

Business Interaction Vouchers – Application Guidance

Consumer Lab is one of six Diet and Health Open Innovation Research Clubs (OIRC), funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), with support from DEFRA, Innovate UK, and the Medical Research Council (MRC). Our vision is to develop a distributed UK-wide network (including industry and academic members) that works to improve the translation of academic research for application in an industry context.

Business Interaction Vouchers - Overview

Consumer Lab Business Interaction Vouchers (BIVs) are designed to nurture proof-of-concept projects involving collaborations between academic and external partners. BIVs will generally support small, early-stage, collaborations, and their purpose is to boost confidence in an idea in preparation for further translational research and a larger project. In so doing, they lay the groundwork for longer-term academic-industry interaction.

How much funding is available?

The Consumer Lab has been awarded an impact account of £250,000 per annum, running between November 2022 to November 2027 to support three funding schemes (BIVs, flexible mobility awards, and feasibility awards).

BIVs are paid directly to the academic partner. BIVs are up to £50,000 (inclusive of VAT) BBSRC funding per project. However, the expectation is that most BIVs will be for smaller amounts. Bristol shall pay the awardee the funding at 100% directly incurred (DI) costs plus 100% of directly allocated (DA) staff costs of the full economic costs incurred by the awardee in respect of the project, up to the maximum amount of the funding. BIVs must support research activities that last no longer than 6 months. Contributions from businesses are not required but are encouraged, where possible.

Eligible costs

Primarily, Consumer Lab aims to support research activities (DI costs) and encourages DA costs to be kept to a minimum. Applicants will be required to justify costs in the application form.

Costs might include:

- Investigator and researcher time - salary
- Events – conferences, networking, workshops etc.
- Economy / standard-fare travel and subsistence
- Consumables, resources, and equipment
- Specialist training
- Partner costs (if they cannot be met by the non-university partner)

BIVs cannot fund the following:

- Indirect or estates costs at the research organisation
- Any costs relating to intellectual property protection including but not limited to registering, maintaining, or supporting patents or property rights
- Equipment with a value of £10,000 or more
- Undergraduate or postgraduate activities or training, or core PhD training, including tuition or bench fees

Eligibility

All applicants (including Co-Is and non-University partners) are strongly encouraged to become a member of Consumer Lab **before** their application is submitted. Join online [here](#). Organisations can be a member of more than one Innovation Hub.

Academic partner

Funding is available to academics who are eligible to receive BBSRC funding ([see BBSRC's guidance](#)).

All proposals must be within the remit of Consumer Lab (see 'Consumer Lab Remit and Funding Priorities' section below).

Consumer Lab defines an Early Career Researcher (ECR) as within 8 years of PhD or equivalent professional training OR within 6 years of first academic appointment (excluding any career break). In particular, we strongly encourage applications from recent PhD graduates and junior post-doctoral researchers. In cases where an ECR does not hold a permanent contract, ECRs must;

- Include a Co-I with a permanent contract
- Demonstrate that their existing contract will apply throughout the period of their Consumer Lab funding, or that it can be extended to do so
- Provide a letter of support from their Head of Department or line manager

Non-university partner

All applications must list an external (non-university) partner. This partner can be from any business, including a small-to-medium-sized enterprise (SME). A partner can also be from a government department or devolved administration. Note, however, that priority will be given to applications where researchers can articulate how their research might be scaled up (e.g., via a Consumer Lab Feasibility Award) to impact population-level human health. Charities are also eligible partners, although the same requirement applies - priority will be given to applications that outline how the partnership could evolve to deliver population-level improvements in human health.

Consumer Lab Remit and Funding Priorities

All projects must relate to human dietary behaviour, and they must address a topic that has the potential to promote a positive change in human health.

In addition to meeting formal eligibility requirements (see [‘Eligibility’](#) section above), we encourage applications that:

- Develop new ways to study, understand, and measure real-world dietary behaviour.
- Draw on biological, social, and psychological research/theory relating to drivers of dietary behaviour.
- Focus on dietary transition and changes in food preference or dietary habits over time.
- Might be considered ‘high risk/high reward’ or ‘disruptive,’ and have potential as the basis for a springboard to translational research.
- Provide a better understanding of dietary behaviours in hard-to-reach (or seldom heard) and marginalised communities.

It is expected that all projects will abide by Consumer Lab’s core guiding principles (see ‘Consumer Lab Core Guiding Principles’ section below).

There is no limited list of activities for which an award can be used. Illustrative examples are:

- Running networking events, exploratory meetings, or workshops with research beneficiaries
- Small-scale piloting and data collection
- Secondary data analysis

Application Process

Consumer Lab follows a two-step application process for BIVs. All prospective applicants should first submit an ‘expression of interest’ form (form available for download from the [Consumer Lab website](#) - Please use the BIV expression of interest form). Following submission of an expression of interest, all applications will be offered feedback and selected projects will be invited to submit a full application. The full application form will be emailed directly to the Principal Investigator along with instructions from the Consumer Lab Manager

The signature(s) at the end of the full application confirm a commitment to the activities described in the application. In cases where an industry partner is unable to sign, an email or Letter of Support will suffice.

Deadlines are posted on the main [‘Funding Opportunities’](#) page.

The academic and non-university partner must agree a start date prior to application submission. The start of the project must be within six months of the full application deadline. Please note that, unless agreed otherwise, the project should begin and end on the dates specified in the application.

