

BBSRC IDLA FAQs

Clarifications:

Project leads

We understand that some uncertainty has arisen concerning the roles of research organisations in our application process. Specifically, the distinction between serving as the project lead for the main IDLA application (i.e. the grant-holding body) and leading individual student projects (i.e. the four-year research projects each student undertakes).

To clarify: a research organisation can be the named project lead on only one IDLA application bid as the nominated grant holder. However, they are welcome to join additional bids as additional project partners allowing them to be involved in individual student projects across multiple IDLA partnerships.

Prior to the full application, organisations may submit more than one notification of intent (NOI) naming them as the project lead. In this instance, we would strongly encourage all prospective project leads to proactively manage any prospective partners involved in their NOIs. Details are permitted to change between the NOI and full application stage.

We apologise for any confusion this might have caused and appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

Costs

BBSRC commits to supporting 100% of the list of costs per student as outlined on the IDLA funding opportunity webpage, totalling £115,336 per student. We understand there are additional costs associated with running a successful programme, which include administrative expenses and may include other optional partner contributions like stipend top-ups and match-funded studentships.

We require applicants to account for these additional costs through the summed cash and in-kind contributions from their partners. We expect that, at a minimum, these partner contributions constitute 20% of our stated cost per student, but partners may wish to contribute more.

This means for our stated cost of a studentship is £115,336, BBSRC would pay that full amount in the award per student, and we would expect the partner contributions, both cash and in kind, to amount to £23,067 per student awarded.

Community FAQs:

Q: Are non-profit organisations based in the UK eligible as a lead project partner institution?

A: Yes, non-profit organisations based within the UK are eligible to be project partner leads.

Q: Can Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) or Research Organisations (Ros) be part of multiple bids as the project lead?

A: HEIs/ROs can only act as the “Project lead” for one application. Applications are co-created by an organisation or organisations typically ineligible for UKRI funding (the lead project partner) in partnership with at least one HEI/RO eligible for UKRI funding (the project lead), who will submit the application. HEIs/ROs can be involved as project co-leads, where they will host students, or additional project partners, where they will not host students on any number of applications, but they can only be the project lead on one application.

Q: Are new SMEs eligible to apply?

A: Yes, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can apply but they must partner with an organisation eligible for UKRI funding who will submit the application and act as the training grant award holder if you are successful.

Q: Can the award and studentships be shared with multiple partner Universities/Research Organisations?

A: Yes. The organisation eligible for UKRI funding who is named as your project lead will act as the training grant award holder if you are successful. At least one student per year of intake will be hosted at the project lead. Any additional organisations who will host students within your partnership should be added as “project co-leads” on your application. These organisations must also be eligible to receive UKRI funding as they will be in receipt of a proportion of the award relevant to the number of studentships they are hosting, as distributed by your project lead. We would encourage students to be hosted at a number of organisations, not just the project lead/TG award holder.

Q: Can the non-HEI project partner lead organisation be a commercial research park, representing a collection of non-HEI organisations?

A: Yes; multiple project partners can be on one application, but a “lead project partner” should be described in the application.

Q: Can individual projects (placements) be hosted by a number of different partners (which are non-HEI)?

A: Yes, multiple project partners can be on one application. Applicants should describe how each partner contributes to their application, as each partner should bring added value to the partnership. For example, additional project partners could offer placement opportunities for students.

Q: What are the key differences between the IDLA and the CTP awards?

A: The main difference is the mandatory inclusion of an organisation eligible for UKRI funding who will act as the project lead and training grant award holder if you are successful. They will host a minimum of one student per year of intake and will also submit your application.

Applicants are now welcome to include different or alternate models of doctoral training e.g., the inclusion of professional doctorates. Placements are now also more flexible. Students may do a placement similar to the DTP CASE [[Studentships – BBSRC – UKRI](#)] model, in which the student's placement is typically still focussed on their research project but they are working on their project outside of their host organisation for between 3 and 18 months.

Students can also do a PIP-style placement, where they can spend up to 3 months developing complementary skills outside of their research project and outside of their host academic environment. Students may also do a combination of both. If doing both types of placement, the student would spend a maximum of 3 months outside of their research project.

Q: For the 20% contribution provided by the lead project partner (or combination of project partners), is this cash only, or are in-kind contributions allowed?

A: The lead project partner (or combination of project partners) will need to make a financial contribution of a minimum of 20% of the funds requested. Cash and in-kind contributions are both accepted. In-kind contributions can come from a variety of sources, such as training, consultation, provision of resources or facilities or equipment. More details on these contributions are included at the top of this FAQ.

