

# GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

## The Environmental Biotechnology Network – a BBSRC/EPSRC NIBB

# Proof of Concept Award



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## Introduction

### Background

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), in association with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), have committed approximately £11M to fund six unique networks for a second phase of Networks in Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy (NIBB Phase II).

The second phase of the BBSRC NIBB will continue to build capacity and capability in the UK, supporting research and translation in biologically based manufacturing. Their aim is to continue to foster collaboration between academic researchers and business at all levels, in order to find new approaches through excellent research to tackle research challenges and help deliver key benefits in IBBE. Details of all of the Networks can be found on the BBSRC website (<https://bbsrc.ukri.org/research/programmes-networks/research-networks/nibb/>).

- Algae-UK: Exploiting the algal treasure trove
- BBNet: Biomass Biorefinery Network
- CCNet: Carbon Recycling - Converting waste derived GHG into chemicals, fuels and animal feed
- E3B: Elements of Bioremediation, Biomanufacturing & Bioenergy – Metals in Biology
- EBNet: Environmental Biotechnology Network
- HVB: High Value Biorenewables Network

The Networks will run from 2019 to 2024, will provide flexible funding for projects and are open to new members throughout their lifetime.

### About EBNet

Microbial systems provide a range of environmental protection and bioremediation services, forming the basis for some of the world's largest industries across the Water-Wastes-Soil nexus. Development of such systems to date has been largely empirical and incremental, but the pace is changing in response to the need to match expanding global demand with finite resources. There are also new challenges to address, ranging from the emergence of new micro-pollutants to the requirement for efficient closed-loop systems that combine treatment with resource recovery.

The current revolution in biological and analytical sciences is creating tools that give unprecedented insights into these systems from genetic to community level, and into factors that can potentially be used to control and harness them. At the same time, new approaches allow enhanced measurement and modelling of engineering phenomena such as mixing and mass transfer, while advances in materials science and separation technologies offer the potential for selectively retaining microbial biomass and/or removing final and intermediate metabolic products. These developments thus offer a chance to optimise existing treatment processes and to create more sustainable 'future-proof' technologies in new areas of application. Successful exploitation of these opportunities depends, however, on bringing together an enhanced knowledge of the underlying science with the ability to apply this in large-scale engineered systems, which must meet both societal expectations and increasingly stringent economic and environmental requirements.

The aim of EBNet is thus to develop and strengthen links between advanced molecular and applied microbiology, engineering and systems optimisation to maximise the societal impacts and benefits. Its overall goal is to take fundamental discovery science towards practical application in key areas of the human/environment interface.

## Principal Investigator

- Professor Sonia Heaven, University of Southampton, Faculty of Engineering and the Environment

## Co-Investigators

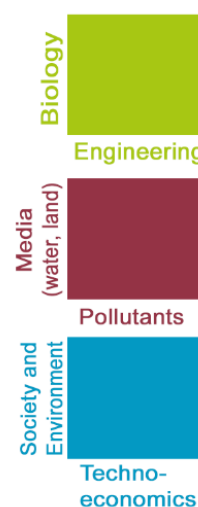
- Professor Frederic Coulon, Cranfield University, School of Water, Energy and Environment
- Professor Tom Curtis, Newcastle University, School of Engineering
- Dr Tony Gutierrez, Heriot-Watt University, School of Engineering and Physical Science
- Dr Jhuma Sadhukhan, University of Surrey, Centre for Environmental Strategy

## Themes

EBNet consists of 3 interlocking themes. They are:

- Pollutants and media, covering both traditional and emerging pollutants;
- Biosciences to engineering to develop and improve technology for pollution control, resource recovery and bioenergy generation;
- Technology interfaces for process integration, techno-economic and sustainability assessment.

In order to fall within the scope of EBNet, please be guided by the detailed theme information available on our website [here](#). This is not exhaustive and other exciting projects will be considered. If your project does not align, but still falls within the purview of Environmental Biotechnology, do contact the Network Managers for guidance before putting together a project – we may be able to reassure you or signpost you to an alternative NIBB better suited to your needs.



## Proof of Concept (PoC) Award and eligibility

### What is a PoC Award?

The EBNet PoC award scheme is a BBSRC/EPSRC-funded initiative aimed at supporting innovation and research. An amount of **£750,000** has been made available to EBNet for this purpose to be allocated over the course of this 5-year network. Awards range from up to **£50K** for single discipline, to **£100K** for cross discipline (multi-institution) and **£25K** for desk-based studies. These are paid at 80% FEC, i.e. the amount funded by EBNet is **£40K, £80K and £20K**, respectively.

