

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

The Anaerobic Digestion Network – a BBSRC NIBB

Proof of Concept Awards

2017



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Introduction

Anaerobic Digestion Network - a BBSRC NIBB

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) has committed £18M to fund 13 collaborative Networks in Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy (BBSRC NIBB). The BBSRC NIBB will foster collaborations between academia, industry, policy makers and NGOs in order to find new approaches to tackle research challenges, translate research and deliver key benefits in Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy (IBBE). Each Network has a particular focus area, mainly within the UK, but with interest to build international links. Details of all of the Networks can be found on the BBSRC website (<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/bbsrcnibb>).

These multidisciplinary networks will drive new ideas to harness the potential of biological resources for producing and processing materials, biopharmaceuticals, chemicals and energy. The Networks can provide Proof of Concept funding, Business Interaction Vouchers and Events and are open to new members.

The BBSRC NIBB, along with the IB Catalyst, form the central part of the BBSRC's strategy to support the development of IBBE as a key component of the UK bio-economy. The Networks will help to provide sustainable processes for producing bio-based alternatives to products which currently rely on petrochemicals.

The Anaerobic Digestion Network (AD Network) addresses scientific and technical challenges in the development of anaerobic biotechnology, drawing on the expertise of leading academics underpinned by new tools and concepts. As well as enhancing the performance of anaerobic digestion as a second generation bioenergy process, these can create new areas of application in the creation of value-added bio-based products, widening the process scope to a biorefinery. Bio-molecular tools open up the possibility of improved diagnostics and advanced on-line process control, topics of immediate interest to industry. For more information, see the website (<http://www.anaerobicdigestionnet.com>).

The AD Network is led by an Executive Board comprising Professor Charles Banks, University of Southampton (Primary Investigator) and Professor Orkun Soyer, University of Warwick (Co-Investigator).

Proof of Concept Award

What is a Proof of Concept Award?

The Proof of Concept (PoC) scheme is a BBSRC-funded initiative aimed at supporting innovation and research. An amount of **£720,000** has been made available to the AD Network for this purpose, to be allocated over the first 3 years of this 5 year Network. They may only be awarded to UK-based academics. The concept should be new and exciting.

By definition, PoC Awards are primarily about proving a concept which might then be further developed with a larger grant elsewhere. They are not aimed at technology transfer – where an existing well known process/idea is merely transferred to the AD industry. Nor are they intended to replace product development for an industry purpose (this type of project would be better directed to our BIV funding or InnovateUK). They are not intended to explore exhaustively all aspects of an idea. Large, ambitious projects would need to apply to the Research Councils directly for funding. Smaller, well defined objectives are required for this funding stream.

Previous awards have had a timescale of 3 to 12 months and maximum budget of £60,000 at 80% FEC (i.e. a maximum grant of £48,000). PoC concepts have been explored with the facilities already at the disposal of the applicant.

Ultimately, the best projects are those which have potential as the basis or springboard for new, exciting research with real industrial potential.

We strongly recommend that applicants use their own in-house review services before they submit their bids to ensure compliance with the conditions of the call.

Objectives

The Anaerobic Digestion Network's aim is to promote the underpinning scientific research that will support a growing AD industry in the UK, helping to resolve immediate challenges in the field of bioenergy production and allowing diversification into the area of industrial biotechnology through development of new functionalities and processes broadly known as the biorefinery concept. Over the course of this Network, a diverse array of projects will be explored.

The PoC Award aims to provide small grants from which much larger initiatives can be launched. Within the Network's lifetime, it is hoped to build strong consortia able to bid for larger national and international grants, e.g. GCRF, Horizon 2020, Innovate, etc.

Scope

Applications should fall within the remit of the BBSRC, specifically with an Industrial Biotechnology aspect. Thus there should be some biological aspect or impact of the project and this should be of some relevance either directly or indirectly to Industrial Biotechnology/Bioenergy. If in doubt, please contact BBSRC for guidance (see: <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/grants/remit/>). They must also fall within the remit of the AD Network by encompassing some aspect(s) of Anaerobic Digestion as a core concept.

Previous Calls

The first PoC call closed in September 2014. Four projects were funded. The second call closed in February 2015. Three projects were funded. The third call closed December 2016 and 5 projects were funded. For summary details of the funded projects, please see www.anaerobicdigestionnet.com/funding.

Specification of the 4th Call

The fourth call opens in 2017 as advertised. The Guidance for Applicants is updated between calls to improve the process. To ensure compliance please re-read the guidance carefully if you applied in the previous call.

Remaining AD Network PoC funds will be used to support up to three **Literature Reports** in the 4th Call - each of £11,000. Literature Reports must aim to provide a sound conceptual foundation as the basis for future larger funding bids to the GCRF, UK Research Council Responsive Mode or other available sources of funding.

