

BBSRC ICURE EXPLORE Programme

April 2024

Guidance Notes

BBSRC ICURE Explore trains, funds, and supports research teams to determine whether there is a market for products or services that utilise their bioscience-based ideas, research, and technologies. Up to £35k of funding is available to 'get out of the lab' and validate commercially promising ideas in the marketplace. Over a 3-month period, the majority of the training and support activities will be carried out online, providing accessibility to a wide range of applicants. There will also be opportunities for face-to-face interaction and networking during the programme.

How does it work?

BBSRC ICURE Explore takes the scientific method (hypothesise, test, evaluate) and applies it to commercialisation. You will learn how to use this approach to test what your potential customers think about your bioscience idea, product, or service. In addition, you will receive training and interview practice, and will be carrying out over 100 interviews across the marketplace and acquiring transferrable business and social skills.

Programme overview - <https://youtu.be/ixZcaB4Q6j8?si=L1gCwrQniF5xSWRc>

Past participants say that having ICURE support, training, and funding to spend on customer discovery has dramatically changed their perspective on their innovation. Hear from those who participated in previous BBSRC ICURE Explore cohorts about their experiences!

Dr Rasha Rezk - <https://youtu.be/l5dthd0bfKs?si=-OUbqdWAs2EsQfWs>

Daniel Wary - https://youtu.be/UfDBHINnSCA?si=LX6JLg_yk56x11xP

Faith Howard - <https://youtu.be/-05y4GZtmO8?si=ONGYGch2Ek3XZC6P>

What does it include?

- Funding of up to £15,000 for market discovery activities and business advisor support.
- Cover for up to 3 months of the entrepreneurial lead's salary, to fully support the time commitment for customer discovery activities whilst participating in the programme (*please note there is a salary cover cap of £20,000*).

- Access to experts in bringing bioscience research to market, including weekly 1-hour coaching clinics.
- Access and proactive connections to our network of bioscience entrepreneurs, investors, and funders.
- Game changing online delivery with opportunities for face-to-face interaction and networking.
- 4-day intensive bootcamp (delivered in a 'blended' format with two days in-person and two days online) where you will learn how to talk about your technology to customers, develop a hypothetical business model, and identify your customers' pain points. You will also create a detailed plan of your customer discovery journey.
- 3 months of market validation using online software platforms, video conferencing and marketing tools, and face-to-face meetings where possible. This will involve targeting direct engagements with over 100 business leaders.
- 1-day online pitch training where you will learn how to pitch your bioscience research to potential customers and investors.
- The opportunity to pitch to an experienced panel of bioscience investors, funders, mentors, and other stakeholders to help accelerate the impact from your research. The panel will give feedback on commercialisation pathways best suited for your project, which can include carrying out further public or private sponsored research, exploring licensing opportunities, or seeking public or private funding for spin-out.
- Selected teams will have the opportunity to access further financial support and apply for various follow-on funding pathways from UKRI. Teams eligible for spin-out support will be required to identify their roles in the future company; any personnel change will need to be assessed for suitability by BBSRC and their delivery partners, NxNW.

Who is eligible?

BBSRC ICURE EXPLORE is open to bioscience teams in all UK universities, BBSRC-funded institutes and approved public sector research enterprises (PSREs).

The research underpinning the bioscience innovation, products or services being carried forward for market exploration by the team MUST be building on a previous BBSRC or other UKRI grant.

BBSRC ICURE EXPLORE teams must be composed of four individuals:

- **Entrepreneurial lead:** Any research or technical research staff member who receives their salary or stipend from an eligible university, PSRE or institute (including, but not limited to, PhD student, technician, PDRA, fellowship and group leader positions). This individual must be able to commit full-time for the duration of the programme starting the week of the bootcamp, and have approval of their institute, organisation, or funder.

- **Associated science advisor:** A researcher who can provide intellectual support to the entrepreneurial lead throughout the course of the programme. For example, an interdisciplinary project may require input from outside the research group.
- **Technology transfer representative/professional:** An individual from the team, either from or contracted to the research organisation, leading on the commercialisation of the intellectual asset with appropriate technology transfer expertise. This individual must be able to attend essential bootcamp sessions as well as the options roundabout. In addition, they must provide support for the entrepreneurial lead and team during the programme and continued support for further commercialisation activity following the programmes conclusion.
- **Business adviser:** A motivated individual from a relevant industrial sector who can offer expert guidance and support. Teams are strongly encouraged to name a business adviser in their application. Please contact the ICURE administration team if identifying a suitable advisor is a barrier. Teams are responsible for any agreements or financial arrangements that may be needed with their business advisers.

We are committed to improving diversity across our programmes and are actively seeking applications from under-represented groups, including women, people of colour, those living with disabilities and those from the LGBTQI+ communities. We also actively encourage applications led by non-Russell Group Universities. The spread across different target market sectors will also be considered when selecting applications to ensure broad portfolio coverage.

Please note that we cannot accept applications based upon a research project that has previously been through the ICURE Explore programme.

Scope

The research underpinning the bioscience innovation and the products or services being carried forward for market exploration by the team must be building on a previous BBSRC or other UKRI grant.

The technology, product or service must be either biological in nature, interact with a biological entity, involve a biological process, or address a biological challenge. We welcome applications from across the biosciences, including agriculture and food, healthy ageing, engineering biology, industrial biotechnology, and innovative tools and technologies underpinning biological research.

Applications based on medical/clinical devices and therapeutics being developed solely for a specific end-point clinical utility (including diagnostics) will not be accepted. For example, if an applicant is developing a technology specifically for diagnosing or treating a specific disease, they would not be eligible for BBSRC ICURE. However, if the applicant also aims to investigate other market opportunities for this technology outside of the health sector, e.g. for livestock, or if this



technology can be pivoted and used as a platform technology then they would be eligible for BBSRC ICURE.

Applicants are strongly advised to contact us if they are unsure whether their application would fit the scope of the call.

How do I apply?

The application form may be accessed from the links on this website. All applications will go through a competitive selection process. As part of this process, the Entrepreneurial Lead and associated science advisor will be required to participate in individual scheduled video interviews. Your application must have been agreed with your organisation prior to applying, including that the Entrepreneurial Lead can commit to the programme fulltime.