

**2020/2021 UKRI-BBSRC sLoLa CALL
GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

Version history

Version	Description	Date
1.0	Initial publication <i>Full stage Je-S information and application deadlines pending</i>	5 May 2020

CALL SCOPE

Applicants should refer to the sLoLa call webpage for details of the call scope, including scientific focus, requirements, exclusions and available resources.

<https://bbsrc.ukri.org/funding/filter/2020-slola/>

APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS - SUMMARY

Stage	Assessment
Call registration (mandatory)	<p>The aim of the call registration is to ensure outlines are appropriately targeted to this call, to provide an early indication of the level of demand and to allow institutional-level demand moderation steps to be taken if necessary.</p> <p>The UKRI-BBSRC Office will provide non-peer review feedback on the suitability of projects for the call</p>
Outline stage	<p>Outline proposals will be assessed by the Strategic LoLa Committee (SLC) only.</p> <p>The SLC will invite submission of full proposals for outlines that have the potential to be highly competitive at the full stage.</p>
Full stage (invite only)	<p>Full proposals will be assessed in two phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive Mode Committees <p>Full external peer review, with assessment undertaken by the Responsive Mode Committees. High scoring proposals will be shortlisted for further consideration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic LoLa Committee <p>The SLC will receive the evaluation of shortlisted proposals from the Responsive Mode Committees.</p> <p>The SLC will conduct interviews with shortlisted applicants to assess further aspects of the sLoLa assessment criteria and consider the strategic case for investment.</p> <p>The SLC will integrate all the assessment information and formulate a final ranked list with recommendations to UKRI-BBSRC.</p>

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APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS – OUTLINE STAGE

The outline stage is mandatory and only open to applicants who have registered for the call. Submission to the outline stage is subject to UKRI-BBSRC feedback on fit to scope and any institutional-level demand management steps that have been imposed (this will only be implemented if essential to control demand).

How to apply

Submit outline proposals through the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) System by **Thursday 10 September 2020 at 16:00**, using the following information:

1. Log in the Joint Electronic System (Je-S)
2. Select Council: BBSRC
3. Select Document Type: Outline proposal
4. Select Scheme: Standard Outlines
5. Select Call/Type/Mode: 2020 Strategic LoLa Outlines
6. Select 'Create Document' and follow the on-screen instructions to complete the form.

In addition to the Je-S proposal form, the only attachment that should be provided is the Case for Support. No other attachments (e.g. covering letter, CVs, letters of support) will be accepted.

Resources

The Je-S form should include a summary of anticipated resources that would be requested at the full stage. **Detailed justification of the resources requested is not required at the outline stage and resources requested may be refined at the full stage.**

Case for support (outline stage)

The Case for Support must be structured using the headings below and must not exceed **six pages of A4**. At a minimum, font size 11 in Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size must be used with a minimum of single line and standard character spacing. Page margins should be no less than 2cm.

The following four headings should be used:

Section 1: Science Case (two pages recommended)

- Identify the overall aims of the proposed sLoLa research programme, set in the context the call's frontier bioscience scope, current knowledge, and the leading edge within the research domain(s).
- The high-level objectives for the planned sLoLa must be included (typically 3-5 bullets) with an explanation of how these will be tackled. If a full proposal is invited, it is expected that the high-level objectives will appear unchanged unless feedback from the outline assessment process indicates otherwise.

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- Highlight features which are particularly original or unique. Explain how the research programme is an ambitious, transformative approach that will result in a step change in knowledge that will have a major impact on the research area.
- *Please note when preparing this section that the SLC will assess the overall scope and potential of the research at the outline stage but a detailed scientific assessment will not be made*

Section 2: Statement of added value (up to one page recommended)

- Justify the need for sLoLa funding, describing the added value of funding through this mechanism. Describe how the work proposed is a fully integrated programme of work that must be tackled via a single, coherent programme of coordinated activity and could not be supported through other funding routes (e.g. several smaller Responsive Mode awards).
- Outline how the proposed research complements and does not overlap with other research funded in this area nationally and internationally, including UKRI-BBSRC's research portfolio. For information on UKRI-BBSRC's portfolio, please see Gateway to Research and downloads on the call webpage.

Section 3: Strategic Case (up to one page recommended)

- The significance and importance of the proposed research, including how the sLoLa will enhance the international position of UK bioscience in the research area.
- How the research programme will have an impact on the broader health and vitality of the UK bioscience. Where applicable, this might include the potential for longer term legacy and sustainability including skills and capability built, and routes towards economic or societal impacts.

