

## **Business Interaction Voucher Guidance**

### **1. What are BBSRC Business Interaction Vouchers?**

Business Interaction Vouchers (BIVs) are to encourage and support collaborations between academics and industrialists within the remit of the [INFORM Hub](#). The INFORM Hub is one of six Hubs funded by BBSRC in 2022 as part of the Open Innovation Research Club ([OIRC](#)) on diet and health.

The vouchers will help resource small, confidence-building activities between an academic partner and industry-based partner(s) that are likely to:

1. Instigate an interaction.
2. Test the potential for a substantive interaction.
3. Lead on to new research technology transfer projects.

### **2. How much funding is available?**

INFORM Hub will provide at least ten awards to the maximum 100% FEC value of £50,000 throughout the Hub's lifetime.

Funding is paid to the academic partner tackling a problem of industrial relevance. Additional industry financial contribution to the Project (cash or in-kind) is encouraged for BIV applications but is not mandatory.

### **3. Who is eligible to apply for the funding?**

Funding is available to:

1. Applicants who are [eligible to receive BBSRC funding](#)
2. Academics based at a UK institution [eligible to receive BBSRC funding](#) when carrying out the Project

Industrial partners should ensure they are not violating current Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), including the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), as BIVs represent small subsidy amounts. Guidance on state subsidy rules, value thresholds, and recording can be found [here](#).

BIVs should focus attention on UK-based partners where there is a benefit to the UK research base and the UK economy. In exceptional circumstances, where there is not a UK company to exploit the research, BIVs may be awarded to work with an overseas partner company where the Project provides a clear justification for working with an overseas partner and will lead to building international collaborations and will be taken forward leading to inward investment and benefit the UK.

#### 4. What activities will the funding support?

BIVs will support collaborative research projects of industrial relevance for a duration of **up to 6-months**.

New collaborations will be prioritised as well as existing collaborations when it will aid in increasing the technology readiness level (TRL). The work must be relevant to [the focus of INFORM Hub](#).

Project costs: The INFORM Hub primarily aims to support research activities (Directly Incurred costs) and encourages Directly Allocated to be kept to a minimum and capped at 20% of total project costs.

The following costs are not eligible for funding:

- indirect or estate costs at the research organisation
- any costs relating to intellectual property protection, including but not limited to registering, maintaining, or supporting patents or property rights
- equipment with a value of £10,000 or more
- Undergraduate or Postgraduate activities, training, or core PhD training, including tuition or bench fees.

#### 5. What is the application process?

The applicant should complete an online application form on the [INFORM Hub](#) website.

Briefly, the application form asks for the following details:

1. Applicant details (including details about the industry partner company)
2. Project details (including relevance to INFORM, the value of the Project to the Industry partner, and the benefits of a longer-term partnership.)
3. Project Financial details (including completion of financial overview template)
4. A letter of support from the applicant University
5. A letter of support from the industry partner(s), if applicable

All applications will be checked for completeness and acknowledged within five working days.

#### 6. What is the review process?

A Panel of four INFORM Hub Steering Committee (SC) members will review and evaluate each application. Panels will comprise one INFORM Hub Management Team member, one from Industry and two from Academia.

Panel Evaluation Reports will be reviewed by the Hub Management Committee, which will make the final proposal recommendations to BBSRC for funding approval.

Criteria for assessment will

include:

1. Quality of science
2. Relevance of application to the [remit of the INFORM Hub](#)
3. Relevance to the funding call (where a specific theme exists)
4. Compelling industrial relevance (Responsible Research and Innovation, RRI)
5. Potential for building future collaborations and expansions to the Project
6. Value for money

## 7. How and when will the award be paid?

The successful academic, co-applicant(s) and industrial partner(s) will **join the INFORM Hub** ([apply for Hub Membership](#)). They will agree on a start date and need a signed agreement before the Project commences.

IP and collaboration agreements will be drawn up by the respective partnering organisations (Academia and Industry), and the Hub Manager will require evidence that these are in place before releasing funds.

The University of Reading Contract teams will draft and issue a formal offer letter (including award 'Terms and Conditions and Financial Arrangements') will be issued to the successful applicant. Applicants must sign and return the formal offer letter to the INFORM Hub Manager before any work commences on the Project.

The Award Holder shall invoice the University of Reading (UoR) quarterly in arrears based on actual expenditure against specified budget headings. UoR shall pay the awardee within thirty (30) days of a valid invoice, subject always to receipt of funds and subject to the satisfactory completion by the awardee of any due diligence checks as may be reasonably required by the Awarding Institution or BBSRC.

The final invoice should be sent to Reading within one (1) month of the end of the Project with the addition of a cost statement (a template will be provided). The cost statement should include the breakdown of the indexed fEC figures and the actual sums claimed.

The awardee should submit a final expenditure claim within **one month of the Project ending** as part of the Project Completion Report (a template will be provided).

## 8. What reporting will be required?

The awardee should submit a Project Completion Report (authorised by the industrial partner for use in the public domain), including a final expenditure statement (authorised by the academic organisation), within **one month of the project ending**. All reporting documentation should be sent to the INFORM Hub Manager ([INFORMHub@reading.ac.uk](mailto:INFORMHub@reading.ac.uk)).

Briefly, the Project Completion report includes:

1. Summary of project outcomes
2. List of outputs, e.g., papers, patents, new products or processes, prizes, collaborations
3. Testimonial(s) ideally from the industrial partner(s)
4. Image(s) (with legend(s)) related to the science carried out
5. Technology Readiness Level (TRL) for research pre- and post-funding (see [BBSRC definition of TRLs](#))
6. Future plans
7. Financial expenditure statement and evidence (a template will be provided).

The report will be used to create a case study available in the public domain (e.g., INFORM Hub website and BBSRC publications).

The awardee should acknowledge the support of the BBSRC award on papers and other forms of media communications, including press releases, conferences and media appearances.

The awardee will act as an ambassador for the science area represented by the INFORM Hub and the wider UK Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy sector by attending and contributing to events within relevant areas at the request of BBSRC.

A full audit trail must be in place for all incurred expenditures on the Project. BBSRC will not expect to see this evidence, but it should be in place and can be checked if the Research Organisation is subject to a funding assurance visit.

## **9. What data protection and data sharing policies are in place?**

Please read the INFORM Hub [Privacy Notice](#) before completing an application form.

Contact the Network Manager: [INFORMHub@reading.ac.uk](mailto:INFORMHub@reading.ac.uk) if you have any questions.

Copies of proposals will be made available to the INFORM Hub Management Committee in confidence.

The administrative staff of the University of Reading will use the information provided in the application for processing the proposal, the award of any consequential funding, and the payment, maintenance and review of the BIVs.

To meet BBSRC obligations for public accountability and dissemination of information, details of grants (including successful BIV awards) may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publicly available databases and in reports, documents and mailing lists. BBSRC will use this information for research-related activities, including but not limited to the transfer of funds, statistical analysis in relation to the evaluation of BBSRC OIRC Hubs, and study of trends and policy and strategy studies.

## 10. Who do I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions regarding the application process, please get in touch with Fiona Lee, the Hub Manager:

[f.l.lee@reading.ac.uk](mailto:f.l.lee@reading.ac.uk) or [INFORMHub@Reading.ac.uk](mailto:INFORMHub@Reading.ac.uk)