It is envisaged that each Literature Report award would fund salary costs for approx. 3 months (full or part-time) for a Post-Doc investigation into a specific, relevant area of AD research. Reports should be designed to lead to a larger funding bid elsewhere.

Whilst the AD Network will fund the production of the report, it may remain confidential. We will request to be updated on the progress of any outputs from the award, such as any publications or funding bids that arise from the activity. A short confidential final report will be requested for monitoring purposes at the end of the award.

In order to secure funding each Literature Report must demonstrate:

- Scientific merit
- Innovation/Novelty
- Industrial relevance
- Value for money
- Potential for further development and implementation

BBSCR views these as desk-based PoC projects. Therefore do explain in general terms what the outcome of the investment will be and indicate the pathway to future development in the application.

Application Process

Eligibility

PoC Awards may be applied for by any AD Network member who is a member of academic staff or equivalent and is eligible to receive BBSCR funding. Eligibility guidelines can be found at www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Guidelines/grants-guide.pdf. Applications may come from individuals or groups, but must have an academic primary contact.

To register as an AD Network member, visit www.anaerobicdigestionnet.com/join, or contact Angela Bywater/Dr Louise Byfield at ADNet@soton.ac.uk for further details.

How to apply

Application is by a simple form available from www.anaerobicdigestionnet.com or by emailing ADNet@soton.ac.uk. Applications should be sent electronically to ADNet@soton.ac.uk and will be acknowledged upon receipt. If an acknowledgement is not received in good time, please contact the Network Managers directly to ensure your application is processed before the call deadline.

We aim to assess proposals within 8 weeks. All applicants will be given feedback on their proposal. Unsuccessful bids can be re-submitted once only.

Call timelines

The calls for Proof of Concept Award applications will be announced on the AD Network website and details sent by email to all AD Network members. Awardees will be notified 6-8 weeks after the call closes. The Executive Board reserves the right to modify these timescales in consultation with the Management Board and, in this case, AD Network members will be informed of any changes. Note that the AD Network must receive the signed contract and proposed start date within 3 months of award notification.

Call opens	31 July 2017
Call closes	Midnight, 16th October 2017
Notification	Immediately after review period
Award acceptance	Within 3 months of notification

The Application Form

The purpose of the application form is to obtain enough information on the project to enable assessors to understand how well it aligns with the Network objectives and how competitive it is with other applications, especially in the areas of scientific merit, innovation, industrial relevance, value for money and potential for collaboration and implementation.

No appendices are permitted. Warning: be aware that reviewers will ignore any information not contained in the application form itself.

Structure

You must use the application form provided, as it requests specific information in a standard form for ease of processing. The structure of the application form is as follows:

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3
Title/summary	Case for Support with optional references	Financial Breakdown
Applicant details	Avenues for further development and outcomes	
Conflict of Interest declaration	Expected start date and duration	
Gateway question: scope		

It is important that you address and respond to each question clearly. To help you, the guidance below provides an explanation of what is required for each field. The guidance notes are not intended to be exhaustive: you should develop your responses based on your own skills, knowledge and experience.

You may refer to other sections of the form in your answers if this will help avoid repetition. Maximum word limits apply to certain form fields. These are specified in the field guidance section below. It is important that you complete each field and present a fully completed form. Incomplete forms will be rejected.

The typeface should be Arial or Calibri, font size 11 and colour black. Please check your completed application form in PRINT VIEW: any text that cannot be seen in this view or when the form is printed will not be seen.

Field Guidance

Proof of Concept Application Form		
Required Fields	Guidance	Maximum word limits/ Further clarification
Application details		
Literature review title	Please give a title for your application.	Word limit – 25 This title may be made publically available.
Proposal summary	Please summarise the aims of your project. It is important to make the core concept you wish to investigate clear at this point. We recommend that you invest some time on this section to clarify exactly what idea or concept will be investigated and how. If your proposal is funded, this summary will be used for publicity purposes by the BBSRC and the AD Network	Word limit – 75 This summary may be made publically available.
Applicant contact details	Enter the full name, address, postcode, e-mail address and telephone number of the Primary Contact between the AD Network and the proposal. This will be the grant holder in the event of a successful bid.	No word limit. According to BBSRC conditions, this should be a member of academic staff (or equivalent) from a UK University. Please see the link under Eligibility .
Please confirm that you are a member of the AD Network and eligible for BBSRC funding	See Eligibility	Yes/No
Other Applicant contact details	Enter the full name, address, postcode, e-mail address and telephone number of any other applicants.	No word limit.
Are you aware of any conflicts of interest that should be	Yes/No	If 'Yes', give details. This section enables us to manage potential conflicts

