



# Grant Writing and the Assessment Process

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# Presentation contents

- Introduction
- Information on Responsive Mode calls
- Overview of the grant application/peer review process
- Guidance on writing grants

# Background

## Grant application success rates

- BBSRC 27% (2013)
- MRC 26% (2013)
- NERC 18.4% (2013)

Many of these are from people who write grants regularly.

There are a large number of good grants submitted each round and only enough money to fund the very best of them.

# BBSRC offers a range of funding


- **Responsive mode** is the main vehicle for Research Council funding.
  - BBSRC open call, 3 deadlines per year

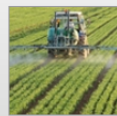



## There are a range of other opportunities:



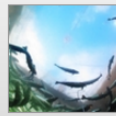
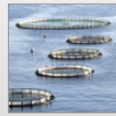
- Initiatives
  - Tend to be in specific areas, often involve other RCs/funders
  - Sometimes one-off
- “Schemes”
  - Run along side other activities
  - Might be targeted to a particular group

# Current Funding Opportunities

Please visit the **'All Calls' Page** on the BBSRC website for a full list of open calls:  
<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/filter/>

	<b>Priming Food Partnerships</b>	<b>Deadline:</b> 13 July 2016, 4pm	<b>Related calls:</b> <a href="#">collaboration</a> <a href="#">food</a> <a href="#">industry</a> <a href="#">innovation</a> <a href="#">multidisciplinary</a> <a href="#">nutrition</a> <a href="#">partnerships</a>
		<b>Open</b>	<b>Expression of interest</b>

June			
	<b>Food System Resilience Programme Co-ordination Announcement of Opportunity</b>	<b>Deadline:</b> 23 June 2016, 4pm	<b>Related calls:</b> <a href="#">collaboration</a> <a href="#">food</a> <a href="#">knowledge exchange</a> <a href="#">multidisciplinary</a> <a href="#">partnerships</a>
		<b>Open</b>	
	<b>GCRF Foundation Awards for Global Agricultural and Food Systems Research</b>	<b>Deadline:</b> 22 June 2016, 4pm	<b>Related calls:</b> <a href="#">agriculture</a> <a href="#">animal health</a> <a href="#">collaboration</a> <a href="#">crops</a> <a href="#">food</a> <a href="#">innovation</a> <a href="#">livestock</a> <a href="#">nutrition</a> <a href="#">partnerships</a> <a href="#">pests</a>
		<b>Open</b>	<b>Expression of interest</b>
	<b>NCDs Foundation Awards: Global Health Science – Beyond Infections</b>	<b>Deadline:</b> 22 June 2016, 4pm	<b>Related calls:</b> <a href="#">collaboration</a> <a href="#">innovation</a> <a href="#">partnerships</a>
		<b>Open</b>	<b>Expression of interest</b>
	<b>Infections Foundation Awards: Global Infections</b>	<b>Deadline:</b> 22 June 2016, 4pm	<b>Related calls:</b> <a href="#">collaboration</a> <a href="#">innovation</a> <a href="#">partnerships</a>
		<b>Open</b>	<b>Expression of interest</b>

July			
	<b>Biomarkers for Nutrition and Health</b>	<b>Deadline:</b> 15 July 2016, 3pm	<b>Related calls:</b> <a href="#">food</a> <a href="#">innovation</a> <a href="#">nutrition</a> <a href="#">research</a> <a href="#">technologies</a>
		<b>Open</b>	<b>Invite only</b>
	<b>Priming Food Partnerships</b>	<b>Deadline:</b> 13 July 2016, 4pm	<b>Related calls:</b> <a href="#">collaboration</a> <a href="#">food</a> <a href="#">industry</a> <a href="#">innovation</a> <a href="#">multidisciplinary</a> <a href="#">nutrition</a> <a href="#">partnerships</a>
		<b>Open</b>	<b>Expression of interest</b>
	<b>UK Aquaculture Initiative: Innovation Projects</b>	<b>Deadline:</b> 5 July 2016, 4pm	<b>Related calls:</b> <a href="#">agriculture</a> <a href="#">innovation</a> <a href="#">knowledge exchange</a> <a href="#">livestock</a>
		<b>Open</b>	<b>Invite only</b>
	<b>UK Aquaculture Initiative: Networks</b>	<b>Deadline:</b> 5 July 2016, 4pm	<b>Related calls:</b> <a href="#">agriculture</a> <a href="#">innovation</a> <a href="#">knowledge exchange</a> <a href="#">livestock</a> <a href="#">people</a>
		<b>Open</b>	<b>Invite only</b>

