BRITE Pump-Priming Fund

Contents

Timeline

- Applications Open: **5th January**
- Information Event: **22nd January**

- Application Deadline: **12pm, 27th February**

- Project Decisions: **Wednesday 25 March 2026**
- Successful projects Notified: **April 2026**

Introduction

This opportunity is underpinned by funding from the Research England UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funded project: Biologics Regional Innovation Technology Ecosystem (BRITE) project. The purpose of this fund is to accelerate the development of biologic assets at Liverpool Higher Education Institutes (HEI).

The total value of the funding pot is £600k, with the expectation to fund a minimum of 6 projects costing **up to £100k** each. We will support projects lasting **up to 12 months**, although there is no standard model. We encourage you to carefully consider your research needs and what is most achievable and appropriate for the funding. Further details on scoping are outlined below.

If you have any questions or queries, we encourage applicants to get in touch as early as possible, which allows us to be responsive if there is high demand for lower valued or shorter projects. This fund is delivered via the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine Knowledge Exchange Team, and all documents for consideration should be submitted via ke@lstmed.ac.uk.

Scope and Remit

The purpose of this fund is to support the advancement of technologies towards market readiness. Applicants should ultimately be looking to develop their work into a viable product or service.

This fund is open to projects in the following areas:

- Biologics.
- Biologics Enabling Technologies.

Biologics

We define biologics as: "structurally complex and process-dependent medicinal products derived from living organisms, and used to prevent, treat, or diagnose disease." Examples of biologics include (but are not limited to) biosimilars, antibody-based technologies, protein-based or nucleic acid-based vaccines, cell and gene therapies and blood or plasma derive products (Appendix - Figure 1).

What is not a biologic:

- Chemically synthesised small molecules (e.g., paracetamol, imatinib, penicillin).
- Simple peptides produced by chemical synthesis.
- Traditional vaccines made solely from killed or inactivated pathogens without recombinant components or innovative technologies (though some overlap exists).
- Medical devices or diagnostics without a biologically active component.

Biologics Enabling Technologies

Projects that support biologics development, including enabling technologies are also eligible, provided proposals can demonstrate direct linkage to biologics-specific bottlenecks or challenges. Applications proposing a focus solely on technology development will not be eligible for this fund.

In addition to experimental and technical activity, the fund is also intended to accelerate relevant translational pathways, such as Market Access Plans, Licensing Agreements or Spinout Creation, so projects should aim to achieve sufficient data to establish the initial viability of an any biologics assets – i.e., to provide confidence in the underlying concept.

Technology Readiness Levels (TRL)

The fund will support projects at Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) of 3 and above (Appendix - Figure 2). Projects should provide clear evidence of, at minimum, *in vitro* proof-of-concept data as part of the application and should address a key bottleneck or challenge of biologic development and translation. We expect funded projects to exit at TRL 4 or 5, sufficiently progressed and de-risked, complete with a downstream development plan, to attract substantive follow-on investment from external funders.

Project Costs

Projects should be costed at 100% FEC, including core-funded staff costs as well as indirect & estates costs. **Maximum project cost is £100K, with a maximum duration of 12-Months.**

Ineligible Costs:

- Fundamental discovery or initial proof-of-concept research.
- Entire translational projects i.e. taking a product to market.
- Staff in between-posts (i.e. bridging support) or PhD studentships (tuition fee or bench fee costs as part of an existing studentship).
- Extension of other funded projects, without clear distinction & delineation of intended resources, activities & outcomes.
- Costs relating to commercialisation or the protection of intellectual property.
- General-use and capital equipment costs.
- Conference attendance or miscellaneous travel - any travel support requested should be clearly justified.
- Open-access publication costs.
- Training or workshop costs.

Applicant Eligibility

Principal Investigator's (PI) must be affiliated to one of the four BRITE-funded academic partners; Edge Hill University, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool School of

Tropical Medicine or University of Liverpool. Early career researcher applicants are eligible to apply for this fund as a Co-Investigator (Co-I) with the support of a PI that fulfils the criteria below. Applicants are welcome to submit multiple applications but only their top scoring project will be funded.

The PI can be from any department and would typically meet the following criteria:

- Proven Track Record of Delivery.
- Previous experience/evidence in securing funding OR in research project leadership role (evidence required in application form).
- Applicants are expected to be already contracted for a minimum of the proposed project duration.

Application Process

Applicants will be required to submit a full application on the provided template. Eligible applications will be reviewed by an External Scientific Advisory Committee (ESAC) which is composed of specialists with industrial experience in product discovery and development. The ESAC will review, assess and score the applications to independently advise the BRITE steering group on the appropriateness and "fit" of the projects for funding, in line with the diversity of applicants and research themes.

