

Funding opportunity

Notification of intent: Diet and health: collaborative research and development grants

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)
Co-funders:	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£3,000,000
Maximum award:	£800,000
Publication date:	29 January 2026
Opening date:	3 February 2026 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	3 March 2026 4:00pm UK time

Last updated: 29 January 2026 - [see all updates](#)


Apply for Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and Defra funding to support collaborative R&D projects developing novel products and innovations delivering healthy, sustainable, and resilient diets for the UK population.

You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for BBSRC funding.

Projects must include at least one industry partner and an industry contribution of 30% (cash, in-kind or both in-kind) is required.

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £800,000. BBSRC and Defra will fund 80% of the FEC.

Projects will be expected to start by October 2026 and will last for 3 years.

 This funding opportunity has a mandatory notification of intent (NOI) stage.

Who can apply

This opportunity is open to organisations with standard eligibility. [Check if your organisation is eligible](#).

Who is eligible to apply

To be eligible as the academic partner, you must be from one of the following organisations:

- UK higher education institutions
- research council institutes
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) approved independent research organisations
- public sector research establishments
- NHS bodies with research capacity

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are [committed to achieving equality of opportunity](#) for all funding applicants. We encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers.

We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. This includes:

- career breaks
- support for people with caring responsibilities
- flexible working
- alternative working patterns

UKRI can [offer disability and accessibility support for UKRI applicants and grant holders](#) during the application and assessment process.

What we're looking for

Aim

This joint funding opportunity provided by BBSRC and Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) aims to build and strengthen partnerships between academia and industry and enable the co-development of collaborative research and development projects that develop novel food products and innovations to deliver healthy, sustainable, and resilient diets for the UK population.

For more information on the background of this opportunity and the Good Food Cycle, go to the Additional information section.

Scope

You are invited to submit proposals for collaborative research and development projects, that explore the following and support the 'Good Food Cycle'.

Projects should address one or more of the following priority areas:

- improving the nutrition of food and drink products to support populations at higher risk of malnutrition, muscle loss or both, for example those using GLP-1 drugs, older population groups and those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds
- supporting research and innovation to assess the impact of food processing and final food product composition on health, including but not restricted to assessing and improving the nutritive value retained by different processing methods, as well as evaluating the impact of food additives and emulsifiers on human physiology, to develop innovations and sustainable alternatives to support healthy sustainable diets
- improving environmental outcomes for novel innovations in the food and drink sector for example by considering a circular economy approach seeking to reduce waste and food losses

To address these themes, your project can focus on one or more of the following:

- biofortification to enhance the nutritional profile of food and drink products and improve nutrition of the UK population (including, but not limited to, fibres, folates, iron, vitamins, proteins, omega-3.)
- re-formulation and processing innovations to retain and or/improve the nutritional value of food products and provide suitable and sustainable alternatives to processing ingredients
- increasing the affordability and accessibility of nutritious food and drink products across the UK, reducing food inequalities and empowering a

productive workforce contributing to the UK economy

- considering consumer behaviour towards diet and health and drivers of food choices
- increasing resilience of the UK food system by creating conditions for a robust supply chain, enabling the UK population to access healthy sustainable food

Your project should consider:

- sustainability in the context of environmental challenges, such as climate change and resource scarcity, where your innovation has the potential to support the UK in establishing resilient supply chains for healthier foods, and reduce negative impacts on climate and nature
- how your innovation will contribute to economic growth within the food and drink sector, contributing to spreading growth and opportunities around the UK. Your innovation should also demonstrate potential for economic growth beyond the food and drink sector, for example by delivering healthier diets with the potential to reduce the burden on the NHS, and by having a net positive impact on growth by increasing healthy life expectancy and improving the workforce productivity

Project proposals should clearly articulate how your project will contribute to the vision set out in the Good Food Cycle, specifically the four pillars below:

- a healthier population with reduced diet related ill-health, especially for children and vulnerable people. Applicants are encouraged to consider how their innovation may support consumer behaviour change towards healthier diets
- a thriving UK food sector that feeds a healthier and more productive UK population and enables economic growth. Applicants are encouraged to consider economic growth within the food and drink sector and beyond
- improved environmental outcomes on land and sea , enhancing nature and ecosystem services while reducing pollution, waste and greenhouse gas emissions. Applicants are encouraged to consider the upstream supply chain requirements of their proposed innovation, as well as the potential environmental implications associated with its scale-up
- improved resilience of the supply chain, with reduced impact of shocks and chronic risks on access to healthy and sustainable food. Applicants are encouraged to consider the preparedness of the innovation for supply chain shocks, disruption and impacts of chronic risks

Duration

The duration of this award is 36 months.