# Schemes in Responsive Mode

- New Investigator Scheme
- 'Stand-alone' LINK
- Industrial Partnership Awards
- Government Partnership Awards
- BBSRC- Brazil (FAPESP) joint funding of research
- Annual research focus on Welfare of Managed Animals
- Highlight calls

# Responsive Mode Priorities

- BBSRC has a set of Council-wide strategic priority areas, described in the *BBSRC Strategic Plan*
- The responsive mode priorities reflect topics or activities within these broader strategic areas that the Council wishes to particularly encourage
- Applications to RM DO NOT need to address a priority area.
- Alignment to Strategic Priorities is one of the seven RM assessment criteria but scientific excellence is the overriding criterion. For two otherwise equally balanced proposals, strategic relevance/importance can give competitive edge  
<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/priorities/>

# Pre-application checks:

**Check, with the assistance of the grants guide and BBSRC office staff if necessary, that:**

- You and your partners are eligible (inc. joint grants)
- Your institution is eligible
- The project is within the BBSRC remit
- The grant is not an uninvited resubmission
- You know which committee is best to submit to
- All the paperwork has been correctly completed
- The fEC costs are correct



# PI/ Co-I eligibility

- Rules are same for PI and Co-I at BBSRC
- Details are in the Grants Guide
- Always check with the Office if in doubt-before submission:  
[eligibility@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:eligibility@bbsrc.ac.uk)
- Post-docs are not eligible as PI/ Co-I
  - Post-docs who substantially contribute to the application can be named as Researcher Co-Investigators
- Lecturer level fellowships should be checked with the office prior to application

# Remit

**All decisions are project based – background, department or past funding do not determine remit eligibility**

- Check the BBSRC website for remit information
- If in doubt, send 1-2 page outline to office: [remit@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:remit@bbsrc.ac.uk)
- Research Councils have no remit gaps
  - see the RCUK Research Councils Concordat
  - <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/prrcremits.htm>

# BBSRC-MRC Remit Interface

- A proposal is considered out of BBSRC remit if its primary focus is elucidation of abnormal or disease processes
- BBSRC will accept proposals that utilise disease models to understand normal biological processes.
- Both BBSRC and MRC support fundamental research relevant to human health. Primary *motivation* determines the best 'home' for proposals

