

Bioinformatics and Biological Resources Fund – Frequently Asked Questions

Expression of Interest stage for the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) highlight

1. What is the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)?

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is a 5-year £1.5Bn resource funding stream, announced as part of the 2015 spending review, to ensure that UK research takes a leading role in addressing the problems faced by developing countries. The GCRF will deploy the UK's world-class research capability to address the challenges faced by the developing world. The funding is protected science spend and the Research Councils are primary delivery partners. The GCRF is also part of the UK Government's commitment to Official Development Assistance, promoting the welfare and economic development of developing countries.

2. What is Official Development Assistance (ODA)?

ODA stands for official development assistance. It is an international definition owned by the OECD and is not only a RCUK or UK Government term: The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines Official Development Assistance (ODA) as "flows to countries and territories" which are on the DAC's list of ODA recipients, provided by official agencies to promote the economic development and welfare of countries on the list. It is expected that funding streams eligible for allocation from the UK's ODA budget should demonstrate how they aim to contribute to aims to reduce poverty and increase sustainable development. ODA is highly relevant to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which 17 goals have been described as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including zero hunger and good health and well-being.

3. What is the DAC list?

The current DAC List is available [here](#). Countries on the DAC list are divided among income groups according to their gross national income per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method. You do not have to work with specific partners from the DAC list however you do need to demonstrate how your research proposal will deliver primary benefits to LMICs in the long term, and how you will deliver this pathway to impact.

4. What are LMICs

LMICs include all countries on the DAC list. The groups are 'Least Developed Countries', 'Other Low Income Countries', 'Lower Middle Income Countries and

Territories' and 'Upper Middle Income Countries and Territories'. LMICs (Low and/or Middle Income Countries) are defined by the OECD and you can find them listed on the DAC list. We recommend you read the list to familiarise yourself with the wide breadth of countries which are covered here.

5. How do I meet the ODA criteria for the call?

Proposals submitted under the GCRF highlight should clearly demonstrate that the primary purpose is to promote the economic development and welfare of Low and/or Middle Income Countries (LMICs) on the DAC list of ODA recipients as its main objective.

Proposals should:

- Address a **specific problem** or seek a **specific outcome** which will impact on the economic development and welfare of countries on the DAC list in the immediate or longer-term
- Articulate a clear and specific case for the primary benefit and relevance of the proposed research to the countries on the DAC list
- Consider the pathway to realising the development impact (even if outside the timeframe of the project)

Proposals can:

- Focus on a developmental topic or address an unmet capacity need in the partner country

More information can be found in the [RCUK ODA guidance document](#).

6. Can my proposal also benefit the UK?

The proposal does not need to be solely relevant to developing countries, but developing countries should be the primary beneficiaries. Secondary benefits to the UK should be articulated.

7. Can I request equipment as part of a GCRF-relevant proposal?

GCRF-relevant proposals can only contain equipment below £10K. Equipment above this threshold should not be requested.

8. Can I submit the GCRF component or pump priming proposal as part of a joint BBR proposal?

No, GCRF component and pump priming proposals must be submitted as a separate proposal in Je-S. This is irrespective of their relationship to a new full BBR proposal and solely due to administrative reasons as GCRF proposals are funded from a

different budget. A GCRF proposal and its related new full BBR proposal will be viewed as a whole project for assessment purposes. However, In case of a significant difference in quality between the components, and if either component be feasibly funded without the other, the assessment panel can recommend partial funding of a component proposal.

Full proposal stage

1. My proposal involves partners from multiple institutions. Should I submit a single application or joint applications from multiple institutions?

Either approach is acceptable, with the exception of GCRF proposals (see above).

2. Can I include international collaborators from the partnering countries as Co-Investigators in the Je-S form?

At the moment, the inclusion of international collaborators as Co-Investigators on the Je-S form is not allowed for the BBR Fund call, and their inclusion will result in the application being rejected.

3. Why is there a limit on the number of letters of support that can be provided?

The BBR Fund Panel has frequently commented that it is the content of the letters provided, rather than the sheer number, which demonstrates the value of a proposed resource to the UK bioscience research community. We have taken the decision to limit the number of letters of support that can be provided due to the large numbers of letters we have received in previous years, which poses considerable challenges to the peer review process. Applicants should submit a representative selection of letters that demonstrate the breadth of the research their resource will enable and comment on the value of the work proposed to the research community.

