

Q – Is this project only covering biomass for energy, or is biomass for locking up carbon into construction in scope too?

A – The programme is agnostic on the end use of biomass, it is focused on helping contribute to increased feedstock production. It is conceivable that some specific innovations may have implications for the nature of the end use of the feedstock, but we will not be judging entries on this basis.

Q – Is the main focus of the energy crops side of the competition on miscanthus, or are there opportunities for other crops?

A – There is no particular focus on miscanthus or any other specific second generation-energy crop. The programme is happy to accept entries for innovations associated with any such crop type, which we are defining as non-food lignocellulosic crops.

If you wish to propose a crop type under this definition that is novel to the UK, then you may have to provide additional evidence regarding its broader environmental impact and would have to take into account the relevant regulatory framework.

Q – Is the conversion of crop waste into energy within remit

A – No, this is not within scope as it falls outside of the boundary of feedstock production.

Q – Are activities associated with the processing of biomass for energy within scope, for example torrefaction, pelletization.

A – We would consider funding on-farm processing activities. Additionally, promising innovations in biomass storage on farm were identified in the scoping study and would be within scope.

Q – Are alternate feedstock production locations (for example urban greening and cropping or highway verges and railway embankments) in scope?

A – Yes, this is within scope. The proposal would have to make clear how the innovation would deliver benefits when compared to innovations that target typically more geographically concentrated sources of biomass. In particular, innovations need to be scalable to volumes which will significantly impact on UK CO₂ emissions.

Q – Are bids from project management companies acceptable?

A – We welcome bids from companies and consortia who have the skills, both in terms of technical capability and project management expertise, to deliver credible proposals and strong projects.

Q – Is there an opportunity to comment on how this programme is related to the wider policy and market landscape associated with biomass? There are concerns that, for example, the current drive for tree planting is not matched by a clear vision on how trees (and other biomass) end up being utilised in a future net zero economy.

A – We are aware that there is a broader set of challenges within the market and the need for a clear vision for the future role of biomass. We would encourage interested parties to engage with the forthcoming Biomass Strategy which intends to address many of these issues.

Q – Is this programme intended to be accessible to SMEs? Are there financial tests that need to be passed.

A – This programme is designed to be accessible to SMEs. SBRI does not require pass/fail due diligence checks. We will carry out, in line with Government policy, due diligence on any supplier to whom we award a contract greater than £500,000. However, this will not be a strict pass/fail, rather an assessment of the risk associated with working with that supplier. We anticipate this to be more relevant during Phase 2, the Demonstration Phase.

Q – Are non-land-based feedstocks within scope? For example, seaweed and algae.

A – Will are currently considering this and will provide clarity in the call documentation.

Q – Can academics participate in the programme?

A – Yes, academic institutions are eligible and can be bid leaders or partners in a consortium.

Q – What role will social value play in the contract? For example will work looking at the barriers to increased social value be relevant.

A – The specific social value criteria will be outlined in the call documentation, with a minimum 10% weighting given in the scoring. In this context, social value will principally be assessed on how you deliver your project. Further details can be found in the following documentation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0620-taking-account-of-social-value-in-the-award-of-central-government-contracts>

Q – Are organisations within all devolved administrations eligible to enter the competition?

A – Yes.

Q – Are there any specific state aid implications for projects based in Northern Ireland?

A – No.

Q – Will the scoping study materials be made available?

A – Yes, with the call documentation

Q – Could you clarify the boundary of the competition, what is meant by activities within farm gate or forestry road?

A – The competition is focused specifically on feedstock production, so the boundary incorporates relevant activities associated with this. Projects do not have to be undertaken on a farm, forestry plantation or feedstock production site in a literal sense, simply that they must be relevant to increasing the production of feedstocks at such localities. This boundary would include breeding, planting, cultivation, harvesting, storage and on-site pre-processing.

Q – if the commercial viability of the innovation is partially dependent on its applicability outside the UK, can part of a multi-site demonstrator be outside the UK (for example the EU)?

A – The innovation must be beneficial for UK feedstock production and must demonstrate a domestic route to market. We would accept bids for projects in which elements of a demonstrator is located overseas and where commercialisation there is also an outcome. However, as stated, the innovation must have a positive commercial outcome in the UK market.

Q - Can we subcontract to organisations outside of the UK?

A – Yes, there are no restrictions, except that they must be based within the geographic scope of the Government Procurement Agreement.

Q – Is genetic modification within scope?

A – The development of genetically modified organisms is strictly regulated and any proposed innovation projects coming forward would have to demonstrate how they would be permitted under current regulations <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/developing-genetically-modified-organisms>.

Q – Will the multi-site demonstrator be judged according to the same criteria as individual innovation projects? Will it be required to have an innovative element itself?

A – It is not expected that the demonstrator itself would need to show innovative elements, rather that it would be a platform to coordinate and trial other innovations. The assessment criteria are likely to overlap in a number of respects with those for specific innovation projects, particularly concerning requirements for management and capacity to deliver. However, there will be a number of differences that will be outlined in the tender documentation.

Q – For some innovations, the three year timescale for the Demonstration Phase may be challenging.

A – We recognise this, but are constrained by Government funding cycles. We would still encourage bids from organisations whose innovations may take longer than three years to trial. In this instance, the bid should clearly outline the benefits that may be achieved within the time available. Towards the end of the programme it may then be possible to consider follow-on funding that would enable further development.

Q – Does support exist for commercialisation, particularly once the project has completed and including for export to other countries.

A – As part of the project, bidders are expected to develop commercialisation plans and demonstrate a route to market. We expect that there will be additional sources of funding to assist with this, such as incubation support or opportunities such as the clean growth fund (a commercially-run venture capital fund investing in clean tech, requiring an additional application process). As the programme develops, we will also work with successful entrants to find ways to knowledge share with other relevant programmes and activities.