

## STRATEGIC TOOLS AND RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT FUND: FAQs

These frequently asked questions are provided as guidance to applicants on common queries. Applicants should contact us if further clarification is required or if they have queries which are not covered here or in the main call text.

- [General questions](#)
- [Questions on areas supported by the Development Fund](#)

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

#### **What is the purpose of the Strategic Tools and Resources Development Fund?**

The purpose of the Development Fund is to support pump-priming research projects and collaborative community networking activities. The Fund aims to support proposals in the following areas:

- Early concept, exploratory investigations of new tools, technologies and resources  
The key feature of this is a technology or methods oriented approach that is enabling and adventurous, and encapsulates the concept of 'high-risk/high reward'. Funded projects are expected to test this concept and, if successful, demonstrate proof-of-principle.
- Rapid access to and deployment of the very latest cutting edge technology  
It is anticipated that these applications would include collaboration with the technology provider.
- Radical, novel modifications to existing tools, technologies and resources  
To facilitate new biological understanding and an expansion in use.
- New approaches to research data analysis, interpretation and sharing in the biological sciences including:
- Development of software tools and algorithms to enable analysis and interpretation of research data (e.g. arising from next generation sequencing)
- Development of software tools and algorithms to facilitate the use of cloud computing approaches and high performance computing architectures
- Community approaches to the sharing of research data including the development of standards (including coordinating UK input into international standards development activities)

#### **Is £120K the maximum amount that can be requested?**

In line with FEC, this figure is not an absolute upper limit. It is a guide to inform applicants of the appropriate level of funding that can be requested. BBSRC considers that applications requesting in excess of this amount are unlikely to meet the aims of the call - to support pump-priming research projects or

collaborative networking activities. You should contact us if your proposed application is in excess of £120K. Should an application, which significantly exceeds the £120K guide, be submitted to the Development Fund, BBSRC reserves the right to withdraw it prior to peer review and recommend that it be submitted to a more appropriate funding stream (eg responsive mode).

**Does the £120K figure refer to the FEC value of a proposal or the requested BBSRC contribution to this cost?**

The £120K figure refers to the requested BBSRC contribution, at the 80% contribution level, to the full economic cost of a proposal.

**Can funds for equipment purchase be requested?**

As for other BBSRC schemes including Responsive Mode, applicants can request equipment that is necessary for the research proposed on applications to the Strategic Tools & Resources Development Fund. There is no fixed limit on what proportions of requested costs fall into particular categories within the limit of the total funds that can be applied for (£120K); however it is not anticipated that equipment would form the principal resource requested on a proposal. Applicants should carefully consider applications which use the bulk of their resources purchasing and commissioning equipment, as applications of this type are invariably classed as 'development of generic platform technologies' which are outside the s-TRDF remit. Applicants will be expected to fully justify the need for any resources requested (including equipment) within the case for support.

**BBSRC allows a six page case for support for much bigger projects. Should I use all 6-pages for my Development Fund proposal?**

As with any application to the BBSRC, applicants should submit a case for support of appropriate length needed to:

- explain the proposed project/activity;
- justify the resources requested.

With small scale proposals, such as those submitted to the Development Fund, applicants may find that they can achieve this in less than six pages.

**What is the maximum duration of an award which can be made under this initiative?**

In line with the scope of the initiative proposals for research projects should be for short duration pump-priming activities of between 6 and 18 months duration. Proposals for community networking activities can extend for up to three years.

## Annex 4

Proposals combining research and networking activities may be for up to three years duration but the research component must comprise no more than 18 months.

### **Can a series of linked proposals be submitted together?**

This is not advised. All proposals must 'stand-alone' and not rely on the successful funding of another related application. All applications are reviewed separately unless they are submitted jointly (see below).

### **Can joint applications be submitted?**

Yes, as long as they meet the criteria for the call (see call text). Applicants from different institutes may submit a joint proposal with a single, shared case for support. Any joint proposal must reflect the Development Fund's guidance on funding and duration. Joint applications will be reviewed as a single proposal. Please see the [electronic submission system help screens](#) for details of how to submit joint applications.

