individually for different research objectives.

With regard to the requirement to provide alternative equipment options rather than specifying a piece of equipment from one supplier. If the equipment is replacing an older version, which would then allow for parts to be reused, thereby improving sustainability and reducing waste, would this justify applying for a single supplier?
Yes, that would be eligible, provided that a robust justification is included in the application. Where possible, you should still obtain and provide quotes from two alternative suppliers alongside your preferred option. Applicants should also confirm with their research office that the proposed procurement approach is consistent with their organisation's requirements for single-source procurement.

If an application proposes to replace an existing piece of equipment with a newer model that offers additional capabilities, would this still be considered eligible for funding?
Yes, replacing an existing piece of equipment that is at end of life with an updated version which has additional capabilities is in scope.

For replacement of essential 'workhorse' equipment, how should applicants present a compelling case for replacement, particularly where the "expiring" equipment is heavily used but the replacement may not offer a step-change in capability?
The ALERT opportunity supports the replacement of established, routinely used equipment that has become unreliable, unsupported, or no longer fit for purpose.

Applications should clearly demonstrate significant user demand for the capabilities of the equipment requested, supported by details of anticipated access and usage levels where appropriate.

What weighting of support might be expected for an application to replace an existing, but essential, piece of equipment that is reaching its end-of-life where the new equipment's capabilities, while measurably improved, largely iterate the capabilities of the older system?

The ALERT opportunity supports the replacement of established, routinely used equipment that has become unreliable, unsupported, or no longer fit for purpose. Each ALERT application is assessed on its own merits, and the assessment panel is guided to consider all types of capability equally, whether the application is for the replacement of a routine "workhorse" piece of equipment or equipment providing an emerging or novel technology.

Are data storage and processing capabilities considered acceptable components of a proposed platform or pipeline?

This may be within scope, depending on the specific nature of the request. Costs for data storage equipment may be eligible, provided they are fully justified and are directly linked to experiments performed using the equipment requested, rather than supporting wider data storage needs across the host organisation. Ongoing data storage charges, such as subscriptions for cloud-based storage, are considered running costs and are therefore not eligible for ALERT funding. Please contact the ALERT inbox (bbsrcalert@bbsrc.ukri.org) to discuss eligibility.

Funding

If an application is successful, how will funding be paid?

Funding is paid to the research organisation. The value of the award is profiled over the duration of the award and payments are made through UKRI's standard grant payment arrangements. Payments are made quarterly in arrears.

Lead times on lots of equipment is now longer than 12 months. Is there no flexibility on the grant length to allow for this?

Grants are awarded for a fixed maximum duration of 12 months with a latest start of 3 August 2027. Grants cannot be extended under any circumstance