

# **Guidelines for Applicants: BBSRC Animal Welfare Seeding Awards**

## **Introduction**

This guidelines document outlines the essential details regarding the BBSRC Animal Welfare Seeding Awards, which the Animal Welfare Research Network (AWRN) has been allocated to distribute. The document provides information on the types of activities eligible for funding, what specific items can be funded, the payment procedures, requirements for project outcomes and reporting, and the application process. It is important to read the entire document before deciding whether to apply for funding.

## **1. Types of Activities to Be Funded**

The BBSRC Animal Welfare Seeding Awards are designed to support a variety of collaborative and innovative activities that advance research in animal welfare. There are three primary categories of funding available.

### **- Business Interaction Vouchers (BIVs) (up to £50,000 each)**

BIVs aim to foster collaboration between academia and industry, facilitating partnerships that can lead to impactful research. These projects must include an industry partner as part of the application. The funding is intended to support initiatives such as proof of concept, feasibility studies, and translational research, which aim to reduce risks associated with further investment. By encouraging these collaborations, the AWRN hopes to support future funding applications and expand the research base in animal welfare.

### **- Discipline Hopping Projects (up to £20,000 each)**

Discipline Hopping Projects will enable researchers to participate in secondments, which may last for a maximum of three months or consist of a series of shorter visits. This program is particularly beneficial for early-career researchers (ECRs) looking to broaden their expertise. The expectation is that these secondments will involve collaborations with industry partners and will provide animal welfare researchers with the necessary skills and experience to address interdisciplinary research questions, particularly those that leverage technology such as artificial intelligence, information and communication technology, and robotics.

### **- Networking and Engagement Events (up to £8000 each)**

These targeted events are designed to foster collaboration and stimulate innovative ideas among researchers and industry professionals. Applicants can propose workshops that facilitate knowledge exchange or sandpit events where participants can pitch their research ideas and collaborate on developing them into robust proposals. The aim is to create an environment that encourages interdisciplinary interactions and the formation of new partnerships. Proposals generated during these sandpits may be considered for Business Interaction Voucher (BIV) funding. Examples of networking topics might include advancing technology for animal welfare solutions and exploring collaborative research opportunities in biosciences and animal welfare.

## **2. What Items Can Be Funded?**

The awards will cover **100% of full Economic Costs (fEC)** for direct costs only. Eligible expenses include travel and subsistence for project-related activities, consumables required for the execution of projects, costs related to organizing meetings and events, and salaries of staff directly employed on funded projects. Directly allocated staffing costs, such as the Principal Investigator (PI) staff time specifically linked to the funded project, are also eligible for funding.

However, certain costs are not eligible for funding, including generic (non-specific) translation activities or infrastructure, patent filing or similar costs associated with registering intellectual property rights, and non-specific public engagement activities or science communication, unless they are designed to have a specific impact on a targeted audience. Equipment costs in excess of £10,000 are not fundable. Funding for generic staff positions that are not directly tied to the project, such as a general "Impact Officer," will also be ineligible. Additionally, please note that **overheads or other indirect costs cannot be claimed.**

### **3. Who is eligible to apply?**

To apply as the main PI on a project, you must work for an organisation that is [eligible for UKRI funding](#) in addition you must meet [UKRI eligibility criteria](#). We encourage ECR's to apply for projects, however they will need an eligible PI to be on the application with them. You may be classed as an ECR if you do not yet have a permanent role, or are less than 2 years full-time (or equivalent duration of part-time work, excluding career breaks) into your first permanent position (e.g. lecturer).

### **4. Payment Procedure**

Projects may begin utilizing funds from **November 2024**, all spend must be completed by the end of August 2025 and all activities must be completed by end of **September 2025**. However, it is essential that at least 50% of the overall funding pot is spent by **February 2025**. As a result, priority will be given to applications that can demonstrate the capacity to utilize a significant portion, **ideally the full budget**, by this milestone. All funds must represent actual incurred expenses within the spending period. Please note that funds cannot be allocated for activities outside the designated period or for any other purposes.

Once an award letter has been received, successful institutions will need to invoice Queen's University Belfast. Payments will be made from QUB to the successful institutions in advance of February 2025. Successful PI's will be expected to collate a full transaction list for their project and this must meet the deadlines specified in their proposal, i.e. spend which was indicated to take place before February 2025 must do so. The full transaction list for each project must be submitted to QUB by the end of August 2025 at the latest and any underspend on the project must be refunded at that time. A copy of all invoices and receipts should be collated and retained for audit purposes.

**The deadline for spend is fixed and is non-negotiable, no extensions can be made under any circumstance. BBSRC and thus QUB retain the right to claim back any funds which do not comply with the award terms and conditions.**

### **5. Project outcomes and reporting**

A list of specific project outcomes, including how achievement of each outcome will be monitored and reported is a requirement of all applications and will be taken into account in evaluating proposals. At the end of a project, clear reporting on each of these outcomes, and whether or not they were achieved, must be provided in order to receive funding that has been claimed.