Q: Does the lead project partner have to be based in the UK to be eligible to apply?

A: Lead project partner organisations must:

- Be registered in the UK
- Intend to carry out project work or research in the UK, or both
- Have a commitment to supporting three cohorts (six-year period)

Additional project partners who are **not** the lead can be international in line with the TFS definition:

“Project partners- A project partner is a collaborating organisation who will have an integral role in the proposed research. This may include direct (cash) or indirect (in-kind) contributions such as expertise, staff time or use of facilities. Project partners may be in industry, academia, third sector or government organisations in the UK or overseas, including partners based in the EU.”

Organisations which will be hosting students for the majority of their studies, i.e., not during their placement time and where students are registered must be based in the UK. Placements are permitted to take place overseas.

Q: What are some examples of companies/partnerships that can be involved?

A: We are flexible on the model, but each application must include:

- At least one project partner organisation, which will strategically lead the application, as defined under the project partner lead organisations section
- One project lead organisation, which will submit the application, act as the training grant holder and host at least one student per year of intake
- At least one accredited higher education PhD awarding body. This may be the project lead, if eligible, or an additional project co-lead partner
- Your application could involve a single project partner lead organisation or have multiple companies sharing a single constituent of students, both are valid. Similarly, the organisation/s acting as the project partner lead could be large or classed as a SME. The important consideration is the relevance of the proposed partner(s) to the strategic goals of the programme and the coherence of the training programme. We have details of our current CTPs on our website.

Q: For industrial doctoral research students, what is the visa criteria?

A: In line with UKRI TG guidance, a maximum of 30% of students can be international for this award. Training Grant Funds cannot be used to cover the difference between home and overseas fee rates. Most students from outside the UK beginning a full-time course of six months or longer will require a student visa. Students from the EU, EEA and Switzerland are included within the student route and will require a student visa unless they have settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme or another valid right to reside in the UK. For more details covering the classification of home and international students, please see the UKRI training grant terms and conditions: <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/UKRI-020424-TrainingGrantTermsConditionsApril2024.pdf>.

Q: How do we ensure a fair opportunity to work with partners?

A: We would expect that all prospective partners within an application would discuss their involvement prior to the submission of your full application. This may include if organisations are planning to be part of more than one application and what their contributions would be, were those applications to be successful.

At the time of your full application, collaborative agreements should be in place regarding management of the doctoral candidate's work and agreements concerning any intellectual property that may arise as a result. This collaboration should be effectively managed, to maximise the benefits for all parties concerned.

Please ensure that you have prior agreement from all partners included in your application so that, if you are offered funding, they will support your project as indicated in the project partners' section. For audit purposes, UKRI requires formal collaboration agreements to be put in place if an award is made.

Q: How does the IDLA relate to the previous Collaborative Training Partnerships (CTPs) scheme and will similar consortia to previous rounds be less likely to be funded?

A: This award is similar to the previous CTP scheme, but it is an entirely new funding opportunity, meaning that existing partners are welcome to submit an application to the IDLAs. Each application to this funding opportunity will be judged on its merits against the assessment criteria for this opportunity. Applicants are welcome to demonstrate that they “have a well-evidenced track record of supporting the training and development of others, particularly previous involvement in delivering doctoral training successfully” as part of the “Applicant and team capability to deliver” section.

Q: Is this different to previous CTP funding opportunities where the lead project partner was the sole budget holder?

A: A minimum of one industrial lead and one HEI partner is the minimum viable product for this opportunity. After that, there is no upper limit, although partnerships will have to judge what an acceptable number is to deliver their training programme and to ensure all partners contribute in a meaningful way and that the partnership is beneficial to all involved.

Q: How many partnerships with an RO are required and how many universities can be involved in an IDLA?

A: A minimum of one project partner lead organisation and one organisation eligible for UKRI funding who will act as the project lead and will hold the training grant is the minimum viable product for this opportunity. You must also have a degree awarding body as part of your partnership if that is not fulfilled by the project partner lead or project lead organisations. After that, there is no upper limit, although partnerships will have to judge what an acceptable number is to deliver their training programme and to ensure all partners contribute in a meaningful way. For this award, we expect applicants to support a minimum of five studentships per year equating to 15 studentships total across the lifetime of the award and we would expect that the partnership is beneficial to all involved.

At least one student per year of intake will need to be based at the project lead, but we would encourage additional ROs to be on your partnership to host students (they will be on your application as “project co-leads”). There is no upper limit to this number, but we would ask applicants to consider where makes the most strategic sense for the cohort of students you will be supporting with this award.