Section 4: Ability to deliver (up to two pages recommended)

- The contribution to the project of each named Investigator (PI/Co-I), including a clear time commitment. This should be in the form of a succinct personal statement, providing evidence of the skills and expertise they will bring to the project based on significant prior research achievements and broader impacts. This would be expected to include any engagement in previous collaborative projects by the investigators.
- The leadership track record of the Principal Investigator demonstrating capability to lead the project. This should include prior experience of managing and successfully delivering complex multi-investigator/PDRA research projects as well as any relevant professional development activities. Where relevant, their ability to mentor and support the development of Early Career Researchers.
- The resources or facilities that will be available within the team and their institutions to underpin the research.

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Assessment process: outline stage

Outline proposals will be assessed by the SLC only; there will be no external peer review stage.

The purpose of the outline stage is not to conduct a detailed scientific evaluation but to assess the extent to which the proposal addresses the purpose, scope and eligibility requirements of the sLoLa call. Please refer to the outline assessment criteria in [Annex 1](#).

Based on their assessment, the SLC will decide which applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal. Feedback from the SLC will be provided to those applicants who are invited to make a full proposal and may include comments on:

- essential information that should be part of a full proposal
- any parts of the outline that should not be included in a full proposal
- the framing of the research objectives
- any suggested modifications to the scale or timescales of the project
- any additional work or collaborations not outlined in the application, where they are deemed to be essential to the success of the project, or concerns as to the composition of the project team
- any other advice required

Feedback will be provided to all applicants.

APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS – FULL STAGE

The full application is only open to proposals invited by the SLC following the outline assessment.

How to apply (invited full proposals)

Further details related to the precise timing and Je-S information for submitting a full stage application to the sLoLa call will be provided in this document at a later date.

We anticipate a full stage deadline in March 2021.

Overview of submission documents

The following documentation is required:

Document	Description	Page limit
Case for Support	The overall maximum page length for the combined case for Support is 16 pages. It must be self-contained - external links are not permitted. See	Maximum 16 pages

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	detailed information below for Case for Support breakdown.	
Justification of Resources	<p>A narrative description of the resources required for the project.</p> <p>Changes to indicative costs provided at the Outline stage are permitted. We recommend contacting us if the budget increases more than 10% from the outline stage.</p>	<p>Maximum 4 pages</p> <p>All resources requested (directly incurred, directly allocated and exceptions, including PI and Co-I time) must be fully justified. Items that would ordinarily be found in a department, for example non-specialist computers, should include justification both for why they are required for the project and why they cannot be provided from the Research Organisation's own resources (including funding from indirect costs from grants).</p> <p>Please see the Je-S guidance for further details.</p>
CVs	Required for all named applicants and named research staff only. CVs are not required for named technicians.	Maximum 2 pages per investigator and named researcher, combined into a single PDF
Work Plan	A diagrammatic work plan and supporting narrative that relates to the management strategy, identifying appropriate time points and deliverables for each objective. A Gantt chart is recommended.	Maximum 2 pages
Data Management Plan	https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/policies-standards/data-sharing-policy/	Maximum 2 pages
Justification of Animal Usage (if applicable)	<p>Signed animal usage declaration, Use of rodents overseas form</p> <p>Only required for overseas animal usage.</p> <p>https://bbsrc.ukri.org/funding/apply/application-guidance/animal-use-in-research/</p>	Variable

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<p>Letters of support</p>	<p>Only directly relevant Letters of Support should be submitted.</p> <p>These can include letters from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Department (or equivalent) <p>Recommended for lead Research Organisation. This should confirm any institutional resources committed to the project. Letters from multiple departments/ organisations should be combined into a single pdf.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborators and Project Partners <p>Required for all named collaborators/ project partners providing a contribution to the sLoLa project.</p> <p>Other letters of support are not permitted.</p>	<p>Please combine letters of support into a single PDF.</p>
<p>Equipment Business Case (if applicable)</p>	<p>BBSRC's normal rules relating to research equipment apply. See UKRI-BBSRC Grants Guide from section 5.14.</p> <p>For all equipment above the OJEU threshold of £115k (net VAT and Import Duty; £138k inc VAT) a business case is required.</p>	<p>Maximum 2 pages</p>

Case for support

The Case for Support should build on the information provided at the outline stage and any feedback but should be a self-contained document and will be assessed independently on its own merits. **Neither the outline proposal nor its score will not be made available to either external reviewers or the Responsive Mode Research Committees.** However, the **Responsive Mode Research Committees will be provided a copy of feedback from the SLC sent to the applicant at the Outline Stage.**

The Case for Support must be a single document that includes the following sections. The suggested page lengths are indicative and applicants may use the overall space available in the Case at their own discretion:

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Section 1: Science Case (11 pages recommended)

Background

- Introduce the topic of research and explain its academic and wider context.
- Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of past and current work in the subject area both in the UK and internationally.
- Provide a summary of the results and conclusions of your recent work in the research area(s) relevant to the proposal.