Projects must start by 31 October 2026.

Funding available

The FEC of your project can be up to £800,000.

BBSRC and Defra will fund 80% of the FEC.

Projects are required to have at least one industry partner, with an industry contribution of 30% (cash or in-kind) of the 100% FEC. The 30% contribution may be made either by an individual project partner or by a consortium.

Eligible industry partners must:

- be a UK based business registered at Companies House
- have a manufacturing base for the relevant product in the UK or provide the relevant service in the UK
- intend to exploit the results in the UK

What we will not fund

We will not fund projects that:

- do not primarily address our remit
- do not clearly address the scope of the funding opportunity
- relate to market analysis
- relate to fundamental research which is not industrially relevant
- relate to standard testing and measurement services readily available commercially or via academic partners
- are not research grants, for example, where the primary focus is funding for networking, studentships, fellowships, equipment purchase, instrument access, infrastructure or training

Supporting skills and talent

We encourage you to follow the principles of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) and the [Technician Commitment](#).

Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&I)

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is committed in ensuring that effective international collaboration in research and innovation takes place with integrity and within strong ethical frameworks. Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&I) is a UKRI work programme designed to help protect all those working in our thriving and collaborative international sector by enabling partnerships to be as open as possible, and as secure as necessary. Our [TR&I Principles](#) set out UKRI's expectations of organisations funded by UKRI in relation to due diligence for international collaboration.

As such, applicants for UKRI funding may be asked to demonstrate how their proposed projects will comply with our approach and expectation towards TR&I,

identifying potential risks and the relevant controls you will put in place to help proportionately reduce these risks.

See [further guidance and information about TR&I](#), including where you can find additional support.

How to apply

Overview of the application process

This funding opportunity has two mandatory stages, notification of intent and full stage applications. You should read all the information before starting your application.

Mandatory notification of intent will remain open from 3 February 2026 9:00am until 3 March 2026 4:00pm UK time.

The full application stage will remain open from 17 March 2026 9:00am until 7 May 2026 4:00pm UK time. You can only submit a full application if you have submitted a notification of intent.

Stage one: notification of intent

The aim of the notification of intent is to ensure proposals are appropriately targeted to this funding opportunity and to provide an early indication of the level of demand, team composition, and research areas.

Project leads must register their interest in the funding opportunity by completing a short Notification of Intent on the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service. This requires a short vision and approach of the proposed work and a list of the anticipated 'core team' members.

Your notification of intent will be reviewed by BBSRC to ensure it fits our remit and the scope of this funding opportunity.

If your proposed research is not suitable for this funding opportunity you will be advised by email following the Notification of Intent stage, and we will suggest that you do not proceed in submitting a full application.

The application link for the notification of intent stage will be available on this funding opportunity page from 3 February 2026 9:00am to 3 March 2026 4:00pm UK time.

You will not be able to register your interest in applying to the funding opportunity after this time. If you do not submit a Notification of Intent, you will not be able to apply to the full stage for this funding opportunity.

Stage two: full application

This stage is open only to applicants who have completed a notification of intent at stage one.

The application link for the full applications stage will be available on this opportunity page from 17 March 2026 9:00am to 7 May 2026 4:00pm UK time. You will not be able to apply after this time.

We are running this funding opportunity on the new Funding Service so please ensure that your organisation is registered. You cannot apply on the Joint Electronic Submissions (Je-S) system.

The project lead is responsible for completing the application process on the Funding Service, but we expect all team members and project partners to contribute to the application.

Only the lead research organisation can submit an application to UKRI.

To apply

Select 'Start application' near the beginning of this Funding finder page.