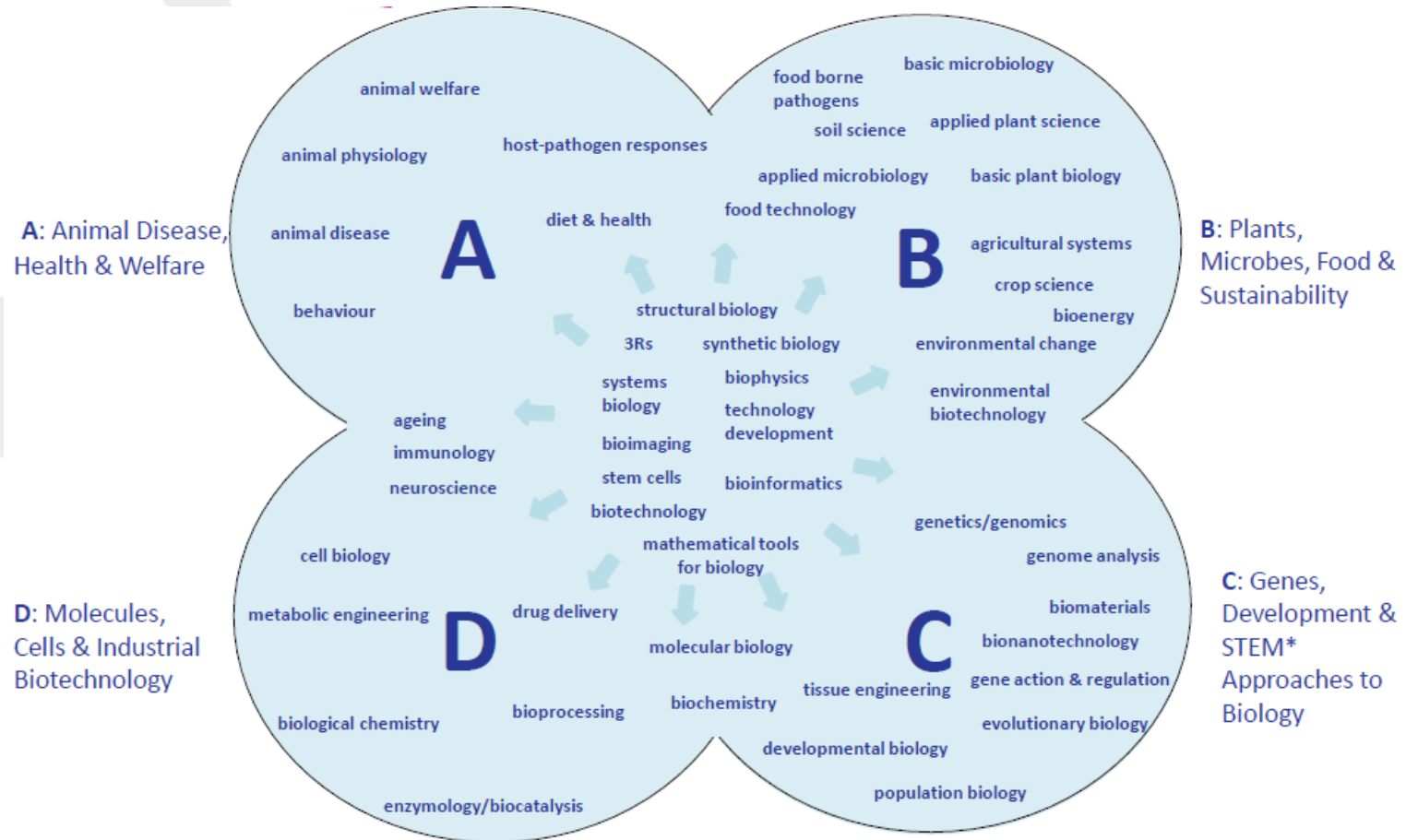
# BBSRC/MRC Remits

- **BBSRC** gives priority to science which:
  - Addresses underpinning themes in biology or normal human physiology (e.g. processes of ageing)
  - Seeks to develop new tools, technologies and approaches with broad applications (e.g. systems biology)
  - Involves research in to plant or animal health
- **MRC** gives priority to science which:
  - Addresses important health questions or is likely to inform research on health or disease

# Some pointers...

- There is a limit to which it is possible to 'pitch' an application. If the area of work is within MRC remit it cannot simply be written to appeal to BBSRC.
- In areas relevant to human biology BBSRC's committees look for excellent fundamental discovery science. Our 'Bioscience for Health strategic framework' provides an overview of key areas of interest.
- There is a distinction between your research questions and potential broader impacts. It is sensible consider the wider relevance of fundamental research when outlining outcomes and pathways to impact, noting these impacts can include but often extend beyond human disease/healthcare.
- If in doubt, send 1-2 page outline to: [remit@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:remit@bbsrc.ac.uk)

# Responsive mode committees



\*Science Technology Engineering and Maths – Committee C will consider generic STEM approaches to biology; specific applications will be considered by the Committee providing the appropriate biological context.

January 2016

- There is considerable overlap between Research Committees. We will assess applications using the most appropriate expertise.

