



Overview

The OpenPlant Fund will support innovative, open and interdisciplinary projects relevant to plant Synthetic Biology over 2015-19. Around 20 six-month projects per year will receive £4k each, with an additional £1k awarded on completion for follow-on and outreach. The first round of applications will close at the end of June 2015.

The aim of the fund is to promote the development of plant Synthetic Biology as an interdisciplinary field and to facilitate exchange between The University of Cambridge, the John Innes Centre and The Sainsbury Laboratory for the development of open technologies and responsible innovation in the context of Synthetic Biology.

Eligibility

Applicants should be graduate students or postdoctoral workers at the University of Cambridge, the John Innes Centre or The Sainsbury Laboratory. They must have agreement from their research supervisor and cost-code sponsor that the proposed project and management of the allocated funding will fit with their existing work. All proposals must lead to tangible, publicly documented and open outcomes, which could include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Design files and prototype for a hardware project
- Software development and documentation
- White paper arising from a workshop
- Educational resource
- Synthesis and sharing of useful DNA parts or vectors.

Applications for travel or event funding without justification of how this will lead to a tangible outcome or resource will not be considered. Salary or stipend costs will not be funded.

Judging Criteria

Judges will evaluate the proposals based on the application form and pitch presentation delivered at the OpenPlant Fund event on 27 July 2015. They will give a higher priority to proposals which:

- Have a tangible outcome that can be readily shared.
- Promote interdisciplinary working and exchange.
- Are relevant to synthetic biology and provide a valuable contribution to the current field.
- Address focus areas of the OpenPlant initiative e.g. open technologies and responsible innovation.
- Are realistic given the timing, costing and team proposed.
- We encourage external collaborations and applications with matched funding.

Additional credit will be given to applicants who have forged innovative partnerships with Cambridge or Norwich-based external partners and those who have agreements of matched funding for their projects.

Application Process 2015

1. Attend launch events/mixers in Cambridge or Norwich (optional - see website for details)
2. Promote your project idea online to recruit collaborators (optional)
3. Complete application form by 30 June.
4. Up to 25 teams will be invited to the OpenPlant Fund event by 13 July.
5. Present a 5 min pitch to judging panel at OpenPlant Fund event on 27 July 2015.
 - Max 4 slides, one slide on each of application form sections 2-5.
 - 5 min for questions
 - Timing will be strict!

- There will be a drinks reception following the pitches.

Successful applicants will be informed soon after the OpenPlant Forum and funds released as soon as possible.

What can teams expect from the OpenPlant Fund?

Support in making your application

- The OpenPlant Fund will run two mixer events for all potential applicants, to facilitate team formation and generate new interdisciplinary links.
- Lightning talk slots will give those with ideas the chance to recruit collaborators.
- Members of the OpenPlant team will be on hand to answer questions and offer guidance.
- In addition, an online platform will be provided for project registration and collaborator sign-up.

Funding

- £4k will be provided up front once your application is successful.
- £1k will be awarded at the end of 6 months once your output is documented openly online, to enable follow-on and outreach.

On-going support during the projects

- The OpenPlant Project Manager and Coordinator will be able to offer assistance and support in making the connections necessary for you to complete your project.
- A monthly meeting in Cambridge makespace will be established with the primary aim of providing co-working space and networking for those projects involving hardware and related software, but this would be open to all and you are encouraged to attend regardless of your project scope.
- All teams will be added to the OpenPlant Fund directory and you are encouraged to attend other meetings such as Cafe Synthetique and SynBio Seminars.

Online infrastructure

- We will provide you with a website on which to document your progress and post outputs at the end of the project.

- Advice will be available on openly licensing your output and the best way to make it shareable and useful to others.

What does the OpenPlant Fund expect from teams?

Transparency and monthly updates

- We will post all accepted applications and presentation slides online, with each project receiving a dedicated page to which team members can post content.
- Brief updates on progress via blog posts or the website are highly encouraged, we would expect some news every month through the 6 months of the project.
- More frequent updates via the website and other channels would be even better.

Involvement with broader Synthetic Biology activities and promoting interdisciplinary exchange.

- There are plenty of events and activities happening to draw together the Synthetic Biology community in Cambridge and Norwich. We hope that OpenPlant Fund teams will be keen to engage with these.
- You may be called upon to provide advice to other teams where your expertise are required. Although the funding round is competitive, implementation of the funded projects should be a collaborative effort!

Open and publicly available outputs

- We expect the output from your project and a brief report to be posted online at the end of 6 months.
- This should be on the website provided by the OpenPlant Fund but you are of course welcome to additionally post elsewhere. This is particularly encouraged where there are repositories that are suited to your output e.g. DNA parts databases, software repositories.
- Importantly, your outputs should be accessible and reuseable by anyone. This means that, where applicable, you need to think about open licensing, standard file formats and good documentation.

Apply by 30 June 2015, 17:00 at <http://openplant.org>