



CARBON RECYCLING NETWORK FLEXIBLE FUND BUSINESS INTERACTION VOUCHERS OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

1. Background:

BBSRC NIBB Business Interaction Vouchers (BIVs) awarded by **Carbon Recycling Network (up to £20K 100% costed)**, will be used to encourage and support collaboration between academic partners and industrial partners within the Carbon Recycling Network framework. Only members of Carbon Recycling Network will be eligible, and who joined at least 3 months before applying for a voucher. They will be awarded to undertake a defined piece of work by the academic partner for/with the industrial partner. The goal will be to: establish a longer-term relationship between the academic and industrial partner; and/or improve interactions between the collaborating partners, and/or; lead to new research technology transfer projects. New collaborations and collaborations aiming to move research up the TRL levels will be prioritised. Funded projects will include, but are not limited to, generating new experimental data, data analysis, technical consultancy or literature review. The industrial partner will be expected to at least match the value of the awarded voucher, either through a cash or in-kind contribution.

Please note: BIV awards should focus attention on UK based partners where there is benefit to the UK research base and the UK economy. In exceptional circumstances, where there is not a UK company to exploit the research a BIV may be awarded to a project with an overseas partner company. The application should provide a clear justification for working with an overseas partner company and outline how the project will lead to building international collaborations, how the project will be taken forward leading to inward investment and the benefit back to the UK. Individual BIV projects should **last no longer than 6 months** and the project must begin within 3 months of receipt of the offer letter.

2. Eligibility:

Funding is available for current Carbon Recycling Network members, who are eligible to receive BBSRC funding and are based at a UK institution:

[\(https://www.ukri.org/councils/bbsrc/guidance-for-applicants/\)](https://www.ukri.org/councils/bbsrc/guidance-for-applicants/)

A BIV may be used to support short term postgraduate research student positions (for example summer placements), provided that the BIV project forms a discrete piece of work and has a separate employment contract from any stipend. The 6 hours a week that PhD students have for additional paid work can also be utilised for BIV projects, again this should be a separate discrete project from their PhD and requires a separate employment contract. A BIV cannot be used to subsidise student grants.

3. Collaboration Agreement:

The academic and industrial partner will agree a start date and will need to have a signed agreement in place prior to the project commencing. IP and collaboration agreements will be drawn up by the respective partnering organisations (academia and industry) and the Network Manager will require evidence that these are in place.

4. Finances:

- Carbon Recycling Network BIVs will be awarded at **100% fEC to include VAT**.
- BIVs will be paid in arrears to the BIV awardee. Funds will be paid by BBSRC to the University of Nottingham in quarterly arrears, on final project costs once a project has completed.
- Equipment is not an eligible cost. Maximum 20% of costs may be subcontracted, however, facility access charges can be included.

5. **Submission and Review Process:**

Applications will be accepted after the scheme has been publicised to Carbon Recycling Network members and up until the deadline. The Executive Group (EG) together with a representative from the Management Board (MB) will form a BIV Evaluation Panel.

The Carbon Recycling Network Manager will check application documents are correctly completed and send them to the BIV Evaluation Panel. In the case of conflict of interest, the EG will engage the MB Chair or a nominee to evaluate the application. The BIV Evaluation Panel will review the application in confidence to ensure it: (i) falls within the scope of Carbon Recycling Network; (ii) has a realistic project plan to achieve the outcomes within the stated time frame, or 6 months maximum, taking into account the experience and track record of the parties; (iii) is value for money and has been appropriately costed; (iv) includes at least an equivalent contribution by the industrial partner, in cash or in-kind, and; (v) has potential for further development.

If an application is not within the scope of Carbon Recycling Network, it may be forwarded to another NIBB. Priority will be given to proposals that, for example; (i) aid technology transfer; (ii) work towards 'solving' a technical problem for an industrial partner, and; (iii) adapt an existing technology for a new application.

The Carbon Recycling Network Manager will agree a starting date for accepted projects. Reports of awarded projects, and final project reports, will be an agenda item on MB meetings. In the event that Carbon Recycling Network BIV fund is being exhausted too rapidly, the MB may decide to ration awards.

6. **Reports:**

Progress made and the outcomes must be submitted to the Carbon Recycling Network Manager within 1 month of the agreed project end date. The Report will detail the: (i) Work That was Undertaken; (ii) The Outcome(s); (iii) The Next Steps, and; (iv) Actual breakdown of costs; (v) A 500 word public summary, which will be an extra page on the reporting form. The report must be countersigned by the industrial partner and be accompanied by a separate 500 word public summary of the work which may be published on the Carbon Recycling Network website. The applicant will be required to make a "summary/case study" slide for the Carbon Recycling Network website. Invoices will not be paid until the report has been received and approved by the management board.

7. **Minimal Financial Assistance:**

BBSRC NIBB Interaction Vouchers will be counted as Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) and so Industrial partners need to ensure they are not in breach of the MFA provisions of the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/subsidy-control-regime>) by accepting the Innovation voucher.

8. **Data Protection:**

All data collected during the course of application will be protected in line with the BBSRC Data Protection Policy which can be found at: <https://www.ukri.org/publications/data-protection-policy/>. The BBSRC may use information for research related activities, including but not limited to, transfer of BIV 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 (including successful PoC awards and Business Interaction Vouchers) may also be made available on the Research Councils' web sites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists.

9. **Acknowledgement:**

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