

ADVANCED LIFE SCIENCES RESEARCH TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE (ALERT 14)

BACKGROUND

Advanced research equipment and the development of capability in its creative use is a key component in maintaining the competitiveness of the UK research base. The RCUK Strategic Framework for Capital Investment Investing for Growth (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/policy/Pages/CapitalInvestment.aspx>) explains the important role of acquiring state-of-the-art equipment into the science base, and the rapid development of people skilled in its use. Accordingly, BBSRC is inviting applications for research grants from eligible researchers with a strong track record of research in the BBSRC remit, to purchase items of advanced research equipment via the ALERT 14 call.

The capital equipment **budget for this call is approximately £8M.**

In addition, **up to £2M in additional funding** may be available to purchase computing equipment (hardware and software) that provides new capability or enhances capacity for the management and analysis of 'big data'.

Applications, which will typically be in the range of £250k-£750k excl. VAT, must enhance the capability of the UK research base in areas of science in the BBSRC remit. Applications will typically be from groups of researchers in one or more eligible institutions, for instrumentation to be deployed on a multi-project/multi-use basis.

SCOPE OF THE ALERT 14 CALL

Awards will primarily resource the purchase of equipment in the expectation that funding for the costs of research using it will be found through other project funding, both current and future. Consequently, in order to demonstrate that support for the equipment is sustainable, applicants will need to have a successful track record in obtaining grant funding and have current underpinning support in the proposed areas of research.

Applications that seek to pioneer the use of **emerging advanced research technology** in the UK and its novel application in areas of bioscience are particularly encouraged. Similarly, applications which address capability in the priority areas in the refreshed BBSRC Strategic Plan are also encouraged, although the call is open to all scientific areas within the BBSRC remit.

Our strategic plan recognizes that 'biological discovery is increasingly being driven by ground-breaking technologies, such as high-throughput genomic and proteomic analysis and next generation biological imaging, that generate massive and complex datasets'.

Computing infrastructure proposals should address a need for resources (such as cloud or high-performance computing installations) for large-scale data analysis, e.g. genome assembly, metagenomics and real-time image analysis, that build on existing BBSRC investment and funded research activity. Computing equipment may also be requested in support of advanced research technologies where the scale of the data generated will necessitate significant new computing/ data management resources (values of items over

£10K BBSRC contribution). It is anticipated that most awards will be in the £250k-£750k range (excl VAT).

Value for money, in terms of the benefit from BBSRC investment, will be a factor in assessment. Consequently, whilst contributions from the host institution(s) and/or other external sources are not mandatory, they are encouraged.

Applications may seek the costs associated with essential customisation and installation of funded equipment as well as initial service maintenance contracts. In addition, a **limited** amount of Principal Investigator and other staff time may be requested, where this is required for activities directly associated with the purchase or installation of the equipment. Further details are provided in the Financial Information section.

Capability depends upon the development and retention of the skilled personnel to support the use of the equipment. Therefore, the application must set out the arrangements that will be put in place for the professional support of the equipment, and the arrangements for the employment and career development of the individual(s) involved. Funds for the initial training of appropriate professional staff in the use of the equipment may be sought where applicable. The BBSRC may establish a network of such staff for the consideration of professional development issues etc.

In accordance with the Wakeham recommendations to maximize the use of equipment and to encourage sharing (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/policy/Pages/Efficiency2011.aspx>), the arrangements for managing access to the equipment and the prioritisation of its use should be described. Award holders will be expected to put arrangements in place for providing advice and support to others wishing to assess the potential of the technology for their own research.

Collaboration and the extension of access to the instrumentation to industry and public sector users that would enhance the potential impact of research is encouraged, and any arrangements for this should be explained in the application.

Where more than one instrument of a similar type or application is funded through the ALERT 14 call, or where a range of capabilities is established that are applicable to the same research field, the BBSRC may expect grant holders to operate within a network to share expertise and coordinate access.

Applicants are asked to provide details of the institutional environment into which the equipment will be integrated (e.g. existing facilities and related equipment, housing, technical and scientific support, plans for on-going management and maintenance of equipment).

Multidisciplinary applications, spanning the remits of more than one Research Council, may be considered if the majority of the research in which the equipment will be utilised falls within BBSRC's remit. Applications where the majority of the research falls outside BBSRC's remit will be rejected. Details of the BBSRC remit are at <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/research/science-remit.aspx>.

Applicants uncertain whether the science in their proposal is within the BBSRC remit must contact BBSRC before submission. If an application contains components of proposed

research that fall outside the BBSRC remit, the BBSRC may seek the advice of other Councils as part of the assessment process.

EXCLUSIONS

The ALERT 14 call is for multi-use, mid-range equipment acquisitions. Applications for single-user or single-project instruments, requests for contributions to very large facilities, or for buildings and other types of infrastructure are not in scope and will be rejected.