Q: How will you approach EDI and will plans be expected in advance and assessed?

A: They are assessed in the positive culture and environment section with equal weighting to all other criteria. Our expert panel will review all sections and give an overall score, which will then be used by BBSRC to inform the final funding decision.

Q: How should applicants calculate the value of the 20% that BBSRC requires is supplied by the project partner lead organisation?

A: This figure can include cash and in-kind contributions and is calculated based on how many studentships you have requested. See the section on “costs” at the head of this document.

Q: If there is more than one industrial partner and they are willing to share the cost, does the lead partner have to pay the full 20%?

A: The overall partnership will need to contribute 20%, but it is down to the partnership to agree how each partner contributes to this total cost.

Q: Is it possible to have multiple (relevant) HEIs, and would this be seen as being advantageous assuming these inclusions are justified?

A: You may include any organisations that will be contributing to the delivery of training on your programme; each partner included should have been chosen strategically for the overall benefit of the partnership.

Q: Is the NHS an eligible partner?

A: Yes, they would be an eligible partner.

Q: Is there a maximum number of students a consortium can bid for?

A: No, but we encourage you to be realistic given our budget of up to approximately 60 students per annum and the capacity of the partnership to deliver training for the number of students you have requested.

Q: Are there any restrictions on the number of applications a HEI can lead on or be involved in?

A: HEIs would only be submitting a bid as a project lead in partnership with an organisation outside of academia, who will act as the project partner lead. They can act as the TG award holder/project lead on only **one bid** but can be involved as a partner or project co-lead on any number of bids.

Q: What is the potential for interactions between Industrial and Doctoral Landscape Awards?

A: We would encourage this but note the risk of planning interactions with other IDLA bids in the event where one or more does not get funded. We would encourage you to consider and include a contingency plan in this eventuality.

Q: Will there be any institutional cap on the number of applications that can be submitted?

A: Organisations can act as the TG award holder/project lead on only one bid, but they can be involved as a partner on any number of bids. Details may change between the NOI and full application.

Q: Would BBSRC extend existing CTPs as part of the new Landscape Award?

A: This is a new funding opportunity and is distinct from the CTPs. The last year of intake for our CTP is October 2025 and the first year of intake for the IDLAs is October 2026. We will not be extending the CTPs as the IDLAs have been designed to replace this scheme.

Q: Regarding the options provided in the guidance for placements (PIPs, internship with the non-HEI project partner, or a combination approach), is the decision on the type of placement a student can undertake made by the individual student, or could be made on a cohort level by the project partner lead organisation or HEI Project Lead?

A: This can be decided either at the individual student level or at a cohort level; it is up to the applicant to inform us of their placement strategy in their application. Students should have an awareness of the placement opportunities available to them as part of this award and they must undertake a placement during their studies.

Q: Do Public Sector Research Establishments (PSREs) qualify for this funding?

A: PSREs wishing to be involved in an application are required to choose whether they wish to do so either as a project partner lead, where they will additionally partner with an organisation eligible for UKRI funding to act as their project lead, or as a project lead themselves, where they will submit the application and work as the training grant holder, if successful. An organisation cannot perform both roles within one application. Please check your eligibility for UKRI funding before applying.

Q: What are the institutional limits for the IDLA. On the website it says: "*Eligible organisations may only act as a project lead and subsequent training grant holder on one application*". Does this rule apply at the NOI stage i.e. each University can only submit one NOI where they are the project lead, or does it only start to apply at the full application stage?

A: See points of clarification at the top of this document.

Q: The Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) is £20,000 per student; can this be included in the funding of the University/Industry hosting the students, or this is something that would be retained for the provision of cohort training? Can RTSG be used to support other studentships?

A: The training grant and administration responsibilities of this grant will be held by the named project lead. Each student is entitled to £5,000 for RTSG per year, which is to be used to cover their research costs, e.g., consumables. The training grant award holder is permitted to use their funds flexibly to support their cohort of students, but the minimum number of notional studentships awarded must be supported, if you are successful. Use of training grant funds must also be in line with the UKRI TG terms and conditions, e.g., TGC 4.10 Transfers of funds between fund headings are permitted, with the exception of those funds which are specific to an individual Student such as Disabled Students Allowance, or where specified otherwise by the awarding Council. For more information, see: [UKRI-020424-TrainingGrantTermsConditionsApril2024.pdf](#)

The Flexible Fund can be used specifically to support cohort training if you wish. For more details, see the “flexible fund” section of the funding opportunity.

Q: The programme management is £2,000 / per student; can this be included in the funding of the University / Industry hosting the students or this is something that would be retained for managing the programme?

