

Interdisciplinary Research Grants

Applicant Guidance

Funding Round 1

What we are looking for

We are looking for interdisciplinary projects that seek to enhance the utilisation of novel and underutilised crops in UK production systems. Projects should seek to address barriers to the adoption of these crops across the food or feed value chains or highlight benefits of including these crops in farming systems by working across disciplines or stakeholders.

Who is eligible to apply for funding?

To comply with BBSRC's standard eligibility criteria, applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Applicants must be NUCNet members at time of application.
- The lead applicant must be eligible to receive BBSRC funding (for more information visit: <https://www.ukri.org/councils/bbsrc/guidance-for-applicants/>)
- Network members based outside the UK are not eligible for receiving flexible funds but can be named as collaborator or advisor.
- We will prioritise allocation of these funds for interdisciplinary research projects (i.e. spanning traditional research boundaries) and those which include schools, community groups, farmers or other stakeholders.
- We will prioritise allocation of these funds to NUCNet members who have not previously received NUCNet funding.
- Early career researchers (ECRs, broadly those within 7 years of a PhD accounting for career breaks without a permanent position) who wish to apply should be named as the 'Researcher Co-Lead'. Please also note that ECR involvement does not confirm ECR eligibility for future UKRI grants.
- PhD students are ineligible to apply or be named on flexible funding research applications.

We do not expect all projects to include an industrial partner, but you will be expected to explain potential industry interest in your idea. If you wish to partner with industry, we expect industry to make at least a 40% matched contribution (of the 80% fEC rate). This

industry contribution can be cash, in-kind or a combination of both. Projects with industry co-funding will be prioritised if they score the same as another project without industry co-funding.

How much funding is available from NUCNet?

During the 3-year NUCNet grant duration there will be a number of awards available. The maximum award is £10,000, with funds awarded at 80% full economic cost (fEC).

Funding will **not** cover cost of equipment, article processing/publication charges (covered by UKRI open access block grants), or international travel.

When are the funding calls?

There will be two funding rounds. Calls will be launched on the network website and circulated to network members. Calls will remain open for 6 weeks. During the call open period please email the Network Manager with any questions you may have.

Round 1 (R1) will open in July/August 2026

Round 2 (R2) will open in July/August 2027

What is the application process?

The application

The applicant should complete the application form through link available on the NUCNet Website www.novelcropnetwork.ac.uk. Alternatively, please request a form from the Network Manager via the Network's email located in document footer.

All applicants (including co-investigators and industry partners) must be members of NUCNet. Here is the link to make an application for membership: [apply for network membership](#)

An individual cannot lead more than one proposal but may be named on up to two as applicant or co-applicant. Research and Technical Professionals (RTPs) are eligible to apply as applicant or co-applicant, provided their responsibilities are equivalent to lecturer-level and they possess substantial research experience.

The application form is divided into sections and includes a final checklist.

Application form questions

Section 1 – Project team details – Applicant, Co-Applicant(s), and Partner(s) details



Website: www.novelcropnetwork.ac.uk Email: novelcropnet@soton.ac.uk

Section 2 – Title, public summary of project, start and end dates

Section 3 – Project details – scope, key activities, objectives, plans for future, timeline

Section 4 – Funding request, breakdown & finance office details

Section 5 – Other questions including Trusted Research & Innovation (TR&I) responsibility

You will also be asked to submit a 1-page maximum “Capability to Deliver” (guidance can be found here: <https://www.find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/grants/bbsrc-standard-research-grant-applicant-led-mode-1#apply>)

Projects should aim to start within 1 month, and no more than three months, from receipt of formal award letter. Projects are expected to be 12 months or less. All projects must be completed and finalised paperwork returned to NUCNet by the deadline stated on the funding call.

*** Please do not apply for an award if you are unable to meet the timescale ***

Submitting application

Applications must be submitted to the Network Manager via the Network email address. Applicants will receive an acknowledgement of receipt from the Network Manager.

Upon receipt, the Network Manager will check whether the application meets the eligibility criteria and includes all required information. Applications with omissions that cannot be easily corrected will not be considered.

Application submission format requirements:

File naming convention:

ResearchGrant_Round_ApplicantSurname_FirstInitial_Date(MonthYYYY)_DocumentTitle

Example: ResearchGrant_R1_Hughes_J_June2026_LetterOfSupport

Document format requirements:



Website: www.novelcropnetwork.ac.uk Email: novelcropnet@soton.ac.uk

Application form: **Word (.docx)**

Letter(s) of support (if necessary): **PDF**

Any additional supporting documents (if specified on the application form): **PDF**

Additional materials may not be shared with reviewers at the discretion of the call administrators.

Competition call and review process

Competition announcement:

Calls will be disseminated through the NUCNet website, mailing lists, and social media channels, along with detailed information on the scope and application process. Each call will remain open for six weeks.

Evaluation & Assessment process:

Applications for flexible funds will be assessed by a small diverse, independent review panel that is separate from the network Management Board, plus two Management Board members.

