

NBIC Proof of Concept (PoC) 4 Frequently asked questions

For ease we have separated the FAQs the sections of 'General', 'Timing', 'Eligibility and Project Partners', 'Intellectual Property' and 'Finance'.

General

1. What documents will I need to provide to support my application?

You will be required to provide all of the following:

- A detailed financial breakdown of your costs including staffing and materials.
- Letters of support from call collaborating institutions (on institutional headed paper).
- A Gantt chart detailing the time frames associated with completing each work package and milestone.
- A letter from your home institution confirming support and agreeing the budget associated with the project (on institutional headed paper).

2. I'm unable to provide a supporting document on institutional headed paper; are you able to accept an email instead?

We can accept emails as long as the full name and job title of the author are clearly stated in the footer of their email.

3. I'm not sure which NBIC Sector applies to my application; do you have definitions?

These are 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.

4. How will the assessment of the projects work and will confidentiality agreements be put in place?

There will be an independent panel that assess the project against the weightings identified in the guidance documents. The final decision will be ratified by NBICs non-executive board. Yes, confidentiality agreements will be required for all assessors and panel members.

5. Can we submit multiple bids, for instance with different companies or are we limited to one bid?

Yes you can submit multiple applications. We do reserve the right as we mention in the call to take a portfolio view at the end if we cannot afford to fund all the fundable applications and there is a bias to one sector rather than others or applications are focussed on one theme (themes being: prevent, manage, detect and engineer) rather than another. Our goal is to fund excellent projects independent of location from member institutions so yes please do submit multiple ones if you have them. Please note however that applicants can apply for multiple projects but cannot hold more than 3 NBIC PoC Awards as a Lead applicant plus 3 as Collaborator at any one time.

6. What access to Hartree does NBIC have?

As part of its grant NBIC received HPC access time at the facilities at Hartree - using the [Scafell Pike](#) processor. We have in total 1.14 million node hours or 28 days of compute on the whole system.



You can access their knowledge base [here](#) by registering to find out more.

If you wish to use these HPC facilities as part of your project then these can be accessed in addition to the rest of your costs, however any funding to use this facility can only be to the same limits as the PoC i.e., total costs expected to be on average £50k. there is no additional financial funding available. If you cannot add the necessary information in the application form please add an extra page as upload to your plan and risk register. Please contact us to discuss more details prior to applying.

Timing

7. What is the application deadline for POC4?

You are required to submit your application via our portal (on SurveyMonkey) with all the required supporting documentation by no later than 12 February 2021. If you are pending supporting documentation, please ensure you submit your application on 12 February 2021 and forward the documents to us at nbic@biofilms.ac.uk at the earliest opportunity including the POC reference number in the subject title.

8. When will I receive feedback on my application?

During the week commencing 24 May 2021.

9. For the IKC call, can we apply for two years funding for an MPhil project - I would hopefully find the funds to extend this to a PhD from my university - or would it be better to apply for a 6-month postdoc?

The scope and guidance proposes 6-12 month projects, on average, across all funded projects.

10. Is it possible for a project to exceed the average project duration of 6 months? My colleague is proposing a project duration of 12 months.

We will consider projects this long if this is required and fits with the other criteria of the call, however this would be exceptional. Please contact us to discuss further.

Eligibility and Project Partners

11. Where can I find a list of research institutions that are part of the NBIC consortium?

This is available on the NBIC website [here](#).

12. Must the industrial partner in the application be UK-based?

No, it does not have to be based in UK, but the industrial partner should have a UK presence, i.e., having a sales or R&D or manufacturing office set up in the UK.

13. Would it be acceptable to have 1 UK partner and 1 non-UK (EU) partner?

Yes, but the non-UK partner would not be able to be funded even if they are SME or Micro-enterprise.

14. Could you please let me know if The University of xxx has been "acceded to NBIC" as I'm not sure how to check? If it hasn't, please could you give me more information on how we can make this happen?

Please see our research partner page and our home page to find out which research institutes have joined us.

15. I am from the Research Support office in Public Health England (PHE, an executive agency of the UK Dept of Health & Social Care) and I would like to inquire about eligibility for the NBIC Proof of Concept call on behalf of some PHE researchers.

As the PHE is not defined as a Research Institution by the UKRI (<https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/>), you would need to partner with



an NBIC Research Institute to submit a proposal for this call. We are happy to help connect you to any of our partners if helpful.