A: This funding header can be used flexibly by the training grant award holder (project lead) to support the administration and/or placement costs associated with your training programme. All funds would be held by the training grant award holder, but it is down to the partnership to decide how these funds will be utilised to best support the training programme, e.g., held centrally or distributed to project co-leads who may be hosting students.

Q: What level of detail is required for the project co-lead organisation, is contact name and organisation sufficient?

A: This level of detail should be sufficient when answering the “core team” section of the application. You should name any organisation which will host students in addition to the project lead as a “project co-lead” and you can list multiple project co-leads per application. We would also expect to see the strategic rationale for the organisations which you have chosen to act as your project co-leads. We ask that “you should specify the number of studentships being requested in the and where they should be hosted “in the “vision” section of the application, so it may make sense to include this rationale here. However, it is up to the applicant to decide as to where and when is best for that information to be communicated within your application.

Q: Is it acceptable to not use a named project co-lead (i.e. do not allocate a studentship to a named RO)?

A: Each application must include:

- At least one project partner organisation, which will strategically lead the application, as defined under the Project partner lead organisations section
- One project lead organisation, which will submit the application, act as the training grant holder and host at least one student per year of intake
- At least one accredited higher education PhD awarding body. This may be the project lead, if eligible, or an additional project co-lead partner

At least one studentship per year of intake must be based at the Project lead/TG award holder. You should indicate in the Vision section of your application how many students you are requesting and where they will be hosted. If you do not include any additional Project co-leads and do not specify where your students will be hosted, it could potentially be inferred that all of your students will be hosted at your project lead. If that is not the case, the applicant should detail this on their application.

Q: If we identify a new RO that has not been named on the application then will it be acceptable to allocate a studentship with them once the grant has already been awarded?

A: Ideally, all organisations you are planning to have host students for the duration of your award should be named in your application. That way, an applicant can outline the strategy behind why these organisations were chosen in their application. It should be possible to add on additional project co-leads/hosting partners when the grant has been issued, but they would need to be justified in writing to us for your partnership at the time of addition and must make strategic sense for your partnership.

Q: Will be ok to just highlight the project lead and 2 primary co-leads for the NOI on the premise that we will name a large number of other co-leads in the full application?

A: Yes, details are permitted to change between the NOI and full application. If there are likely to be large differences between your NOI and full application, please do indicate this if you have the space to do so.

Q: 'At the time of application'- does this refer to the 17 December 2024 or the 18 February 2024 deadline?

A: This would refer to the 18th of February 2024 full application deadline. Details are permitted to change between the NOI and your full application.

Q: At the point of full application, is a signed joint-partnership letter setting out the essential parameters of the relationship between the partners (letter signatories), management of the doctoral candidate's work and heads of term of intellectual property sufficient? The collaborative partners would then subsequently sign a formal collaboration agreement which would also flow through all the UKRI terms and conditions if an award is made?

A: There is no formal requirement for a joint partnership letter as part of the assessment for this funding opportunity, but we would expect that collaboration agreements would be in place at the time that your application is submitted. Please ensure you have prior agreement from all partners included in your application so that, if you are offered funding, they will support your project as indicated in the Project Partners section of your application. The section on "Partnerships and governance" asks for evidence to demonstrate that "partners are committed to working together, with effective two-way engagement", so you may demonstrate these agreements in this section of your application, and/or at any other point in your application that you deem relevant.

Q: The guidance reads as 'the Project Partner lead is not the University'

A: Yes, this is correct. The **project partner lead** is the non-HEI/organisation which will strategically direct the application but will not submit the application. Nor will they hold the training grant or be the main host institution for the students if the application is successful.

Q: Clarity on the call guidelines, particularly around the 20% match fund from project partner lead.

A: An organisation may act as a project partner lead (strategically leading the application, not eligible for UKRI funding) or Project lead (submitting the application, eligible for UKRI funding and would be the training grant holder) on only one application. However, there is no limit as to the number of applications an organisation can act as an additional project partner (see TFS definition for project partner), or project co-lead (hosting additional students). See the "costs" section at the top of this document.

Q: What are the aims of this Landscape Award?

A: This funding opportunity is a landscape award, where we aim to provide:

- Broad, flexible funding to support talented doctoral students to contribute to a vibrant, internationally attractive and world-leading research and innovation system.
- Breadth and diversity in the research supported and to ensure that as a community we are rapidly responsive to new and emerging research ideas and areas.
- Opportunities for a variety of engagement with non-academic partners.

We are looking for innovative and inclusive doctoral programmes designed to train students to undertake research and gain the core skills needed for a variety of careers.

