

Business Interaction Voucher Funding: Terms and Conditions

Please read this document before completing the application form.

Introduction

The Horticultural Quality and Food Loss Network (HortQFLNet) has Business Interaction Voucher (BIV) funding available to develop collaborations between researchers and industrialists. This funding will enable researchers to meet with industry partners to develop project ideas and conduct feasibility trials of new processes. The data may support pump priming funds or go directly to alternative funding instruments such as Innovate UK. Three rounds of funding take place, one per year; a total of £5000 is available per round.

The nature of the collaboration and any resulting work must be within the scope of the network: to address improvements in fresh horticultural and potato crop quality and reductions in postharvest food loss through research. In turn they will also address at least one of the four priorities identified under 'Reducing Waste' in the Agriculture and Food Security Strategic Framework (U.N Sustainable Development Goal 12.3). The four priorities are:

- Enabling more effective prediction and better control of harvesting windows by understanding the underpinning developmental biology of horticultural crops relating to dormancy, flowering time, maturation biology and senescence.
- Optimising uniformity and physical traits by exploiting crop genetics
- Reducing the risks of spoilage by understanding and managing the relevant biological processes
- Minimising losses within the food system by understanding and controlling the fundamental biology that influences food storage and shelf-life.

A fifth priority will also be included the scope of this project –

- Increasing resilience of the food supply chain by understanding the impact of adverse factors (such as Covid-19 pandemic) on food security

Applicants may apply for funds up to £2000.

Applicants can apply for funding to cover Directly Incurred staff costs which can include investigators if they are PDRAs not on a permanent University/Institution contract. Directly Allocated costs for other investigators are not eligible.

Applicants must choose an industrial partner(s) and must identify additional researchers who will be involved in the project/activity. All researchers who will be involved in the project should be listed and their role described.

v.2 Dec 2021

Projects should have duration of 6 months maximum. Projects can start from 1 May – 30 June 2022. Experimental work should be completed by 31 October 2022 allowing one additional month for reporting by 30 November 2022.

Successful applications should demonstrate novelty, excellence, stakeholder engagement and plans to progress the work beyond a feasibility phase.

Eligibility

Business Interaction Voucher funding is available for projects led by UK based researchers at [UKRI](#) eligible institutions from any discipline in collaboration with at least one named industry partner.

Early Career Researchers: Applications are encouraged from early career researchers whose first or early research project ideas are relevant to the Networks' remit. The Network is committed to supporting this group by ringfencing subsequent pump priming funds and providing networking opportunities for ECRs.

An ECR is defined as anyone within ten years of gaining a PhD and/or anyone appointed to their first academic position on or after 1 August 2016.

Application Process

All applications should be made by completing the Business Interaction Voucher application form provided on the HortQFLNet [website](#). Terms and conditions of award can be found on the website. The completed form should be returned as a pdf document to the Network Manager at info@foodlossnetwork.com and will be acknowledged upon receipt.

Evaluation Process

Selection of reviewers and conflict of interest

Applications will be initially assessed for scope-fit by the Network Manager with support from the HortQFLNet Leadership Team. Each application will then be reviewed by at least two Network Management Board members. Proposals will be ranked and discussed at a Management Board (MB) meeting where preliminary decisions on the award will be made. The [Management Board](#) members represent a mix of academic and industry facing organisations, providing expertise to assess projects for both scientific excellence and industry relevance.

Any member of the MB who has a conflict of interest (CoI) will not be involved in the assessment or ranking of those individual project proposals and will be asked to leave the review meeting as per standard practice. If there is disagreement amongst the Board members, the Chair will have the deciding vote. Each successful project will go through institutional ethics, data management and health and safety committees in accordance with local management structures and shall be the responsibility of the host University.

The Leadership Team will put forward their proposals for the successful BIVs to UKRI-BBSRC who provide final sign off on funding decisions.

Evaluation criteria

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

v.2 Dec 2021

- Scope/Relevance to improving horticultural crop quality and reducing food loss; relevance to UK food system security and ability of the work to enhance food supply chain resilience (5 %)
- Scientific excellence and novelty (35 %)
- Stakeholder engagement and value for money (10 %)
- Inclusion of appropriate disciplines (10 %) *
- Potential of the project and associated follow-on activity to deliver impact at scale, including clarity of the legacy plan for progression of work to pump-priming or directly to alternative funding instruments (30%)
- Opportunities for research staff and ECR involvement and career development (10 %)

*Proposals should be able to demonstrate that they have brought together all the relevant disciplines in order to maximise its chances of success. For some projects this will require an inter/multi/transdisciplinary approach, but for others a single disciplinary approach may be adequate.

