Guidance Notes for STAR Hub Feasibility Award Applicants

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1.   What are BBSRC OIRC Feasibility Awards?

The purpose of the BBSRC-funded STAR Hub Feasibility Awards (FAs) is to foster and support new collaborations between academia and industry, to boost the UK economy and to create positive social and environmental impact.

Demonstrably falling within the remit of the Hub and addressing a genuine challenge faced by the industry partner, the Awards support translation and commercialisation activities to help bridge the gap towards later stage innovation, i.e. to move programmes/concepts to validation, prototype development, etc..

Supported projects are expected to result in:

- Longer-term relationship between the collaborators;
- Translation of academic research into industrial application and product development/ enhancement;
- Route towards commercialisation;
- Clear potential for further funding;
- New research technology transfer projects.

2.   How much funding is available?

The STAR Hub will award up to £100k per FA (at 80% fEC) to successful research organisation (RO) applicants. Full Economic Costing (fEC) is a government-directed standard costing methodology used across the UK Higher Education sector to produce consistent and transparent research project costs. FAs are awarded at 80% fEC, i.e., an Award for the maximum £100k (costed at 100% fEC) would result in £80k (representing 80% fEC) being granted to an RO applicant.

The funding is paid to academic partners who are tackling specific problems of industrial relevance.

Match-funding by the Industry Partner is required, the level of which is based on the size of the organisation, as shown below:

Size of Business	Level of Match-funding Contribution as % of FA Value	Minimum Match-funding required at £80k FA Value
Micro and Small Businesses	20% minimum	£16,000.00
Medium-sized Enterprises	30% minimum	£24,000.00
Large Organisations	50% minimum	£40,000.00

Whilst industry contributions are mandatory, these can be provided in the form of existing resources (in-kind) or new resources (cash), or a combination of both. Match-funding contributions must be provided at cost, be exclusive of Value Added Tax (VAT), and must be auditable.

3.   Eligibility

Feasibility Awards are available to

- **Academics**, who are based at a UK research organisation when carrying out the project, and who will be working in collaboration with a
- **UK-registered businesses**[1] of any size, from micro businesses and small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to large organisations.

Proposals for projects to be led by an **early career researcher (ECR)**[2] or another non-permanent member of staff are also encouraged.

However, such bids should include a senior academic as co-investigator. Alternatively, the ECR's or other non-permanent staff member's Line Manager should confirm by signing the form that they approve the submission of the FA application by the PI.

Any non-permanent RO applicants incl. ECRs will need to provide confirmation from their Research Finance Department that their post's funding conditions allow them to deliver the project within the proposed timeframe and that contracts of employment will be put in place for such staff for the duration of the proposed FA project.

The Awards are not intended to fund PhD students (details and nature of academic investigators are subject to University and UKRI BBSRC guidelines), to pay for service contracts or for the acquisition of new equipment.

UK-based businesses of any size are eligible to be co-applicants. However, the company's size will determine the level of match-funding required (see Section 2). The UK Government currently defines Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)[3] in accordance with the table below:

Size of Business	Staff Headcount	Annual Turnover	Balance Sheet Total
Micro	<10	<2m €	<2m €
Small	<50	<10m €	<10m €
Medium	<250	<50m €	<43m €

FAs cannot be used to purchase equipment nor fund any expenditure incurred by the Industry Partner as part of the delivery of the project.

All applicants must be STAR Hub members at the time of making the application. To register as a member, please visit the STAR Hub website.

Applicant organisations must be eligible to receive UKRI BBSRC funding.
To check eligibility for UKRI BBSRC funding, please visit
https://www.ukri.org/councils/bbsrc/guidance-for-applicants/check-if-youre-eligible-for-funding/ .

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[1] In exceptional circumstances, where there is no UK-registered company to exploit the project's outputs, a FA may be awarded to an overseas industry partner. The application should provide a clear justification for working with an overseas business and outline how the project will lead to building international collaborations, how the project will be taken forward, leading to inward investment and benefitting the UK's economy and society.

[2] An ECR is someone who is either
- within eight years of their PhD award (this is from the time of the PhD 'viva' oral test), or equivalent professional training,
- within six years of their first academic appointment (the first full or part-time paid employment contract that lists research or teaching as the primary function).

These periods exclude any career break, for example, due to family care, health reasons, reasons related to COVID-19 such as home schooling or increased teaching load.

[3] Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) action plan: 2022 to 2025

No academic staff member or intern (or their families) delivering the project can have an interest in the co-applicant company (e.g., be a shareholder or a director).

4.   What activities will the Award scheme support?

Awards can support collaborations that involve any distinct piece of work *by* an academic partner *relevant to* an Industry Partner for 9-12 months' duration.

