

CROSSING BIOLOGICAL MEMBRANES NETWORK OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR PROOF OF CONCEPT FUNDS

Contents

1. Context	2
2. Funding eligibility	2
2.1 Applicants	2
2.2 Activities funding will support	2
3. Targeted Funding	2
4. Funding Calls	2
5. Route 1: Application Process	2
5.1 Submission of application and further information	3
5.2 Evaluation process	3
6. Route 2: Application Process	3
6.1 Submission of application and further information	4
6.2 Evaluation process	4
7. Payment of awards	4
8. Monitoring and reporting	5
9. Supporting Proof-of-Concept projects towards further funding	5
10. Data protection regulations	5
11. Conflict of interest guidance	5
12. Summary of complete process	6

1. Context

A major activity for the network will be to encourage the formation of, and then support, selected new multi-disciplinary teams to develop innovative solutions to overcome transport-related Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy (IBBE) bottlenecks. A key component of this aspect of the network is the provision of Proof-of-Concept funding to allow consortia to generate the preliminary information required to establish the feasibility of their proposed approaches, with the target of generating competitive bids to IB Catalyst and other relevant funding calls. The Proof of Concept (PoC) fund represents the largest part of the Crossing Biological Membranes (CBMNet) Network budget.

It is essential that there are robust and transparent mechanisms for the allocation of these funds, monitoring progress and reporting outcomes. All applications will be considered following the code of conduct that applies to those assessing/reviewing BBSRC applications in terms of confidentiality, fairness and managing conflicts of interest.

2. Funding eligibility

2.1 Applicants

Funding is available for current CBMNet members who are eligible to receive BBSRC funding (<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Guidelines/grants-guide.pdf> - section 3 of this document). In certain cases funding will be made available to other CBMNet members (e.g. SMEs or Industry) if the project has an essential need for their involvement. Up to 20% of PoC project value can be subcontracted to industry to buy a service or to an SME to facilitate involvement.

2.2 Activities funding will support

Funds will support a range of activities from research or data production through to theoretic, economic, environmental or social studies. The scope will be that of the CBMNet Network themes, as described on the CBMNet Website.

3. Targeted funding

The funding calls may have targeted key technology challenges facing industry, these will be identified through CBMNet's workshops, however only those challenges in which the UK's academic and industrial base are well-equipped to tackle these areas will be funded. In addition to any targeted call, there will also be an open call for any area covered by the CBMNet theme.

4. Funding calls

All funding calls will be well-advertised using the CBMNet's website, twitter and email, as well as other outlets to ensure wide coverage of the call.

There are two routes for Proof-of-concept applications:

Route 1: Call announced on CBMNet website and other social media. Application via completed application form.

Route 2: Proof of concept funding will be available at 'Creative Events', which will be open to any interested participants (who are CBMNet members) and run by a professional facilitator overseen by an independent expert panel (Which will include some members of the CBMNet Team and Management Board). Criteria for assessment will be set out before the event and will be similar in scope to those for Route 1 funding whilst recognizing that the aim of these 'sand-pit' style events should generate some unexpected innovative project proposals that emerge from the interactions between network members at the event. These events will be advertised on CBMNet website and other social media.

A summary of the complete processes can be seen at the end of this document.

5. Route 1 Funding

The call is announced and the applicant(s) should submit a pdf file of the online word application document (See CBMNet website for further details).

Funding over £5,000 will be awarded at least twice a year (to coincide with Management Board (MB) meetings); once in the first year of Network operations, applications will need to be submitted 6-8 weeks prior to the MB meeting. Such deadlines will be clearly advertised within the funding call text.

5.1 Submission of application and further information

Applications are to be submitted by e-mail to jen.evans@shef.ac.uk; all applications will usually be acknowledged within three working days. All enquiries should also be directed to jen.evans@shef.ac.uk. All information submitted will be held in strictest confidence; the MB will all sign a Management Board Agreement which will require their confidentiality.