Criteria for assessment of the applications are:

- Quality of Underpinning Research – Including established proof of concept.
- Feasibility of the project within suggested timeframe.
- Planned Development Pathway.
- Track record of the research team
- Value for money
- Potential impact (Commercial, Social or Technological)

Conflicts of Interest and Transparency

LSTM are committed to transparency throughout the decision-making process and it is important to manage all real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest with integrity, impartiality, honesty and openness. ESAC members with conflicts of interest on any submitted project will be asked to declare it, and they will not score a proposal, with the scoring average being adjusted accordingly.

Intellectual Property (IP)

It is generally expected that any IP generated during the funded projects shall be owned by the party generating it. Specifics of IP should be contractually agreed prior to commencing the project.

Any projects that include multiple partners should discuss IP considerations. Please email KE@lstmed.ac.uk.

Post Award

Funding and Finances

The sum awarded is the maximum available and no additional costs or costed extensions will be issued. Subcontracts and other commitments of funding should only be established when the grant award letter (containing the funding terms and conditions) has been signed by the PI, returned, and acknowledged. Funds will be managed by the finance partner/team of the respective PI.

Award-holders must complete project delivery and associated spend within the funding period detailed in the Application Form, and no later than **12-Months from the Project contract start date**. Award-holders will be required to submit a final expenditure statement of costs charged against the grant at the end of the project. LSTM may request transaction lists at any point throughout the duration of the project to support financial reporting requirements as part of the wider BRITE project.

Reporting

All awardees will be required to submit project mid- and endpoint progress updates. Awarded project titles, a non-confidential lay summary and project outcomes will be included in BRITE project outcomes and deliverables, this includes external communications and public engagement activities.

All projects must align to UKRI Research England reporting guidelines. Publication or dissemination of research outputs must acknowledge UKRI Research England funding and the BRITE project in line with standard practice and conduct as below:

This work was [partially] supported by the Biologics Regional Innovation and Technology Ecosystem (BRITE), a UKRI Research England funded project [grant number: xxxx, yyyy].

General Enquiries Contact List

For further clarification and general enquiries, we would encourage all applicants to discuss their project with their BRITE Lead, via KE@lstmed.ac.uk.

