

ALERT 2014: GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

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

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Except where these guidelines state differently, BBSRC's standard guidelines for research grants apply. Applicants should therefore consult the BBSRC Grants Guide.
2. This call invites proposals to acquire novel items of advanced research equipment, typically in the range £250k-£750k, which will enhance the capability of the UK research base in areas of science in the BBSRC remit.
3. Applications that have particular relevance to the progression of the BBSRC strategic research priorities or the aims of the BBSRC Strategic Plan are particularly encouraged.
4. 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 used falls within the BBSRC remit. Applications where the majority of this research falls outside the BBSRC remit will be rejected.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

5. Details of eligible and ineligible costs are provided below. All costs must be fully described and justified in the Justification of Resources (see Justification of Resources).

Equipment

6. ALERT 14 will support applications for the purchase of specific items, or coherent sets of items, of research equipment including VAT (where applicable) and associated customisation or installation costs.
7. The ALERT 14 call is not intended to support development of new technologies, nor is it intended to support the "well-founded laboratory".
8. 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.
9. Proposals for other procurement methods e.g. leasing will be considered.

Refurbishment or installation costs

10. Refurbishment or installation costs may be eligible under the scheme providing these are an absolute requirement for the proper functioning of the equipment, for example a ventilation system or cold room. These costs must be itemised in the application fully justified.

Maintenance contracts

11. Costs of maintenance or service contracts, where these are one-off payments, are eligible under the call. If these are required, they should be itemised as part of the requested costs and must be fully justified. Other maintenance costs are not eligible.
12. Service contracts must be paid for up front (as capital), not profiled across the term of the grant

Running costs

13. Support for running costs for usage of the equipment such as staff, consumables and longer term estate charges should be sought on a project basis through research grant applications. Running costs are therefore not eligible under the scheme.
14. Consumables costs will not be eligible except those required for installation
15. In the proposal, applicants will need to present evidence of past and current support for research in the BBSRC remit that indicates they have a realistic capability of securing required running costs through project funding.

Depreciation

16. Depreciation cannot be claimed on any equipment where the Research Councils have funded the capital costs, so it is not an eligible cost under the call.

Staff costs

17. Staff costs for running and maintaining the equipment are not eligible under the call – see point 15 above. A limited amount of experimental and technical support staff time will be eligible either as a ‘Directly Allocated’ cost or as a ‘Directly Incurred’ cost (if time can be supported by a full audit trail) where this is required specifically for installation and initial set-up of the equipment or for refurbishment.
18. Principal Investigator time may be eligible as a ‘Directly Allocated’ cost where this relates to time directly involved in overseeing the procurement process or the installation and set-up. It is anticipated that this should average no more than 1 hour per week over the duration of the project.
19. Co-Investigator time cannot be charged on the application; the Principal Investigator will lead the purchase and procurement of the equipment. However, Co-Investigators may be key users once the equipment is up and running.

Financial contributions from the institution and from external sources

20. The sums requested on the application form should be the costs being sought from BBSRC, net of any contributions from elsewhere
21. Contributions from the institution and from external funders are not mandatory but proposals in which the BBSRC investment is off-set by contributions from elsewhere are encouraged. These should be described in the case for support.
22. Financial contributions must be secure at the time of application: for each contribution a letter from the contributing party stating the contribution value and their expectations from the award should be attached to the application.
23. Where contributions are coming from existing awards from other research funder(s), a statement from the funder agreeing to the use of funds in this way must be provided.
24. Applications that are dependent on the outcome of requests to other funders to secure the required funding will be rejected unless the institution commits to making up any shortfall resulting from the failure or delay of such a request to be funded

