



E3B: METALS IN BIOLOGY BBSRC NIBB OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR PROOF OF CONCEPT FUNDS

1. What is BBSRC NIBB Proof of Concept funding?

BBSRC NIBB Proof of Concept (PoC) funds are to encourage and support collaboration between academics and industrialists within the [E3B: Metals in Biology BBSRC Network in Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy, a BBSRC NIBB](#).

The 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 Network has been awarded £400K of PoC funding at 100% fEC and is expecting to make awards of up to £25K (at 100% fEC) over the lifetime of the Network. PoC funds are awarded at 80% fEC and the associated institution will be responsible for the remaining 20% fEC. Funding is paid to the academic partner who is tackling a problem of industrial relevance. Industry contribution to funding (cash or in-kind) is encouraged.

3. Who is eligible to apply for the funding?

Funding is available to:

- [E3B: Metals in Biology Network members](#) who are [eligible to receive BBSRC funding](#) (section 3)
- Academics based at a UK institution when carrying out the project

PoC funding should focus attention 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 and outline how the project will lead to building international collaborations, how the project will be taken forward leading to inward investment and the benefit back to the UK.

4. What activities will the funding support?

Funds will support collaborative research projects of industrial relevance for up to 12 months duration. 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 Network](#) including [industrial biotechnology and bioenergy as defined by the BBSRC](#).

5. When are the funding calls?

The funding calls will remain open for the lifetime of the Network. The call for applications for the PoC funds will be advertised on the [E3B: Metals in Biology Network website](#) and by email to members as well as other outlets such as twitter (@METALSBBBSRCNIBB) to ensure wide coverage of the opportunity.



6. What is the application process?

The applicant should complete an application form available on the [E3B: Metals in Biology Network website](#) (when a PoC call is open) or by request to the Network Manager: metals.bbsrcnibb@durham.ac.uk.

In brief, the application form asks for the following details:

- Applicant details (including details about the industry partner company)
- Project details (including technology readiness levels)
- Finance 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
- cv of the PI

The completed application form, short cv, letter of support (if relevant) and Annex B (if relevant) should be emailed to the Network Manager: metals.bbsrcnibb@durham.ac.uk

All applications will be acknowledged within 3 working days. The Network Manager will check the application meets the criteria and has the required information, however if this cannot be easily remedied (within 3 working days) then the application will be returned and will have to be resubmitted. The Network Manager will contact the academic principal investigator's Research Office to confirm acceptance of the 80% FEC funding rate and eligibility of applicant to receive BBSRC funding.

A [Companies House](#) search for industrial partners will include confirming the presence of a UK-base, the incorporation date (to see how long the company has been trading) and if accounts have been filed on time. Further due diligence checks may be made when academic partners are also company directors. Durham University's due diligence process (based on [UKRI recommendations](#)) will be followed for overseas partners.

7. What is the review process?

The E3B: Metals in Biology Network Executive Group (EG), together with representatives from the Management Board (MB) and other members as required, will evaluate applications. Recommendations will be authorised/approved by the EG. The Chair of the MB will review the award recommendations pre-submission to the BBSRC for approval. All awards are subject to retrospective oversight from the MB.

Criteria for assessment will include:

- Quality of science
- Relevance of application to [remit of the Network](#) including industrial biotechnology and bioenergy (defined by the 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)
- Compelling industrial relevance (Responsible Research and Innovation, RRI)
- Potential for building longer-term relationships
- Value for money

8. How and when will the award be paid?



The academic, co-applicant(s) and industrial partner (s) will agree a start date and will 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 Network Manager will require evidence that these are in place before releasing funds.

A formal offer letter (including award Terms and Conditions) will be issued to the successful applicant. A final expenditure claim must be submitted within three months of the project completion along with the final project report. Funds will not be released from the BBSRC until the expenditure claim and report are submitted.

Funds will be transferred at 80% fEC from the BBSRC to Durham University on final project costs once a project has been completed. BBSRC will make the payment to Durham University in the next available pay run. The University 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 University) must be submitted within three months of project completion and should be sent to the Network Manager (metals.bbsrcnibb@durham.ac.uk).

The report form is available is available on the [E3B: Metals in Biology Network website](#) or by request to the Network Manager: metals.bbsrcnibb@durham.ac.uk. A copy will also be emailed to each PI.

Briefly, the project completion form should contain:

- Summary of the project outcomes
- Future plans
- Testimonial(s) ideally from the industrial partner(s)
- Image (with legend) related to the science
- List of outputs eg papers, patents, new products or processes, prizes, collaborations etc
- Technology Readiness Level (TRL) for research pre-funding (see [BBSRC definition of TRLs](#)), for research post-funding and details of how the funding has helped to advance the TRL of the research (if applicable)
- Financial details of the actual spend of the project

The report will be used to create a [case study](#) (see more examples on the [Network website](#)) available in the public domain (eg Network website and BBSRC publications)

The awardee should acknowledge the support of the BBSRC award BB/S009787/1 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 Network 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 RO is subject to a funding assurance visit.



The Elements of
Bioremediation,
Biomanufacturing
& Bioenergy

Metals in Biology
(MiB)

The EG will approve all reports. In the case of conflict of interest the MB Chair or nominee will review such reports.

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10. What data protection and data sharing polices are in place?

Please read the [E3B: Metals in Biology Network privacy notice](#) before completing an application form. Contact the Network Manager: metals.bbsrcnibb@durham.ac.uk if you have any questions.

Copies of proposals will be made available to the E3B: Metals in Biology Network evaluation panel in confidence. They will use information provided in the application for processing the proposal, the award of any consequential funding, and the payment, maintenance and review of the PoC funds. In order to meet the BBSRC obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of 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 the BBSRC NIBB, study of trends and policy and strategy studies.

To meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of grants (including successful PoC awards) may also be made available on the Research Councils' web sites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

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

If you have any questions regarding the application process, please contact the Network Manager: metals.bbsrcnibb@durham.ac.uk