You will be expected to deliver leading edge, frontier research and innovation training across Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)'s remit and address strategic challenges faced by the bio-industry and bio-based economy. Your application must demonstrate that the Industrial Doctoral Landscape training programme offers a scientifically excellent training environment and sufficient, high quality research capacity to deliver that training.

We encourage interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary doctoral training programmes and advise against single discipline or narrowly focused applications. IDLA applications must be able to demonstrate high quality provision across the breadth of the science relevant to BBSRC's remit. There is no expectation that a single application will cover the entirety of BBSRC's remit, however, BBSRC does reserve the right to manage the balance of the overall studentship portfolio to ensure broad coverage of our remit.

Q: Notification of Intent – are you able to share the complete application form for the NOI and do we have to state at this stage how many studentships we intend to bid for?

A: The link to the form to complete you NOI is on the IDLA funding opportunity page.

The NOI should include:

- The title of your training programme.
- The organisations that are expected to be involved in delivering your training programme.
- A brief summary of your planned work which should include your vision (what the training grant is going to achieve and why it is important for UKRI to support it) and your capability to deliver (who will lead and deliver the training grant) (approximately 1,000 words).

You may also indicate how many studentships you intend to request, but this is not a requirement at this stage.

Q: Can you clarify what do you see the role of an Administrative Lead to entail? Does this have to be separated and explained in the proposal?

A: The project lead will hold the training grant and will host at least one studentship per year of intake for the lifetime of the award. This organisation will be responsible for the administration of your training grant and will work with the project partner lead to deliver your training programme. This will include the distribution of funds to project co-lead organisations which may host additional studentships, if they are not all based at the project lead.

Q: Would IDLA studentships be expected to be respond even more strongly to an identified industry need?

A: IDLA studentship projects will function similarly to CASE studentship projects; your training partnership should aim to identify and address short and long-term skills challenges faced by the bio-industry sector and foster interdisciplinarity between industry, academia and other employers. This award aims to support capacity building across sectors and industries of the bio-based economy by giving non-HEIs greater autonomy in the selection, development, and implementation of studentship projects they would like to support and supervise.

Q: Would a charity be an eligible co-lead partner to be an academic host?

A: Your project lead will hold the training grant and therefore must be eligible for UKRI funding. Any additional project co-leads should also be organisations which are eligible for UKRI research grant funding, as they would receive a portion of the IDLA training grant if they are hosting students.

These organisations include:

- Higher education institutions (HEIs)
- Research council institutes
- Eligible independent research organisations and catapult centres
- PSREs

PSREs wishing to be involved in an application are required to choose whether they wish to do so either as a project partner lead or as a project lead. An organisation cannot perform both roles within one application. Before applying for funding, check the **eligibility of your organisation** to act as a project lead or project co-lead.

Q: Can organisations contribute with match funding, increasing the total number of studentships.

A: You are welcome to have match funded students as part of your training programme, but it is not a requirement of the funding opportunity and will not be assessed.

Q: Can we submit a proposal for this call with a consortium of SMEs, rather than one large industry partner.

A: Yes, it is permissible to submit an application for this call as a consortium of SMEs rather than one large industry partner.

Q: We understand that UKRI/BBSRC iCASE is replaced by UKRI/BBSRC Industrial DLA?

A: The IDLAs will replace our CTP studentship programme. CASE studentships are still a feature of our academic-led doctoral landscape award (DLA) and will make up 25% of the studentships for this award. All studentship projects as part of the IDLAs are collaborative and should involve a partner or partners outside of academia to co-create, supervise, and deliver the project.

Q: UKRI iCASE was led by Industry and a company could submit and receive funding for a number of iCASE awards, which will be placed in different Universities. A University usually receives the Award letter, telling us that such and such amount £ is awarded for a project with a Company X. We do not usually know what other iCASE awards and with which other Universities this company is awarded. It seems that Industrial DLA process is completely different and a university is expected to coordinate and submit a proposal for the Industrial DLA – is this correct?

A: Yes, this is correct. Each project partner lead organisation must partner with an organisation which is eligible for UKRI research grant funding. The eligible organisations will act as the project lead and will hold the training grant. The project lead will write and submit the application in partnership with the project partner lead.

Q: Are DLA partnerships encouraged to get involved in submitting an IDLA bid?

A: Prospective DLA award holders are welcome to be involved in an IDLA application, where they can act as either the project lead or project co-lead. Any prospective applicant will need to demonstrate that the partnership has the resource and capacity to hold additional studentships which will be supported by this award.