Programme and methodology

- Identify the overall aims of the proposed sLoLa research programme, set in the context the call's frontier bioscience scope, current knowledge, and the leading edge within the research domain(s).
- Provide the individual measurable objectives for the planned sLoLa and explain how these will be tackled. This should include a detailed description and justification for the methods and approaches to be employed.
- Describe the programme of work, indicating the research to be undertaken and the milestones that can be used to measure its progress. The detail should be sufficient to indicate the programme of work for each member of the research team.
- Identify any potential risks within the research programme and strategies to mitigate these risks (e.g. alternative approaches).
- Identify any facilities or resources you will need to access.
- Explain why the proposed project is of sufficient timeliness and novelty to warrant consideration for funding. Highlight features which are particularly original or unique. sLoLa proposals are expected to be ambitious and potentially transformative, resulting in a step change in knowledge that will have a major impact on the research area.

Section 2: Statement of added value (up to one page recommended)

- Justify the need for sLoLa funding, describing the added value of funding through this mechanism. Describe how the work proposed is a fully integrated program of work that must be tackled via a single, coherent programme of coordinated activity and could not be supported through other funding routes (e.g. several smaller Responsive Mode awards).
- Outline how the proposed research complements and does not overlap with other research funded in this area nationally and internationally, including UKRI-BBSRC's research portfolio. For information on UKRI-BBSRC's portfolio, please see Gateway

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to Research. For information on UKRI-BBSRC's portfolio, please see [Gateway to Research](#) and downloads on the [sLoLa call webpage](#).

Section 3: Strategic Case (up to one page recommended)

- The significance and importance of the proposed research, including how the sLoLa will enhance the international position of UK bioscience in the research area.
- How the research programme will have an impact on the broader health and vitality of the UK bioscience. Where applicable, this might include the potential for longer term legacy and sustainability, impacts on skills development, and potential longer term economic or social impacts.

Section 4: Ability to deliver (up to two pages recommended)

- The contribution to the project of each named Investigator (PI/Co-I), including a clear time commitment. This should be in the form of a succinct personal statement, providing evidence of the skills and expertise they will bring to the project based on significant prior research achievements and broader impacts. This would be expected to include any engagement in previous collaborative projects by the investigators.
- The leadership track record of the Principal Investigator demonstrating capability to lead the project. This should include prior experience of managing and successfully delivering complex multi-investigator/PDRA research projects as well as any relevant professional development activities. Where relevant, their ability to mentor and support the development of Early Career Researchers.
- The resources or facilities that will be available within the team and their institutions to underpin the research

- **Section 5: Management strategy (up to one page recommended)**

- Describe how the project will be managed to ensure effective working of the investigators and successful delivery of the planned outcomes. The management approach should be appropriate to the nature and scale of the programme.
- Provide details about the governance, advisory and management structure, details of the approach to project and risk management, and the monitoring strategy for the proposed programme.
- An independent advisory board is required for large-scale programmes.

Assessment process: full stage

Proposals will be assessed by external peer reviewers and applicants will be invited to respond in writing to the reviewers' comments. Proposals will then be assessed by the relevant Research Committee. The outputs from the Responsive Mode assessment will be shared with applicants prior to the interview stage.

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Applications that are scored highly (expected to be those rated within the Excellent and Exceptional scoring range, subject to volume management requirements) will be further assessed by the Strategic LoLa Committee (SLC). The SLC will interview the research team and assess against the criteria set out below. A report of the assessment made by the Research Committees will also be made available to the SLC, for it to take into account in its decision-making. The SLC will make recommendations to UKRI-BBSRC, which will make the final funding decision.

The Research Committees and SLC will use the criteria and scoring definitions in [Annex 2](#).

Interviews are expected to be held in Autumn 2021 (applicants will be advised to hold these dates once they are known).

Conditions of award

Awards will be made under standard [UKRI Research Grant Terms and Conditions](#) to the lead organisation, which will be responsible for the management of the award.

Reporting and Monitoring

As a condition of a sLoLa award, in addition to standard reporting requirements, the PI must complete an interim report during the third year of the grant. A report template will be provided. Continuation of funding for the full period of the grant depends on the successful assessment of this interim report.

We will also allocate a project officer for the duration of all sLoLa awards. They will provide a primary point of UKRI-BBSRC contact for the PI, monitor progress and issues, and provide guidance during the course of the grant.

ANNEX 1: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND SCORING DEFINITIONS

Assessment criteria

Applications to the sLoLa scheme will be assessed with reference to the scope of call and against the following assessment criteria:

Research excellence

The project should fully address the scientific scope of the call and meet the highest current international standards in its area of research. The project should have a coherent focus on addressing a significant research challenge employing ambitious, creative and innovative approaches. Justification should be provided regarding how the project will lead to a distinctive and significant advancement with regard to both current state of knowledge and ongoing research efforts within the field.

