

Please read the terms and conditions before proceeding with your application

These T&C's apply to the “**NWBI-IBIC Build a Biotech**” Business Idea Competition 2026 run by the NorthWest Biotech Initiative, a student-led society which is part of The University of Manchester's Students Union and funded by the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Catalyst (IBIC).

General Rules/Guidelines

1. Eligibility and application:

- 1.1. Applications for the competition are accepted for teams of up to 4 people. We will accept applications coming from solo founders, and we will be happy to connect to our network to find co-founders if successfully passing to the final stage.
- 1.2. Only one application per individual or team is permitted.
- 1.3. To enter the competition the teams must register in the google form by **Sunday March 1st**.
- 1.4. Each team must contain at least one student (undergraduate, masters or PhD)
- 1.5. The ideas must be the teams' own ideas.
- 1.6. The ideas must be novel and not presented in any other previous Build a Biotech competitions. If the idea has already been presented in a different competition or you have already received funding for your idea, you will have to disclose the details in the application form, this does not impede you from participating but this may affect eligibility for other opportunities to be determined by IBIC.
- 1.7. Whilst you may propose any idea/start-up having a solid business case in any **biotechnology** topic, we encourage the teams to aim to solve a problem related to:
 - **Industrial Biotechnology**
 - **Artificial Intelligence**
- 1.8. The North-West Biotech Initiative reserves the right to contact entrants to validate the entry information.
- 1.9. Part of the application process involves attending 2 business workshops provided by Kevin Parker, and it is compulsory that at least one member of the team attend these sessions (see details below) and we strongly encourage all team members to participate.
- 1.10. Applications which do not meet the above criteria will not be taken into evaluation or will be disqualified if any of the criteria are found to be breached during the course of the competition.

2. Intellectual property rights:

- 2.1. Build a Biotech 2026 is evolving from being a fictional start-up competition to a real and feasible start-up competition. We welcome ideas that match the research/study field of the participants, but it is not compulsory, it can be a multidisciplinary theme in biotech as long as it is a solid proposal which the founder team can realistically lead and develop (for categories A and B of the prize, see details of category C below).
- 2.2. It is the responsibility of the applicant teams to take appropriate steps to protect the intellectual property rights in which the idea might be based. You are encouraged to talk about the problem, the solution and the unique value proposition, without describing the

key know-how or proprietary information. This topic will also be covered in the workshops and you will have mentors to support you in this particular aspect.

- 2.3. The participants should be aware that all the ideas presented in the pitches will be disclosed to all the participants, mentors, judges and organizers of the competition, as well as potentially the general public.
- 2.4. The Northwest Biotech Initiative is not responsible for any sort of intellectual property or copyright conflict that might arise from the utilisation of the ideas' concepts presented in the competition.

3. Registration Deadline for Workshops March 1st 2026 (11:59pm)

- 3.1. All the participants interested in submitting an application (either alone or as a part of a team) can register by the March 1st (inclusive - ending at 11:59pm) by filling the google form (advertised in the QR code)
- 3.2. Participants that register by this deadline will be invited to take part in **2** online (Zoom) workshops that will take place on the **5th and 6th of March 2026** (more details will be communicated closer to the date). At least one member of the team must attend each of the workshops, to have the right to submit an application, and we strongly encourage all team members to participate
- 3.3. The workshops will include "switched learning" sessions where the participants will discuss materials (papers and videos) sent out to them in advance.
- 3.4. Participants must find the time to read/watch/absorb these materials in advance of the workshops and be prepared to discuss them at the workshops.

4. Submission Deadline March 15th 2026 (11:59pm)

- 4.1. Teams must submit their entry by completing the application form, by March 15th (inclusive- ending at 11:59pm)
- 4.2. The NWBI committee, including a member of the IBIC team, will evaluate the application forms and the 10 best applications will be shortlisted.
- 4.3. The successful applicants (qualified teams) will be notified by March 19th 2026 and will receive the competition schedule and instructions for the mentoring sessions and the competition day. Depending on the number of applications and availability of the panel the NWBI committee reserves the right to notify the finalists a few days after March 21st.
- 4.4. There can be no appeal against the decision of the committee and these decisions must be accepted as final.
- 4.5. The shortlisted applicants will prepare the presentations and deliver a pitch to a panel of expert judges at the competition final on 14th April 2026.

5. Successful Teams

Mentoring sessions:

- 5.1. Teams will be linked up to industry experts who are there to provide mentorship for the competition.

- 5.2. Each mentor has agreed to provide a 1-hour online session to their team, to be arranged between the team and mentor.
- 5.3. The mentoring sessions will take place between the March 20th - April 10th, and all the teams will be supported by a member of the NWBI committee to facilitate the meeting schedule and follow up, but it is the responsibility of the teams to coordinate it.
- 5.4. The teams are free to ask any questions to the mentors and the mentors can provide feedback on pre-prepared presentations.
- 5.5. Contact details of the expert mentor will be provided to the team upon their shortlisting.
- 5.6. At least half of the team must ensure they can attend the mentoring session.

