

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

The Environmental Biotechnology Network
– a BBSRC/EPSRC NIBB

Placement Awards



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Introduction

Background

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), in association with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), have committed approximately £11M to fund six unique networks for a second phase of Networks in Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy (NIBB Phase II).

The second phase of the BBSRC NIBB will continue to build capacity and capability in the UK, supporting research and translation in biologically based manufacturing. Their aim is to continue to foster collaboration between academic researchers and business at all levels in order to find new approaches through excellent research to tackle research challenges and help deliver key benefits in IBBE. Details of all of the Networks can be found on the BBSRC website:

(<https://bbsrc.ukri.org/research/programmes-networks/research-networks/nibb/>).

- Algae-UK: Exploiting the algal treasure trove
- BBNet: Biomass Biorefinery Network
- CCNet: Carbon Recycling - Converting waste derived GHG into chemicals, fuels and animal feed
- E3B: Elements of Bioremediation, Biomanufacturing & Bioenergy – Metals in Biology
- EBNet: Environmental Biotechnology Network
- HVB: High Value Biorenewables Network

The Networks will run from 2019 to 2024, will provide flexible funding for projects and are open to new members throughout their lifetime.

About EBNet

Microbial systems provide a range of environmental protection and bioremediation services, forming the basis for some of the world's largest industries across the Water-Wastes-Soil nexus. Development of such systems to date has been largely empirical and incremental, but the pace is changing in response to the need to match expanding global demand with finite resources. There are also new challenges to address, ranging from the emergence of new micro-pollutants to the requirement for efficient closed-loop systems that combine treatment with resource recovery.

The current revolution in biological and analytical sciences is creating tools that give unprecedented insights into these systems from genetic to community level, and into factors that can potentially be used to control and harness them. At the same time, new approaches allow enhanced measurement and modelling of engineering phenomena such as mixing and mass transfer, while advances in materials science and separation technologies offer the potential for selectively retaining microbial biomass and/or removing final and intermediate metabolic products. These developments thus offer a chance to optimise existing treatment processes and to create more sustainable 'future-proof' technologies in new areas of application. Successful exploitation of these opportunities depends, however, on bringing together an enhanced knowledge of the underlying science with the ability to apply this in large-scale engineered systems, which must meet both societal expectations and increasingly stringent economic and environmental requirements.

The aim of EBNet is thus to develop and strengthen links between advanced molecular and applied microbiology, engineering and systems optimisation to maximise the societal impacts and benefits. Its overall goal is to take fundamental discovery science towards practical application in key areas of the human/environment interface.

Principal Investigator

- Professor Sonia Heaven, University of Southampton, Faculty of Engineering and the Environment

Co-Investigators

- Professor Frederic Coulon, Cranfield University, School of Water, Energy and Environment
- Professor Tom Curtis, Newcastle University, School of Engineering
- Dr Tony Gutierrez, Heriot-Watt University, School of Engineering and Physical Science
- Dr Jhuma Sadhukhan, University of Surrey, Centre for Environmental Strategy

Placement Awards

What is a Placement?

Placement Awards are available to help fund UK-based Network members to facilitate the transfer and exchange of research and knowledge. This could be for training purposes or for the accumulation of new skills. They are not to be used for conference attendance. They may be used to fund a visit to an industry partner or research laboratory for training purposes, but may not be used for training *within* an organisation.

They are available to all UK-based members, whether ECR or mid-career, and will be assessed upon the potential value of the placement to the applicant, the applicant's organisation and the UK EB community.

Funds are available for two schemes.

- **Research Placement Awards – UK/overseas** are aimed at UK-based EBNet researchers who wish to spend time with an UK or overseas partner organisation for the accumulation of new skills or training.
- **Industry Placement Awards – UK only** are aimed at UK-based EBNet **industry members** who wish to spend time with a UK-based academic or industrial partner organisation or for the accumulation of new skills or training. Whilst these are aimed at UK only placements, should you have a strong argument for attending an overseas placement, please do contact us.

Available Placements	Total available (annual limit*)	Max. value per award (incl. VAT) at 100% FEC
Industry Placement – UK	10 (2)	£1,500
Research Placement – UK	10 (2)	£1,500
Research Placement – overseas	10 (2)	£3,000

*Placements will be allocated over the 5-year lifetime of the Network at the discretion of the Executive Group.

All Placements must be requested and approved in advance of the planned activities taking place. We ask that you roughly estimate the anticipated spend, but will only reimburse expenditure claims supported with full receipts. Each Placement has a maximum spending limit (above). We accept no responsibility for spending that exceeds that limit.