The ALERT 14 call is not intended to support development of new technologies, nor is it intended to support the “well-founded laboratory”. Support for multiple items of equipment that could be funded individually or in clusters on research project grants are not eligible and will be rejected.

ALERT 14 is also not intended to support the establishment of generic computing platforms (for example high performance computing clusters) whose intended uses extend beyond research areas that are within the BBSRC remit.

The purpose of the ALERT 14 call is to support the purchase of research equipment. “Software as infrastructure” proposals that develop software packages are outside the scope of the call.

All applications outside the scope of the call will be rejected.

ELIGIBILITY

ALERT 14 is open to institutions and researchers normally eligible to apply to BBSRC managed-mode calls; this includes BBSRC approved HEIs, Research Council Institutes and Independent Research Organisations (IROs)

- Categories of eligible organisations can be found in section 3 of the BBSRC Grants Guide (<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/apply/grants-guide.aspx>)
- A list of IROs can be found in the RCUK eligibility guidance (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/documents/eligibilityiros.pdf>)

Applications that include principal or co-investigators who are not eligible to apply for funding, and/or from ineligible organisations will be rejected.

A research organisation may submit more than one application; however there is a limit on the number of applications from an investigator or consortium. Details of limitations are in the call guidance.

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

The capital equipment budget for ALERT 2014 is approximately £8M. Applications may seek the following only:

- The costs of capital equipment purchase, including one off costs such as initial service/maintenance contracts, and **excluding any discounts and/or institutional or external contributions**. The sum sought must not exceed £750K total BBSRC contribution.

- The costs of activities directly associated with the purchase, installation and initial set up of the equipment, including necessary time of the Principal Investigator and experimental support and technical staff time and training, but excluding the cost of any general building works.

Costs of the time of other staff (e.g. Co-investigators), or for the operation and use of the equipment (except if included in the initial purchase contract) are not eligible. The normal FEC provisions will apply.

In accordance with the Wakeham guidelines, up to 100% of the capital cost of the equipment may be sought from BBSRC where the equipment is an enhancement to national capability and operated on a basis that maximises its utilisation and accessibility. However, contributions to the capital cost from the institution or other external sources which provide gearing to the BBSRC investment sought are encouraged.

Awards will be announced in September 2014 and **grants must start by 31 January 2015**. Projects may last for a maximum of 12 months and no extensions will be considered.

Applicants should discuss this requirement with their relevant procurement and finance officers **prior to submission**, particularly bearing in mind the EU requirements for competitive tender. Prospective applicants for whom the expenditure appears impossible (e.g. because the equipment may require an export license or involves lengthy customisation or construction times) must contact the BBSRC (see Science Contact below) before submitting an application.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applications will be assessed by a multidisciplinary panel of experts, including representatives drawn from the four BBSRC Responsive Mode Committees. External reviewers will not be used and applicants are therefore not required to nominate reviewers.

The following assessment criteria will apply:

1. The **scientific quality** of the work to be conducted using the equipment.
2. The **track record** of the applicants (including both research excellence and the level of previous and/or existing Research Councils support).
3. The **contribution the investment will make to the physical research infrastructure** in the applicant institution(s) and in the UK (e.g. how the equipment will complement related infrastructure and equipment) and the broader environment in which the equipment will be placed (e.g. lab space, technical support, scientific expertise, data management plans).
4. The **strategic relevance** of the proposed research, including the extent to which the research meets priorities identified in the BBSRC Strategic Plan and the benefit to or involvement of a wider user community.
5. The arrangements for the **management and support** of the equipment and in particular the arrangements to secure the expertise in its operation and to provide access to the equipment and expertise in its use.
6. **Cost effectiveness**, in particular the value of non-BBSRC contributions and the credibility of the financial and management proposals.

7. Consideration will also be given to any **ethical and societal issues** that may be raised by the proposal.

All criteria will be considered in the assessment but applications which do not score highly against both criteria 1 and 2 are very unlikely to be successful

HOW TO APPLY

Applicants should refer to the detailed call guidance.

Applications must be submitted using the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system by **16:00 on 13 May 2014**.

- Applicants should select:
 - Council: BBSRC
 - Document Type: Standard Proposal
 - Scheme: Managed Mode
 - Call/Type/Mode: ALERT 2014

AWARDED GRANTS

BBSRC would like to maintain a balanced portfolio in this area. Grants awarded through the 2013 call are available [here](#).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A list of frequently asked questions will be generated and updated regularly. Please consult the FAQ before submitted a question via email to the contacts below.

BBSRC ALERT 14 CONTACTS:

Please provide as much information as possible in your email to ensure a rapid response.

For Je-S system queries please email: JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk

For call-specific queries please email: bbsrcalert@bbsrc.ac.uk

The closing date for applications is **16:00 on 13 May 2014**.