Appendix – Figure 1 Biologic Examples

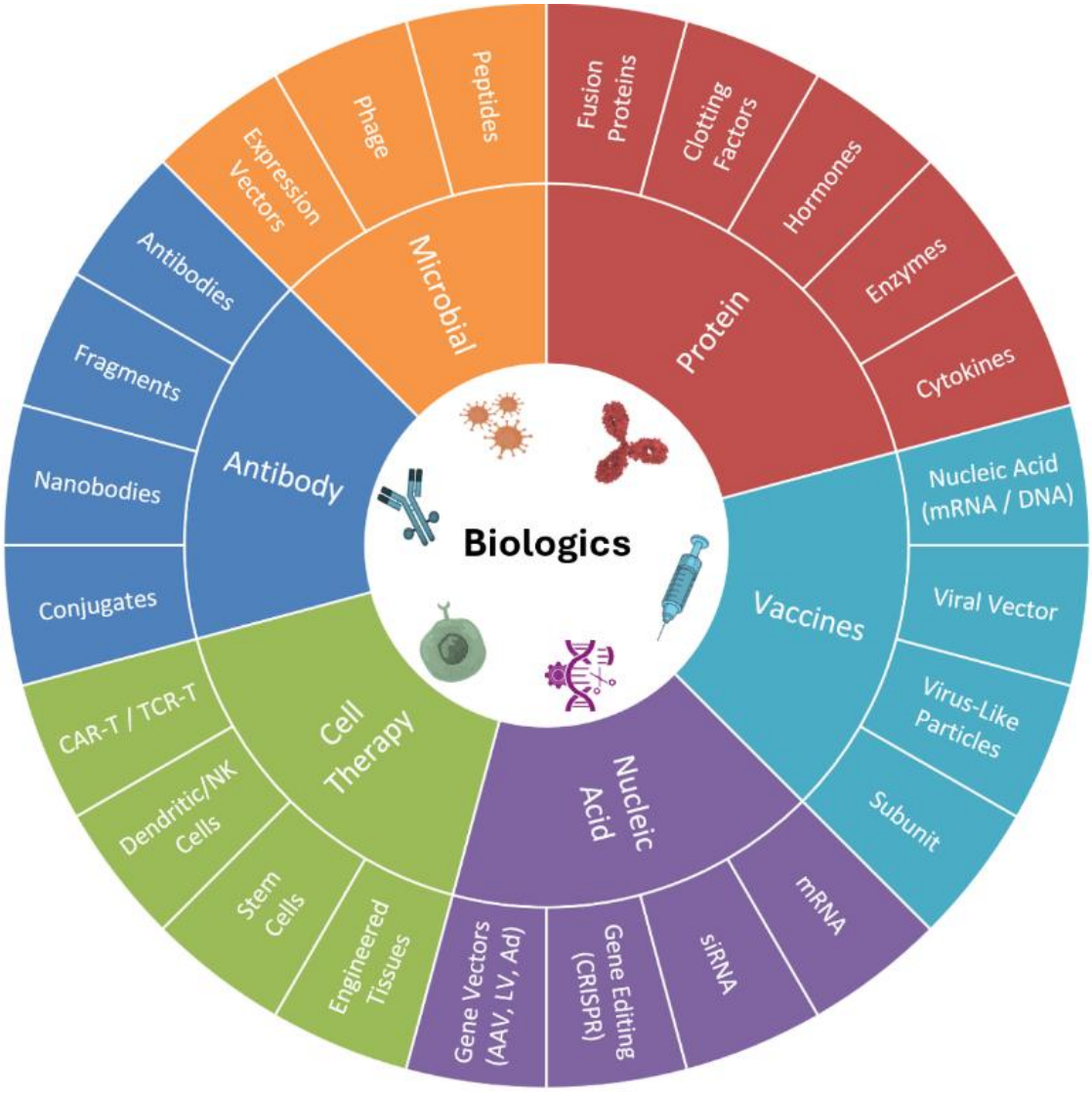

Figure 1. Outline of biologics categories and examples of types of therapies (examples are not exhaustive).

Appendix – Figure 2 TRL Scale Framework

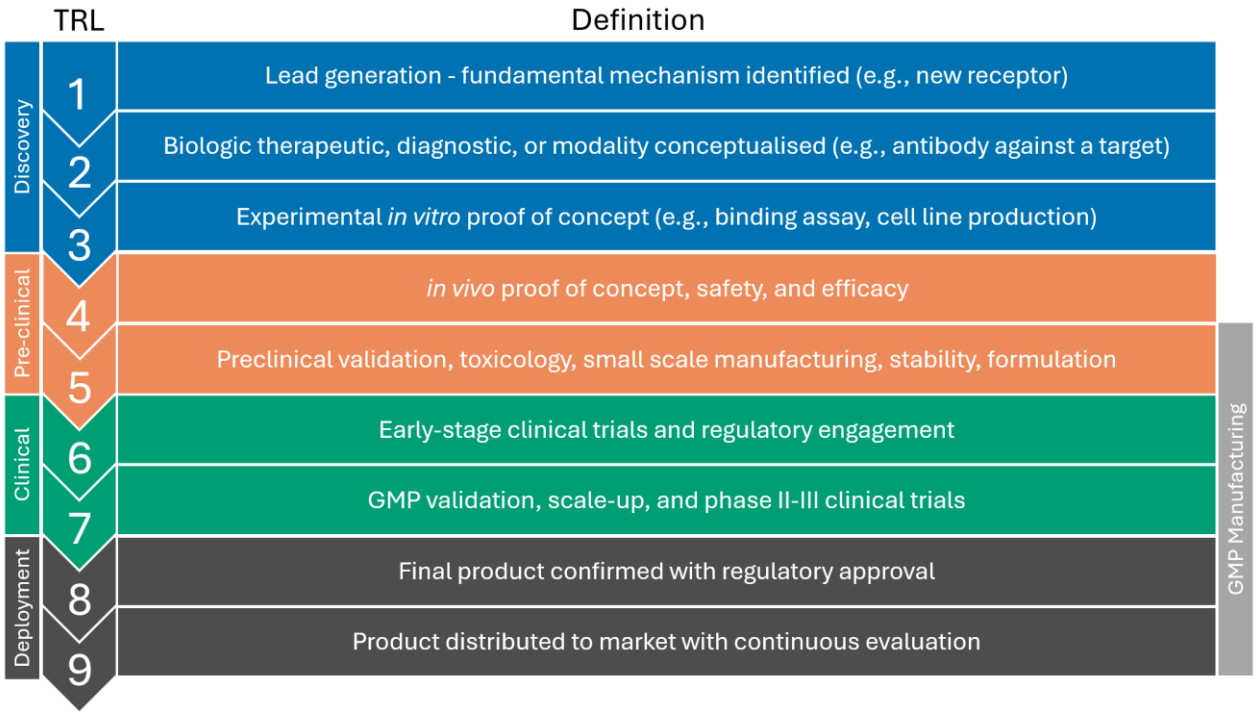

Figure 2. Standardised framework for technology readiness level definitions, adapted from UKRI definitions, and modified to contextualise within the biologics space (UKRI, 2025).