### **Can we include costs for travel and project meetings on a research application?**

Yes. Travel and project meeting costs can be requested on applications submitted to the Fund.

### **I wish to develop some community standards. What can I request in my application?**

Funding can be requested for meetings and workshops, as well as travel and dissemination costs. Note that this may be as part of a networking activity, and the same guidelines will apply (see later).

### **My project fits more than one research priority, can I note this on my application form?**

Yes, on the JeS form you can indicate that your application underpins multiple strategic priorities or policy priorities

## **QUESTIONS ON AREAS SUPPORTED BY THE DEVELOPMENT FUND**

### **Why are you keen to support community networks in data sharing?**

Data sharing is of growing importance in the biological sciences where there is a clear shift towards high throughput, large scale studies (e.g. genomics, proteomics and systems biology). BBSRC has a data sharing policy and further details are available at ([insert web link to data sharing policy](#)). We are keen to provide an opportunity for communities funded by BBSRC to come together to consider data sharing issues including the development of data standards.

Comment [b1]: Web link

## Annex 4

**I wish to adapt a tool that is currently used in another discipline to a biological problem. Is this appropriate for the Development Fund?** Yes, this is appropriate as long as the technology adaptation requires that radical, novel modifications are made.

**I wish to take technology that is currently being used in the biological sciences and adapt it for use in a different biological system. Is this appropriate for the Development Fund?**

Applicants should note that one of the exclusions to the call is “ applications using existing tools and technologies available to comparable areas of biological sciences”. In order that an application to adapt a technology already in use in a biological science to use in another, applicants will need to make a strong case that ‘radical, novel modifications’ are required, as laid out in the call text, and that these modifications require the resources requested to complete. If the adaptations required do not appear to fit these criteria, an application to responsive mode may be more appropriate.

**I am working on data standards development; what can I apply for?**

Under this call, applicants working in the area of data standards could apply for networking proposals including workshops or support for coordination of UK input into international standards development activities. Applicants could also apply for support for development of tools to facilitate data sharing.

**I wish to develop software tools to perform a new type of biological data analysis – is this appropriate for this fund?**

e-tools such as software and databases can be considered tools and are appropriate to this call, subject to the other call criteria and exclusions.

**Will the Development Fund support pilot studies on generic technology advancements?**

Technology development proposals for this call should be driven by the need to tackle bioscience challenges and fall within BBSRC’s remit. We would encourage applications from multidisciplinary areas of research.

**I want to generate some preliminary data for a subsequent application to BBSRC in the area of technology development. Is this appropriate for the Fund?**

Yes. One aspect of the Development Fund is to support early stage investigation of new tools and technologies. It is possible that these pilot studies will generate research that can be used to support subsequent applications to BBSRC.

**Can I use technologies/tools developed in other academic labs?**

## Annex 4

Yes, so long as there is a technology/methods development components to the project. In these kinds of projects, we would expect the technology developer to be a collaborator.

### **Can I use S-TRDF funds to pay for networking activities, including travel for international collaborators?**

Yes

### **I have an application that may be suitable for the s-TRDF for which I have generated considerable pilot data. Will this aid my applications?**

The s-TRDF call is intended to support early concept, exploratory investigations. As such, pilot data is not required. Applicants should consider carefully whether applications which contain considerable amounts of preliminary data are considered as 'high-risk' or whether applications of this type are more appropriate to responsive mode.

### **I have previously received funding for a successful TRDF project and would like to follow it up. Would an s-TRDF be appropriate for this?**

The s-TRDF is intended to fund small or short duration pump-priming activities and therefore may not be appropriate for the direct continuation of previous grants. Applicants should think carefully about their projects, and may wish to submit applications such as these to responsive mode.

### **Does time allocated as part of the national supercomputer resource HECToR count towards the £120K limit?**

No, this time only has a notional value assigned and does not count towards your limit.

### **Will I get an uplift as a New Investigator/with an industrial collaborator?**

No, these uplifts do not apply in this initiative. New Investigators should note that being then PI on a grant which gives them supervision of a PDRA will exclude them from being a New Investigator subsequently.