Scope

The scope of the funding call focuses on **postharvest** (post-farmgate) crop quality and food loss. It is inclusive of the entire supply chain, from breeders to retailer and consumer, but with a post-harvest problem focus. The solution to quality and loss issues may require pre-farm gate interventions and as such agronomic and breeding projects are encouraged, so long as they can demonstrate post-farm gate benefits.

The Network is open to proposals from both scientific and technology-based disciplines that fall within the BBSRC remit, but may also include elements of social sciences, engineering, physical, computational or mathematical sciences that would ordinarily fall under different research councils if these are necessary to deliver the project. The Network recognises that fundamental scientific research is required to overcome the challenges of producing sufficient and high-quality UK grown crops with optimal nutritional density, flavour and shelf-life, so applications from basic plant scientists who wish to investigate underpinning biological processes relevant to postharvest challenges in horticultural crop species are encouraged.

The ability of a proposal to demonstrate how it will strengthen the resilience of the horticultural industry supply chain directly or indirectly, engage with other disciplines and/or industry partners if appropriate, have the potential for further research opportunities beyond pump-priming and have impact at scale will strengthen a proposal's relevance to the call.

The Management Board will have approximately four weeks to evaluate proposals. Applicants will be notified of the outcome with feedback as soon as possible after applications recommended by the Management Board have been approved by BBSRC. A formal offer letter/communication will be sent to applicants.

Administration and reporting

Successfully funded proposals will be monitored and evaluated by the Network Manager on a three-monthly basis and reviewed by the Leadership Team. PIs will be asked to provide a final report within one month of completion (using a standard and agreed template). The final report will describe the findings and future impact and plans for ongoing pump-priming or research including future innovative and novel grant proposals to UKRI-BBSRC. Data will be collected and collated through the members area of the Network website for

v.2 Dec 2021

monitoring and evaluation purposes. All funded projects will be expected to disseminate their key findings to the Network members through either a virtual conference and/or an article in a newsletter.

Network Support Activities

The network will support applications in the following ways:

- Official Launch and Industry Workshop
- Annual sandpit event focussed on developing partnerships and networks
- Final Research Conference – linked to ISHS [International Horticultural Congress](#) (in Angers, France, 14-20 August 2022)

Payment of Awards

The payment of awards is co-ordinated by Cranfield University on behalf of the Network. To facilitate project commencement, particularly for ECRs, 50 % of award funding will be provided to the awardee at the commencement of the project with the remainder provided at the close of the project – see Terms and Conditions available on the website for additional information.

Awardees are required to keep financial records for their project and be able to provide evidence of receipt of in kind or financial contributions from industrial partners if requested by the Network Leadership Team during the course of the project and by co-signature on the project's final report.

Data Protection / Data Sharing

Applications will be treated as confidential and used only for the purposes of reviewing to determine whether funding will be approved and for monitoring BIV funds.

Ownership of data from BIV will reside with the proposal investigators and their institutions undertaking the research. Consortia will be required to implement a collaboration agreement prior to any work commencing that sets out the terms of IP management for the project. A standard template can be provided by the network if required. Acknowledgement of the Network and UKRI should be made in any publications resulting from research outputs derived as a result of benefitting from Network BIV research funds.

The majority of data from BIV activities is likely to be low volume from short feasibility studies so unlikely to fall into key categories identified by BBSRC for data sharing. Consortia are encouraged to develop their own data management plans and, where IP agreements allow, to put data into the public domain within 12 months of completing the project.

Data pertaining to the outcomes of sandpit, emerging consortia and related activities will be published as newsletter items with agreement from the appropriate project participants.

Data Management / Data Storage

The Network will ensure compliance with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts. Images and other data will be stored in ways that allow sharing without disclosing personal information. The BBSRC funded Network will remain operational for three years, ending on 5 January 2023. At the end of this period, it is envisaged that data will be archived into individual partners (University of Reading and Cranfield University) central archives where possible. Documentation of data resulting from the Network will be held for 10 years in laboratories records stores.

v.2 Dec 2021

Proprietary data

The partners will all be signed up to a collaboration agreement that specifies the handling and exploitation of proprietary data. Within that context, partners will adhere to their normal IP policies.

Methods for data sharing

We anticipate making non-IP, non-commercially sensitive data and that which has been protected by patenting, available via refereed publications in high quality journals, and conference proceedings at the earliest opportunity. Where appropriate and permitted, data will be made available electronically via the Institution's websites and wherever possible data will be deposited in recognised open-access and/or third-party database and supplied in the appropriate format.

Dissemination to the general public

This will be facilitated through Institutional websites and publicised through newsletters, social media and press releases. Dissemination aimed at the industrial sectors covered by the project will be facilitated through organisations such as AHDB and WRAP.

Contact Details

For any queries, please contact the HortQFLNet Network Manager (Jane Bradbeer) or the Industry Liaison Manager (Sofia Kourmpetli) by email at info@foodlossnetwork.com