



## Proof of Concept (PoC) funding - Guidelines

UPDATED GUIDELINES for projects submitted after 22-02-2024

Please check your eligibility to receive funding using our quick [online test](#) before completing an application form.

### 1. What is BBSRC Proof of Concept funding?

Proof of Concept (PoC) funds are to encourage and support collaborations between academics and industrialists within the remit of the [Biofortification Hub](#). The Biofortification Hub is one of [six Hubs](#) funded by BBSRC as part of the Open Innovation Research Club ([OIRC](#)) on diet and health.

The PoC funds will help pump-prime collaborative research projects of industrial relevance that could lead to a:

- Longer term relationship
- Route to commercial translation
- Clear potential for further funding
- New research technology transfer projects

### 2. How much funding is available?

The Biofortification Hub has been awarded £800K of PoC funding at 100% fEC (full Economic Cost) and is expecting to make average **awards of £40K, up to a maximum of £100K** (at 100% fEC) over the lifetime of the Hub. Funding is paid to the academic partner who is tackling a problem of industrial relevance. Additional industry contribution to funding (cash or in-kind) is encouraged.

### 3. Who is eligible to apply for the funding?

Funding is available to:

- Applicants who are [eligible to receive BBSRC funding](#)
- Academics based at a UK institution [eligible to receive BBSRC funding](#) when carrying out the project

PoC projects should focus on UK-based partners where there is benefit to the UK research base and the UK economy. In exceptional circumstances, where there is not a UK company to exploit the research, PoC funding may be awarded to work with an overseas partner company. The application should provide a clear justification for working with an overseas partner company as well as outline how the project will lead to building international collaborations and will be taken forward leading to inward investment and benefit the UK.

Applicants must explicitly indicate in their application form if they have applied or received funding for a similar and/or overlapping research project elsewhere, especially from any of the other five OIRC Hubs or through the BBSRC-UKRI “Diet and health innovation: Early-stage feasibility projects” yearly funding call reserved to OIRC Hub members. It is strongly discouraged to apply for similar projects from different OIRC Hubs at the same time unless you have been invited to do so.

### 4. What activities will the funding support?

Funds will support collaborative research projects of industrial relevance for a duration of **up to 9-12 months**. PoC funds are not available to support PhD students unless it is for a short period (depending on their stipend conditions) and students must be under an employment contract for this work. PoC projects cannot be used as part of a PhD, incorporated into results of a PhD thesis or used to top-up or extend a PhD studentship. Stipend and fees of MSc/PhD students will not be covered by



PoC funds. Researchers already working full-time on BBSRC project(s) cannot be supported by PoC funds. Equipment purchase is not eligible under the PoC awards. The funding should be used to pump-prime specific grant submissions in response to national and international calls. The work must be relevant to [remit of the Biofortification Hub](#) including [industrial biotechnology and bioenergy](#) as defined by BBSRC.

PoC awards will favour projects on biofortification (food, feed and fodder) rather than fortification (ingredients or supplements).

Project costs: BBSRC Grant Conditions for The OIRC Hubs (amended 22-02-2024) make the following provisions: Directly Incurred (DI) costs (excluding equipment) and Directly Allocated (DA) costs (excluding estate costs) are allowed. Indirect Costs (IC) are not allowed. In addition, the Biofortification Hub aims to support primarily research activities and encourages proposals with Directly Incurred (DI) costs representing 80% or more of the total grant costs. This criterion will be considered during the review process. Written justification of why Directly Allocated (DA) costs are necessary to the project is requested in the application form.

Important note: For projects up to £50K and 9 months duration, an application for a [Business Interaction Voucher](#) (BIV) may be preferable to maximise chances of funding.

#### **5. When are the funding calls?**

The funding calls open in March 2023, February 2024, February 2025 and February 2026. The call for applications for PoC funds will be advertised on the [Biofortification Hub](#) website as well as other outlets such as Twitter to ensure wide coverage of the opportunity.

#### **6. What is the application process?**

The applicant should complete an application form available on the [Biofortification Hub](#) website (when a PoC call is open) or by request to the Hub Manager ([biofortification.hub@nbi.ac.uk](mailto:biofortification.hub@nbi.ac.uk)). It is recommended, but not mandatory, that all applicants (including co-investigators and industry partners) join the Biofortification Hub. It is free and only takes two minutes to [apply for Hub membership](#) online.

Briefly, the application form asks for the following details:

- Applicant details (including details about the industry partner)
- Project details (including technology readiness levels)
- Financial details (including details of the industry contribution, if applicable)
- Any ethical or social issues
- A letter of support from the industry partner(s), if applicable

The completed application form, letter of support (if relevant) and Annex B-ethical approval (if relevant) should be emailed to the Hub Manager: [biofortification.hub@nbi.ac.uk](mailto:biofortification.hub@nbi.ac.uk)

A '[Companies House](#)' search of the industrial partner(s) will be conducted.

