

School Research Top-Up Fund

Applicant Guidance

Who is eligible to apply for funding?

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

- All Network members at the time of application who are schoolteachers or in a related discipline are eligible to apply.
- Network members based outside the UK are not eligible to apply but can be named as collaborator or advisor.
- We will prioritise allocation of these funds to those who have not previously received NUCNet funding.
- Participating Schools must be UK-based.

How much funding is available from NUCNet?

There will be a number of awards for schoolteachers (and related) available throughout the 3-year NUCNet grant duration. The maximum request per award is £400 and 100% of the costs will be funded. This fund is intended as a top-up, therefore matched funding (at least half the value of the award being applied for) should be available from another source. If, however, additional funds are not available, this can be justified on the application. We expect that the majority of awards will have some level of matched funding in place.

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. We anticipate making 5-6 awards in each round. During the grant 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?



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

The application

The applicant should complete the application form through the 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.

The applicant must be members of NUCNet. Here is the link to make an application for membership: [apply for network membership](#)

The school top-up fund application form is divided into sections and includes a final checklist.

Application form questions:

Section 1 – Applicants' details

Section 2 – Title, public summary of project, dates

Section 3 - Key activities, objectives, future plans

Section 4 – Funding request*, breakdown & finance office details

Section 5 – Alignment with NUCNet goals

Section 6 – Other questions

* Certain science lab consumables may be procured through the University of Southampton's approved suppliers to take advantage of discounted rates. For a list of these, and indicative costs, please request from the Network Manager in advance of application. Seed (up to 100) will be provided free of charge for those who request this as part of their project. A list of species for which seed are available will be provided upon request.

Awardees will have up to one month to start the project from receipt of formal award letter. Projects are expected to be 9 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 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 be returned to the applicant for revision and resubmission.

Application submission format requirements:

File naming convention:

SchoolFund_ApplicantSurname_FirstInitial_Date(MonthYYYY)_DocumentTitle

Example: SchoolFund(Hughes(J(June8682) letterofsupport

Document format requirements:

Application form: Word (.docx)

Letter 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 school top-up funds will be assessed by a small diverse, review panel made up of the network Management Board and additional members if they suggest.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- The proposal should add value to the school towards their teaching.
- The funds should add teaching capacity beyond the life of the grant.
- The project should have aims related to the goals of NUCNet
- Matched funding (at least half the value of the award being applied for) should be available from another source where possible (this is not required, but desired).

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 months of the date on the offer 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.

Funds must be spent as detailed on the application.

The awardee must acknowledge the support of the BBSRC and the NUCNet award (Grant reference no. UKRI1969) on any advertising or related 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 via the network's email located in footer of this document. These reports will be reviewed by the Leadership Team 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 award will be for recipients of awards to allow their name, school, and project summary report to be used to promote NUCNet's outputs, for example, on the NUCNet website, in written reports, via the network's social media channels.

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
8. How is the project being taken forward following the end of the funding?
9. Is there anything else you would like to report?

Payment terms

While all awards are funded at 100%, awardees will receive a partial payment (80% approved funding) upon acceptance of the formal award letter and associated terms and conditions.

Award recipients are required to submit a final report, together with a final expenditure statement and supporting receipts, to the Network Manager within one month of the end of the funding period for the final 20% of award funding to be paid.

Any underspend must be returned to the University of Southampton. Eligible additional costs, up to the approved award limit, may be invoiced to the University of Southampton for payment.

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 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 (application form and supporting documents) will be made available to the NUCNet leadership team in confidence for review and funding decisions. 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.