

NWBI-IBIC “Build a Biotech” Business Idea Competition 2026

February - April 2026

North-West Biotech Initiative and the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Catalyst present:

“Build a Biotech” is a start-up competition organised by the North-West Biotech Initiative in collaboration with the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Catalyst (IBIC). The main aim of the competition is to make biotech innovation coming from academia in the northwest a sounding reality. The participants will learn how to turn a good idea into a real business opportunity and have the chance to pitch to investors and industry experts. The winning teams will receive up to **£15000 cash prize** and receive growth support through the Innovation District Manchester project.

This year, we are delighted to announce that we will deliver an **in-person competition** that will host the seminar **“Biotech, Rewired”** in parallel. You will have the chance to listen to successful founders and scientists working with AI in the biotechnology sector that will facilitate further networking among the entrepreneurial biotech ecosystem. While the competition will be closed to participants only, the seminar is open to all and attendees will have the opportunity to hear and vote for the best **Elevator pitch** from the finalists (optional to the teams), to give them an additional **cash prize**.

This competition is open to **undergraduate students, postgraduate students, PDRAs and university staff** from any **north-west university** interested in gaining a thorough understanding of entrepreneurship in biotechnology. The applicants will be selected on the basis of their application, potential of their idea to impact the NW industrial biotech sector, and demonstration of their business potential. The places are limited to 10 teams. Teams should be between 1-4 people and must contain at least one student (undergraduate, masters or PhD). If you would like to participate but don't have a team and would really like to partner with someone, please email us at manchester@nwbiotherapy.co.uk and we will do our best to find you a team. In case no one else is available, you can submit your application as a solo founder and if successful, we can connect you with our network to help you find co-founders.

Team ideas can be related to **any biotechnology application**, but we encourage participants to focus on the following topics:

- **Industrial Biotechnology**
- **Artificial Intelligence in the Biotech Industry**

Competition format:

“Build a Biotech” competition has six key dates:

- **March 1st:** Registration Deadline (fill google form to provide names, degrees, and universities of each participant and team/startup name)
- **5th March:** Day 1 - Virtual Business workshop session 1: Introduction and innovation
- **6th March:** Day 2 - Virtual Business workshop session 2: Intellectual property and finance
- **March 15th (23:59):** Send your team’s application to manchester@nwbiotherapy.co.uk
- **March 15th:** Notification to the Finalists
- **March 20th - April 10th:** Ad-hoc mentoring session (matching schedule, max 1 hour)
- **14th April:** Competition day – pitch in front of experts and awards ceremony

The competition will require the interested teams to complete an **application form** describing their idea/technology, how they plan to translate their idea into a start-up and how they would use the IBIC funds awarded to catalyse their plans. Following the registration and application deadlines above, participants will have access to two specialized workshops delivered by Kevin Parker ([LinkedIn](#)), focusing on the commercialisation of research. These workshops will have particular focus on setting-up a business, funding and intellectual property. We encourage you to register as soon as possible since the workshops include material to watch in advance, so that you can gain the most out of them. You will have one extra week to polish your application after the last online (zoom) workshop, but we recommend that you start working on it as soon as possible, to ensure a quality application and increase your chance of being shortlisted.

Upon notification to the finalists, the teams will have 1 month to prepare a 10 min presentation for a pitch to the competition panel. Details and guidance on how to prepare the pitch will be given in the workshop sessions. Teams will be expected to defend their pitches and answer questions about the startup, from both technological and commercial perspectives. After the pitches, the panel of experts will evaluate the presentations and award prizes to the **three best teams**.

Application requirements:

- Undergraduate students, Postgraduate students, PDRAs and university staff at a **north-west** UK university.
- Background in biotechnology or related subjects.
- Team of 1-4 participants.
- Be available for competition key dates: **5th March** (virtually), **6th March** (virtually) and **14th of April** (in-person).
- *Please be aware that the general idea may be disclosed to the general public, you are responsible to take the steps needed to protect your IP accordingly.*

How to participate:

Register interest by the 1st of March scanning the QR code and **complete the attached application form by the 15th of March** (send in **PDF format** to manchester@nwbiotherapy.co.uk). Selected participants will **attend the virtual workshops on**

24th and 25th March 2026.

Build a Biotech Programme

Day 1 - Thursday 5th March – workshop 1

- 16:00 - 17:00: Introduction and Innovation - turning science into life-saving treatments or devices. What should be in your pitch? What makes a technology interesting to the 'real world'?
- 17:00 - 17:15: Break
- 17:15 - 18:15: Understanding markets - researching your innovation, getting evidence from stakeholders and thinking about your business model

Day 2 - Friday 6th March – workshop 2

- 16:00 - 17:00: Intellectual property - what is it and who owns it? How does it link with your business strategy?
- 17:00 - 17:15: Break
- 17:15 - 18:15: Finance - time and money. How long is it going to take us to do this? How much is it going to cost?

Pitch preparation period and mentoring session

- Time and date to be agreed between mentor and team (max 1 hour), **March 20th - April 10th.**

Day 3 - Tuesday 14th of April - Competition Day - Teams Perspective

Venue: SISTER Renold Building

Estimated timings, to be confirmed to finalists prior to the event on 14th April 2026

- 11:30 - 12:00 Welcome lunch (Food & Drink provided)
- 12:00 - 12:05 Competition Kick Off
- 12:05 - 13:05 Closed Presentations - First Block (4 Teams)
- 13:05 - 13:10 Coffee Break
- 13:10 - 14:10 Closed Presentations - Second Block (4 Teams)
- 14:10 - 14:25 Second Coffee Break
- 14:25 - 14:55 Closed Presentation - Third Block (2 Teams)
- 14:55 - 15:15 Judges deliberation and Elevator Pitches to Public

Event Promotions:

The "Build a Biotech" competition will be promoted on NWBI and IBIC social media channels (including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn).

