

Towards a circular bioeconomy for technology-relevant metals and textiles
Webinar queries

Q: Will the webinar slides be made available?

A: Slides and a Q&A document can be found on the call website: [Towards a circular bioeconomy for technology-relevant metals and textiles – UKRI](#).

Call scope/remit Q&A

Q: Why did the scope of the call change from precious metals to technology relevant metals?

A: After the pre-announcement launched, we received some feedback from the Community that the title 'precious metals' may mean that we exclude certain categories of metals within the scope of the call. That was not our intention, we don't want to limit to a specific class or set of metals and the term 'precious' is also open to interpretation. We want to keep the scope as broad as possible and hence the change to technology-relevant metals.

Q: What metals are classified as "technology-relevant"?

A: We haven't been prescriptive on the metals classified as "technology-relevant" and that is on purpose to ensure that we are not excluding relevant metals based on the wording used in the call text. Our intention was to keep things broad, however we are talking about metals that have an industrial value, and recovery within the context of a circular bioeconomy and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. If you are interested in a particular metal and are unsure as to whether it is in scope for this call, please contact us at circulareconomies@bbsrc.ukri.org.

Q: If the source material for a metal was primary (i.e., not a waste), but a new biobased approach was being proposed to recover the metal, incorporating other waste streams into the process and reducing environmental impacts relative to standard processing routes, would such a project be in scope?

A: This could be in scope if you're using a biotechnological approach and also adding waste streams into the project. Mine tailings are in scope which is a waste from the mining industry but still virgin material. We are happy to discuss project specifics via email if you are unsure, please contact circulareconomies@bbsrc.ukri.org.

Q: Would the development of processes not necessarily relevant to the UK (e.g., copper mining in Chile, etc) be eligible?

A: Ideally, they would be relevant to the UK as originally this was planned to be a UK-based activity only. However, for this type of query, it would be good to see some of the project specifics before making a decision, so please contact us at circulareconomies@bbsrc.ukri.org for a more detailed discussion.

Q: Do metal recoveries/GHG reduction have to be from the UK?

A: Ideally, they would be from the UK as originally this was supposed to be a UK-based activity only. Please contact us at circulareconomies@bbsrc.ukri.org to discuss the project specifics.

Q: Is leather defined as textile within this call?

A: Yes, both leather and non-animal leathers are in scope of the call. For any type of 'textile', a proposal for this call should also demonstrate potential for environmental footprint reduction via switching to bio-based alternatives, as well as potential for circularity of the new materials proposed. If you are unsure if your idea is in scope, please contact: circulareconomies@bbsrc.ukri.org.

Q: Are non-clothing textiles in scope?

Other textiles as well as clothing textiles are in scope of the opportunity. Please refer to the question on leather immediately above as to other considerations when submitting an application.

Q: Does the circular economic aspect of textile bioremediation have to feed back into the textile industry, or would you consider the production of other valuable commodities from textile waste?

A: The textile waste could go towards a different high value application. However, what we don't want to see is down-cycling back to, for example, fillers and insulation. Creating something of high value with potential for the material to be reused would be acceptable. The circularity is important and considering how to keep material in circulation rather than committing it to an end-of-life as much as possible.

Q: Should the project be focussed on the biological science or technology and scale-up?

A: We are trying to provide some pump priming resources to demonstrate the application of bio-technological processes, but if you can extend that project into consideration of scale up then so much the better. Remembering that we are asking for projects which are 24 months maximum and with a BBSRC contribution of £300,000 - it may be a bit too much to expect an entire process to be devised.

Q: Considering the low Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of biosystems in both remits of the call, is the modelling of CO₂ emissions beyond the scope of developing and getting the unit operation to work?

A: We recognise that the TRL for these projects is probably quite low, but our ambition is that projects will be attempting to do their best to illustrate where the savings might be made. Essentially, it may not be possible, and not within the scope of every individual project to perform a complete life cycle analysis, but to be working towards that would be advantageous.

Q: How do you address the possibility that moving to a circular economy may not reduce CO₂ emissions?

A: There's a presumption that by choosing a biotechnology based process you will automatically reduce your CO₂ emissions, one of the aims of this call is to find out whether that's true or not.

Q: Are bio-inspired processes in remit?

A: We are assuming this refers to engineering biology style approaches where you are attempting to mimic a biological system. A bona fide biological process is important to fit within the scope of the call. We are happy to discuss project specifics via email if you are unsure please contact circulareconomies@bbsrc.ukri.org.

Eligibility Q&A

Q: Can one applicant submit more than one application as PI?

A: Yes, this is permitted, obviously bear in mind that they will be in competition with each other. You may want to focus your attention on where you think you are going to get maximum value for the proposals submitted.

Q: Can research fellows participate as PI or co-PI, or which could their role be in the proposal?

A: It is possible if their position is at lecturer level, or equivalent, and if it is allowed within the terms of their fellowship. Please see [section 3](#) of the [BBSRC research grants guide](#) for further information, or email eligibility@bbsrc.ukri.org with specific questions.

Q: Is it possible to submit more than one proposal, and in which role (i.e., can you be PI, co-PI or part of a team in both proposals)?