# Overview of process

Proposal submitted

← External reviewing

← “Committee” meeting

← Final decision made

Grant awarded / rejected

# Submission of proposals

Enquiries to office

↓  
Proposal submitted

↓  
Remit check

- Office staff answer queries relating to remit, eligibility, costs etc.
- Proposals submitted through Je-S by 4pm on closing date **Zero tolerance!**
- Staff check remits
- May “transfer” to other Research Councils (transfer to other councils effectively means it is withdrawn)



# Assignment of Introducers

Enquiries to office

↓  
Proposal submitted

↓  
Remit check

↓  
Committee/Pool members assigned

- Office staff assign committee members to each proposal based on expertise
- The “introducers” (**at least 2**) lead on the discussions in the meeting

# Selection of Reviewers

Enquiries to office

↓  
Proposal submitted

↓  
Remit check

↓  
Committee/Pool members assigned

↓  
Reviewers selected

- Applicants nominate four reviewers on their Je-S form
- Peer Review Officers select some of the nominated reviewers, and select other reviewers themselves
- Reviewers must not come from the applicant's or collaborator's institution, or have an existing collaboration with the applicant

# Peer Review

Enquiries to office

Proposal submitted

Remit check

Committee/Pool members assigned

Reviewers selected

External reviewing

PI response to reviewers

- Request to review sent via email
- Anonymised reviewers' comments are sent to applicant
- Applicant (PI) submits a response to the reviewers' comments

# Reviewers' comments

- **Read in anger, get a good nights sleep, respond with patience**
- Respond to reviewers fully and positively: Having negative reviewers comments will not necessarily harm your chances of funding if you deal with them appropriately
  - Identify criticisms clearly and respond explicitly to negative comments
  - Criticise the reviewer comments **NEVER the reviewer**
  - View this as an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and add new supporting data
  - Clarify experimental approaches if asked
- **Committees WILL consider your response** in their discussions and it often improves your chances when you respond well
- Remember you nominated some of the reviewers- so please don't complain to the Office that they have asked the wrong reviewers
- If the reviewer did not understand what you are planning to do maybe the committee won't either. Now is your last chance to clear up ambiguity

# Overview

Enquiries to office

↓  
Proposal submitted

↓  
Remit check

↓  
Committee/Pool members assigned

↓  
Reviewers selected

↓  
External reviewing

↓  
PI response to reviewers

↓  
Committee meeting

# Grant Assessment at BBSRC

- Each application is discussed in turn, 70 -130 applications per committee
- A **collective** final score for each application is agreed
- A final rank ordered list is agreed (**the order is the key**, not the scores)
- On rare occasions the Committee may make “Conditional Awards” or “Invited Resubmissions”.

# Assessment Criteria

## Scientific excellence

- Does the application meet the highest international standards of current research in the field?
- Does it demonstrate timeliness and promise?

## Other criteria in areas such as:

- Delivery of council's strategy
- Impact
- Staffing
- Appropriateness of costs

# Overview

Enquiries to office

Proposal submitted

Remit check

Committee/Pool members assigned

Reviewers selected

External reviewing

PI response to reviewers

Committee meeting

Final Decision making body makes decision

Feedback

Grant awarded



# Final Decision

- Proposals are funded from the rank-ordered list (e.g. top 20-25%) based on available funding
- Those above the 'funding cut-off' are sent award letters. Once the grant has been announced, ownership passes to "Post Award process"
- Those falling below the funding cut-off are sent notification letters and receive feedback on request
- **It is a competition for funds - even good grants don't necessarily get funded**

# After the process

- If successful: make sure your starting date is right and check the terms and conditions
- If unsuccessful:
  - Ask for feedback from a peer review officer. Additional information **may** be available
  - All council's resubmission rules discourage/disallow the resubmission of the same application
  - Remember success is relative to the quality of other applications and available funding



# **Guide to Grant Writing – the paperwork**

# What makes a successful grant application?

## View from a former Committee Chair

- Is it top quality internationally competitive science?
- Is it addressing an important problem?
- Is it novel and exciting?
- Are the aims and potential outcomes of the grant crystal clear from the case for support?
- Does the accompanying data support the proposal?
- Is the work feasible – are there contingencies?
- Has the applicant considered the potential impacts of the research?
- Can a non-specialist understand why the work is important?