These are intended to enable accelerated innovation and progression through the Technology Readiness Levels (TRL's). See the [appendix](#) for more details on TRL's. The initial TRL should be in the range 1-4, with progression expected. Projects which will not be funded might include the exploration of a novel theoretical idea or the development of basic principles through experimentation. Projects which would be considered include translational development of high risk, high reward ideas through:

- early proof of concept (lab based)
- late proof of concept (trial based)
- technology refined and ready for real trials

However, merely adding to existing evidence for safety, efficacy and regulatory data on a fully developed pre-existing process would not be considered, nor would transitions from pilot scale to market.

All projects must show how interdisciplinary contributions enhance the research value. We encourage you to hold a group meeting or workshop within your institution to develop ideas ahead of the call. We have funds available to support this. Do contact us for details.

PoCs may only be awarded to UK-based academics and the concept should be within the remit of Environmental Biotechnology, as determined by the Executive Group (EG). Joint applications will be considered. The project timescale can range from 3-12 months' duration but may not exceed 12 months. Only 20% may be sub-contracted. Equipment purchase is not allowed. You are expected to be able to explore your concept largely with the facilities already at your disposal.

Ultimately, the best projects will be those which are 'high risk, high reward' and have potential as the basis or springboard for new, exciting translational research with real industrial or societal potential. These awards should act as a starting point for further larger funding bids in the topic.

Applications should also fall within the remit of the BBSRC and/or EPSRC, specifically with an Industrial Biotechnology aspect. Thus, there should be some biological/engineering aspect or impact of the project and this should be of some relevance either directly or indirectly to the BBSRC Delivery Plan. If in doubt, please contact EBNet for guidance.

See: <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/research/science-remit/>  
and <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/basics/remit/>

## Eligibility

PoC Awards may be applied for by any EBNet member who is a member of academic staff or equivalent and is eligible to receive BBSRC/EPSC funding. Eligibility guidelines can be found at <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/grants-guide/>.

Applications may come from individuals or groups and be a mix of industry and academia, but must have a single lead academic contact, as the funds are awarded to a single academic partner.

All participants named on the application must be members of EBNet and based in the UK. To register as an EBNet member, visit [www.ebnet.ac.uk](http://www.ebnet.ac.uk), or contact Angela Bywater/Dr Louise Byfield at [EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk](mailto:EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk) for further details. Membership is free and you can join at any time.

If you have questions regarding your eligibility, please [contact us](#).

## Application process

### How to apply

Application is through a two-part application form available from <http://ebnet.ac.uk/> or by emailing [EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk](mailto:EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk).

Applications should be sent to [EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk](mailto:EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk) as a Word email attachment and will be acknowledged by email upon receipt with a reference number (POCYYYXX) which should be used in any further correspondence. If an acknowledgement is not received in good time, please contact the Network Managers directly to ensure your application is processed before the call deadline.

### PoC calls

Calls for PoC Award applications will be announced on the EBNet website and details sent by newsletter to EBNet members. The call timelines will be as advertised. Calls may be themed at the discretion of the EG; if this is the case, further details will be on the website.

The funding limit for the call is set in advance. Since the amount of money requested for each award is variable, it is anticipated that after the successful projects are funded, some excess money – insufficient to fully fund the next qualifying project – will remain. This money will be rolled over to the

next EBNet call. Entirely at its own discretion, the Executive Group may instead choose to release further funds to provide support for an award application that could otherwise not be fully funded.

### New double-blind policy for 2022/3

The 2022/3 POC Calls will use double-blind review, which means that both the reviewer and author identities are concealed from the reviewers, and *vice versa*, throughout the review process. This is intended to focus attention solely on the quality of the project as described.

To enable this, authors need to ensure that their applications are prepared in such a way that their identity is concealed. The application form has been amended to reflect this. It is split into two parts – Part A: Applicant and Part B: Project.

Part A: Applicant contains **all identifiable information** such as name, institution, any partners, previous associations etc. It will be seen by the Network Managers for initial processing purposes, but NOT passed to reviewers. Send this as a **separate Word document** from Part B: Project.

Part B (the blinded application) contains all project-related information for the review stage. Please be guided by the following key points (below). Be aware that failure to adhere to these may result in issues being picked up at the initial sift stage. If so, the Network Managers (NMs) may, at their discretion, choose to redact or amend\* any minor parts of the application which inadvertently breach (or have the potential to breach) the desired level of anonymity. [\*e.g., to depersonalise pronouns/anonymise references to “own” previous work etc.]. Where this is not possible, a bid may be rejected.