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

25. Applications must be made through the Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) System.

26. Applications may involve a single institution or two or more acting in collaboration. **Applications involving two or more collaborating organisations must be made on a single form.** The submitting organisation will receive the grant and subsequently own the equipment.
27. Applications that involve investigators from different institutions that are not submitted on this single form will be rejected.
28. Only one application may be submitted by any PI or consortium.
29. An institution may submit more than one proposal however applications must be in the context of the institutional environment. Multiple applications from an institution for similar equipment will not be considered favourably. Applicants are advised to consult with their institution to identify applications of strategic interest.
30. Applications cannot be submitted to the ALERT 14 call in tandem with submission to other award schemes or research council grant schemes.
31. Unless specifically invited, applicants wishing to submit a proposal that has already been considered by BBSRC or another funder **must consult the Call contact point** before applying. In view of the high demand for ALERT 13 **such applications will be considered at the discretion of BBSRC** and must be accompanied by a covering letter explaining the circumstances of the previous application, its outcome and the modifications subsequently made to the proposal including feedback received. It is expected that substantive (not cosmetic) changes will have been made to any resubmission.
32. In addition to the completed Je-S pro-forma, the proposal should include the following attachments:
 - Case for Support - maximum 8 pages (see below for further guidance)
 - Justification of Resources – maximum 2 pages (see below for further guidance)
 - Data management plan – maximum 1 page
 - Pathways to Impact – maximum 2 pages
 - Diagrammatic work plan – maximum 1 page
 - CVs for PI, Co-Is and named researchers – each CV is limited to 2 pages. All Cvs should be collated and uploaded as a single pdf
 - Letters of support 1– a signed and dated letter of support, on headed paper, is required from each external project partner providing a contribution; a maximum of 5 **additional** relevant letters from scientific and other collaborators may also be attached .All letters of support should be collated into 1 pdf before uploading .
 - Expressions of Interest(a maximum of 5) from the user community (identifying potential use and reason) may be collated together and uploaded as a single PDF under other attachments
 - Quotations – mandatory for equipment items above the OJEU threshold (£113,057 excl. VAT). Where the actual cost of the equipment items exceeds the OJEU thresholds three quotations must be provided. For items where the actual cost is between £25k and the OJEU threshold it is optional to provide up to three quotations, but they should be included if available.
33. A sans-serif font, for example Arial, Helvetica or Verdana, should be used. The minimum font size is 11pt, which must be used throughout all documents. A minimum

of single line spacing and standard character spacing must also be used. Margins must not be less than 2cm.

34. The applications will be assessed by the ALERT 14 Panel; referees will not be used. Applicants therefore do not need to nominate referees.

Case for Support and Justification of Resources

35. The Case for Support and Justification of Resources should describe the research to be undertaken and the equipment requested respectively.

Case for Support

36. The following aspects should be covered on **no more than 8 sides** of A4 in a sans-serif font (for example, Arial), minimum font size 11pt. Failure to address all the requirements may result in the application being rejected on the grounds of insufficient information.

Part one – Equipment suitability, previous research track record, and institutional environment (maximum 2 pages)

- a. **The case for the proposed equipment** briefly describing the rationale for the selection of equipment and research benefits that will be gained from it
- b. **Suitability of the applicant(s)**, including a demonstration of excellence in research of the entire research group seeking funds. This should include evidence of the success in attracting funding support through peer-reviewed applications, the impact of the science, collaborative and user links etc. Within the 2-page limit **a track record summary table** must be produced detailing up to 8 of the research groups most relevant current and recent grants including: the amount, title, awarding body, grant holder and the impact of the research. Applicants' CVs should be attached separately as a single pdf.
- c. **Institutional environment:**
 - i) A summary of existing facilities within the institution(s), including details of related/complementary equipment (existing or where confirmation of proposed purchase is provided) and technical support.
 - ii) Housing and support for the equipment: Details including any buildings, laboratory space, technical support etc. to be made available in support of the equipment.
 - iii) Consideration of how well the hosting department or research group can support the equipment in terms of technical and scientific expertise or infrastructure;
 - iv) Plans for maintenance and long-term support of the equipment.
 - v) Plans for the staff support of the instrument including the retention and development of key staff.
- d. **Existing capabilities elsewhere:** identification of any existing similar instruments in the UK and why these cannot be utilised. Identification of similar instruments overseas or in industry with applications in the same field with which collaborative connections might be made.