5.2 Evaluation process

The Network Manager will check the application meets the criteria and has the required information. If there are any problems the Network Manager will contact the applicant to request further information, however if this cannot be easily remedied (within three working days) then the application will be returned and will have to be resubmitted to the next round.

The Network Manager will then process the application recording specific information: date received, further information requested, whether the application requires MB review, whether external review is required, which MB members have been allocated to review and introduce the application at the MB meeting and a conflict of interest register.

If the application is for < £5k and straightforward, The CBMNet Team (Professor Green, Dr Thomas and Dr Evans) may award the funds without review and will report such proposed funding to the MB Chair prior to its final agreement. The MB will receive a summary of all funds awarded in this way at the next meeting. In the case of conflict of interest the CBMNet Team will engage the MB Chair or alternative representative from the MB to evaluate the application.

If the application is for > £5k it will be reviewed by the MB at a set meeting, where minutes will be taken. Any MB member who has a conflict of interest (or has a reason for not reviewing the application such as involving an industrial competitor) must recuse themselves from the discussion of that particular application. Prior to the meeting, MB members will have around two weeks to review the applications, at the end of this time a score must be submitted to the Network Manager, to be discussed at the meeting.

Quorum for the MB for this activity will be MB Chair plus at least 2. MB members will be given good notice of all funding review meetings but in cases where attendance is difficult, the MB Chair may accept written points for discussion or that member may be allowed to join the discussion by telephone or video conference. MB members who contribute to meetings remotely will be counted in the quorum numbers. If the quorum number cannot be reached, the Network Manager will discuss with the BBSRC to attempt to find an acceptable alternative to ensure there is no delay in proof of concept awards.

Independent external review of proposals will be sought, particularly if projects are over £50,000, or if the area of application is not within the expertise of the Board. External reviewers will be asked to evaluate the proposal and invited to submit a detailed commentary. The commentaries will be made available to all MB members and review will proceed as described above. In the case of conflict of interest, the MB member will not receive the written reviews.

Proposals will ranked by the following criteria:

Essential	Other criteria	% expected contribution to total score
Match to network remit*		n/a
	Realistic goals within the constraints of Proof-of-Concept funding	20
	Innovative and Multi-disciplinary science with strategic value in enhancing research activity	35
	Industrial support	25
	Supporting collaboration	10
	Routes to follow-on funding and outcomes	10

*Proposals outside the network remit will be rejected

For each criterion, proposals should score 60% of total marks allocated to be considered for funding. The MB will have a good degree of flexibility in the decisions made so that, at the MB's discretion, an application could for example, be part funded.

The ranked list will be reviewed and approved by the CBMNet team at the meeting. Minutes and actions from the meeting will be sent to the panel members for approval. Once the minutes and recommendations have been approved and the Network Manager has updated the BBSRC NIBB Extranet with award details, the Network Manager will inform successful and unsuccessful applicants by email. Feedback will be available to applicants.

6. Route 2 Funding

Proof of concept funding will be available at 'Creative Events', which will be open to any interested participants (who are CBMNet members) and run by a professional facilitator overseen by an independent expert panel. These events will be advertised on CBMNet website and other social media.

Criteria for assessment will be set out before the event and will be similar in scope to those for Route 1 funding whilst recognizing that the aim of these 'sand-pit' style events should generate some unexpected innovative project proposals that emerge from the interactions between network members at the event.

6.1 Submission of application and further information

All CBMNet Members can apply to attend the 'creative events via the CBMNet website. Projects for Proof-of-Concept support will be selected at the event either by community consensus or by an independent panel assessment. The selected projects will be asked to submit a formal application for funding for consideration by the MB, who will consult external reviewers if necessary.

6.2 Evaluation process

The selected projects will be asked to submit a formal application for funding for consideration by the MB, who will consult external reviewers if necessary. This is as per section 5.2 above. When a decision has been taken, the Network Manager will inform successful and unsuccessful applicants by email. General feedback will be made available to applicants.