Internal applicants only

University of Bristol applicants require an approved Worktribe FEC before submission. Applicants should contact their [Faculty Finance team](#) at least three weeks before the submission deadline to discuss the project and its costings. Please access the [Worktribe guidance on Sharepoint](#) for further support

To submit the application

Expressions of interest and full applications should be sent to the Consumer Lab Manager (consumer-lab@bristol.ac.uk) as MS Word documents. Other documents (e.g., letters of support) can be submitted as a PDF.

Assessment of Applications

The Consumer Lab [Impact Account Panel](#) (IAP) will review all applications. The IAP reviews applications independently of the hub Executive Committee and the hub Advisory Board. Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Relevance of application to the objectives of Consumer Lab:** Does the project address a topic that has the potential to promote a positive change in human health? Will it facilitate an understanding of drivers of human dietary behaviour by studying consumer interactions with food?
- **Benefit and impact:** To what extent does the proposal demonstrate benefit for the applicant and the partner? Will there be lasting benefits beyond the duration of the project? Is there potential for the project to act as a springboard to translational research with real industrial or societal relevance? Does the project recruit hard-to-reach (or seldom-heard) and marginalised communities?
- **Deliverables:** Are there clear objectives and milestones in the work plan clear? Are the outcomes realistic and achievable? Has the applicant demonstrated sufficient awareness of risks and contingencies?

Once agreed by the panel, applicants (both successful and unsuccessful) will be informed of the outcome and will receive feedback on the application.

Successful Applications

- You will be notified in writing by the Consumer Lab Manager, who will send you an award letter confirming your award details. To confirm acceptance of your award, please arrange for the award letter to be signed by an authorised representative of your institution and returned to the Consumer Lab Manager.
- Where the project is being conducted by the awardee jointly with other collaborating parties named in the application the awardee shall be responsible for ensuring that appropriate written agreements are in place with the collaborating parties.

- External awardees shall submit invoices to Bristol quarterly in arrears based on actual expenditure incurred. Invoices must quote a valid Purchase Order number that will be issued upon acceptance of this agreement.
- The awardee will ensure that the final report in respect of the project is submitted to the Consumer Lab Manager no later than three months following completion of the project. The final report shall contain full details of the results and outputs of the project together with details of how the awardee and the collaborators plan to use the results generated during the project in the future, in particular, details of any plans for commercial exploitation of any intellectual property rights and results generated during the project. Bristol will not publicly disclose the final report without the consent of the awardee, provided that the final report is clearly marked as confidential. In addition, applicants will be required to complete a generic assessment form that includes questions about equality, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI).
- Within three months of project end date, the awardee will provide the Consumer Lab Manager with two further reports, both of which will be suitable for public disclosure, detailing:
 - The academic, economic, societal and/or technological impact created and/or forecast as a result of the project.
 - Any public and/or private-sector funding (in addition to the funding and in addition to any funding from Bristol which the collaborators have received in respect of the project) which the awardee or any of the collaborators have secured for future research as a result of or in connection with the project having been undertaken.
- The awardee shall attend Consumer Lab conferences and participate in Consumer Lab events where reasonably requested to do so.

Summary of Funding Process

Please see Annex A.

Consumer Lab Core Guiding Principles

Consumer Lab is guided by principles of EDI. It also promotes the following standards in scientific research:

- Best practice in data sharing – see [BBSRC Data Sharing Policy, version 1.22 March 2017](#)
- Pre-registration of project hypotheses and data analyses on platforms such as [Open Science Framework](#).
- Anonymisation of primary data and making it publicly available at the point at which findings are published or three years after they have been collected, whichever occurs first, and making data publicly discoverable through an appropriate research data repository (e.g., '[data.bris](#)'), which assigns DataCite Digital Object Identifiers (DOI) to deposited datasets.

Subsidy Control

Applicants may name formal Project Partners, that is, a third-party person who is not employed on the grant, or a third-party organisation, who provides specific contributions either in cash or in kind, to the project. Entitlement to the outputs of the project and/or Intellectual Property will be determined between the parties involved, however any access to project outputs and/or IP must be in line with any relevant Subsidy Control

regulation and must comply with their institution and UKRI's policies on the conduct of research - <https://www.ukri.org/publications/ukri-policy-on-the-governance-of-good-research-practice/>.

It is the awardee's responsibility to ensure all agreements and contracts are in place BEFORE the project starts.

Data Protection Regulations

Applicants, including partners and collaborators, consent to the University and UKRI (or any agent thereof) processing personal data relating to them for the purposes of assessing, awarding, and managing the impact award scheme, and to ensure compliance with any applicable laws, regulations, and procedures. Copies of projects will be made available to the Consumer Lab Impact Account Panel, who will use information provided in the application for processing the proposal, the award of any voucher, and for the payment, maintenance, and review of the voucher funds. See the [Consumer Lab Privacy Policy](#).

Applicants, including partners and collaborators, agree to abide at all times by the provisions of the UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018 in relation to any processing by them of the personal data of others.

As funding comes from the BBSRC, to meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, details of awards may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

The Data Controller

The University of Bristol is the Data Controller and is committed to protecting the rights of individuals in line with Data Protection legislation. University of Bristol's Data Protection Officer can be contacted via email at: data-protection@bristol.ac.uk.

Annex A

Awarding process followed by the Impact Account Panel (IAP) – Reviewed Sept 2024

Feasibility Awards and Business Interaction Vouchers