1. Confirm you are the project lead.
2. Sign in or create a Funding Service account. To create an account, select your organisation, verify your email address, and set a password. If your organisation is not listed, email support@funding-service.ukri.org. Please allow at least 10 working days for your organisation to be added to the Funding Service. We strongly suggest that if you are asking UKRI to add your organisation to the Funding Service to enable you to apply to this opportunity, you also create an organisation Administration Account. This will be needed to allow the acceptance and management of any grant that might be offered to you.
3. Answer questions directly in the text boxes. You can save your answers and come back to complete them or work offline and return to copy and paste your answers. If we need you to upload a document, follow the upload instructions in the Funding Service. All questions and assessment criteria are listed in the How to apply section on this Funding finder page.
4. Allow enough time to check your application in 'read-only' view before sending to your research office.
5. Send the completed application to your research office for checking. They will return it to you if it needs editing.
6. Your research office will submit the completed and checked application to UKRI.

Where indicated, you can also demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant.

When including images, you must:

- provide a descriptive caption or legend for each image immediately underneath it in the text box (this must be outside the image and counts towards your word limit)
- insert each new image on a new line
- use files smaller than 5MB and in JPEG, JPG, JPE, JFI, JIF, JFIF, PNG, GIF, BMP or WEBP format

Images should only be used to convey important visual information that cannot easily be put into words. The following are not permitted, and your application will be rejected if you include:

- sentences or paragraphs of text
- tables
- excessive quantities of images

A few words are permitted where the image would lack clarity without the contextual words, such as a diagram, where text labels are required for an axis or graph column.

Your application will be rejected if images are provided without a descriptive legend in the text box or are used to replace text that could be input into the text box.

For more guidance on the Funding Service, see:

- [how applicants use the Funding Service](#)
- [how research offices use the Funding Service](#)
- [how reviewers use the Funding Service](#)

References

References should be included within the word count of the appropriate question section. You should use your discretion when including references and prioritise those most pertinent to the application.

Hyperlinks can be used in reference information. When including references, you should consider how your references will be viewed and used by the assessors, ensuring that:

- references are easily identifiable by the assessors
- references are formatted as appropriate to your research
- persistent identifiers are used where possible

General use of hyperlinks

Applications should be self-contained. You should only use hyperlinks to link directly to reference information. You must not include links to web resources to

extend your application. Assessors are not required to access links to conduct assessment or recommend a funding decision.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI)

Use of generative AI tools to prepare funding applications is permitted, however, caution should be applied.

For more information see our [policy on the use of generative AI in application and assessment](#).

Deadline

BBSRC must receive your Notification of Intent by 3 March 2026 at 4:00pm UK time.

You will not be able to apply after this time.

Make sure you are aware of and follow any internal institutional deadlines.

Following the submission of your application to this funding opportunity, your application cannot be changed, and submitted applications will not be amended. If your application does not follow the guidance, it may be rejected.

Personal data

Processing personal data

BBSRC, as part of UKRI, will need to collect some personal information to manage your Funding Service account and the registration of your funding applications.

We will handle personal data in line with UK data protection legislation and manage it securely. For more information, including how to exercise your rights, read our [privacy notice](#).

BBSRC as part of UKRI, will need to share the application and any personal information that it contains with Defra so that they can participate in the assessment process. See [more information on how Defra uses personal information](#).

Sensitive information

If you or a core team member need to tell us something you wish to remain confidential, email dietandhealth@bbsrc.ukri.org

Include in the subject line: [the funding opportunity title; sensitive information; your Funding Service application number].

Typical examples of confidential information include:

- individual is unavailable until a certain date (for example due to parental leave)
- declaration of interest
- additional information about eligibility to apply that would not be appropriately shared in the 'Applicant and team capability' section
- conflict of interest for UKRI to consider in reviewer or panel participant selection
- the application is an invited resubmission

For information about how UKRI handles personal data, read [UKRI's privacy notice](#).

Institutional Matched Funding

There is no requirement for matched funding from the institutions hosting the project lead, project co-leads or other staff employed on the application, beyond the standard 20% FEC. Expert reviewers and panels assessing UKRI funding applications must not consider levels of institutional matched funding as a factor on which to base recommendations. Direct and in-kind contributions from third party project partners are encouraged.

This policy does not remove the need for support from host organisations who must provide the necessary research environment and infrastructure for award-specific activities funded by UKRI. For example, research facilities, training and development of staff.

Publication of outcomes

If your application is successful, we will publish some personal information on the [UKRI Gateway to Research](#).