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A: We've not put a limit on the number of applications that you can submit and be part of but if you intend to be an applicant on a number of applications, you may want to email us to discuss and also think about prioritizing which applications you feel would have greatest impact and the greatest chance of success.

Q: Are international Co-Is allowed?

A: International Co-Is are not allowed in this call.

Q: Is it ok to propose research activities carried out abroad?

A: Ideally, research would be carried out in the UK as originally this was planned to be a UK-based activity only. Please contact us at circulareconomies@bbsrc.ukri.org to discuss project specifics.

Q: Is it ok to have international (non-UK based) industry partners?

A: We ask applicants to justify why a non-UK-based industry partner has been chosen and there should be strong justification for this. It would be up to the Expert Panel to determine the appropriateness of the collaboration. Feel free to contact us at circulareconomies@bbsrc.ukri.org to discuss the project specifics.

Q: Would we be able to employ partners who have specialised skills? Would that be an eligible cost?

A: We do allow subcontractor costs to a certain extent, but this must be justified in your justification for resources. Please see [section 2.55](#) of the [BBSRC research grants guide](#) for further information on sub-contracting. It also depends whether the partner is from an organisation eligible for funding. Further information on eligibility is available [here](#) or please contact us at circulareconomies@bbsrc.ukri.org with the specifics.

Q: I understood that PI and Co-I must be lecturers. Is a Teaching Fellow eligible to name as Researcher Co-I?

A: Yes, a teaching fellow could be eligible to be a Researcher Co-I.

Q: Is it possible to have more than one university as a partner?

A: Yes, you can have more than one university as a partner, obviously, bearing in mind the total funding limit that we have.

Q: Is it possible to have more than one industrial partner?

A: Yes, you may have as many industrial partners as you as you want, we very much encourage industrial collaboration, even though it is not a pre-requisite for this call.

Q: Can the PI be from one university and Co-I from another university?

A: Yes, this is acceptable - applications can be multi-institutional. Please note all applications must be submitted as a single Je-S proposal form by the lead institution.

Q: If the PI is a lecturer or equivalent, can the Co-I be a Research Fellow or both need to be lecturers?

A: PIs and Co-Is both need to be at lecturer level or equivalent. Those in receipt of lecturer level equivalent postdoctoral fellowships from either the Research Councils or award-giving bodies such as the Royal Society and the Wellcome Trust may also apply, as may the recipients of internal university fellowships that have a similar lecturer level equivalent status. Potential applicants who are in receipt of a Fellowship should contact eligibility@bbsrc.ukri.org prior to submitting a proposal to confirm eligibility for BBSRC funding. Alternatively, if not eligible to be a Co-I, a research fellow below lecturer level may be listed as a researcher Co-I on the application. Please refer to the [BBSRC grants guide](#) for further information.

Application content Q&A

Q: Is there any specific information you require in the Cover Letter?

A: Applicants' Declaration of Interests must be included in the Cover Letter, it is a place to identify conflicts or make us aware of anything that is not covered by the Team Résumé for Research and Innovation – please see the guidance provided at: [UKRI-261120-Declaration-of-Interests-for-applicants-v2.pdf](#). Additionally, sometimes a non-reviewer request can be included.

Q: What is the ratio of consumables vs equipment vs salary for postdoc etc.

A: This is not something we specify, and it would be the role of the Expert Panel to determine the appropriateness of the split of these costs. However, please note that applications solely focused on the purchase of equipment are not in scope of the call.

Q: Should the proposal be divided in Work Packages?

A: Impact activities should be distributed throughout the proposal rather than a separate work package, but we would expect you to outline and set up the rest of your application as you see fit.

Q: What is the maximum allowed project value?

A: The maximum project value is £375,000 at 100% FEC, BBSRC pays 80% which equates to £300k per project at 80% FEC.

Q: As an Early Career Researcher (ECR), am I disadvantaged in not having lots of things to add to a Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI)? Should I ask a more senior scientist to collaborate, or will you accept that ECRs will not have long lists of achievements?

A: You certainly do not need to ask a senior scientist to lead your application to increase your possibility for success. The idea behind introducing the R4RI is to increase inclusivity and encourage more ECRs and a wider diversity of people to apply for grants. R4RI is more concerned with the collective team contribution and the assessment of how the whole team is fit to deliver the proposed project. The R4RI is not only focused on academic achievements alone but other activities that you may do as a scientist.

Other Q&A

Q: Based on previous calls, how many applications per topic would you expect?

A: We don't have a specific number of expected proposals particularly because we see these two areas as fairly new and nascent. We might expect in the region of 30-50 proposals across the two areas as a ballpark figure, but we are happy to accept as many proposals as the community would like to submit.

Q: Is there any information available on who will be on the review panel?

A: We are currently putting together the Expert Panel for this call. We do not share information on panel membership prior to the Expert Panel meeting to assess the awards. These details will be published alongside the list of successful projects after the funding is awarded.

Q: When will call outcomes be announced? Will there be sufficient times to recruit Post Doctoral Research Assistants by 1st February?

A: We plan to get the grants announced before Christmas. We fully recognize the constraints that people are operating under and we will do our very best to ensure that you have good notice of whether your proposal has been successful or not to allow the maximum amount of time to recruit staff members.