7. Payment of awards

Consortia of applicants will need to have signed agreements in place prior to funded projects commencing; the Network Manager will check this is the case. The University of Sheffield will provide a simple contract for the awardee, assigning all rights to the awardee's University or consortium but requiring funds to be spent as detailed on the application and reports on progress to be sent to the Network.

Funds will be transferred at 80% FEC from the BBSRC to The University of Sheffield in arrears. The University will then transfer funds to the awardee. For grants over £25,000 the University of Sheffield will retain 10% of the total award payable until the final report is received.

8. Monitoring, reporting and finances

Following the award, progress of supported projects will be monitored through compulsory presentation of findings (updating on progress towards milestones and deliverables to ensure the project is on track) at the network meetings that occur during the funding period.

At the end of award, a final report on results against objectives will be submitted to the Network Manager. This report will detail the major findings and how these will be exploited in seeking further funding and team building. Also, where possible, a case-study template will be started and will be updated throughout the Network's lifetime. Finally, six months after the end of the funding period, a report of how the work undertaken has led to funding bids and other outcomes will be required.

Please see the CBMNet website for further details about reporting in the Proof of concept reporting guidelines.

Financial expenditure will be reported by the grantee in all reports; however CBMNet will not require receipts to be submitted although these must be kept as they may be required for possible future audits. The grantee's host institution will follow their standard procedures for financial accounts. Any underspend will be returned to CBMNet and will be allocated to future PoC funding rounds.

All reports will be checked by the Network Manager. The CBMNet team will approve interim and final reports and these will be signed off by the Network Manager. In the case of conflict of interest, the MB Chair or senior nominee will review and sign off such reports.

9. Supporting Proof-of-Concept projects towards further funding

One major driver for the Proof-of-Concept funding model is to stimulate the formation of new inter-disciplinary teams that can successfully compete in major funding opportunities. The Network Manager will provide information on possible funding calls as they arise and will offer support to members by assisting in collating information required for applications arising from Proof-of-Concept funding.

