Grant application guidance: full guidance for eligibility and application

Introduction

OryzaNet Small Grants are available for small, short-term stand-alone or pilot studies to explore a new area of rice research. This might be a new direction inspired by your current research, the adoption of a new technology for your existing research or a new collaborative venture.

Early career researchers (ECR) are encouraged to use this scheme to explore a new area which could support their development as independent researchers, for example, developing ideas for a fellowship application. Such applicants will need a sponsor who is eligible to be the grant holder. All projects should consider the industrial applications of their work and outline potential for collaboration.

We especially welcome applications from OryzaNet members who have joined the OryzaNet community to contribute to a growing international network of researchers and industry partners working to advance rice science.

Scope

All projects must be in scope of the OryzaNet network and have a rice research component. Small projects will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- To serve the UK rice research community, to help the aims and objectives of OryzaNet and will naturally help to create momentum for OryzaNet to continue beyond this funded phase.
- Where the funds requested are for travel and communication, they must enable new collaborative ventures especially between the UK and the global rice community.
- Where the funds requested are for experimental science and discovery, they must be timely, be of an excellent international scientific standard and advance current knowledge OR to create tools or resources that will clearly enable innovation or discovery for rice related research of an excellent international scientific standard.
- The proposal must show how the funds will be used to enable career paths or personal development. We strongly encourage Early Career Researchers to use this scheme for career development (they can lead by proxy, but the named lead must be eligible for BBSRC funding).

- We particularly welcome projects where matched funding or contributions from another source, such as industry, can be shown.
- Applicants awarded must agree to publicise the data and outcomes via OryzaNet. A project title will initially be shown on the OryzaNet website.
- Applicants awarded must agree to present the project outcomes at the final OryzaNet meeting in 2028.
- Applicants awarded must form an agreement with OryzaNet that the project outcome and data will be made publicly available e.g. by publication by peer review.

Eligibility Criteria

OryzaNet funds are not available to support PhD students. We will not fund researchers already funded or paid and working full-time.
For projects with an industrial partner, detail the funding or contribution 'in kind' they will supply and explain how the figure for the total contribution was calculated. For example, include cash contributions or outline how in-kind figures are calculated (daily rates for staff involved, travel costs etc).
Applicants must declare whether they have any association or financial interests with any industrial partner named in the application. The Conflict-of-Interest section of this document (Section 13) will help you to define what associations should be declared.
All applicants must be OryzaNet Network members to be awarded funding via this scheme. Applicant can join the network for free via the website at https://www.oryzanet.com/
The lead applicant must meet the opportunity-specific eligibility requirements and be eligible to receive BBSRC funding. Refer to BBSRC eligibility criteria for guidance[1]

[1] https://www.ukri.org/councils/bbsrc/guidance-for-applicants/check-if-youre-eligible-for-funding/

Early Career Researchers who wish to apply should be named as the 'co-applicant' and the appropriate box completed on the application form. For the purposes of this call, ECRs should be within ten years of the award of their PhD but we are willing to be flexible, for example if they can demonstrate the reason for a longer term such as a career break. PhD students will not, normally, be eligible as applicants because they will be expected to focus on their studies. It is not essential for projects to include an industrial partner or a stakeholder partner, but you will be expected to explain the practical application and impact. The value added by partner contributions should be explained.

What is eligible:

Directly Incurred Staff
Directly Incurred Travel and Subsistence
Directly Incurred Other Costs (Lab consumables and parts, service charges, field costs etc)

Directly Allocated Investigators
Directly Allocated Estate Costs
Directly Allocated Other Costs

What is not eligible:

Top ups for stipends
Equipment purchases are ineligible however equipment access charges are allowable
Indirect Costs will not be covered

Use the format on the application form.
Confirm that your costings have been approved by your finance office and that the head of your department or university has given permission for the proposal to be submitted.
These awards are short-term, and all reports and invoices must be submitted by April 2028.
All awards will be paid in arrears to the lead applicant; we will not be able to pay your invoice if the project is excessively delayed.
Complete the table on the form, detailing costs 80% FEC.
All awards will be made at 80% FEC with the host University responsible for providing the 20% contribution. If there are co-applicants from a different institution, you must agree how the 20% shortfall will be funded before you submit the application. Write a short justification of costs. Refer to UKRI FEC guidance if needed[2]

[2] https://www.ukri.org/publications/terms-and-conditions-for-research-grants/ukri-guidance-on-fec-grant-terms-and-conditions/

Evaluation Process

Initial checks

We will check your application is complete and that it is in scope. If we have further questions, we will contact you immediately. If we cannot resolve these issues, your application will not be reviewed. Note that the OryzaNet committee has the final decision on scope.