To avoid issues, do check your application thoroughly before submitting. Applications received sufficiently in advance of the Call deadline may benefit, whenever possible, from an initial scan by the NMs to highlight any identified issues – allowing you to self-correct. We appreciate that this double-blind format is new. After the deadline no such amendments are possible.

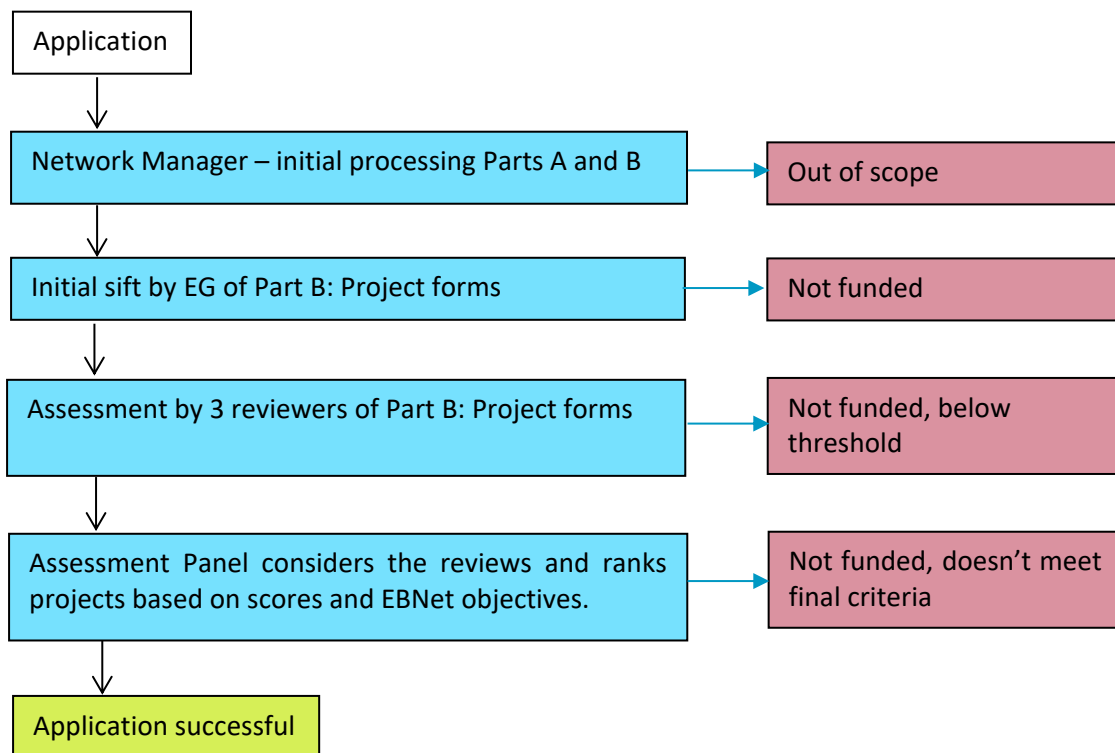
#### Key points

- Submit Part A and Part B as **2 separate Word files**.  
*(Why? We need to separate the two and may need to amend (b) to eliminate minor issues later in the process)*
- Submit any accompanying Letter(s) of Support (if there are industrial partner(s)) as a separate file. Letter(s) of support will not be forwarded to reviewers and can therefore contain identifiable information.

#### Within Part B

- Remove any reference to an applicant’s names and affiliations.  
*(This stipulation does not also apply to industrial partners – if supported by Company X Ltd. you are free to include their relevant details)*
- Use the third person throughout to refer to any previous work you have undertaken. Do not use “as we have shown before” but rather “it has been shown before [Reference, 2019]”.
- When referring to partners within the application, avoid using identifying gender pronouns and status indicators like him/her or Professor/Dr. Thus, “He will do X and, as lead Professor of Z, she will do Y” becomes “Applicant “A” will do X and applicant “B” will do Y”. Avoid using your own initials as your identifier.
- Double-check all figures, document properties and file names (such as “Jane & John Edinburgh bid v1.doc” on the footer). Personal information can be removed from the Word document properties using these instructions: <https://bit.ly/xdocinfo>.
- Remove references to funding sources and avoid acknowledgments.

## Process for PoC review



Submissions will first be sifted by the Network Managers to ensure they are consistent with the aims and objectives of the Network.

Should many bids be received, there will be an initial sift by non-conflicted members of the Executive Group (or their substitutes) to limit the number sent for full review.