Summary

Word limit: 550

In plain English, provide a summary we can use to identify the most suitable experts to assess your application.

We usually make this summary publicly available on external-facing websites, therefore do not include any confidential or sensitive information. Make it suitable for a variety of readers, for example:

- opinion-formers
- policymakers
- the public
- the wider research community

Guidance for writing a summary

Clearly describe your proposed work in terms of:

- context
- the challenge the project addresses
- how your project will contribute to the vision set out in the Good Food Cycle
- aims and objectives
- potential applications and benefits
- The collaborative nature of your project
- The industry involvement in the delivery of your project

Core team

List the key members of your team and assign them roles from the following:

- project lead (PL)
- project co-lead (UK) (PcL)
- specialist
- grant manager
- professional enabling staff
- research and innovation associate
- technician
- researcher co-lead (RcL)

Only list one individual as project lead.

This programme will fund academic-industry collaborative R&D partnerships, undertaking industrially relevant research and innovation in bioscience and biotechnology (within BBSRC's remit) that has clear benefits to the businesses involved, and your application must include at least one industry partner in the project partner section to be eligible.

UKRI has introduced a new addition to the 'Specialist' role type. Public contributors such as people with lived experience can now be added to an application.

Find out more about [UKRI's core team roles in funding applications](#).

Application questions

Vision

Word limit: 300

What are you hoping to achieve with your proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Explain how your proposed work:

- is of excellent quality and importance within or beyond the field(s) or area(s)
- has the potential to advance current understanding, or generate new knowledge, thinking or discovery within or beyond the field or area
- is timely given current trends, context, and needs, in particular how will your project contribute to the vision set out in the Good Food Cycle
- impacts world-leading research, society, the economy, or the environment

References may be included within this section.

You may demonstrate elements of your responses in visual form if relevant. Further details are provided in the Funding Service.

Approach

Word limit: 300

How are you going to deliver your proposed work?

What the assessors are looking for in your response

Explain how you have designed your approach so that it:

- is effective and appropriate to achieve your objectives
- is feasible, and comprehensively identifies any risks to delivery and how they will be managed
- uses a clearly written and transparent methodology (if applicable)
- summarises any previous work and describes how this will be built upon and progressed (if applicable)
- will maximise translation of outputs into outcomes and impacts which are commercially relevant
- describes how your, and if applicable your team's, research environment (in terms of the place and relevance to the project) will contribute to the success of the work

References may be included within this section.

Project partners

Word limit: 300

Add details about any project partners' contributions.

A project partner is a collaborating organisation who will have an integral role in the proposed research. This may include direct contributions for example cash, donated equipment and resources, or staff seconded to the project, or indirect and in-kind contributions for example use of project partner's equipment, datasets, or facilities. Project partners may be in industry, academia, third

sector or government organisations in the UK or overseas, including partners based in the EU.

This programme will fund academic-industry collaborative R&D partnerships, undertaking industrially relevant research and innovation in bioscience and biotechnology (within BBSRC's remit) that has clear benefits to the businesses involved, and your application must include at least one industry partner to be eligible.

Add the following project partner details:

- the organisation name and address (searchable via a drop-down list or enter the organisation's details manually, as applicable)
- the project partner contact name and email address
- the type of expected contribution (cash, in-kind or both, if known at the NOI stage). Please note that values for contribution are not required at the NOI stage

If a detail is entered incorrectly and you have saved the entry, remove the specific project partner record and re-add it with the correct information.

For audit purposes, UKRI requires formal collaboration agreements to be put in place if an award is made.

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

We will assess your application using the following process.

Notifications of Intent will be reviewed internally by BBSRC. Portfolio managers will examine the fit of the proposal to BBSRC remit and whether the work addresses the scope of the funding opportunity.

You will receive advice on whether we recommend you submitting a full stage application within 10 working days of the closing date.

You can make changes to the team and the project objectives prior to submission to the full stage. If substantive changes are made that may affect eligibility, scope or remit of the application, we recommend you contact us before submitting your full application.

Principles of assessment

We support the [San Francisco declaration on research assessment](#) and recognise the relationship between research assessment and research

integrity.

Find out about the [UKRI principles of assessment and decision making](#).