Each awardee will also be required to produce a brief report summarising the activities and outputs from their project and future plans to build on the work. Case studies will be published on the AWRN website, blog and twitter. Notification of subsequent development of projects, funding successes etc. will be requested by AWRN to keep track of the longer-term outcomes of the Seeding Award.

## 6. Application Process

Applications for projects must be submitted by **Friday November 15, 2024**. The application form must be completed fully, providing comprehensive details regarding the budget, activities, and anticipated impacts.

Application forms will be available as an MS Form, allowing for easy access and submission. You can find the application forms here:

- **Business Interaction Vouchers:** [<https://forms.office.com/e/7MR7adzXcQ>]
- **Discipline Hopping Projects:** [<https://forms.office.com/e/R64CC88uvZ>]
- **Networking and Engagement Events:** [<https://forms.office.com/e/TxmTjQT3Uf>]

## 7. Assessment Criteria

All submissions will be reviewed by a funding panel comprised of AWRN Coordinating Group members, industry representatives and Queens University Belfast Business Alliance staff. They will be assessed on the following criteria:

**Feasibility** (are the project plans achievable within the time limit and budget described?)

**Scientific Merit** (quality of concept and project overview. Is there a strong scientific background to the project, do they have clear aims and objectives?)

**Relevance to Seeding Award Objectives** (does the proposal meet the aims of the Seeding Awards, see Appendix)

**Strategic Relevance to AWRN** (does the proposal meet the aims of the AWRN e.g. promoting animal welfare research, engaging with industry and other stakeholders, enhancing the development and training of researchers and supporting early career researchers?)

**Benefits to Animal Welfare** (will this project improve animal welfare and if so how much and for how many animals)

**Value for Money** (are the costs quoted appropriate, does it offer good value for money?)

**Outputs** (quality of the outputs being proposed, could they easily be reported on and monitored and will they have impact?)

**Engagement with Open Science** (e.g. will the data produced and other outputs be made freely available at the end of the project)

The scores will be used to guide discussions and help the panel to select the most appropriate grants to fund. The timing of the spend will also be taken account of in the assessment period since 50% of the funding must be spent by the end of February 2025.

Responses will be given as soon as possible to allow for timely project spend after that date.

## **Appendix: General Aims and Objectives for the Seeding Awards as stipulated by BBSRC**

The overall aim of the Seeding Award is to enhance AWRN's engagement with industry and stakeholders, ultimately leading to the translation of research outputs into impact on animal welfare. Specific objectives include: to enable the development of sustained connections and collaborations between AWRN researchers, industry and other stakeholders, including by facilitating mobility of people between sectors; to enhance understanding of the opportunities and challenges experienced by both research and industry sectors; to provide funding to support short-term impact projects aimed at translating research outputs into products, services, tools and technologies to improve animal welfare.

***BBSRC has specifically stated that funding for the Animal Welfare Seeding Awards must align with one or more of the following objectives of knowledge exchange:***

- Enable innovation-focused research activities at leading UK universities with a strategic interest in animal science, ICT, AI and robotics to improve animal welfare.
- Strengthen collaboration between the UK's world-class bioscience research base and businesses engaged in animal welfare and digital technologies.
- Enable activities to de-risk and test potential solutions for current challenges in using technologies for animal welfare monitoring and management, progressing the research to a point where companies can justify further investments.
- Prepare the bioscience research base for further investment in a thematic area of strategic importance to the UK and to relevant public funders including BBSRC.

Seeding award projects are expected to relate to **at least one of the challenge areas** highlighted below:

- Data and device heterogeneity
- Privacy and edge processing
- Welfare metrics
- User-centred design
- Validation of technology
- Interoperability and data integration

This award will support the UK research base to engage in translational research, knowledge exchange and innovation activities, bringing together businesses and third sector organisations with academic researchers to support the development of animal welfare technologies of direct relevance to industry, policy makers, end users, and other key stakeholders. To this end, **all seeding award projects will be required to have at least one project partner from business**, and welcome project partners from third-sector organisations. Project partner financial contribution (either cash or in-kind) is encouraged.

**Note:** This requirement does not strictly apply to Networking and Engagement Events, which can be organized without a business partner. While these events should facilitate collaboration and dialogue among researchers, regulators, third-sector organizations, and end users, the inclusion of a business partner is not necessary.

***Funding from the Seeding Awards should also align with the aims and objectives of the Animal Welfare Research Network:***

- To further develop a cohesive animal welfare research community, both within the UK and abroad, that is well connected and can form a foundation for collaborative research, including across borders
- To facilitate research training and mentoring opportunities for early career animal welfare researchers (e.g. researcher exchanges), and to otherwise support development of the next generation of research leaders
- To maintain a programme of annual meetings and workshops, member-led workshops, and associated events that bring together animal welfare researchers with stakeholders, including industry bodies, charities, government and funders, to generate new collaborations and to advance and strengthen animal welfare research

***Activities outside the scope of the Seeding Awards:***

- Generic (non-specific) translation activities or infrastructure
- Patent filing or similar costs associated directly to registering intellectual property rights
- Non-specific public engagement activities and science communication, however specific activities designed to have specific impact upon a specific public may be acceptable