

11 February 2022

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2022/00022

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 21 January in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I would like to receive information on the number of proposals submitted to all calls from the last decade which relate specifically to the "Engineering Biology" and/or "SynBio"-priority area of the BBSRC. For each call, listed by name and date, two simple numbers suffice:

Number 1: The total number of submissions to the call.

Number 2: The number of proposals rejected because they were judged to be outside remit.

In addition, I would like to know the average percentage of proposals that are rejected based on remit for standard calls of the BBSRC for each of the last 3 years. That is: three numbers, one for each year, which gives the percentage of calls rejected because they were judged to be outside remit.

Our response:

I can confirm UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) hold the information relevant to your request. Please see the information below.

Five competitions have been identified where BBSRC was the sole or lead council that were related to the "Engineering Biology" or "SynBio" priority areas and were run since 2011/12.

Please note that the synthetic biology calls and engineering biology calls are not directly comparable due to the differences in remit between the two.

Competition	Number of Submissions	Number Rejected due to Remit*
Synthetic Biology Research Centres (1 st Round) – 2013	15	0
Synthetic Biology Research Centres (2 nd Round) – 2014	11	0
Follow-on Fund (Synthetic Biology highlight) - 2019	32	0
Engineering Biology Breakthrough Ideas – 2021	206	85 (41%)
Engineering Biology research, community and capacity development - 2021	43	16 (37%)

* Rejected due to Remit are submissions judged to not sufficiently meet the scope or themes of the call.

We estimate that the cost of complying with the final part of your request, regarding *“the average percentage of proposals that are rejected based on remit for standard calls of the BBSRC for each of the last 3 years”* would exceed the appropriate statutory limit as specified within Section 12 of the FOIA which for UKRI is set at £450. This represents the estimated cost of 18 hours of staff resource on locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

To gather this information, we have determined that it would be necessary to manually read the notes field for each individual application that was rejected or withdrawn, to see if the rejection was due to wider remit reasons. There have been approximately 2,900 applications submitted in the last three years to BBSRC calls when considering all calls that have been completed to date. At an estimate of 1 minute per record to locate and extract the required data from each application, this would take over 48 hours to complete.

Consequently, UKRI is not obliged under Section 12 of the FOIA to process this section of your request further/respond to your request.

Under Section 16 of the FOIA, our duty to provide advice and assistance, it may be possible to narrow the scope of this portion of your request by requesting data relating to specific call types and by reducing the time period that you would like the data to cover.

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek an internal review of the decision, please contact:

Head of Information Governance


Email: foi@ukri.org or infogovernance@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,


Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
foi@ukri.org | dataprotection@ukri.org