Using generative artificial intelligence (AI) in expert review

Reviewers and panellists are not permitted to use generative AI tools to develop their assessment, including to correct language, spelling, grammar and formatting. Using these tools can potentially compromise the confidentiality of the ideas that applicants have entrusted to UKRI to safeguard.

For more detail see our [policy on the use of generative AI](#).

Sharing data with co-funders

BBSRC as part of UKRI, will need to share the application and any personal information that it contains with Defra so that they can participate in the assessment process. See more [information on how Defra uses personal information](#).

We reserve the right to modify the assessment process as needed.

Assessment areas

The assessment areas we will use are:

- Vision
- Approach
- Project partners

Find details of assessment questions and criteria under the 'Application questions' heading in the 'How to apply' section.

Contact details

Get help with your application

If you have a question and the answers aren't provided on this page

The helpdesk is committed to helping users of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service as effectively and as quickly as possible. In order to manage cases at peak volume times, the helpdesk will triage and prioritise those queries with an imminent opportunity deadline or a technical issue. Enquiries raised where information is available on the Funding finder opportunity page and should be understood early in the application process (for

example, regarding eligibility, content or remit of a funding opportunity) will not constitute a priority case and will be addressed as soon as possible.

Contact details

For help and advice on costings and writing your application please contact your research office in the first instance, allowing sufficient time for your organisation's submission process.

For questions related to this specific funding opportunity please contact dietandhealth@bbsrc.ukri.org

Any queries regarding the system or the submission of applications through the Funding Service should be directed to the helpdesk.

Email: support@funding-service.ukri.org

Phone: 01793 547490

Our phone lines are open:

- Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 5:00pm
- Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm

To help us process queries more efficiently, we request that users highlight the council and opportunity name in the subject title of their email query, include the application reference number, and refrain from contacting more than one mailbox at a time.

For further information on submitting an application read [How applicants use the Funding Service](#).

Additional info

Background

This competition is aligned to the previous investment in the Diet & Health Open Innovation Research Club programme (OIRC). Membership is free and you can join on the individual hub websites which can be found on [About the Diet & Health OIRC](#).

The government has set out a [new food strategy](#) aiming to deliver a healthier, more affordable, sustainable and resilient 21st century UK food system that grows the economy, feeds the nation, nourishes people, and protects the environment and climate, now and in the future.

To support the 'Good Food Cycle', your project will focus on developments to create novel food and drink products or innovations that can deliver healthy,

sustainable, and resilient diets supporting a productive UK population and a thriving food and drink sector. Your project should focus on collaborative research and academics must have at least one Industry partner included on the project, financial contributions (cash or in-kind) from the industry partner will be required.

Research and innovation impact

Impact can be defined as the long-term intended or unintended effect research and innovation has on society, economy and the environment; to individuals, organisations, and the wider global population.

Webinar for potential applicants

We will hold a webinar on 12 February 2026 (11:00am to midday UK time). This will provide more information about the funding opportunity and a chance to ask questions.

[Register for the webinar.](#)

Research disruption due to COVID-19

We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major interruptions and disruptions across our communities. We are committed to ensuring that individual applicants and their wider team, including partners and networks, are not penalised for any disruption to their career, such as:

- breaks and delays
- disruptive working patterns and conditions
- the loss of ongoing work
- role changes that may have been caused by the pandemic

Reviewers and panel members will be advised to consider the unequal impacts that COVID-19 related disruption might have had on the capability to deliver and career development of those individuals included in the application. They will be asked to consider the capability of the applicant and their wider team to deliver the research they are proposing.

Where disruptions have occurred, you can highlight this within your application if you wish, but there is no requirement to detail the specific circumstances that caused the disruption.

Supporting documents

[Equality Impact Assessment \(PDF, 252KB\)](#)

Updates

29 January 2026

Webinar details added to the 'Additional info' section.

Timeline

○ **3 February 2026 9:00am**

Notification of Intent stage opening date

○ **12 February 2026 11:00am**

Webinar

○ **3 March 2026 4:00pm**

Notification of Intent stage closing date

○ **17 March 2026 9:00am**

Full stage opening date

○ **7 May 2026 4:00pm**

Full stage closing date

○ **June 2026**

Full stage panel meeting

○ **October 2026**

Projects start from

○ **November 2029**

Projects must end by

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/diet-and-health-collaborative-research-and-development-grants>