Aims and Objectives of the Placements

These Placements are intended to further the aims and objectives of the EBNet by:

- Encouraging and fostering collaboration between members for knowledge exchange and potential future collaboration.
- Enabling members to access training opportunities or to attend relevant training events that they would otherwise be unlikely to access.

Eligibility

Only UK-based members of the EBNet may apply for placements. Membership is free (see: <http://ebnet.ac.uk/>). If you have questions regarding your eligibility, please [contact us](#).

This Placement Award does not grant recipients the eligibility to apply for BBSRC research grant funding when otherwise not eligible. Recipients should contact the BBSRC Office with eligibility queries for any future calls.

Common Queries

I want to learn a skill at another university. Can I use a Placement?

Yes. Explain why this skill is unavailable at your own institution and why it will help develop UK EB and your own research. This could be because you want to develop a new area of research and need specialist training. You will need to arrange your own [formal agreement](#)* with the host.

I want to learn a new skill from industry. Can I use a Placement?

Yes. See above. We strongly encourage links between industry and academia.

I am an industry member and I want to learn a new skill from academia. Can I apply for a Placement?

Yes, provided the costs applied for are reasonable and well-justified. See above. We strongly encourage links between industry and academia. Be aware that this is not a substitute for activities which could otherwise be covered by a formal training course elsewhere. You should make the case for your specific need and state why a placement in academia is the most appropriate way to develop your knowledge.

I need to spend some time with a partner organisation to develop a big, joint funding proposal. I won't be learning a skill. Can I apply?

No. Placements are intended solely for knowledge transfer.

I want to combine a conference trip abroad with a skills workshop run by the event. Does this count as a Placement?

We would examine this very carefully to determine the nature of the skill transfer. If a request is made for a substantial contribution from EBNet for a trip that has a minimal amount of skill transfer potential, it may be declined. Only if there was a substantial and unique opportunity to gain new skills of value to UK EB research would this be considered. Certainly, no contribution to conference expenses would be made. We have a separate funding stream for Early Career Researchers to attend conferences.

I already have separate funding to attend a conference abroad, but wish to extend my stay by a few weeks to learn a skill whilst there. Can you "top up" to cover my extra accommodation and expenses?

This may be possible depending on the circumstances. Please put full details of your separate funding arrangement on your application. We must ensure that costs are kept separate. We would need to confirm the details and timings of your interaction with the host institution prior to payment. You would need to arrange your own formal agreement with the host. A decision of this kind would be made on a case-by-case basis.

There is a specialist training course run by a commercial concern that I would like to attend. Will you fund this?

It is envisaged that these funds will be used primarily to develop links between individuals, rather than to support external commercial training courses. However, depending on the nature of the course, it might be possible. We would need to know the details to ensure that it is within our remit. Please give us a link to the website, if possible. Please make a case stating the relevance of the course to your future work in EB and why it is not possible to arrange a reciprocal visit to obtain this knowledge exchange.

I have a particular EB skill and wish to train people elsewhere at another university/company. Is this covered?

Yes, but you should be clear about the benefit to UK-based EB research or industrial biotechnology – particularly if this were to take place abroad. We encourage the transfer of skills and knowledge, so any reasonable request of this nature will be looked at favourably.

***What do you mean by “formal agreement”?**

It may be the case that no such agreement is necessary for a brief visit. However, you may have in mind a personal placement at a workplace with associated health and safety issues. Most universities and companies have procedures in place, as standard, to cover visitors. It is your responsibility to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to cover insurance and legal liabilities, as necessary. This may entail registering through a pre-existing visitor system or, in rare cases, arranging your own agreement.