# The Application

## A good proposal should have/be:

- A clear hypothesis/aim and objectives [where appropriate]
- Feasible
- Preliminary data or demonstration of technique
- A clear work plan - and contingencies (what if?)
- Sufficient detail for assessment
- Appropriately costed

## Should avoid:

- Data gathering without advancing knowledge
- Entirely speculative applications with no evidence base

# Justification of Resources

**Separate attachment (only 2 pages - not an essay)**

**Should include full justifications for:**

- PI and Co-I time
- Level of staffing required (including research and technical staff)
- Level of resource (T&S, consumables, equipment, facilities access etc)

**The Committees are empowered to cut ANY unjustified resource**

# Data management plan

## **BBSRC has a data-management policy.**

- All applicants are required to include a statement of how they intend to make the data generated through their project available to the wider community.
- The Committee will assess whether the statement is adequate.
- If the applicant's data-sharing policy is not considered adequate the Committee can make funding conditional on the provision of a revised statement.

# Pathways to Impact

**Compulsory and includes 2 extra pages in case for support and a summary in the Je-S form**

Je-S help text and text in grants guide is available

Activities outlined in the Pathways to Impact should be:

- project specific (e.g. with specific objectives and timelines)
- appropriate
- costed for activities within the period of the grant
- carried out by the staff working on the project
- not generic departmental activities

For more guidance see RCUK website: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/ke/impacts/>



# Top tips from the Office

- Don't rush it
- Make sure its going to the right place, at the right time
- Check that it is in remit, and you have done the paperwork correctly (including costs)
- Get someone outside your direct field to read it
- Work out possible criticism and head them off in the application (don't hide from them)
- View your response to reviewers comments as a chance to sell yourself (not to rubbish the reviewer)
- Prepare yourself for success rate reality and persevere

# Learn from others

Find **recent & successful** grant applications in your department – ideally with the same funding body

Speak to people who have written these grants

But carefully manage this advice:

- especially around past unfunded applications
- not all advice is good or accurate
- not all of it reflects current realities
- don't rely on colleagues for latest rules

# Help is at Hand

## Talk to us:

- Prior to submission
- Submit 1-2 page outline proposals
- Ask for feedback

## Help the Office by:

- Explaining your science in simpler terms
- Peer reviewing when asked
- Reading the Je-S guidance notes and grants guide
- Treating the Office staff with respect

# Get involved - Panel Membership

BBSRC is seeking suitably qualified and motivated individuals from academia, industry and other BBSRC user communities to join our pool of experts, strategy advisory panels and committees

## This is an opportunity to:

- Get involved in funding committees.
- Input into BBSRC Strategy.
- Understand how funding decisions are made.

## You would need to:

- Be available for 1-2 meetings/year
- Commit time to prepare for the meetings
- Lead discussions in the meetings


Call for panel members is **currently open** and details are on the website. This includes videos of panel member experiences

<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/about/governance-structure/committees/committee-pool-membership/>

Any questions to [research.committees@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:research.committees@bbsrc.ac.uk)

# Contacts

- [eligibility@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:eligibility@bbsrc.ac.uk)
- [remit@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:remit@bbsrc.ac.uk)
- [GrantsBBSRC@ssc.rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:GrantsBBSRC@ssc.rcuk.ac.uk) (pre-award)
- [GrantsPostAward@ssc.rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:GrantsPostAward@ssc.rcuk.ac.uk) (post-award)
- Science contacts:  
<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/site/contact/science-contacts.aspx>



**Please note that this presentation should not be used as a substitute for reading the current grants guide as information in it may become out of date, the BBSRC grants guide can be found here:**

**<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/apply/grants-guide/>**