

Technology Strategy Board

Driving Innovation

Website notice

17 September 2009

Government to invest £2.5 million in innovation for industrial biotechnology

The Technology Strategy Board is to manage a £2.5 million investment programme on behalf of the Government aimed at stimulating innovation in the UK's industrial biotechnology sector, and is encouraging small and medium-sized companies to apply for funding.

The aim of the competition, which is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), is to encourage the development and commercialisation of innovative processes that will generate high value chemicals through industrial biotechnology.

Through the competition, which opens today and closes on 19 November 2009, BIS will fund feasibility studies mainly for short-term projects, usually lasting up to six months, which are likely to cost up to £200,000. Up to 75% funding may be made available for such studies, and applications from small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) would be particularly welcomed. Applications can be made by single companies or collaborative consortia.

Explaining the background to the competition, Merlin Goldman, the Technology Strategy Board's Lead Technologist for the Biosciences, said: "BIS's Industrial Biotechnology Innovation and Growth Team recommended earlier this year that an Industrial Biotechnology Fund should be set up by the end of 2009. This would provide industry, again focusing on SMEs, with access to demonstration facilities."

"Through the fund, BIS has allocated £2.5m to support feasibility projects from this 2009 competition. We anticipate that the successful demonstration, through this competition, of a process, feedstock or material using industrial biotechnology will lead directly to production-level activities within two to four years".

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. Further details about this competition can be found at:
<http://www.innovateuk.org/deliveringinnovation/forthcomingcompetitions/developinghighvaluechemicals.ashx>.
2. The Technology Strategy Board is a business-led executive non-departmental public body, established by the government. Its mission is to promote and support research into, and development and exploitation of, technology and innovation for the benefit of UK business, in order to increase economic growth and improve the quality of life. It is sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). For more information please visit www.innovateuk.org.
3. This competition aims to stimulate collaboration between industrial biotechnology developers, higher education institutions and in particular, the chemical sector. The chemical and chemistry-using sectors are encouraged to use this initiative to pilot industrial biotechnological routes for existing processes or to address new challenges.
4. This 2009 competition invites proposals which demonstrate significant benefit in terms of sustainability over existing petroleum-based approaches in areas such as, but not limited to:
 - platform chemicals
 - novel bio-chemicals
 - chemicals for use in health and personal care products
 - biodegradable lubricants
 - cleaner, more efficient manufacturing of chemicals, including fine chemicals, materials, and active pharmaceutical ingredients
 - the discovery and sustainable use of natural products as biologically active ingredients.
5. The majority of the projects supported under this 2009 competition will be feasibility projects lasting up to six months and operating at or below 1,000 litre batch processing capacity. The projects must be able to commence by April 2010, and may be run at any of the small-scale industrial biotechnology pilot plant facilities around the UK.
6. The Industrial Biotechnology Innovation & Growth Team (IB-IGT) was established in November 2007 to facilitate the creation of a strategic view collectively from industry on what the innovation & growth challenges are for its future competitiveness and how industrial biotechnology (IB) can improve the competitiveness of the chemicals and chemistry-using sectors as availability.
<http://www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/sectors/chemicals/IBIGT/page44395.html>
7. Building Britain's Future - New Industry, New Jobs (published on 20 April 2009) identifies key areas where Government action can have most impact, investing in growth to speed recovery and building manufacturing and services essential to ensure British people and businesses can compete successfully for the jobs of the future. New Industry, New Jobs identifies a number of areas, including industrial biotechnology, where strong UK capabilities should be a priority for Government attention and support.
http://www.dius.gov.uk/news_and_speeches/press_releases/new_industry_new_jobs

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