Part two (maximum 6 pages)

1. **Contributions from external project partner(s) or funders** - including details of the funding offered, any "in-kind" support, and any other (collaborative) activities to be carried out in support of the research.
2. **Detailed plan of research:** This should include a description of the projects that will be supported by the equipment with sufficient experimental detail to allow the

- Panel to judge the quality of the science, including preliminary results where possible. Consideration should be given to any ethical and societal issues relating to research using the equipment. State any relevance to the BBSRC Strategic Plan and BBSRC strategic priorities
3. **Benefits to a wider user community** and how this will be delivered. How any access by external collaborators, including industry, will be managed.
 4. **Contribution to the physical research infrastructure**, including reference to:
 - i) how the equipment will improve or complement the existing facilities in the department(s) or institution(s);
 - ii) how the equipment will contribute to the research infrastructure (short and long term);
 - iii) whether the equipment is to be used for multidisciplinary purposes;
 - iv) how the equipment could contribute to research training.
 - v) where computing equipment is requested **alongside** instrumentation: why there is a need for enhanced data analysis/management support with the associated purchase of the data-generating platform.
 5. **Arrangements for support, retention and development of skilled operating staff** describing the arrangements to train and develop the staff needed to support the use of this equipment and retain this capability within the institution

Justification of Resources

37. The following aspects should be covered on no more than 2 sides of A4 in a sans-serif font (for example, Arial), minimum font size 11pt. Failure to address all the requirements may result in the application being rejected on the grounds of insufficient information.
 - i) Detail and justify the equipment and other associated resources requested (e.g. technician or PI time required for purchase, installation or essential customisation). Applicants should be aware that grants might be reduced if a full breakdown of costs together with a comprehensive justification for individual items of expenditure is not provided.
 - ii) Reasons for requesting a particular specification of equipment or a particular manufacturer should be included. Applicants should indicate how many quotations have been obtained and append the relevant quotation wherever possible.
 - iii) Applicants should also take into account the information provided for completing this section on the Je-S System Help pages.
38. Within the 2-page limit, an equipment cost summary table must be produced detailing, in both absolute and percentage values, the total equipment cost and the breakdown of costs to i) BBSRC and institution, ii) total project partner cash contribution and/or iii) any discounts.

Data Management Plan

39. Applicants should, inter alia, use this to explain how data from the new instrument will be captured managed and made available. The data management plan should complement the case for support, demonstrating the challenges involved in data capture and maintenance and detailing how the necessary skills to support data management will be made available.

Pathway to impact

40. In this section applicants should, inter alia, discuss how the availability of the instrument will enable the potential impact of research by the applicants to more effectively explored and developed, but also, where appropriate, address the potential impacts of interaction with industry and other users resulting from widened access to the equipment.

POST AWARD

41. BBSRC will decide the amount of each grant. Applicants must seek value for money in their choice of equipment, through competitive tender where appropriate.
42. There can be no purchase of equipment prior to a grant being formally announced, even if this is at the applicant's own financial risk. This will result in withdrawal of the grant.
43. Applicants and institutions are reminded that it is their responsibility to comply with all relevant national and EU legislation, and the institution's own financial policy and procedures regarding the procurement of equipment. Accepted procurement best practice in the higher education sector must be observed. For all equipment and services where the contract value is greater than £25,000, professionally qualified procurement staff must be consulted before the procurement process begins and applicants are advised to consult with their local purchasing office.
44. Applicants whose external sponsorship takes the form of a supplier's discount are reminded that there may be a procurement risk in seeking discounts from a specific supplier prior to a full tendering process. Where applicable, they are advised to discuss the management of any such risk with their institution procurement staff before submitting the bid.
45. A sample of successful bids may be audited.

BBSRC ALERT 14 contacts:

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

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