

Tools and resources development fund: call 2

Support for development of bioinformatics tools and computational approaches to the biosciences

Application deadline: 25 September 2012, 4pm

Summary

The Tools and Resources Development Fund (TRDF) aims **to pump prime the next generation of tools, technologies and resources that is required by bioscience researchers in scientific areas within our remit.**

It is anticipated that successful grants will not exceed £120K and a fast-track, light touch peer review process will operate to enable researchers to respond rapidly to emerging challenges and opportunities.

The 2012 TRDF call is in two phases. This second call supports bioinformatics tools and computational approaches to the biosciences. Details of the areas supported are described below. Call 1 was launched earlier this year. Both TRDF calls have an indicative budget in the region of £1.5M, subject to the quality of the proposals received.

Scope

This call is intended to:

- Support small or short-duration, pump-priming (pilot) projects that enable excellent bioscience
- Encourage the development of novel software tools, technologies and computational methods for research challenges within our remit (see our strategic priorities in related links)
- Help underpin research in the wider biosciences

It is expected that applications will involve multidisciplinary approaches and it is important that they demonstrate appropriate collaborative connections, and relevance to the generation of important new biological knowledge.

Grants of up to £120K ([ref 1](#)) will be made. Applications for projects should be between 6 and 18 months duration, although community networks to develop standards could be supported for up to 3 years.

Different types of 'enabling' proposal are eligible for consideration under this call.

- **New approaches to the analysis and interpretation of research data in the biological sciences**, including development of software tools and algorithms. Of particular interest will be proposals that address challenges arising from emerging new types of data and proposals that address known problems associated with data handling (e.g. next generation sequencing, high-throughput phenotyping, metagenomics)
- **New frameworks for the curation, sharing, and re-use/re-purposing of research data in the biological sciences**, including embedding data citation mechanisms (e.g. persistent identifiers for datasets within research workflows) and novel data management planning (DMP) implementations (e.g. integration of DMP tools within research workflows)
- **Community approaches to the sharing of research data** including the development of standards (this could include coordinating UK input into international standards development activities)

- **Approaches designed to exploit the latest computational technology** to further biological research; for example, to facilitate the use of cloud computing approaches or high performance computing architectures

Please contact us if you are unsure whether your application fits within this remit (see contacts below).

Exclusions

The following areas are excluded from this call:

- Applications which are not technology or methods focused
- Applications where the end users of the bioinformatics or computational tools will be applying the technology to a challenge outside the BBSRC remit
- Generic 'platform' informatics or computational approaches in the physical sciences
- Novel technology development, focusing on tools and instrumentation. Development of these technologies is within the scope of the first call of the TRDF (see related links)
- Applications not within the specified proposal areas or not meeting the specified expectations on project scale (including cost and duration). Such applications should be submitted to the responsive mode or another appropriate funding scheme

As noted above, this call is intended to support the development of bioinformatics, computational biology software or algorithm development, including data sharing. If a submitted application does not fit the remit of this call it will be rejected at an early stage. Applicants are therefore advised to contact us to discuss potential project concepts.

Complementary funding mechanisms

The TRDF is one of a number of recurring BBSRC funding streams that support research into bioinformatics and other computational approaches to the biosciences.

The TRDF is a small grants scheme and is not suitable for applications where the cost to us is greater than £120K.

Applicants are advised against submitting an under-resourced project to the TRDF as experience has shown that applications of this nature are inevitably unsuccessful.

Potential applicants are advised of the following alternative schemes that may be suitable for projects meeting the scientific criteria of the TRDF but exceeding the cost and/or duration limitations of TRDF projects:

- **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).
- **Strategic Longer and Larger (sLoLa) grants** (see related links). These are integrated research projects with high strategic relevance that require long timescales, extensive resources and/or

multidisciplinary approaches. The sLoLa scheme is an annual call for grants requesting over £2M FEC project value and lasting up to five years.

- **Bioinformatics and Biological Resources (BBR) fund** (see related links) has an annual call that is designed to provide support for the establishment, maintenance and enhancement of resources (e.g. databases, software suites). The fund has an annual budget of approximately £6M and projects can last up to five years

Other non-recurring funding schemes that may include support for technology/software development activities will be advertised via our special opportunities page (see related links).

Eligibility

This call is open to all institutions normally eligible for BBSRC managed-mode calls, which include:

- HEIs
- Research Council Institutes
- Independent Research Organisations (IROs) approved by BBSRC

For the categories of eligible organisations see our grants guide, section 2 (see related links). For the list of IROs see the RCUK eligibility guidance (see external links).

Applicants must be eligible for BBSRC funding; for eligibility criteria see section 3 (see related links).

How to apply

Applications should be submitted through the Je-S system (see external links).

Fast-track, light touch assessment

We reserve the right to reject applications, without reference to peer review, which are deemed to fall outside the remit and scope (including the financial scope) of this call. Applicants are strongly advised to contact the research councils if they are unsure whether their application would be suitable for this call.

Proposals that fit the remit of the call will be accessed through a single stage, fast-track panel assessment process. The streamlined nature of the assessment will use a broadly-based, multi-disciplinary panel with appropriate expertise.

Please note:

- **Proposals will be assessed only by the expert panel.** Written reports from additional referees will not be obtained.
- **The Panel will evaluate the proposals against the criteria for assessment** (see below) and provide the funders with a recommended rank-ordered list of proposals based on the details contained within the case for support.
- **Applicants should ensure** that sufficient details of their expertise and track record, proposed project, approaches and methods are provided within the case for support to enable the proposal to be assessed by scientists with relevant but not necessarily specialist expertise.

- **Applicants will receive post-panel feedback on unsuccessful proposals.** Details of how to request this will be provided in due course, and once the panel decisions have been made.

Peer review

The Expert Panel will be composed of representatives from our core committee and pool membership, plus members with expertise that covers scientific areas as required by the nature of the submissions.

Criteria for assessment

The assessment of proposals will reflect the scope of the fund and will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Scientific excellence
- Strategic relevance
- Industrial and stakeholder relevance
- Economic and social impact
- Timeliness and promise
- Cost effectiveness
- Staff training potential

In addition, assessors will be asked to take into account the scope of the TRDF as set out above, including the potential utility and novelty of the proposed tool/technology.

Awarded grants

Grants arising from previous calls of this fund can be viewed from our advanced grants search page (see related links).

Reference

1. This figure refers to the BBSRC contribution to the project, i.e. 80% of the full economic cost

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