

NBIC's Industrial Challenge Response Fund: Follow on Fund Application Form Guidance

NBIC's Industrial Challenge Response Fund (PoC Extended Remit) is now open. This call is for high quality project proposals from organisations with the expertise to investigate and exploit areas in which biofilms play a central role.

All project proposals will be considered and ranked based on their merit and several criteria, with the aim of selecting a strong, high-impact portfolio of projects that demonstrate real-world potential.

All applications must be submitted via the online application form by 26 May 2026 at 17:00 GMT.

Scope

NBIC's Industrial Challenge Response Fund is looking for proposals that are a collaboration between

- One (or more) NBIC UK University/Research institution member

And

- At least one company (Micro, SME or Large)

Or

- At least one stakeholder from the third or public sector (Such as charities, regulators, the NHS etc)

Please refer to eligibility criteria for more information.

Proposals

The fund provides tiered, rapid-access support for projects at different stages of development.

This guidance document covers the follow-on fund stream of our ICRF funding. For guidance on the initial funding, please see the initial funding guidance document.

Value - The Follow-on fund provides funding of up to £100k

Projects - Applications are limited to partners funded by NBIC (including PoC 1–5, FTMA, CTP, Regional innovation vouchers and core research) requiring additional support to reach critical milestones, ensuring continuity and amplifying prior investment.

Funding is intended to help projects advance toward market readiness, ideally supporting the development of a minimum viable product or enabling a product to be brought to market by the end of third quarter 2027. Projects should be within the target range of TRL 5–9*, focusing on late-stage development and commercialisation activities.

Applications will be expected to establish the feasibility of a concept, idea or technology from any application sector, which is aimed at **preventing, detecting, managing or engineering biofilms** which we define as follows:

- **Prevent:** Knowledge-based design of surfaces and materials.
- **Detect:** Innovative sensing, tracking and diagnostic technologies.
- **Manage:** Kill, remove or control established biofilms from exploiting their life cycle dynamics.
- **Engineer:** Control and direct complex microbial community processes in process applications

Projects are expected to propose additional sources of funding either as in-kind and/or financial support that will enhance the quality of the bid and the outcomes anticipated. The level of funding from collaborators will be used as a key part of the assessment process of the project.

To achieve maximum score in the finance section of the applicants, project partners should ensure the following match from the industrial partner:

- SME- 50% match of requested funding either in kind or cash contribution
- Large corporate- 50% match of requested funding with at least 25% as a cash contribution

*= TRL is commonly used to evaluate the maturity of the technology in research and development projects. TLR5: technology basic validation in a relevant environment. TRL9: actual technology qualified through successful mission operations.

Eligibility

To be eligible for NBIC's Industrial Challenge Response Fund, applicants must comply with the following requirements:

- Academic and industry/third sector partners **MUST** have received NBIC funding previously. This can include funding from POC 1-5, FTMA, CTP, regional innovation voucher or core research funding.
- Research organisation is an acceded [NBIC research partner](#).
- Collaborating partner must be a company of any size **OR** a third sector organisation such as a charity, regulator or the NHS. The Collaborating Partner must have a UK presence.
- All applicants to the follow-on fund must secure co-investment from public or private sector investment to achieve an ROI of at least 3:1 over 5 years. **
- The project lead can be from either lead partner.
- Any individual can only be project lead on 1 NBIC's Industrial Challenge Response Fund grant.
- If successful, industry must register for [NBIC Industry Membership](#), pay respective fees and remain as a member for the duration of the project.

** Q: What does "ROI of 3:1 over 5 years" mean?

It means the project should deliver at least £3 of economic benefit for every £1 invested (NBIC + co-investment) within five years. Benefits can include revenue, cost savings, or follow-on investment

How to calculate ROI:

Example:

- NBIC funding: £30,000
- Industry co-investment: £10,000
- Total investment: £40,000
- Projected benefit over 5 years: £120,000

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{£120,000}{£40,000} = 3:1$$

Applicants must provide:

- Estimated 5-year economic benefit (£)
- Total project investment (£)
- ROI ratio (must be $\geq 3:1$)
- Brief justification of assumptions (e.g., market size, adoption rate, cost savings)

Project Agreement and IPR

NBIC has a standard approach to project agreements to ensure we are consistent and fair with our collaborators. This ensures that basic terms, such as the definition of confidential information and Intellectual Property Rights meet the requirements set out by UKRI and Subsidy Control Act 2022. Our consortium members have agreed to the terms of NBIC Consortium Agreement, [the IPR guidelines](#) and the use of NBIC Project Agreement for contracting awarded projects

Funding Level

Research institutions, if successful, would receive funding at 80% of the Full Economic Cost (FEC) for their activity as costed by the university finance teams.

Non university project partners can be reimbursed at the levels shown below

- Large companies and third sector organisations would receive no direct funding from NBIC.
- SMEs (as defined by the EU <250 employees) can receive up to 50% of directly incurred project costs (capable of audit).
- Micro businesses (<10 employees) can receive up to 50% of directly incurred project costs (capable of audit).

Full definitions for SME/micro businesses can be found [here](#).

Assessment

Projects will be assessed by at least two assessors before going before the final assessment panel to make final funding recommendations. Both the assessors and the assessment panel will score each question against the applicant guidance given in the application form.

Applicants for the follow-on fund are required to make a 15 minute pitch to the Assessment Panel over Teams, this presentation can be pre-recorded and will be followed by some questions from the panel.

Key Dates

- Call opens: 20/04/2026.
- Call closes: 26/05/2026 17:00 GMT.
- A 15-minute pitch given to the panel: TBC
- Decision and offer letters will be sent within 8 weeks after call end date.

Instructions

- You must fill in the online application form to apply formally for the award once the portal opens and before the end of 26/05/2026. No applications received after this time will be considered. Please do not send us your application via email/mail.
- NBIC's Industrial Challenge Response Fund application should be jointly written but must be submitted by the project lead via the online application form.
- For any queries regarding NBIC's Industrial Challenge Response Fund, please contact us at nbic@biofilms.ac.uk

Supporting Documentation and Information

- Please fill in the application form with as much information and as accurately as you can. The information we asked for will help our assessors and panel to evaluate your project.
- You are requested to provide your research institution's financial approval and Letter of Support from collaborators, as attachments after you have completed your application. Please start to obtain these as soon as you can. Please ensure that your costings include a details breakdown rather than headline figures for staffing, materials etc.