BBSRC EngBio ICURe Discover October 2025

Key Dates & Expectations

Programme Outline*	
Applications Open	**30th July 2025**
Applications Close	**23rd September 2025, 23.59**
Welcome Call	**17th October 2025 (1.5 hrs)**
Bootcamp Day 1	**21st October 2025 (5.5 hrs)**
Bootcamp Day 2	**22nd October 2025 (5.5 hrs)**
Coaching Calls	**Dates TBC (1.5 hrs)**
Pitch Training	**Date TBC (1.5 hrs)**
Practice Pitch	**Date TBC**
Options Roundabout	**15th January 2026**
***Exact timings and dates for sessions will be confirmed on your Welcome Call**	
***The Entrepreneurial Lead will be expected to attend all sessions scheduled above and should hold these dates in their diary when applying.** ***Technology Transfer Representatives are also welcome to attend all sessions, but it is not obligatory.**	

What is BBSRC EngBio ICURe Discover?

BBSRC EngBio ICURe Discover is a 10-week (plus 3 additional weeks to accommodate the Christmas break), part-time online market exploration programme, supporting any research staff or technical research staff member who receives their salary or stipend from an eligible university, PSRE, research institute or organisation (including, but not limited to, Ph.D., technician*, PDRA, fellowship, and group leader positions).

*Building on the Technician Commitment UKRI Action Plan and the UKRI people and teams action plan, we particularly encourage applications from research technical professionals (RTPs) as entrepreneurial lead.

The programme aims to enhance market awareness and deepen the understanding of potential technology applications.

How does it work?

Our 10-week, part-time online market discovery programme is developed using the lean startup methodology, which applies the scientific method (hypothesise, test, evaluate) to business ideas. Participants will learn how to use this approach to gauge their potential customers' opinions about their idea, product, or service. This programme is suitable for participants looking to explore the potential of their early-stage projects or those who require a part-time commitment for market exploration.

What does it include?

- Support to carry out market and customer discovery on a part-time basis over a 10-week period.
- Introduction to Strategyzer Business Model Canvas (BMC).
- Trainer and mentor feedback with next steps guidance following your BBSRC EngBio ICURe Discover journey.
- Up to £2,500 support for market discovery activities.

Discover provides a route towards other ICURe Programmes. ICURe Discover is now a compulsory route into the ICURe Explore Programme.

Why Attend?

Past participants say that having dedicated time to spend understanding what commercialisation of research means has dramatically changed their perspective on their research, ideas, and innovations. The programme introduces ICURe and provides the space and opportunity to think differently about impact, commercialisation, and entrepreneurship.

What is the scope for the BBSRC EngBio ICURe Discover?

Engineering Biology must be the primary, underpinning technology for the product, process, or service being carried forward for market exploration.

UKRI defines engineering biology as the application of rigorous engineering principles to the design and fabrication of biological components and systems, from modifications of natural systems to new forms of artificial biology.

Please see below an illustrative list of example inclusions and exclusions to demonstrate the boundaries of the scope for this opportunity. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Examples of Inclusions

- Orthogonal biosystems: proposals in engineering cells and organisms which include systems or parts not found in nature to impart new capacities or chemistry
- Regulatory circuits: proposals designing and inserting well-characterised circuits or networks, to generate new functions or responses in cells and organisms
- Protocells: proposals in bottom-up chemical design approaches to produce synthetic or semi-synthetic cells and compartments
- Metabolic engineering: proposals involving using complex modifications informed by predictive models of biosynthetic pathways to allow or enhance production of useful products
- Minimal genomes: proposals involving the understanding of the minimal number of parts (genes) needed for life, to serve as a chassis for engineering minimal cell factories for new functions
- Bio nanoscience: proposals that utilise and exploit synthetic molecular nano machines based on cellular systems

Examples of Exclusions

- Applications that focus on the engineering of a system in which biology is embedded, rather than engineering the biological system itself. *For example, engineering the scaffold in tissue engineering, while not engineering the biological component*
- Applications that are learning from biology, rather than engineering the biological system. *For example, design of a purely physical or chemical mechanical construct, taking inspiration from biological systems, rather than engineering an artificial or modified biological system*
- Applications focused on the development of an output of pre-existing engineering biology, with no tangible engineering biology being conducted. *For example, an experiment using a metabolite of a well-established engineered chassis as an input to a chemical process, with no demonstrable element of engineering biology conducted by the applicants.*
    - However, if you are taking pre-existing engineering biology in a new context, such as a novel chemical production using an existing engineered chassis, then you would be eligible for BBSRC EngBio ICURe.
- Applications based on medical/clinical devices and therapeutics being developed solely for a specific end-point clinical utility (including diagnostics). *For example, developing a technology specifically for diagnosing or treating a specific disease.*
    - However, if you also aim to investigate other market opportunities for this technology outside of the health sector, for example for livestock, or if this technology can be pivoted and used as a platform technology, then you would be eligible for this BBSRC EngBio ICURe.

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