The proposed work must be within the scope of the [Hub's remit](#) and the [Government's Food Strategy](#), and projects should address clearly defined and specific industry challenges in the following areas:

- Role of Polyphenols in maintaining metabolic, cognitive and mental health;
- Action on Fibre and Resistant Starch;
- Nutritional adequacy of Alternative, Sustainable Proteins across the life-span;
- Improving the nutritional, health and sustainability profile of existing or novel plant-/ fungi-/algae-based food.

The Scheme's aim is to enable industry partners to access - and benefit from - academic expertise, solutions and resources which would otherwise be unavailable to them. In return, academics are given an opportunity to carry out work that sits at the forefront of industry R&D remits.

We are particularly looking for projects facilitating progression from translational development towards commercialisation, and projects with the clear potential for further collaboration, development and impact will be prioritised.

Examples of projects include proof-of-concept studies, phase 1 studies, pilot studies, generation of new or analysis of existing data, development of new plant-/fungi-/algae-based products, improvement of the nutritional, and health and sustainability profile of existing products.

Proposals should facilitate one or more of the following:

- Technology transfer;
- Work towards solving a technical problem for the industry partner;
- Adaptation of an existing technology to a new application;
- Evidence generation;
- Confirmation of commercial viability;
- Route towards commercialisation.

5.   Application process

The FA application form should be jointly completed by the Principal Investigator and the Industry Partner via the REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture) platform which facilitates simple management of the FA application, review and awarding process. REDCap is a popular, secure data collection tool with a simple web-based interface originally designed for clinical researchers to manage their study data collection needs. It is used in the UK and internationally for academic research, and users include some researchers at the Universities of Surrey, Reading, Leeds and Ulster. REDCap is fully compliant with GDPR, and the University of Surrey's REDCap service is managed and maintained solely by internal IT staff members. For more information about data security, please see Section 11 below.

No registration is required for the completion of an application form, and access is facilitated through the applicant's email address via a secure internet connection.

The FA application consists of three separate parts, the

- **Online application form**, the
- **Work Plan** (MS Excel template), and the
- **Financial Details**, the proposed project's budget including a breakdown of funding sources (MS Excel template).

All parts of the application can be accessed via the [STAR Hub](#) (when the FA call is open).

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

- Applicant details (including details about the industry partner company)
- Project details (including technology readiness levels)
- Work plan (an outline of the expected timeline and milestones)
- Benefits to both the academic institution and the industry partner
- Impact on the UK economy, society and the environment
- Translational development and route towards commercialisation
- Financial details (including details of the industry partner's contribution)
- Line Manager's approval is required for proposals which do not include a senior-level academic.

Prior to applying for a FA, collaborators should follow their organisation's internal processes and obtain the relevant approvals, for example, from their Head of Department, Finance Department, etc..

Creating and completing an application

The Principal Investigator should initiate the application process by creating an online application. Their email address will be used for all FA-related correspondence.

The system allows partial completion through its 'Save & Return Later' function. A unique survey link (URL) will be sent to the email address provided upon exiting the form, enabling applicants to reopen the form at a later time and to share this URL with their collaborators. Each party will then be able to retrieve the partially completed form, enter their details, and to jointly complete Section 2 of the application.

The proposed project's Work Plan should be completed, using the MS Excel template provided and populating the designated fields.

Financial Details

Applicants are advised to notify their Finance Departments of their intention to bid early on in the application process to allow sufficient time for the project's costings and the match-funding contribution to be established and authorised.

The proposed project's Financial Details should be added to the provided MS Excel template by filling in the designated fields. Conditional formatting will validate your data, ensuring that the proposed expenditure and match-funding meet the Scheme's requirements. Examples of breakdowns of funding sources are provided within the template. Once completed, the file should be uploaded to the FA application form and saved.

Please note that UKRI issued [updated guidelines](#) for full economic cost grants on 3 November 2022.

Authorising and submitting an application

Once the application form has been completed and the Work Plan and the Financial Details have been uploaded onto REDCap, the relevant e-Consent sections should be completed by the following individuals:

- an authorised member of the lead RO applicant's Research Finance Department;
- the PI's Line Manager (if required – see Section 3);
- an authorised signatory of the applicant industry partner should complete the e-Consent section.

The final step is for the Principal Investigator to complete their e-Consent section and to submit the application in line with the Call's [submission cut-off dates](#).

All applications will be acknowledged automatically upon submission.

Guidance is provided throughout the form but please contact the Hub Manager (star.ukri-oirc@surrey.ac.uk) if you have any queries.

6.   Review and award process

Upon submission, the Hub Manager will check whether the applicants meet the eligibility criteria, whether the application has been completed in full and the Financial Details have been uploaded.