considered with regard to this proposal – e.g. associations with Management Board members?		of interest during the review process.
Gateway question: How does this application align within the AD Network scope and the BBSRC IB remit?	Explain how your proposal fits within the aims and objectives of the AD Network.	Word limit - 150 Note: Please identify the main research challenge that the project addresses. This will be used to determine whether the proposal proceeds for review. It is important, therefore, for you to understand fully the background, challenge and scope of the competition, as outlined in these Guidance Notes and the Network website.
Are you, your organisation, co-applicants or co-applicant organisations applying to other BBSRC NIBB Networks for funds on the same project area?	Yes/No	NB this does not prevent you from applying here, nor will it form part of the assessment criteria for your proposal or influence the assessment decision. However, a successful outcome may lead to discussion of joint/exclusive funding.
Proposal details (confidential)		
Case for support	Please give the main aim of your project and summarise the proposed activity. Please address each of the following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific merit • Innovation/Novelty • Industrial relevance • Value for money • Potential for further development and implementation If known, please specify who will undertake the work and their academic status. It is vital to provide a scientific justification for the core concept to be explored and an explanation of the novelty or innovation to AD industrial research, in particular.	Word limit - 1 page
Reference list	You may put your references here and refer to them in the text. References are optional, but could be used to help make the case for this further literature review.	Maximum of 5 references
Prospective	Give specific details of the further funding	For example: Newton Fund ;

avenue(s) for further development and outcomes	which you aim to access through this Literature Report. Should a funding bid fail to materialise, what other avenue of publication/dissemination would you seek from this work?	GCRF ; RC Responsive Mode. For example: Journal publication, conference presentation, publically available dissemination of a report through the AD Network.
Expected start date and duration	Please estimate your desired start date and duration of your project in months. This enables us to comply with BBSRC reporting requirements.	Provide details as indicated. If successful the actual start date will be finalised with the Network Managers at a later date.
Financial Breakdown		
Please provide a financial breakdown of your proposal according to BBSRC requirements in the table below. Full guidance on the section requirements can be found in section 5 of www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Guidelines/grants-guide.pdf .		Funds should be requested at 100% fEC but will be paid at 80% fEC . Thus, the maximum request of £10,000 at 100% fEC will be paid as £8,000. Please note PoC funding cannot be used to purchase equipment .
Please give any further details of the financial breakdown here: Use this section to give any further details of the salary rates and time involved. E.g. Dr A N Other : x days at y £/hr – Total £z. Any extra resources dedicated to the report may also be explained here. E.g. Extra support provided free-of-cost by Mr A N Other, ACME Institute of AD.		For the 4th Call it is envisaged that costs will be mainly salary related.

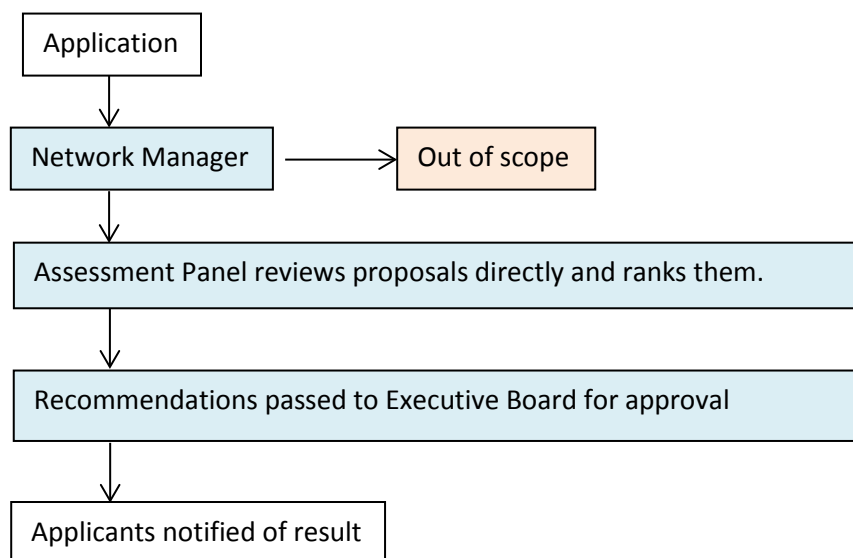
Conflict of interest guidance

The PoC application form provides an opportunity to highlight any conflicts of interest that you may be aware of in the Management Board with regard to your proposal. Examples of a potential conflict of interest include members:

- Employed by the same institution as the applicant(s)
- Actively involved in research collaborations with the applicants(s)
- Working closely with the applicant(s), for example as a co-author or PhD Supervisor, or has worked closely in the last 4 years
- Holding a current position on the governing body of or an honorary position within the institution(s) of the applicant(s)
- In receipt of personal remuneration in excess of £5,000 per annum from the applicant's organisation
- Having a personal/family relationship with the applicant(s)

Any Board member who becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest with an application is required to disclose this at once to the Executive Board so that the conflict may be managed.

