BBSRC ICURe Explore January 2027

Key Dates & Expectations

Programme Outline*	
Applications Open	1st September 2026
Applications Close	27th November 2026 11:59pm
Welcome Call	25th January 2027 (2.5 hrs)
Bootcamp Day 1 (In person)	27th January 2027
Bootcamp Day 2 (In person)	28th January 2027
Bootcamp Day 3 (Online)	1st February 2027
Bootcamp Day 4 (Online)	2nd February 2027
Coaching Calls (Online)	TBC
Mid-Point Review (Online)	19th March 2027
Pitch Training (Online)	23rd April 2027
Practice Pitch (Online)	29th April 2027
Options Roundabout (In person)	5th & 6th May 2027
*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.	

About BBSRC ICURe Explore

BBSRC ICURe Explore is a fast-paced, full-time, 12-week market exploration programme for bioscience researchers and technicians. It provides financial support of up to £35,000, which includes up to £20,000 for the Entrepreneurial Lead's salary and up to £15,000 for assumption testing and customer discovery activities.

This programme is aimed at helping bioscience research teams from across the UK to explore technology applications and test value propositions through extensive market engagement globally. This programme is designed using the lean start-up methodology, which applies the scientific method (hypothesise, test and evaluate) to business ideas. You will learn how to use this approach to gauge your potential customers' opinions on your bioscience-based idea, product, or service.

Past participants say that having three months of commercialisation support, dedicated time, and funding to spend on customer discovery has dramatically changed their perspective on their innovation.

What's included

- Up to £35,000 of financial support, which includes up to £20,000 for the salary of the Entrepreneurial Lead to participate full time in the programme and up to £15,000 for market discovery activities and business advisor.
- Access to our team of experts and proactive connections to our network of entrepreneurs, investors and funders.
- Membership of a national community of past ICURe participants and graduates.
- 4 days of intensive bootcamp training on how to develop a hypothetical business model and identify your customers' pain points.
- 3 months to test your value propositions through extensive market engagement. This includes planning and executing tailored market discovery for your bioscience idea, product or service using online software platforms, video conferencing and marketing tools.
- Undertake deep in-market research of supply chain, regulators, customers and competitors.
- Pitch to an experienced panel of bioscience investors, funders, mentors, and other experts to help accelerate the impact from your research
- Opportunity to access further support through ICURe Exploit to spin-out or licence your technology

Why Attend?
Our participants get access to leading university resources, and fantastic networks of mentors and investors who join them early on their journey. We're de-risking very exciting technologies which have enormous potential to change the world for the better.

Who can apply?
BBSRC ICURe Explore is open to bioscience researchers (including PhD student, research technical professional (RTP)*, postdoctoral research associate (PDRA), fellowship and group leader positions) in all UK universities, BBSRC-funded institutes, and approved public sector research enterprises.

Bioscience Scope

The technology, product or service being carried forward for market exploration by the team must be either:

- biological in nature
- interact with a biological entity
- involve a biological process
- address a biological challenge

We welcome applications from across the biosciences, including

- agriculture and food
- healthy ageing
- engineering biology
- industrial biotechnology
- innovative tools and technologies underpinning biological research

What we will not fund

Applications based on medical or clinical devices and therapeutics being developed solely for a specific end-point clinical utility (including diagnostics) will not be accepted.

For example, if you are developing a technology specifically for diagnosing or treating a specific disease, you would not be eligible for BBSRC ICURe. 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 BBSRC ICURe.

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

Previous Funding

Please note that you must have completed ICURe Discover if you wish to apply for ICURe Explore.

In addition, priority will be given to teams where the research underpinning the bioscience innovation and the products or services being carried forward for market exploration is building on a previous BBSRC or another UKRI grant.

In your application, please specify what UKRI grants have supported this underpinning research to date.

If you are a PhD student and your application is based on your PhD research, please specify the funder of your PhD.

How to apply

All applications will go through a competitive selection process, and the entrepreneurial lead and associated science advisor will be required to participate in individual scheduled video interviews as part of that process.

Your application must have been agreed with your organisation before applying, including that you can commit to the programme full-time.

Ask about this funding opportunity

The Helix Way Team Email: ciaran@thehelixway.com / info@thehelixway.com

The BBSRC Team Email: kcu@bbsrc.ukri.org