A [Companies House](#) search for industry partners will be carried out to confirm the presence of a UK-base, the incorporation date (to see how long the company has been trading) and whether accounts have been filed on time. The University of Surrey's due diligence process (based on UKRI recommendations) will be followed for overseas partners.

Eligible submissions will then be grouped according to their chosen theme and allocated to 3 Executive Group/Management Board members in a secure and confidential manner, taking into account conflicts of interest and expertise that best match the competition.

These three members will assess and submit scores for the assessed questions. A report is compiled to identify a ranked order of all applications based on the average of all assessor scores.

Applications will be assessed, on individual merit, against the FA Call's criteria which include:

- Quality of science;
- Evidence of SMART[4] deliverables;
- Innovation;
- Relevance of application to aims and [remit of the Hub;](#)
- Potential industrial relevance (Responsible Research and Innovation, RRI);
- Potential benefits to both the academic institution and the industry partner and impact on UK economy/society;
- Translational development and route towards commercialisation;

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[4] SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound

- Sustainability;
- Potential for building longer-term relationships;
- Justification of resources and value for money.

For further details, please see Annex A - Scoring Criteria and Guidance for Reviewers.

The highest-ranking applications, subject to a minimum quality threshold, are recommended to the Executive Group for final assessment and prioritisation.

Reviewers will be expected to adhere to the highest standards of scientific integrity as laid down by the BBSRC (https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/policies-standards/good-scientific-practice/). In the event of a conflict of interest, this must be declared to the Executive Group who will reassign the proposal to an alternative reviewer.

We aim to assess proposals within 5-6 weeks. No feedback will be given on the proposal, but unsuccessful applicants are able to re-apply once more in a subsequent call.

The Hub Manager will issue a Conditional Grant Offer Letter to the successful Principal Investigator applicant, which will need to be accepted by an authorised signatory of their RO within 1 month upon receipt to indicate acceptance of the award.

The Conditional Grant Offer Letter will specify that a Collaboration Agreement is in put place between the collaborating parties within 3 months and prior to the project commencing. The Hub Manager will require evidence that this agreement is in place before the project's start.

It can take some time to reach agreement on this document, especially considering the involvement of applicants' legal and finance departments. You are, therefore, strongly advised to allow sufficient time. An example of collaboration agreement can be found on the Lambert Agreement website at: http://www.ipo.gov.uk/lambert.

Before the project begins, a start date must be agreed with the STAR Hub Manager. Projects must be completed within 9-12 months of this date, depending on the proposed project duration. No expenditure will be reclaimable for activities outside of the agreed project period. This is a BBSRC requirement.

7.   Reporting requirements and invoicing

All awardees including industry partners should acknowledge the support of the BBSRC award BB/X51228X/1 on papers and other forms of media communications including press releases, conferences, and media appearances.

The awardees will act as ambassadors for the science area represented by the Hub and the BBSRC Diet and Health Open Innovation Research Club (OIRC) by attending and contributing to events within relevant areas at the request of BBSRC. Partners are encouraged to present the results and promote the FA Scheme at Hub events and other networking opportunities. During its lifetime, the STAR Hub may also send an occasional survey in order to ascertain any additional impact from the FA, such as publications, product development, impact, further funding applications and so on.

Although no interim reporting is required for these short projects, the Hub Manager will maintain regular contact with the awardees during the delivery of the project. We do ask to be informed by email immediately should there be any matters of concern or delays/problems envisaged.

Once the project is completed, the academic partner must submit to the Hub Manager a Project Completion Form, detailing the work carried out and the resources used, which must be countersigned by the industrial partner. This includes a brief publishable summary will be used by UKRI BBSRC, posted on the STAR Hub website, form the basis of a case study and may be used for other promotional activities.

The form should contain:

- Summary of the project outcomes;
- List of outputs, e.g., papers, patents, new products or processes, prizes, collaborations, etc.;
- Benefits and impact;
- Evidence of translational development and progression towards commercialisation from pre-funding level to post-project level and details of how the grant has helped supported this advancement (if applicable);
- Future plans;
- Testimonial(s), ideally from both the academic and industry partner;
- Images (with legend) related to the science;
- Financial details of the partners' actual expenditure incurred whilst delivering the project.

A full audit trail must be in place for all incurred expenditure on the project – by both the RO and the Industry Partner. In addition, the Industry Partner's match-funding must be provided at cost and be exclusive of Value Added Tax.

All project-related documentation including financial records must be retained for the current financial year plus the subsequent six (6) years after the submission date of the final expenditure statement.

The Project Completion Form will be passed to the Executive Group to be signed off prior to funds being released. An invoice for the full amount to be claimed from the STAR Hub should be submitted alongside the Completion Form to enable transfer of funds. The invoice figure must agree with that shown in the Completion Report.