Three reviewers will be sought from the pool of potential reviewers which may include Steering Group members, academic EBNet members, the applicant's own suggested reviewers, the International Advisory Group or experts as recommended by the EG. Reviewers will be expected to adhere to the highest standards of scientific integrity as laid down by the BBSRC (<https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/policies-standards/good-scientific-practice/>).

The Assessment Panel will be formed from members of the Executive Group (or their substitutes) and members from the Steering Group. Should fewer than 2 reviews be obtained before the Assessment Panel meeting, the bid will be additionally reviewed by a member of the Panel. The Panel will rank the projects according to their final average scores and the reviewers' comments, combined with their personal expertise and knowledge, with recommendations for funding taking into account EBNet objectives.

Successful projects will be passed to BBSRC for final approval. We aim to respond to applications within 8 weeks of submission.

Feedback is not normally returned to the applicant. No reapplications are permitted from the same (or highly similar) bid in future calls. Exceptionally, where a bid of merit is identified by the Assessment Panel, feedback may be given, along with an invitation to resubmit to the next call in the light of that feedback.

## The PoC application forms

### General guidance

This section explains the structure of the application form – Part A: Applicant and Part B: Project - and offers guidance on the information to include in each section.

The purpose of the application form is to obtain enough information on the project to enable assessors to understand how well it aligns with the Network objectives and how competitive it is with other applications, especially in the areas of scientific merit, value for money, industrial relevance and potential for collaboration and bridge-building between disciplines.

No appendices are permitted. Although not required, you may choose to include a Letter of Support from any actively participating non-academic partners.

To help you, the guidance below provides an explanation of what is required for each field. The guidance notes are not intended to be exhaustive; you should develop your own responses based on your skills, knowledge and experience. You may refer to other sections of the form in your answers if this will help avoid repetition. Incomplete forms will be rejected.

Once filled in, the application can be returned to [EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk](mailto:EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk) by email as a Word attachment. Please do not send a scanned document.

### Application form field guidance

Application Form - Part A: Applicant		
Required Fields	Guidance	Max. word limits/ further clarification
<b>Application details</b>		
Project Title	Please give a title for your application. The title may be made publicly available.	Word limit – 25
<b>Contact details – Applicant(s)</b>		
Contact Details – Applicant(s)	Enter the full name, job title, address, postcode, e-mail address, telephone number and research group/discipline/Institution of the <b>Lead Academic</b> between EBNet and the project. This will be the grant holder (Primary Investigator - PI) in the event of a successful bid.  You may also add the details of any Co-I's underneath those of the PI. Please just make clear the identity of the lead PI (e.g. Dr X Y (PI); Dr A B (Co-I)). If successful, the application forms part of the contract – hence the need for clarity.  For a cross-disciplinary bid, repeat these contact details for the <b>second academic partner (Co-investigator - Co-I)</b> . Ensure PI and Co-I are clearly identified.	No word limit. The grant holder will be responsible for accounting for the expenditure of funds for all award types.
Please confirm that you are a member EBNet	Where there is more than one applicant, all must be members of EBNet. In a cross-	Yes/No



and eligible for BBSRC/EPSRC funding	disciplinary bid, both must be eligible to receive funding. See <a href="#">Eligibility</a> above	
Are you aware of any conflicts of interest that should be considered with regard to this project – e.g. associations with Executive Group (EG) members?	If 'Yes' give details. This section enables us to manage potential conflicts of interest (Col) during the review process. A current list of Executive Group members will be published on the website. A potential Col may occur if an applicant is: employed by the same institution as the EG member or actively involved in a research collaboration or otherwise working closely together in past 4 years, as co-author or PhD supervisor.	Yes/No and separate space for details of any conflict of interest.
<b>Contact details – Further Applicant(s)</b> <i>This section is to record participation of industrial partner(s), if present</i>		
Please confirm that you are an EBNet member.	Further applicant(s) must be members of EBNet. See <a href="#">Eligibility</a> above	Yes/No
Name	Enter the full name, address, postcode, e-mail address and telephone number of the partner(s). A signed letter of support is required from each of the industrial partner(s).	No word limit. Participation of an industrial partner is not required but is welcome.
Organisation	Enter company name	
Geographical base	Industry only. State region or country of operation.	Free text.
Company reference number	This can be obtained from Companies House.	This is generally an 8-digit number.
Employee headcount at your company	Pick one of the given options. Use full-time equivalent positions.	Mark relevant one with an 'X'.
Turnover	Pick one. This should be from the latest financial year.	Mark relevant one with an 'X'.
<b>Chosen Theme</b>		
Chosen Theme	The theme you select will help us determine which experts will assess your Project. Multiple themes are allowed: in this instance, number them, with the most important as 1.	Please select one or more.
<b>Chosen Award</b>		
Chosen Award (select one)	Desk-based study (max. £25K) Single discipline (max. £50K) Cross-disciplinary (max. £100K)	Mark relevant one with an 'X'.
<b>Suggested Reviewer(s)</b>		
Suggested reviewer(s) – name and email contact	If you wish, you may enter the full name and contact details of academic reviewer(s) of your choice. This could be anyone you believe has the specialist knowledge necessary to assess your application. We may approach them to aid in our review process.	No word limit. Optional.