Conflict of interest checks.

All academic lead applicants or co-applicants must declare any conflicts of interest with any named company or other organisation. This information should be detailed on the application form, where indicated.

Review process

A review panel will be drawn from the OryzaNet Core Committee following the establishment of any conflicts of interest (anyone with a conflict of interest concerning a proposal will be removed from any discussion or decision concerning that proposal). All applications will be reviewed following scoring guidance below. All applications will be discussed and ranked in the same process. Successful applications will be submitted to the BBSRC for funding approval. The review threshold for funding consideration for each individual criterion is 60%.

Criteria % contribution to total score threshold level required,

1. Excellence of the proposal, timeliness and competitiveness, value for money (50 %)
2. Contribution and relevance to the UK rice research community and OryzaNet scope (30%)
3. Capability of Applicant / team and management (15 %)
4. Ethical, economic, environmental and social impact (5%)

A committee assessment will be used for ranking. We anticipate that applications will be allocated among committee members according to expertise with 2 – 3 members assessing each grant. Independent scores will be submitted, and a committee meeting will follow to agree ranking.

Notification of Review Outcome

The Network will notify applicants of the outcome of their application once the BBSRC has approved funding. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed promptly.
The Network may pass on specific feedback if the panel makes this available. We will not offer comprehensive feedback.

Post-award Administration

Confirmation of award

The Network will send an award letter to the lead applicant's institution, summarising the terms and conditions governing the transfer of funds and confirming project start date. Projects cannot start until this has been accepted. Awards are conditional upon the project starting within one month of the date on the offer letter with the actual start date confirmed by email to the Network.
Funds must be spent as detailed on the application; virement of funds between cost headings will not be permitted.

It is anticipated that a research contract and / or collaboration agreement between institutes or entities named on the proposal may be required for some projects, depending on the number of applicants and the nature of the research. OryzaNet does not take responsibility for negotiations between partners regarding the development of this nor will OryzaNet claim ownership or IP of the grant research or outcomes.

Reporting and payment
Two documents must be completed by the Principal Applicant at the end of the project:
1. a short final report form, including an expenditure statement
2. an invoice from their institution These must be submitted in one single email to: oryzanet@nottingham.ac.uk
There is no alternative to this reporting process, and part-claims will be returned until all the required documents are presented together. You will not be able to claim the award if it is submitted after the deadline.
Final project reports are approved by the OryzaNet Core Committee, external advisory board and BBSRC. OryzaNet does not require receipts to be submitted but these must be kept by the host institution as they may be required for possible future audits. The grantee's host institution must follow their standard procedures for financial accounts.

Data Protection and Usage

Copies of proposals are made available to OryzaNet reviewers and staff, who use information provided in processing of the application, the award of any consequential grant, and for the payment, maintenance and review of the funds. OryzaNet will upload details of all applications (whether funded or not) to the OryzaNet secure area. If a project is funded, OryzaNet will publish the names of project partners, project title and project public summary on the Network website as appropriate. Case studies from completed projects will be used to promote the Networks outputs, for example, on the OryzaNet website, in written reports, via BlueSky, Linked-In and other media outlets. BBSRC uses the supplied information for research related activities, including but not limited to, transfer of funds, statistical analysis in relation to evaluation of the BBSRC study of trends and policy and strategy studies.

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

Application Form

The following guidance should assist you in completing the application form;

1. Project title

A title for all projects is required.

2. Applicant details and Co Applicant(s):

Name, position, university, e-mail. A contact person in your Finance/ Research Office contact details is also required who will be copied into emails when the offer letter is issued. Additional co-applicants may be added as required.
Industrial partner(s) details: Name, position, company, e-mail. In addition, supply the URL for the company. Industrial partners are not essential for this call.
All academic lead applicants or co-applicants must declare any conflicts of interest with any named company or other organisation. This information should be detailed on the application form, where indicated.

3. Public summary of project (200 words max)

Describe your project in a manner that can be readily understood by a lay audience. Do not include any confidential information as this information will be used by OryzaNet, and potentially the BBSRC, for public dissemination if the award is funded. This section should clearly state how the project fits within a rice research context and the BBSRC will use this information to check that the proposal matches their criteria for Network funding. The summary is used to check any reviewers' conflicts of interest.