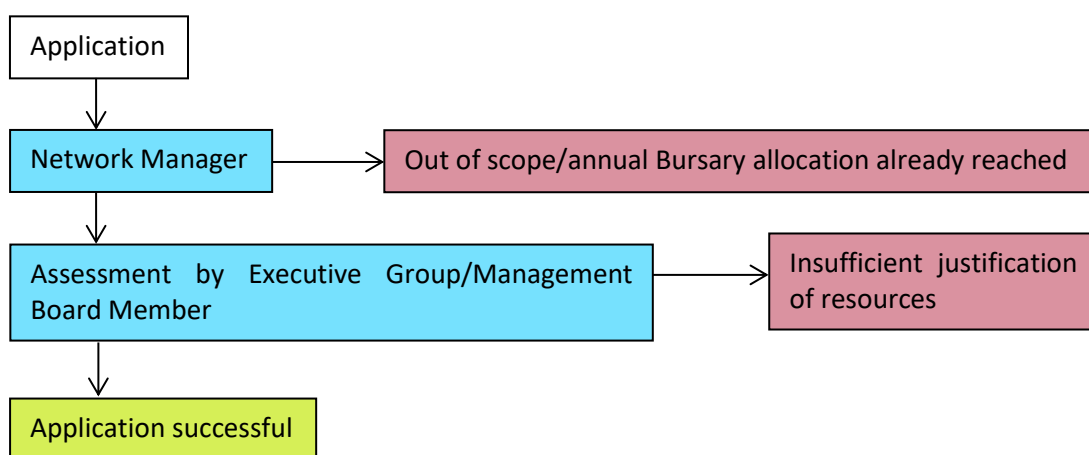
If insurance and legal liabilities need to be covered by a separate agreement between the parties involved, this can be arranged through the support services of your own institution (whose experience of staff exchanges, secondments and placements should be extensive). We recommend that you contact them to arrange this well in advance. EBNet accepts no responsibility for any legal/insurance costs pertaining to the Placement activity.

Application Process

How to apply

Application is through a simple application form available from <http://ebnet.ac.uk/> or by emailing EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk. Applications are accepted at any time and should receive a response within 4-6 weeks from that point. Applications should be sent to EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk as a Word or PDF email attachment and will be acknowledged by email upon receipt with a reference number (PLYYYYYX). Should an acknowledgement not be received in good time, please contact the Network Managers directly to ensure your application is processed.

Process for Placement review



Submissions will first be sifted by the Network Managers to ensure they are consistent with the aims and objectives of the Network. Should sufficient funds remain available, they will then be passed to a member of the Executive Group or Management Board for assessment and approval. Applicants who have participated in EBNet activities (e.g. attended an event, acted as a member of the ECR Scientific Committee) will be viewed favourably.

Applications may then be funded (up to the annual limit), rejected or further clarification sought from the applicant to assist the decision. Decisions are entirely at the discretion of the Executive Group for final approval. We aim to assess proposals and reply within 4-6 weeks.

Application form guidance

This section explains the structure of the application forms and offers guidance on the information to include in each section. The purpose of the application form is to obtain enough information to enable us to understand how well your submission aligns with the Network objectives.

It is important that you address and respond to each section clearly. To help you, the guidance below provides an explanation of what is required for each field.

Placement Awards Application Form		
Required Fields	Guidance	Maximum word limits/ further clarification
Application details		
Purpose of Placement	Please state the purpose of your application.	Word limit - 25
Type of placement	Put an 'x' to the right of Research Placement – UK/Overseas if you are a UK EBNet <i>academic member</i> requesting a UK/Overseas placement. If you are a UK EBNet <i>industrial member</i> applying for a UK placement, put an 'x' to the right of 'Industry Placement – UK'	If you are a UK EBNet industrial member wishing to carry out an overseas placement (within the UK budget limitations), contact us .
Applicant's contact details		
Applicant's Name	Enter your full name. This will be the Award holder in the event of a successful application.	No word limit
Institution	Please give the name of Institution where you are employed	No word limit
Phone Number	Please give a contact number where we can reach you	No word limit
Email	Please give your email address. An institutional (not personal) email address is preferred.	No word limit
Applicant's Career to date	Please give a brief overview of your career, with positions held, institution and dates. Also, provide details of any prior activities with the Network. Are you a recipient of EBNet-funded research? Have you presented at the EBNet ECR conference? Which of our events have you participated in?	Word limit – 200 This assists us to verify your ECR status and EB credentials and can be a simple table or list. You may attach a CV to the application if you wish.
Please confirm that you are a member of the EBNet and eligible for funding (Y/N)	See Eligibility	Yes/No – delete as applicable