Finance/Research Office contact	It is helpful for us to have the contact name and email address of the person responsible for invoicing and the person responsible for signing the grant acceptance letter, if known.	This information may identify your University hence it is included in Part A.
Other	Use this to add any relevant information not captured elsewhere that you want to bring to the attention of the NMs (e.g. if this is a continuation of previously funded work).	

<b>PoC Application Form – Part B: Project</b>		
<i>Please ensure all potentially identifiable information is removed from this Part B document</i>		
<b>Required Fields</b>	<b>Guidance</b>	<b>Max. word limits/ further clarification</b>
<b>Application details</b>		
Project Title	Please give a title for your application. The title may be made publicly available and must match the one given in the Part A: Applicant form.	Word limit - 25
Project Summary	Please summarise the aims of your project. This may be made publicly available. It is important to make the concept you wish to investigate clear at this point. We recommend that you invest some time on this section to clarify exactly what idea or concept will be investigated and how.	Word limit – 250
Expected start date Duration	Please provide an estimated start date (dd/mm/yy). Specify duration of the project as a value between 3 and 12 months.	If successful, the actual start date will be finalised with EBNet at a later date.
<b>Project Details</b>		
Gateway question 1: How does this application align within the EBNet scope?	Give the main aim of your project and summarise the proposed methodology and potential outcomes.  Provide as much detail as possible for reviewers to assess your proposed project and ensure that the proposed work is clearly defined and, if applicable, that the industry problem is clearly stated.	Word limit – 200
Gateway question 2: What Technology Readiness Levels (TRL's) does this project encompass?	Projects must aim to advance TRL. State the current TRL and explain in what way this will be raised by the end of the project. See Appendix for TRL definition.	Word limit - 150
Aims, methodology and outcomes	Give the main aim of your project and summarise the proposed methodology. Outline the processes/ equipment/ mechanisms to be used and the expected outcomes. Outline any ethical/social or animal	Word limit - 2 pages and 3 pictures or diagrams max. Regarding the 3 pictures or diagrams max – these are in

	testing issues, if applicable. Please make it clear if this is a desk-based study.	addition to the 2 pages of text and not counted in the word limit.
Reference list	<p>Put your references here and refer to them in the text. No more than 2 of these may self-reference.</p> <p>If referring to your own prior work try not to link directly to your reference (e.g. ...based on my/our work x, see: "X in action" by Dr A B). But there is nothing to stop you using references indirectly (this work has been verified, see: X in action by Dr A B et al.) – particularly if failing to do so might otherwise imply an unrealistic level of work within the bid.</p>	5 references max.
<p><b>Project Sections</b></p> <p><i>Each of the following questions is worth 10 points for a total of 40 points. You may refer to previous sections in your answer to avoid repetition. State the number of words in each section.</i></p>		
<p><b>Question 1: Scientific merit</b></p>		
Outline relevant prior experimental/technical evidence and explain how any previous results lead to the proposed project. You should outline: the extent to which your project is supported by excellent underpinning science; how your team's expertise and access to facilities can support the delivery of this project; and the value to the wider EBNet community of any proposed expansion of scientific knowledge. The methodology should be clearly explained and appropriate to achieve your objectives		<p>Word limit – 400</p> <p>Score – 10 points</p>
<p><b>Question 2: Value for money</b></p>		
<p>This section is for you to describe the anticipated project costs, detailing contributions from the project participants.</p> <p>You should describe how the resources requested, relative to the anticipated scientific, economic and societal gains, represent an attractive investment of public funds. Explain how your requested resources are appropriate for successful delivery of your project's objectives. Outline a strategy for the results of the project to be disseminated or continued in future work.</p> <p>If this is a cross-disciplinary application, justify the requirement for a cross-disciplinary approach and explain the reasons for the general budgetary allocation between the academic partners. Note that a thorough explanation is required, particularly if the budget split is very uneven.</p> <p>The highest marks for "value for money" will be awarded to those who provide a clear breakdown between staff costs, consumables, subcontracting of services etc. and explain why this constitutes good value.</p> <p>Our funder states that up to 20% of PoC project value can be subcontracted to industry to buy a service or to an SME to facilitate involvement. PoC funding <b>cannot be used to purchase any equipment</b>. Purchase of consumables is acceptable. A consumable can be defined as</p>		<p>Word limit – 400</p> <p>Score – 10 points</p>