Importance and transformative potential

The scientific significance and importance of the proposed research should be clearly articulated. This should include how establishing or enhancing a unique, world leading research activity will ensure international competitiveness of UK bioscience. Proposals should also address how the research programme will have significant impact on the broader health and vitality of UK bioscience and consider the potential for longer term legacy and sustainability, impact on capability, and economic and social impact.

Added value of funding via sLoLa grant

The need for longer and larger-scale funding through the sLoLa programme must be articulated clearly, with the benefit and added value of supporting a coherent programme of inter-related objectives and other research activities rather than individual project grants clearly demonstrated.

Proposals should include consideration of how the proposed research programme fits with and complements other active UK research in the area or related areas, including the relationship to UKRI-BBSRC's portfolio of investments and overall strategy.

Ability to deliver and leadership quality

The work should be undertaken by a world-class research team comprising the full complement of skills and expertise needed to achieve the expected outcomes, drawn from the full breadth of the UK's diverse talent pool and underpinned by an appropriate institutional environment(s).

Projects must demonstrate that they have the appropriate leadership expertise and experience to deliver the complexity and scale of work proposed. This includes overall scientific leadership to maintain the focus and momentum of the project, as well as the skills required to ensure the successful functioning of the team of individuals involved – this may include relevant professional development indicators (e.g. in leadership/project management)

Management strategy

The proposal must demonstrate that a robust strategy is in place to manage the award, the team and the research outputs, including information about governance and advisory structures, risk management, monitoring strategy, and project management.

Resources

The resources requested should be fully justified and appropriate relative to the anticipated project outcomes.

Use of the assessment criteria

At each assessment stage of the call the assessment criteria will be used as follows:

Criteria	Outline stage	Full stage: Research Committees	Full stage: sLoLa Committee
Research excellence	Y	Y	Y
Importance and Transformative Potential	Y	Y	Y
Added Value of Funding via sLoLa Grant	Y	N	Y
Ability to Deliver and	Y	Y	Y
Leadership Quality		N	Y
Management Strategy	N	N	Y
Resources	N	Y	Y

In addition, at Full Stage the Research Committees will also assess the following:

Data management plan

Research proposals are expected to comply with UKRI-BBSRC's data sharing policy and all proposals must include a data management plan. For the UKRI-BBSRC policy please see the statement at <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/policies-standards/data-sharing-policy/>.

Ethics and Animal usage

Applications proposing to use animals must abide by the guidance on Animal Use detailed in the UKRI-BBSRC Grants Guide at <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/grants-guide/>

At the interview portion of the Full Stage of assessment, the SLC will be provided with a report summarising the assessment made by the Research Committees and may use this to identify questions for the interview stage. Feedback from the Research Committees will also be shared with successful applicants before the interview stage.

ANNEX 2: SCORING DEFINITIONS

Outline stage

Proposals will receive an overall score of 1 to 6.9 using the standard UKRI-BBSRC scoring framework (below) and ranked. Proposals must score within the 'exceptional' or 'excellent' range in order to be considered for progression to the full stage. Demand management may dictate that a higher scoring threshold is imposed.

Full stage: Research Committees

Proposals will not be ranked against standard Responsive Mode proposals. Research Committees will propose an overall score based on the standard UKRI-BBSRC scoring framework. It is anticipated that only proposals rated 'exceptional' or 'excellent' at this stage will be taken forward for consideration by the SLC, subject to recommendation by the Committee and volume management requirements.

Full stage: SLC

Proposals will be ranked using the standard UKRI-BBSRC scoring framework.

Standard UKRI-BBSRC Scoring Framework

Score Range	Definition	Guidance
6.0 – 6.9	Exceptional Fully addresses the scope of the call and all of the assessment criteria, meeting the majority of them to an exceptional level. Likely to have a significant impact.	Fundable
5.0 – 5.9	Excellent Fully addresses the scope of the call and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to a very high level	Fundable
4.0 – 4.9	Very Good Addresses the scope of the call and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to a high level.	Fundable
3.0 – 3.9	Good Work that addresses the scope and scientific objectives of the call to a reasonable standard and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to an adequate level.	Fundable in principle but unlikely to be funded
2.0 – 2.9	Not Competitive Work that does not adequately address the scope and scientific objectives of the call and does not meet the assessment criteria to an acceptable level.	Not Fundable
1.0 – 1.9	Unfundable Work that does not address the scope and scientific objectives of the call and does not meet the assessment criteria to an acceptable level.	Not Fundable