- 16. If PHE were to apply with, for instance, our collaborators at xxx university, would need a third party, such as an SME, to be eligible?**
Critical in the answer to your question will be the commercial pull and the business case for the project. Stakeholder could mean the NHS or an institution with a clear link to a market and able to define the value of the opportunity that you are trying to progress (which PHE may be able to do) and the unmet needs. Equally important is the state of technology readiness (TRL) and what the next steps are.
So through working with xxx your project application would be eligible if the case was made strongly. Being able to give information provided by a commercial partner on the scale of the opportunity would also be valuable.
- 17. NBIC indicated that applications must be submitted by a lead academic, am I able to submit this in my name as a Post-doctoral Researcher?**
Yes, researchers within partner academic institutes are eligible to apply.

Intellectual Property

- 18. About the IP management, who owns the IP and how is managed etc. You are expecting proposals with TRL 2-4, it means there are existing IPs, what happens to them.**
For successful projects, a Project Agreement will be put in place. This Project Agreement includes negotiable clauses on IP rights based on several scenarios, including ownership, use, protection and exploitation of IP. It would be expected that Background IP would be the sole and exclusive property of the party to whom it belonged prior to the start of the project. Our IP guidelines are available on our website or directly from us.
- 19. Is there any guideline from the funding body on how to deal with the intellectual property, when companies are involved?**
It is entirely up for the participant to negotiate on the IP in line with our guidelines (available on our website or directly from us) As our projects are publicly funded, we expect the IP to be made public at a certain stage past its necessary confidential protective period. We will need to report and demonstrate the IP related progress to BBSRC and Innovate UK.

Finance

- 20. Who leads the project and how the finance is transferred?**
Regarding the leadership of the project; we expect that the PoC be jointly written and submitted by the lead academic partner from the NBIC research institution. The funding will be invoiced to the University of Southampton to a schedule that will also be included in the Project Agreement.
- 21. Since NBIC is giving funding only to research institute, does it mean SME & Micro gets their share through the research institute?**
The University of Southampton (NBIC) as budget holder would fund the SME/ Micro directly against auditable costs.
- 22. For Micro Businesses and SMEs, the POC form says they “can receive up to 50% of directly incurred project costs (capable of audit)”. What does this include?**
As part of our governance, we can only partly support (up to 50%) costs in SME/ Micro businesses that can be directly audited and traced to activity on the NBIC funded projects. This evidence could include documented timesheets (with explanation of hourly rates), invoices from third parties. As NBIC will only fund up to a limit (£50K). Then any costs claimed by a Company may reduce the amount payable to the academic partner. The contribution to the project in time and resources can also be indicated on the form (even if



not claimed) in order to demonstrate the commitment of the industrial partner to the project.

- 23. An industrial partner can contribute in kind to the proposal but cannot make a cash contribution. Please could you tell me if this is OK?**
Contribution of in-kind or cash are both welcome. The level of this contribution is weighted in the assessments. Successful projects have had on average at least 30% of the total project value contributed by the industrial partner either in kind or in cash/
- 24. Is there a requirement for how large the industrial contribution needs to be?**
There is no requirement for the level of contribution. Projects are encouraged to propose additional sources of funding or support in-kind that will enhance the quality of the bid and the outcomes anticipated. There is no requirement for the level of contribution from company/commercial partner. In our criteria of project assessment, a key criteria is the extent of engagement with external stakeholders or industrial partners and their level of commitments (in-kind or finance). See also answer to Q23
- 25. Can you confirm what level of details is required for the budget within the application form or is it possible for you to forward a copy to me?**
Please refer to the guidance for the budget related information.
- 26. I note research Institutions can claim 80% FEC. Can you confirm if we need to show the 80% or 100% figure within the budget on the application form please?**
Please see guidance and application form, please include 80% FEC and note this in the box provided.
- 27. Does the maximum funding level of £50k include the company contribution?**
No, it refers to NBIC funding. Please refer to the guidance for examples of funding level.
- 28. Can the funding be used to support a PDRA or supplement a student?**
This POC is for translational research, so PDRA support, etc. has to be utilised for this purpose but can be deployed to an appropriate researcher eg PDRA, PhD
- 29. Do you have any further guidance on funding and or restrictions on the £50K available?**
The project 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. This can be in a laboratory, model or real world setting in order to give confidence for further work. The PoC programme is not aimed at basic research, but is expected to build on existing research, findings or technology and show how the collaboration will move the research towards practical exploitation in a specified application. In Technology Readiness Level (TRL) terms then these projects are likely to be at levels 2-4. A useful guide to TRL levels can be found [here](#).
- 30. Are we allowed to allocate some of the funding for public engagement? More specifically, involving an artist to work part-time and a gallery (as a partner) to run art workshops and an exhibition?**
On the assumption you are proposing a project that fits the other POC criteria explained in the guidance and application in terms of its prime objective then this outreach and communication are fine to include. The application will be assessed on its merits against others.

[Finance example.](#)

[IPR guidelines.](#)