an item that is used up during or would not normally be expected to last beyond the lifetime of the project.	
<b>Question 3: Industrial relevance</b>	
You should outline how and to what extent your project addresses an important and relevant industrial/commercial/societal challenge. For example, what are the deliverables and over what timescale will they be relevant to the needs of industry or wider society? Address any issues arising in regard to implementation, translation or scale –up.	Word limit – 400 Score – 10 points
<b>Question 4: Potential for collaboration and bridge building between disciplines</b>	
Explain how your research idea is likely to lead to future collaborative research or implementation. Outline your plans for further development and future collaboration. Please specify what lasting gains might result from the project – perhaps in the form of continued association, larger research grants or industrial take-up. How will your findings be disseminated to the wider community?	Word limit – 400 Score – 10 points
<b>Financial Details</b>	
Financial Breakdown - Academic	
<p>There are three sections for financials: the first is for the <b>Lead Academic (PI)</b> who will be the grant holder; the second is to be used for the <b>Second Academic Partner (Co-I)</b> for cross-disciplinary applications only; the third is used to record any cash/in-kind contributions from further applicants, likely to be industrial partners. Whether this is a single or cross-disciplinary bid, please fill in the GRAND TOTAL figures for 100% and 80% FEC.</p> <p>Should the application be successful, note that any significant alteration to the total cross-disciplinary split between the academic partners will need to be authorised <b>in advance</b> by EBNet.</p> <p>Please provide a brief financial breakdown of your Project according to BBSRC requirements in pounds sterling (incl. VAT). The rules on VAT for universities can be complex, with research activity and consumables classed separately – please seek specialist advice from your institution if unclear. Full guidance on BBSRC requirements can be found in section 5 of the <a href="#">Grants Guide</a>. A notable exception is that PoC funding cannot be used to purchase equipment. This means equipment of any kind, even single complete pieces under £10k. Funds are paid at 80% FEC.</p> <p>The ‘Details’ column can be used for any breakdown of an individual cost as outlined below. There is also extra space in the ‘further details’ section for any other relevant information.</p> <p>Staff costs should be at official university approved costings, e.g. 3 days/Mr A N Other: Technician/£120/day = £360.</p> <p>Travel costs should state the purpose of travel, e.g. 3 progress meetings for 2 staff/£100pp = £600. Consumables should be broadly defined e.g. Media and lab consumables £500; specific equipment time £400.</p> <p>Salary, travel and purchase of consumables (defined as ‘an item used up in the course of the project’) are acceptable.</p> <p>The figure in the total of the ‘EBNet Contrib. @ 80% FEC’ column is the figure requested from EBNet and the maximum figure invoiced to the Network at the end of the project.</p>	
Financial Breakdown – Contribution from further applicant(s)	

Please specify the value of any contribution to the project from other project participants, in cash or in kind. Other contributions are not essential but are welcome. Industry partner(s) must provide a letter of support to be attached to the application.

### Brief tips and hints

All PoC bids must clearly state their concept and how it is to be tested in the “Project details”. This is expanded on in the “Questions 1-4”. However, the initial summary section is the first point of contact between your bid and reviewers/panel members, so please use it to make the core concept crystal clear. Industrial collaboration, whilst welcome, is not essential, but an awareness of the industrial/societal context and potential TRL impact of the research is required. The expectation is that funded bids will build a platform for further research.

If there is any question that your bid may have received overlapping funding or be a continuation of previously funded work, please make quite clear in what way it is distinct. Members of the Assessment Panel have overlapping expertise in Environmental Biotechnology but may not be specialists in your field – therefore make sure that the context and relevance of your bid is clearly understandable to a non-specialist to enable a wide discussion of its merit. Acronyms should be clearly defined.

We strongly recommend that you leave time before you submit to get your bid checked either by a colleague or your own institution's specialist research bid assistance service. This will pick up any obvious typos. Any queries and uncertainties can be clarified *in advance* of the Call deadline by contacting the Network Managers who will be happy to assist. Minor reasonable amendments may be made to bids sent in advance of the call deadline. For example, a missing section or incorrectly applied financial category might be picked up by the Network Managers and queried. However, no material changes may be made to submissions after the call deadline has passed.