4. Type of grant (state all that apply)

1. Scientific Discovery and Innovation
2. Travel collaboration and international engagement
3. Tools and Resources Development Project dates

5. Project Dates

Please detail your start date. You will have up to one month to start the project from the award of the grant. We anticipate awards will be made promptly in February or March, allowing time for any necessary paperwork to be completed by April 2027 when work should start. We expect projects will be 12 months or less. All projects must be completed and finalised with paperwork returned to OryzaNet by April 2028 (see section in the guidance on reporting and payment). *** do not apply for an award if you are unable to meet this timescale***

6. Project details

Text should be at least single-spaced, 11-point Arial (or equivalent) with a 2 cm margin. Applicants must use the specified headings so that the proposal can be reviewed against the evaluation criteria. Ensure that you cover all aspects, as marks cannot be given if information is missing. Figures should be contained within the three-page limit. If you are relying on unpublished work to make your case, you must provide enough evidence for reviewers to assess your project.

Vision (max 300 words)

Explain how your proposed work,

1. is of excellent quality and importance, has the potential to advance current understanding, or generate new knowledge, thinking or discovery.
2. is timely given current trends, context, and needs.
3. Impacts world-leading research, society, the economy, or the environment.

Approach (max 1,000 words)

Explain how your project:

1. is effective and appropriate to achieve your objectives
2. is feasible, and comprehensively identifies any risks to delivery and how they will be managed
3. uses a clearly written and transparent methodology (if applicable)
4. summarises any previous work and describes how this will be built upon and progressed (if applicable)
5. describes how your, and if applicable your team's, research environment (in terms of the place and relevance to the project) will contribute to the success of the work
6. is value for money and briefly justify the budget.
7. Are there risks to your project? If so, identify these.
8. Provide a project plan including milestones and timelines in the form of an embedded Gantt chart or similar.

Ethical, economic, environmental and social impact considerations (max 150 words)

Identify the ethical, economic, environmental and social impacts of the proposed activity and explain how you will deal with these aspects.

Trusted Research and Innovation (100 words max)

Does the proposed work involve international collaboration in a sensitive research or technology area? If so, please explain how you will safeguard any intellectual property of any new discoveries and mitigate any risks.

Resources and cost justification (words max 200)

We allocate £50,000 from the flexible funds and aim to fund approx. 7 - 10 projects of excellent quality. We strongly encourage Early Career Researchers (ECR) to apply and to demonstrate career enablement. We outline three types of projects that are not exclusive:

1. Scientific Discovery and Innovation (up to £8000)
2. Travel collaboration and international engagement (up to £3000)
3. Tools and Resources Development (up to £5000)

Research projects must be costed at 80% FEC, with the receiving RO contributing the remaining 20%. The maximum financial support that can be requested is up to £10,000 at 80% Full Economic Cost (FEC).

Project partners (words max 200)

Partners must be listed in the 'Project partners' section of the application with a clear description and monetary/in-kind valuation. A formal letter of support on headed paper is required to confirm their commitment and added value.

Curriculum Vitae or capability to deliver

A short CV (no more than 1 side each) of the lead applicants including ECRs if applicable to be included within the single pdf.

Letter of Support

A letter of support is not required but you are asked to confirm that you have permission from your institute to apply lead applicant is eligible to receive BBSRC funding and the University or Institute accepts the conditions.

1. Please do not send any additional documents.
2. All applications will be acknowledged within one working day.
3. All information submitted is held in strict confidence.

Final Checklist

Please read and tick to indicate you have done the following: ✓

	I have read the OryzaNet small grant guidelines for the OryzaNet Flexible Fund small grant.
	I confirm there is a Lead investigator on the application who is eligible to apply for UKRI funding
	I am a member of the OryzaNet Network.
	I confirm that the costings have been approved by my finance /research office and my Institute/Department has given approval for the proposal to be submitted. I confirm that evidence for this can be provided if asked.
	I have attached CV or Team capability Statement OR Statement of Track record plus up to 3 publications for the lead applicant and ECR Researcher co-lead leading the work (if applicable). One side of A4 per applicant
	I confirm I have no conflict of interest

Submission

A single PDF of the completed application form and one-page CV of the main applicants should be submitted to OryzaNet@Nottingham.ac.uk.