All applications will be acknowledged within 3 working days. The Hub Manager will check that the application meets the criteria and has the required information, however, if this cannot be easily remedied (within 3 working days) the application will be returned and will have to be resubmitted.



## 7. What is the review process?

The Biofortification Hub Funding Committee (FC) will evaluate applications. The FC will be composed of representatives from the [three Hub management groups](#), namely the Core Membership Group (CMG), Strategic Advisory Board (SAB) and Executive Group (EG). Recommendations will be approved by the FC. The Chair of the FC will review the award recommendations prior to submission for approval by BBSRC.

for assessment will include:

- Quality of science
- Relevance of application to the [remit of the Biofortification Hub](#) including industrial biotechnology and bioenergy (defined by BBSRC as the use of biological resources such as plants, algae, marine life, fungi and micro-organisms for producing and processing materials, chemical, biopharmaceuticals and energy)
- Relevance to the funding call (if a specific theme has been set)
- Compelling industrial relevance (Responsible Research and Innovation, RRI)
- Potential for building long-term relationships
- Value for money (including why Directly Allocated (DA) are necessary for the project)

## 8. How and when will the award be paid?

The successful academic, co-applicant(s) and industrial partner(s) will **join the Biofortification Hub** ([apply for Hub Membership](#)). They will agree a start date and need to have a signed agreement in place prior to the project commencing. IP and collaboration agreements will be drawn up by the respective partnering organisations (academia and industry) and the Hub Manager will require evidence that these are in place before releasing funds.

A formal “Funding Offer Letter” and “Award Agreement” (summarising the “Terms and Conditions”) will be issued to the successful applicant.

A final expenditure claim must be submitted within **one month of the project ending** as part of the Project Completion Report. The [Project Completion Form](#) is available on the Biofortification Hub website. Funds will not be released from BBSRC until the expenditure claim and final project report are submitted. Funds will be transferred at 100% FEC from BBSRC to The Quadram Institute Bioscience (QIB) on final project costs once the project has been completed. BBSRC will make the payment to QIB the next available pay run and QIB will then transfer the funds to the awardee.

## 9. What reporting will be required?

A [Project Completion Form](#) (authorised by the industrial partner for use in the public domain) including a final expenditure statement (authorised by the academic organisation) must be submitted within one month of the project ending and should be sent to the Hub Manager ([biofortification.hub@nbi.ac.uk](mailto:biofortification.hub@nbi.ac.uk)).

Briefly, the Project Completion Form includes:

- Summary of project outcomes
- List of outputs e.g., papers, patents, new products or processes, prizes, collaborations
- Testimonial(s) ideally from the industrial partner(s)
- Image(s) (with legend(s)) related to the science carried out
- Technology Readiness Level (TRL) for research pre- and post-funding (see [BBSRC definition of TRLs](#))



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- Future plans
- Financial details of the actual spend of the project

The Hub Executive Group (EG) and Core Membership Group (CMG) will approve all reports. In the case of conflict of interest, the CMG Chair or nominee will review such reports.

The report will be used to create a [case study](#) available in the public domain (e.g. Biofortification Hub, BBSRC and British Nutrition Foundation websites and publications).

The awardee may be invited to make a short project presentation to the Biofortification Hub Community Meetings which will take place in 2023, 2025 and 2027.

The awardee should acknowledge the support of the BBSRC award **BB/X010864/1** on papers and other forms of media communications including press releases, conferences and media appearances.

The awardee will act as an ambassador for the science area represented by the Biofortification Hub and the wider UK Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy sector by attending and contributing to events within relevant areas at the request of BBSRC.

A full audit trail must be in place for all incurred expenditure on the project. BBSRC will not expect to see this evidence, but it should be in place and can be checked if the Research Organisation is subject to a funding assurance visit.

#### **10. What data protection and data sharing policies are in place?**

Please read the [Biofortification Hub Privacy Notice](#) before completing an application form.

Contact the Hub Manager: [biofortification.hub@nbi.ac.uk](mailto:biofortification.hub@nbi.ac.uk) if you have any questions.

Copies of proposals will be made available to the Biofortification Hub FC in confidence.

Administrative staff of the Norwich Bioscience Institutes (NBI, Norwich) will use the information provided in the application for processing the proposal, the award of any consequential funding, and the payment, maintenance and review of the BIVs.

To meet BBSRC obligations for public accountability and dissemination of information, details of grants (including successful PoC awards) may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists. BBSRC will use this information for research-related activities, including but not limited to, transfer of funds, statistical analysis in relation to evaluation of BBSRC OIRC Hubs, study of trends and policy and strategy studies.

Information about grants may also be made available to the [British Nutrition Foundation](#) which coordinates on behalf of BBSRC, the activity of the six OIRC innovation Hubs, including the Biofortification Hub.



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**11. Who do I contact if I have any questions?**

If you have any questions regarding the application process, please contact the Hub Manager:  
[biofortification.hub@nbi.ac.uk](mailto:biofortification.hub@nbi.ac.uk).