### Checklist

Please ensure that you have sent us all documents. The following checklist may be helpful.

Please check....	√
Part A: Applicant form <i>(as Word document)</i>	
Part B: Project form <i>(as Word document)</i>	
Letter of Support* from industry partner(s) <i>(if applicable)</i>	
Are all named applicants EBNet members?	
Does the finance section reconcile? Do all totals add up correctly?	

\*See information on Letters of Support in Section 2.15 of the [BBSRC Grant Guide](#) for guidance

## If the award is successful

### Offer, contract and collaboration agreement

If successful, the Lead Academic (PI) will be informed via email. The reference number provided upon application submission (POCYYYYxx) should be used on all further correspondence. Any further stipulations specific to the offer will also be outlined. The Lead Academic will also be sent a Conditional Grant Offer Letter. This must be signed and returned **within 3 months** to indicate acceptance of the award.

Should the PoC be a collaboration, there must be a Collaboration Agreement in place. The Collaboration Agreement should be created between the project participants and it should incorporate the operation and exploitation of the outcomes of the project. EBNNet does not need to see a copy, but you are required to state that you have in place a document specifying the relative contributions to, and IP ownership issues regarding, the project. EBNNet accepts that any Intellectual Property arising from the bid is owned by the applicants.

It can take some time to reach agreement on this document within the consortium participants, especially considering the involvement of applicants' legal and finance departments. You are therefore strongly advised to allow sufficient time. An example of collaboration agreement can be found on the Lambert Agreement website at: <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/lambert>.

Before the project begins, a start date must be agreed with the EBNNet Network Manager. Projects **must** be completed within 12 months of this date or the specified duration, whichever is shorter. No expenditure will be reclaimable for activities outside of this period. This is a BBSRC/EPSRC requirement. EBNNet will close on 15 March 2024 and no claims for payment may be made beyond the end of the Network.

Successful bids will be asked to nominate their own expert adviser(s) and inform EBNNet at the point of uptake. This proviso is intended to support the PI during their project. The advisor(s) might be an individual from within their own organisation with additional expertise, able to act as a sounding board and initial contact for ongoing project advice. Alternatively, at your request, you may specify any member of the EBNNet Executive Group to act in a general advisory capacity for such minor technical queries that might arise whilst the project is ongoing. We advise that applicants have such advisory support in place to facilitate the project through to completion both as good practice and in case of issues. [For all procedural queries contact the Network managers.]

Please be aware that PoC funds could be counted as *de minimis* aid and so industrial partners need to ensure they are not in breach of *de minimis* aid rules (<https://www.gov.uk/state-aid>) through their participation. This refers to the level of public subsidy a private company may legally be afforded.

### Special notes for £100K cross-disciplinary awards.

These will be paid in full to the Lead Academic (PI). We would expect the collaboration agreement to exist between partners from different institutions to reallocate these funds as seen fit for each project. EBNNet do not need to see this agreement but must be assured it exists. Note that EBNNet will only dispense monies to the designated lead (PI) on the application. Thereafter, responsibility for further sub-dividing the monies lies with the Lead Academic's institution.

The overall budgetary split, as specified in the application, must be adhered to. Any significant deviation to this **MUST** be approved in advance by EBNNet. Thus, for a 60/40% split between University A and University B, we might award up to £100K to the Lead Academic. The Lead Academic is solely responsible for all subsequent communication, reports and invoicing. Thereafter, provided no more than £60K of EBNNet funding is spent by University A, and no more than £40K by University B, we would

be satisfied that the split was adhered to. Should there be a significant underspend for one partner, it would not affect that cap for the other.

However, if EBNNet were asked to approve a Final Report where one partner was claiming for more than their designated budgetary split, we would query and may refuse that element. Using the above example, should the Final Report state that £80K of funding was actually allocated to University A and £20K to University B, EBNNet would query. In that case, we would consider that £20K was fairly allocated to University B and £60K would be our total liability to University A. Without prior written agreement to a change, the other £20K would be forfeit.

We appreciate that projects evolve over time and that unforeseen circumstances arise. Changes may be discussed at any time by email with the Network Managers and we strongly advise all significant issues to be raised with us immediately, as well as through the Interim Report to allow us to help manage any situations as they arise.

### Reporting and invoicing

A brief Interim Report will be requested from the Lead Academic to summarise progress at the halfway point of the project where the project length is 8 months or greater.