10. Data protection regulations

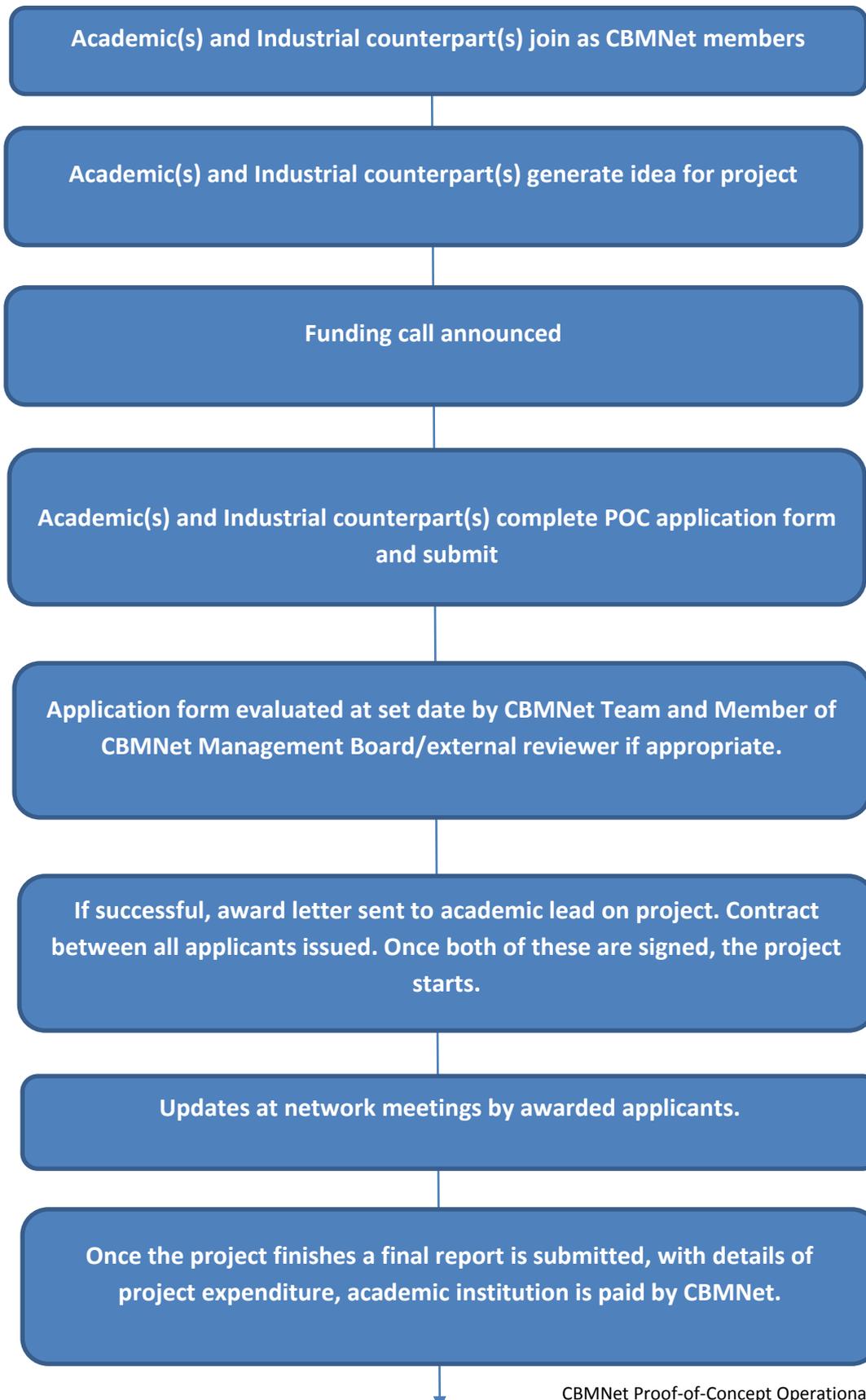
Copies of proposals will be made available to the CBMNet evaluators (members of the CBMNet team, MB and external reviewers where applicable), who will use information provided in the application for processing the proposal, the award of any consequential grant, and for the payment, maintenance and review of the funds. Funding comes from BBSRC, so to meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, non-confidential details of awards may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

11. Conflict of interest guidance

In cases of conflict of interest, there are specific alternatives to the stated guidance – these are referred to throughout the document. Examples of a conflict of interest include:

- Employed by the same institution as the applicant(s)
- Actively involved in research collaborations with the applicants(s)
- Working closely with the applicant(s), for example as a co-author or PhD Supervisor, or has worked closely in the last 4 years Holding a current position on the governing body of or an honorary position within the institution(s) of the applicant(s)
- In receipt of personal remuneration in excess of £5,000 per annum from the applicant's organisation
- Personal/family relationship with the applicant(s)

12. Summary of complete process: Route 1



6 months post award completion report completed and submitted to Network Manager.

Summary of complete process: Route 2

Academic(s) and Industrial counterpart(s) join as CBMNet members

CBMNet 'creative event' announced. Interested CBMNet members register for event. Criteria for assessment will be set out before the event.

Projects will be selected at the event either by community consensus or by an independent panel assessment.

The selected projects will be asked to submit a formal application for funding for consideration by the MB.

Application form evaluated at set date by CBMNet Team and Member of CBMNet Management Board/external reviewer if appropriate.

If successful, award letter sent to academic lead on project. Contract between all applicants issued. Once both of these are signed, the project starts.

Updates at network meetings by awarded applicants.

Once the project finishes a final report is submitted, with details of project expenditure, academic institution is paid by CBMNet.

6 months post award completion report completed and submitted to Network Manager.