Process for PoC review



Submissions will first be sifted by the Network Managers to ensure they are consistent with the aims and objectives of the Network. Where a Conflict of Interest is declared by a member of the Executive or Management Board, the application will be re-directed for assessment to a non-conflicted member as appropriate. Members of the Assessment Panel will be expected to adhere to the highest standards of scientific integrity as laid down by BBSRC. See: http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Policies/good_scientific_practice.pdf.

What happens if you are successful?

If successful, the Primary Contact will be informed via email. Following this, you will be sent a Conditional Offer Letter. This should be signed and returned within 3 months to accept the award.

Before the project begins, a start date must be agreed with the AD Network Manager. It is anticipated that projects in the 4th Call will last for approx. 3 months (including write-up). Projects **must be completed** by the end of 2018 at the latest.

Once the project is completed, the academic partner must submit a final report on the work carried out and the resources used. This final report must be accompanied by information on expenditure and an invoice and will be signed off by the Executive Board. A short summary report must be provided to act as a publishable summary for posting on the AD Network website.

Partners will be encouraged to present the results and promote the PoC scheme at Network events.

Costs and payment

For the 4th Call PoC Awards can be requested up to £11,000 (incl. VAT). PoC costs should be requested at FEC 100%, of which BBSRC pay 80% (i.e. a maximum of £8,000) and the remaining 20% is covered by the institution that is awarded the PoC. BBSRC will transfer the requested PoC awards, provided they are satisfied that the Network procedures have been followed, up to 3 months in arrears to the University of Southampton. The University of Southampton will then transfer this to the institution awarded the PoC.

Next steps

Note that the AD Network has funds available to support open access publication should this be appropriate. Please contact the Network Managers for details.

We also have funds available to support Funding Specific Workshops which can cover the host for refreshments and a room should you wish to form a collaborative bid arising from the project. (These must lead to a bid to qualify).

The AD Network will request to be informed of any ongoing bids (successful or not) and other activity arising from the work as we report these back to BBSRC for monitoring purposes.

Other Information

Data Protection Regulations

The PI of the BBSRC NIBB grant has the responsibility for keeping data relating to the grant secure and safe. Copies of the applications will be made available to the BBSRC, who 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.

The Executive Board will use information provided in the application for processing the proposal, the award of any consequential grant, and for the payment, maintenance and review of the grant.

Copies will also be made available to reviewers, the Executive Board and Management Board for the purpose of assessment and evaluation. They will be expected to adhere to the highest standards of scientific integrity as laid down by the BBSRC (Ref: http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Policies/good_scientific_practice.pdf).

To meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of funded awards may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publically available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

We are expecting applicants to conform to the BBSRC guidelines for data sharing: <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/publications/policy/data-sharing-policy.aspx> and good scientific practice: http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Policies/good_scientific_practice.pdf.

Intellectual Property

The Network is seeking to create an environment where knowledge is shared rapidly for the benefit of the whole community and used effectively to secure new sources of funding. However, it is important for each member to consider the expectations of their own organisation before disclosing proprietary information.

Before engaging in consortium-building activities, you should create an inventory of the intellectual property you may need to disclose and seek advice of the relevant support services team in your own organisation on how best to proceed. Effective collaborations will usually start with an agreement which documents what each partner will contribute and how the outputs will be shared.

Useful advice is available from:

- UK Intellectual Property office <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/whyuse/research.htm> and <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/about/press/press-release/press-release-2011/press-release-20110519.htm>
- European IPR helpdesk. <https://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/>
- BBSRC <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/organisation/policies/position/policy/knowledge-exchange-commercialisation.aspx>

Many organisations will have their own consortium agreements, but if this is not the case, template agreements such as the DESCA model consortium agreement available at <http://www.desca-2020.eu/> and the Lambert toolkit templates available at <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/lambert> can be adapted to suit a range of collaborative interactions. The Network can provide some general advice in this area, but your essential first point of contact for all intellectual property and knowledge management decisions should be the support services available within your own organisation.

Contact Details

For any queries, please contact the Network Managers:

Angela Bywater/Dr Louise Byfield at ADNet@soton.ac.uk

Tel: 023 8059 1281

Post: AD Network, Building 26, Room 2011, University of Southampton, Highfield Campus, University Road, Southampton, SO17 1BJ.