Once the project is completed, the Lead Academic must submit a Final Report on the work carried out and the resources used, which must be countersigned by the collaborator in the case of a cross-disciplinary award. This includes a brief publishable summary for use by the BBSRC/EPSRC, posting on the EBNNet website and other promotional activities. Please include as a separate attachment high-resolution, copyright-free images or photographs, if possible. Photographs contained within the report are not generally suitable for us to utilise for publicity purposes. Awardees are encouraged to produce a short informal video and some calls may stipulate this.

The Final Report will be passed to the Executive Group to be signed off prior to funds being released. An invoice must accompany the Final Report to enable transfer of funds. The invoice figure must agree with that shown on the financials in the Final Report. Invoices will not be forwarded for payment until the Final Report has been approved.

There is the expectation that project participants will engage with the Network in later dissemination activities, e.g. via Network events. During its lifetime, EBNNet may also send an occasional survey in order to ascertain any additional impact from the award, such as publications, conference attendance, product development, commercial spinouts, products of commercial interest, further funding applications and so on. These are for EBNNet reporting purposes back to BBSRC/EPSRC funders.

### Data Protection Regulations

The PI of the BBSRC/EPSRC NIBB grant has the responsibility for keeping data relating to the grant secure and safe. Copies of the applications will be made available to the BBSRC/EPSRC, who will use this information for research related activities, including but not limited to, transfer of funds, statistical analysis in relation to evaluation of the BBSRC/EPSRC NIBB, study of trends and policy and strategy studies.

Copies will also be made available to reviewers, the Executive Group and Management Board for the purpose of assessment and evaluation such as processing the Project, the award of any consequential grant and for the payment, maintenance and review of the grant.

They will be expected to adhere to the highest standards of scientific integrity as laid down by the BBSRC. These include guidelines for data sharing: <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/policies-standards/data-sharing-policy/> and good scientific practice: <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/policies-standards/good-scientific-practice/>.

To meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of funded awards may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

## Contact details

For any queries, please email the Network Managers, Angela Bywater/Dr Louise Byfield at [EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk](mailto:EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk) or telephone 02380 591281. Post to us at Building 178, Room 5019, Boldrewood Innovation Campus, University of Southampton, Burgess Road, Southampton, Hants. SO16 7QF



## Appendix – Technology Readiness Levels (TRL's)

	Description	Defining activities	TRL achieved when
TRL 1	Basic principles observed and reported: Transition from scientific research to applied research.	Basic scientific principles observed. Research Hypothesis formulated. Scientific background and rationale for the research. Fundamental scientific investigation within an academic environment.	Potential outcomes and use of research is defined (e.g. clear elevator pitch).
TRL 2	Technology concept and/or application formulated: Applied research. Theory and scientific principles are focused on specific application area to define the concept.	Applied scientific investigation within an academic environment. Preparation for technology needs (market dependant). Analytical techniques to test reproducibility of research. Practical concepts or applications are formulated, markets identified. Patent applications filed to protect invention. Basic process/product specifications drawn up.	The relevance of the research to an application has been proven. The value of the technology to a customer is defined.
TRL 3	Analytical and experimental critical function and/or characteristic proof-of concept: Proof of concept and demonstration of technical feasibility	Technology development within an academic environment. Demonstrate reproducibility of technique and or technology Analytical studies to predict the performance of separate elements of the technology in appropriate context. Patent applications filed to protect invention. Preliminary techno-economic modelling. Explore commercial partnerships or collaboration opportunities. Data collection in line with industry expectations e.g. electronic lab books, analytical equipment records.	The technology concept has been proven but process components have not been integrated. The value of the technology to a customer is confirmed (e.g. market need and opportunity).
TRL 4	Component/subsystem validation in laboratory environment	Technology development within an industrial (or industry simulated) environment Bench scale validation. Basic technological components are integrated to provide evidence that the concept will work. Build data on reproducibility of process. Implementation of GLP processes. Understand the impact of the regulatory impact on the process. Scale up issues are understood, and mitigation plans developed. Initial techno-economic analysis using process data. Market analysis performed.	The technology concept has been proven with basic component integration. An investment case to attract private investment has been developed.
TRL 5	System/subsystem/component validation in relevant environment:	Technology development within an industrial environment (technology transferred to commercial partner and undertaken by their staff to test robustness of science and process). Basic technological components are integrated with reasonably realistic supporting elements. End to end process validation to provide evidence that the concept will work. Pilot scale experimentation. Detailed techno-economic analysis. Detailed market analysis performed.	The technology transferred to an industrial environment. A refined investment case to attract private investment has been developed.