Competition day: (April 14th)

- 5.7. Competition day will take place **IN PERSON** at the SISTER Building on the **14th April 2026**.
- 5.8. Successful teams located at a university outside of Manchester may claim travel expenses to attend the competition (up to 100£ round trip). In this case please keep all receipts and tickets to be provided to the NWBI team on the competition day.
- 5.9. On the day of the presentations, the panel of judges will evaluate the pitches, select the winners and award the prizes to the three best teams (one per category ideally, but judges have the right to jointly award prizes or offer alternative amounts depending on their analysis).
- 5.10. Judges are external industry and commercialisation experts from outside of the NWBI committee.
- 5.11. Details on how to prepare the pitches will be provided in the workshop sessions.
- 5.12. The presentation slides must be presented in Microsoft PowerPoint format.
- 5.13. The presentation slides must be emailed to the organising committee at least 24 hrs before the start of the competition (by noon April 13th 2026).
- 5.14. No further amendments will be allowed to the slides once the presentation has been sent.
- 5.15. All the teams will receive judging forms and anonymised written feedback after the event.
- 5.16. There can be no appeal against the decision of the judges and these decisions must be accepted as final.
- 5.17. The judges may decide to award joint prizes. If there are no entries of a sufficient quality, at the absolute discretion of the judges, the right not to award any prize is reserved.
- 5.18. The evaluation criteria may be provided upon request.
- 5.19. All the team members must ensure they attend the competition. (See detailed schedule below.)
- 5.20. While the judges are deliberating, the teams will have the chance to pitch a 1 minute **elevator pitch** in front of the audience registered to the seminar. This is optional and will be subjected to an audience vote, which will give them the possibility to win up to £200. No need to prepare any extra slides for this.

6. Rules on presentation/pitch and evaluation

- 6.1. The presentation/pitch must last **no longer than 10 min. This will be strictly timed.**
- 6.2. The presentation/pitch will be followed by a 5 min Q&A session performed by the judges.
- 6.3. Both the presentation and the Q&A session will count for the judges' evaluation.
- 6.4. The application form will not be evaluated by the judges.

- 6.5. No copyrighted material allowed; teams can use open-source code and Creative Commons licensed images/videos.
- 6.6. Only team members listed on the application form can present to the panel.
- 6.7. Teams should obtain informed consent if images of people appear in the presentation.
- 6.8. Further information of how to prepare the presentations/pitches will be provided in the workshops.

7. Rules/Guidelines for judges:

Applicants will be selected on the basis of their pitches, and demonstration of the idea/startup, from both, the scientific-technological aspect of things and the business potential. The judges will also assess the potential for impact on the north-west industrial biotechnology sector.

7.1. Judging attitudes:¹

- 7.1.1. Mentorship – give constructive criticism as well as highlight strong points
- 7.1.2. Critique – evaluate projects comprehensively and evaluate impact
- 7.1.3. Fairness – judge teams on their own merits

7.2. Judging protocol:²

- 7.2.1. Watch pitches/presentations
- 7.2.2. Quiz on pitches during the judging sessions
- 7.2.3. Fill in the judging form and award points to the teams
- 7.2.4. Votes of an individual judge represent their individual opinion, not a consensus of the judging panel. The organising committee will determine the winner based on the points from all judges in the judging forms
- 7.2.5. Judges are asked to write at least one positive comment and one constructive criticism in the judging forms provided. The comments will be anonymised before presenting them to the Teams
- 7.2.6. Judges award the prizes

8. Prizes:

- 8.1. Three prizes will be awarded collectively to the team:

a) UP To £15K

First prize is for the best idea that is at a stage of commercial readiness and potential for impact. It might be already validated or have some prototype ready to explore commercial options. It can also be an idea in development that has at least the concept tested via their studies or previous research. Having said that, we understand that deep-tech technologies take longer to develop, so we also welcome outstanding ideas that may require more lab work but it is very clear on the path to solve a specific problem in biotech, with a clear market, and a real unique value proposition.

¹ Adapted from: iGEM Foundation, <https://2020.igem.org/Judging/Resources>, (accessed Jan 14th, 2021).

² Adapted from: iGEM Foundation, <https://2020.igem.org/Judging/Resources>, (accessed Jan 14th, 2021).

b) UP TO £5K

For the second place, the idea may need a bit more support to make the business model and validate the commercial path, but has great potential to develop a minimal viable product and create future impact.

c) FROM £1K

For third place the idea may be at a very early stage. This category will reward one outstanding biotech start-up proposal that shows all the components to have a solid business model, but which may not be at commercial readiness.

8.2. All teams will be issued a Certificate of Participation.

9. Competition timeline and schedule 2026:

- **March 1st:** Registration deadline
- **March 5th and 6th:** Business workshops (online)
- **March 15th Midnight:** Application deadline
- **March 19th:** Notification to the Finalists
- **March 20th-April 10th :** Mentorship sessions (1 hour per team, scheduled between mentors and teams)
- **April 14th:** Competition Day - Teams participation only
- **April 14th:** Afternoon seminar “**Biotech, Rewired**” - General audience participation

10. Complaints and Responsible Conduct Issues:

If you find that anyone involved in the competition is breaching the competition rules or behaving in a manner not in line with the standard of the Competition, please contact the NWBI committee at manchester@nwbiotech.co.uk