Destination details		
Name of contact	Enter the name of the primary contact at the Placement destination.	No word limit. We may contact them to confirm your placement prior to payment.
Institution	Please give the name of the Placement destination	No word limit
Address	Please give the address of the Placement destination	No word limit
Phone Number	Please give a contact number for the Placement destination	No word limit
Email	Please give the email address for the Placement destination	No word limit
Placement Details		
Please provide a brief description of the background to the placement request.	Applicants should use this opportunity to make a case for funding, as we anticipate competition for the awards. State the anticipated start date and duration. Explain the purpose of the funded activity to be carried out. Explain why this activity would not take place without EBNet support. Please also state how the placement aligns within the EBNet aims and objectives.	Word limit - 400
Please list the key outcomes that will arise from this funding	Applicants should explain how this award furthers the objectives of the EBNet – in particular the intention to leverage further funding/collaboration opportunities in the sector or the transfer of valuable skills to strengthen and consolidate future capability to respond to challenges within the area of EB.	Word limit - 300
Financial Details		
Please provide an estimate of the breakdown of funding costs. For currency conversions, use https://www1.oanda.com/currency/converter/ . Standard university travel claim rules apply.		
Accommodation	Please estimate the sum for your accommodation. Only reasonable costs for the destination will be reimbursed e.g. up to 3* accommodation.	In pounds sterling (incl. tax, if applicable)
Travel	Please estimate the costs of all air/rail/taxi/bus travel. Only reasonable costs will be reimbursed. The cheapest form of available transport should always be used. Where a valid public transport option exists, a claim for taxis (or other more expensive options) will not be accepted as valid.	In pounds sterling (incl. tax, if applicable)
Subsistence/Other (please specify)	Please estimate subsistence costs – if required. Only reasonable costs will be reimbursed. No claims will be accepted for alcohol purchase.	In pounds sterling (incl. tax, if applicable)

	<p>Visa costs can be reimbursed if total award amount is not exceeded.</p> <p>Detail any consumable or equipment hire costs that are essential to the Placement. These should not exceed £500. The primary purpose of the Placement is knowledge transfer/networking/training - not to subsidise research.</p>	
Total (£) contribution requested from EBNet	This should not exceed the maximum permitted sum set out in the " What is a Placement? " section.	In pounds sterling (incl. tax, if applicable)
Signature		
<p>Applicant agrees to the following: <i>I confirm that I wish to apply for an EBNet Placement Award, that I am an EBNet member and that the information contained in the application is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that EBNet accepts no responsibility for any legalities/insurance pertaining to the placement activity. I agree to provide a report and photograph(s) upon completion.</i></p>		<p>Please sign, date and print your name. A scanned signature is acceptable.</p>

If the Award is successful

If successful, the applicant will be informed via email and provided with a reference number (PLYYYYxx) which should be used on all further correspondence. This email will confirm the maximum amount of funds that can be claimed under the placement award for the purposes stated in the application. Any further stipulations specific to the offer will also be outlined. An expenses form and bank details form will be attached.

Recipients will also be required to submit a publically publishable short report on their activities along with their expenses claim. This summary will be made publically available on our website and may be published more widely elsewhere. Please include as a separate attachment high-resolution, copyright-free images or photographs, if possible. Photographs contained within the report are not generally suitable for us to utilise for publicity purposes. If you promote your placement through social media or other publicity routes, EBNet would be grateful for acknowledgement of our support. We are @EBNetUK on Twitter.

Funds will be paid in arrears, if supported by original receipts and the summary report. It is the responsibility of the applicant to post the original receipts/travel tickets to us, along with the expenses claim form and the bank details form. We cannot process your expenses claim without this information. Please ensure that you have retained copies both for your own records and in case of loss of the original receipts. Note that in case of air travel, a valid boarding pass for the return journey is required as proof of travel. Consumables and equipment hire costs are capped at £500 and should be essential to the Placement. No equipment purchase of any kind is permitted. If in doubt, contact the Network Managers for advice prior to any large purchase.

Applicants must ensure that they hold the appropriate visa which has been applied for in good time. EBNet will not be held responsible for any costs incurred should a visa not arrive on time, rendering the applicant unable to attend.

Should the conditions of payment of the Award present any difficulties that might hinder uptake of the award, please contact the Network Managers at EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk to discuss alternative payment arrangements. Note that the award is non-transferable.

Data Protection Regulations

The PI of the BBSRC NIBB grant has the responsibility for keeping data relating to the grant secure and safe. Copies of the applications will be made available to the BBSRC, who will use this information for research related activities, including but not limited to, transfer of funds, statistical analysis in relation to evaluation of the BBSRC NIBB, study of trends and policy and strategy studies. Copies will also be made available to members of the Executive Group and Management Board for the purpose of assessment and evaluation such as processing the proposal, the award of any consequential grant and for the payment, maintenance and review of the grant.

We are expecting applicants to conform to the BBSRC guidelines for data sharing: <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/policies-standards/data-sharing-policy/> and good scientific practice: <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/policies-standards/good-scientific-practice/>.

To meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of funded awards may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publically available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

Contact Details

For any queries, please email the Network Managers, Angela Bywater/Dr Louise Byfield at EBNet@EBNet.ac.uk or telephone 02380 591281.