Reviewers will evaluate each application using a standardised scoring sheet and guidance, and will produce a ranked list of proposals, which they will present and discuss at a review panel meeting with the network Management Board. Any panel member with a conflict of interest will not participate in the assessment or discussion of the relevant application.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria following [UKRI principles of assessment and decision making](#).

Selection criteria include:

- Scientific quality & innovation
- Feasibility & methodology
- Potential for future funding
- Team capacity
- Alignment to NUCNet
- Involvement of Schools, NGOs or other stakeholders

- Value for money
- Due focus on EDI considerations and mitigations

Applications will be ranked and funded from the top down until the funds are allocated.

Notification of Review Outcome:

The Network will notify applicants of the outcome of their application by email and agree a project start date with successful applicants before issuing a formal award letter with Terms and Conditions of the award.

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed promptly. Where available, the Network may relay specific feedback provided by the panel; however, comprehensive feedback will not be provided.

Post award administration, reporting and payment

A formal award letter, summarising the terms and conditions governing the transfer of funds and confirming project start date, will be issued by University of Southampton. Projects cannot start until this has been accepted.

Awards are conditional upon the project starting within 1 –3 months of the date on the award letter with the actual start date confirmed by email to the Network. The Management Board will consider requests for a delayed start on a case-by-case basis.

To meet BBSRC's funding spend requirements Round 2 projects would be required to start within 1 month of the date on the offer letter or may have to be less than 12 months long.

Funds must be spent as detailed on the application; virement of funds between cost headings will not be permitted.

Applicants must consider whether a collaboration agreement is required for the project. The Network does not take responsibility for negotiations between partners regarding the development of this.

The awardee must acknowledge the support of the BBSRC and the NUCNet award (**grant reference number UKRI1969**) on papers and other relevant outputs.

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 Research Organisation is subject to a funding assurance visit.

Reporting

Award recipients must submit a final report and final expenditure statement within one month of the funding period to the Network Manager (email novelcropnet@soton.ac.uk) in one email. These reports will be reviewed by the Management Board to ensure that Network objectives have been met and to identify any research gaps that may inform future calls. Conflicts of interest in this review process will be avoided.

A requirement of the reward will be for recipients of awards to demonstrate impact of their project funded through the network. Various ways to prove impact, include external evaluations, stakeholder interviews, case studies, REF impact assessments, video reports, implementing an impact taskforce are available. If a project is funded, NUCNet will publish the names of project partners, project title and project public summary (with edits if desired) on the network's website as appropriate. Case studies from completed projects will be used to promote NUCNet's outputs, for example, on the NUCNet website, in written reports, via the network's social media channels. Data generated through the award is expected to be released in a timely fashion to the wider community through appropriate sources. This should be defined in the application form.

The project completion report asks the following questions:

1. Project title
2. Project Lead name and Organisation
3. Actual project start date
4. Actual project end date
5. Public project summary
6. Financial details of actual spend of the project
7. Summary of the main outputs and outcomes of the project, including data generated.
8. Potential/likely impact of the project
9. Demonstrate impact of project
10. How is the project being taken forward?
11. Details of industry contribution (if applicable)
12. Value of industry contribution (if applicable) cash and in-kind (£)

13. Provide details on how the international collaboration relates to TR&I (if applicable)

14. Is there anything else you would like to report?

Payment terms

All awards will be paid in arrears to the lead applicant following submission of a final report and final expenditure statement to the Network Manager. Options for quarterly or staged payment (accompanied by a breakdown of costs) during project period will be considered on a case-by-case basis and if approved will be stated in the formal award letter.

All reports and completion documents must be completed by deadlines set in the funding call. Do not apply for this award if these dates are not achievable for your project – this is not negotiable; we will not be able to pay your invoice after this date.

Research Projects must be costed at 80% fEC. The receiving research organisation (RO) must contribute the remaining 20%. If applications include co-applicants from a different institution, applicants must agree how the 20% shortfall will be funded before submitting their application.

All cost categories are eligible except equipment.

Conflict of interest guidance

For reviewers

There are specific systems in place to safeguard the review process in cases of conflict of

interest for reviewers. Any reviewer with a conflict of interest will declare it and will not participate in the reviews.

Examples of a conflict of interest include:

- being 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),



- being in receipt of personal remuneration more than £5,000 per annum from the
- applicant's organisation,
- personal/family relationship with the applicant(s).

In addition, reviewers may declare a conflict of interest if they consider the area of research to be too close to their own.

For applicants

All academic lead applicants or co-applicants must declare any conflicts of interest with any named company. This information should be detailed on the application form where indicated.

Data protection and sharing

Copies of applications will be made available to peer reviewers and to the NUCNet leadership team in confidence. Administrative staff of the University of Southampton will use the information provided in the application for processing the proposal, the award of any funding, and reporting. To meet BBSRC obligations for public accountability and dissemination of information, details of grants (including successful awards) may also be made available on the Research Councils' website 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 BBSRC, study of trends and policy and strategy studies.

Have a question?

For any questions, comments, or feedback regarding this guidance, the application form or the application process, please email the NUCNet Manager using the address listed in the footer of this document.



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