4. How should I demonstrate 'community need/demand' for my resource?

Applicants should provide appropriate indicators of the need/demand for their proposed resource by the research community. This should include letters of support representative of the utility of the resource to research community it will serve. Other indicators of potential utility might include usage statistics for existing resources, feedback from user surveys, and evidence of user engagement/ consultation in the development of the project objectives. Further guidance on letters of support is available under 'How to apply'.

5. Is it possible to apply for continuation funding of an existing resource previously funded under the BBR Fund?

Renewals for awards previously supported under the BBR Fund are permitted under the current call. These applications should continue to maintain and develop the resource. The expectation is for long-term sustainability of the resource beyond BBSRC funding to be considered. Applicants should demonstrate a full understanding of the true cost of running and maintaining the resource and include cost recovery plans where appropriate. Where cost-recovery is not possible or only partially possible, applicants should set out their plans for supporting the resource beyond the period of BBSRC support and how they will transition to this model. If cost-recovery/ longer-term sustainability is not possible, applicants should clearly set out the arguments as to why BBSRC should continue to support the resource. Renewals will be assessed in competition with all other proposals submitted to the call. Renewals will be assessed in competition with all other proposals submitted to the call.

Applicants who plan to apply for continuation funding to support an existing resource should ensure sufficient usage data for this resource is provided. Some examples of the types of data to be included are:

- Independent users/ sites accessing the resource (e.g. number of requests for biomaterials, website analytics, user location)
- Citations or acknowledgements
- Independent groups supporting the resource
- Other public resources providing links to the resource
- New acquisitions captured by the resource (e.g. major new data sources or biological samples)

BBSRC also encourages the parties providing letters of support as an indication of community demand to include similar supporting data (e.g. their own usage statistics, papers that critically relied on the resource).

6. What is the membership of the assessment panel?

The assessment panel is drawn from BBSRC's Research Committees and pool of experts. Additional expertise may also be drawn from the wider bioscience community. The panel will comprise a balance of developers and users of resources. Details of previous assessment panels are available on the respective call webpages. The 2017 panel will be published once the assessment is concluded.

7. I previously submitted a grant application that was unsuccessful. Can I submit the proposal to the BBR Fund?

Any proposal related to a previously unsuccessful grant application must comply with BBSRC's resubmission policy (see BBSRC Grants Guide). Applicants are advised to contact the programme staff prior to submitting an application if they are concerned that their project may be considered a resubmission. Applications that are deemed to constitute uninvited resubmissions will be rejected from the call.

8. When is the outcome of the call likely to be known?

We are unable to give a precise date by which outcomes will be announced. It is anticipated that we will be able to notify applicants by the end of March 2018.

9. I wish to develop a resource with both biological and bioinformatics components, is this allowed?

Yes.

10. My proposal has relevance to other Research Council's scientific remit. Will it be suitable for the BBR Fund?

The principal beneficiaries of the proposed resource should be the BBSRC research community, but that resources with broader applicability will be considered. Resources that do not address BBSRC remit or which will be of primary utility to researchers working outside of BBSRC remit will be rejected prior to assessment. Applicants needing further guidance on the suitability of a proposal for the BBR Fund are strongly advised to contact the programme staff prior to submission (see contact details).

11. What is the scale of resources that can be requested?

Full BBR projects may request no more than £2M fEC and can have a maximum duration of five years. GCRF component proposals can have a maximum duration of five years, and the total of BBR and GCRF component should not exceed £2M FEC. GCRF pump priming proposals may request no more than £150K for a maximum duration of 12 months.

12. Does the BBR Fund support genome sequencing projects?

Genome sequencing projects are not supported by the fund. Sequencing may be performed where this is needed in order to establish a particular resource; for example, the sequencing of gene libraries.

13. Does BBSRC provide other funding for bioinformatics projects?

Yes, the BBR Fund is one of a number of recurring BBSRC funding streams that support bioinformatics and other computational approaches to the biosciences. Its focus is the support of community resources.

The following alternative scheme may be suitable for projects that do not adequately address the objectives of the BBR Fund:

- Responsive mode grants (see related links) are awarded in response to unsolicited research applications in any area relevant to BBSRC's mission. Research projects funded under responsive mode, including technology development projects, are awarded no more than £2M fEC and can last up to 5 years. There are three annual responsive mode calls and applications are assessed by the appropriate BBSRC Research Committee (see related links).

Other opportunities may arise through our managed mode initiatives and will be advertised under 'special opportunities' on the BBSRC website.

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