Invoices will not be forwarded for payment until the Project Completion Form has been approved.

8. Subsidy Control

The University of Surrey intend to follow a **'No Subsidy'** approach in the receipt and administration of the BBSRC OIRC grant funding.

1. The scientific research will be undertaken by the ROs as a non-economic activity, and, therefore, may receive financial assistance from the BBSRC grant without it constituting a subsidy.

2. Non-economic scientific research may be carried out in collaboration with commercial organisations (industry partners), as long as the commercial organisation does not receive a specific benefit from the financial assistance given to the RO.

3. If the commercial organisation does receive a benefit, then the RO may be considered an intermediary of a subsidy. Any collaboration should then be based on the following principles:

a) The commercial organisation pays the full cost of the project; or

b) The results that do not give rise to intellectual property are widely disseminated, and

c) any intellectual property rights arising from the project are allocated to the parties involved in a manner which reflects their contributions, i.e., intellectual property rights resulting from the activities of the RO are fully allocated to it and the commercial organisation provides compensation to the RO, equivalent to the market price, to own or exclusively licence the intellectual property rights which result from their activities.

For further information about UK subsidy control requirements, please consult the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy's 'Statutory Guidance for the United Kingdom Subsidy Control Regime – Subsidy Control Act 2022' (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1117122/uk-subsidy-control-statutory-guidance.pdf).

For project proposals which involve industry partners whose economic activities have the potential to affect trade between Northern Ireland and the EU, as envisaged by Article 10 of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the EU Withdrawal Agreement - any funding awarded must remain compliant with the UK International Obligations for Subsidy Control on a '**No Subsidy'** basis.

For further information, please consult the European Commission's Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (2014C 198/01) ("R&D&I Framework").

9. Data protection and data sharing policies

Please read the STAR Hub Data Privacy Notice before completing an application form. Contact the Hub Manager (star.ukri-oirc@surrey.ac.uk) if you have any questions.

Copies of the FA applications will be made available to the STAR Hub 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 award funds. In order to meet UKRI BBSRC's 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 OIRC, study of trends and policy and strategy studies.

Details of grants (including successful FA awards) may also be made available on BBSRC's web sites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

In addition, the names of applicant organisations may also be shared with the other 5 Diet and Health OIRC Hubs to establish whether multiple applications by the same partnership (which are eligible) exist and, if so, to determine whether the scope of the proposed projects represent a duplication of services, should they be funded.

Information about the other Diet and Health OIRC Hubs can be found here.

10.   Who do I contact if I have any questions about the application process?

If you have any questions, please contact the STAR Hub Manager: star.ukri-oirc@surrey.ac.uk.

Annex A – Scoring Criteria and Guidance for Reviewers

Section	Criterion
2a	**Relevance of proposed project to the STAR Hub's remit and funding call** - How well does the proposal align with the Hub's remit and the call's objectives?
2b	**Defined key tasks, expected timeline and milestones for each applicant party** - Are the key tasks, timeline and milestones for each applicant party clearly defined? - Is what is being proposed technically feasible within the constraints of the project? - Is the work plan clear enough to determine which partner will do what, and when? - Does the work plan clearly identify the route to achieving the stated project outputs?
2c	**Defined outputs for each applicant party** - Are the outputs clearly defined for each applicant party? Are they SMART?
2d	**Defined outcomes and benefits to each applicant party** - Are the outcomes and benefits to each applicant party clearly defined? - How will the project outputs be used?
2e	**Translational development and route towards commercialisation** - How will this project enable or facilitate translational development and progression towards commercialisation, e.g., moving from proof of concept in the lab to initial human trials and beyond? - How will this project, for example, aid the development of a new product and getting it to market? - Thinking longer-term and beyond the lifespan of this project, what are the next steps and when do you expect to commercialise the product or service?
2f	**Expected potential impact on the UK economy, society and/or the environment** - Where an industry partner is based outside of the UK, please consider whether real value and benefits will be accrued in the UK.
2g	**Justification of Resources and Value for Money** - Are all the costs, both the RO's and the Industry Partner's or Partners', clearly defined (incl. clear descriptions)? - Will the proposed project be undertaken in an efficient and effective way and are the applicants requesting only resources that are essential to the completion of the project? - Do the importance and the quality of the proposed project (and associated outcomes and benefits) justify the amount of resource required?

	- Do the resources requested, relative to the anticipated outcomes, represent an attractive investment of STAR Hub funds?
2h	**Plans for further collaboration** - Is there clear potential for further collaboration/engagement? - Is there a clear and realistic strategy for financing this further collaboration/engagement?