CARBON RECYLING NETWORK
FLEXIBLE FUND
PROOF OF CONCEPT OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

1. **Context:**
   BBSRC NIBB Proof of Concept funding will be used to encourage and support multidisciplinary projects which seek to integrate component parts within the CCnet framework. A total fund of **£800,000 (80% fEC)** will be awarded: £200,000 after each of 4 funding calls in tranches of up to £50k. Funds will be prioritised for accessing and developing key technology areas using UK open access technology service providers and those that have clear potential for further funding or have a route to commercial translation. Although an industrial partner is not required for PoC funding, it is encouraged. Individual PoC projects should last no longer than 12 months.

   All funding calls will be advertised using the CCnet website, twitter and email, as well as other bodies including KTN and learned societies to ensure wide coverage of the call. Funding calls will be open for approximately 4 weeks.

   Please note: The maximum award value for a PoC is £50k. PoCs are awarded at **80%fEC**. The awardee at the academic institution **MUST** be willing to provide the remaining **20%fEC.**

2. **Eligibility:**
   Funding is available for current CCnet members, who are eligible to receive BBSRC funding (https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/grants-guide/)
   Up to 20% of PoC project value can be subcontracted to industry to buy a service or to an
   SME to facilitate involvement. However, PoC funding will be counted as De minimis aid and so Industrial partners need to ensure that by accepting involvement, they are not in breach of De minimis aid rules (https://www.gov.uk/state-aid).

3. **Application Form:**
   The application form will comprise a maximum of eight-pages (Ariel Font 10, single space, minimum of 2 cm margins), and detail the: (i) People and Organisations Involved; (ii) Executive Summary (iii) Track record of Applicants; (iv) Background; (iv) Description of Proposed Research (v) References; (vi) Relevance To CCnet; (vii) Gantt Chart; (viii) Impact; (ix) Public Summary; (x) Data Sharing; (xi) Justification of Resources; (xii) Predicted Breakdown of Cost. Applications must be accompanied by a brief 1-page CV from applicants and any co-applicants, together with a 1-page description of the combined capabilities and facilities available in the organisation/s.

4. **Application Process:**
   Applications should be submitted on the application form as a pdf document by email to Network Manager louise.dynes@nottingham.ac.uk: all applications will be acknowledged within three working days. The Network Manager will also be the main point of contact for this fund. All information submitted will be held in strictest confidence.

5. **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. This process will take about **one** week.

All applications will be reviewed by two members of the Board; however, all applications will be available for them to read in advance of their presentation to the MB meeting if they wish to. 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 decline discussion of that particular application. MB members will have around **four weeks** to review the applications, at the end of this time a score must be submitted to the Network Manager.

Proposals will be introduced at meetings, discussed by the MB and ranked by the following criteria:

Criteria	% contribution of total score
Quality of Science	30
Relevance of application to CCnet scope	15
Industrial relevance and pathway to impact	20
Economic, environmental and social impact	15
Project management	10
Value for money	10

For each criterion, proposals must score **60% of total marks** allocated.

The MB will be able to award proof of concept funds in tranches of up to £50k; they 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 EG; in any case of conflict of interest, the EG will be joined by the MB Chair (or a senior nominee) to approve awards. Within the week following the MB meeting, the Network Manager will update the BBSRC NIBB Extranet with award details and notify all applicants of the outcome with feedback.

Independent external review of proposals will be sought 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.

6. **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 Nottingham 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 Nottingham in arrears on final project costs once a project has completed.** The University will then transfer funds to the awardee. For grants over £25k, the University of Nottingham will retain 10% of the total award payable until the final report is received.

7. **Monitoring, Reporting and Finances:**
    At the end of award, a final report on results against objectives will be submitted to the Network Manager within one calendar month. The Report will detail the: (i) Work That was Undertaken; (ii) The Outcome(s); (iii) The Next Steps, and; (iv) Actual Financial Expenditure. The grantee's host institution will follow their standard procedures for financial accounts. The EG will approve the final reports. In the case of conflict of interest, the MB Chair or senior nominee will review such reports. The Final Report includes a 500 word public summary of the work which may be published at the CCnet website. Grantees will be expected to give an oral presentation at the next appropriate annual scientific meeting and required to make a "summary/case study" slide for the CCnet website.

8. **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)

9. Data Protection Regulations:

Copies of proposals will be made available to the CCnet evaluators (members of the EG, 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. The BBSRC may use information for research related activities, including but not limited to, transfer of PoC funds, statistical analysis in relation to evaluation of the BBSRC NIBB, study of trends and policy and strategy studies.

To meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of grants may also be made available on the Research Councils' web sites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

10. Acknowledgement:

Any publications should acknowledge support as follows '**We acknowledge that CCnet, a BBSRC NIBB, supported this project'**.

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                    │    PoC Call Opens    │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼  *4 weeks*
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │   PoC Call Closes    │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼  *4 weeks*
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │     Assessment      │
                    │       Meeting       │
                    └─────────────────────┘
        ◄───                  │  *1 week*
  [BBSRC | UK Research        ▼
   and Innovation]   ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Successful Bids Advised │
                    │    Feedback Given    │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼  *4 weeks*
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Project Initiated and│
                    │      Completed       │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                              ▼  *4 weeks*
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │     Final Report     │
                    └─────────────────────┘
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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Oral Presentation at Annual │  *Next appropriate time*
                    │  Scientific Meeting  │
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PoC Call Opens

4 weeks

PoC Call Closes

4 weeks

Assessment Meeting

1 week

BBSRC | UK Research and Innovation

Successful Bids Advised Feedback Given

4 weeks

Project Initiated and Completed

4 weeks

Final Report

Oral Presentation at Annual Scientific Meeting

Next appropriate time