

# Getting into biobusiness

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Finding help and advice to transform a great concept into money-making reality can be daunting. Yet there are many websites and other resources with information and guidance for aspiring entrepreneurs. Government-run information services cover everything from protecting intellectual property and financing the venture to new and updated guidelines and laws. Faye Jones gives a brief overview of just some of the resources that support innovation and promote enterprise in the UK.

## Further reading

George, A. (2003). How to spin gold. *NewScientist* 180, 52–53.

## ● GENERAL BUSINESS RESOURCES

### UK

Department for Trade and Industry – DTI for Business  
[www.dti.gov.uk/for\\_business.html](http://www.dti.gov.uk/for_business.html)

The DTI is involved in many initiatives to encourage successful start-ups and the DTI for Business website is the best initial port of call for finding out about setting up a new enterprise. It also provides links to numerous other relevant websites.

*Other useful DTI-linked sites:*

#### Business Link

[www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/home](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/home)

Through this site, the DTI provides useful information and practical help for small and new businesses, including how investment and skills can benefit businesses; improving business performance; expanding a business; making technology work; and help with regulations, environmental and European matters.

#### Small Business Service

[www.sbs.gov.uk](http://www.sbs.gov.uk)

The Small Business Service is one of the key driving forces taking forward the Government *Action Plan for Small Business* published in January 2004. The plan is structured around seven strategic themes.

### Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

The administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland work with DTI to support firms in their respective countries. They also operate individual initiatives to help businesses.

#### Scotland

Scottish Executive

[www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/?pageID=120](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/?pageID=120)

Scottish Enterprise

[www.scottish-enterprise.com/sig-biotechnology](http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/sig-biotechnology)

Business Gateway

[www.bgateway.com](http://www.bgateway.com)

Intermediary Technology Institutes Scotland

[www.itiscotland.com](http://www.itiscotland.com)

#### Wales

Welsh Development Agency

[www.wda.co.uk/index.cfm/wda\\_home/index/en2](http://www.wda.co.uk/index.cfm/wda_home/index/en2)

Business Eye

[www.busesseye.org.uk](http://www.busesseye.org.uk)

Wales for Innovation (technology brokerage service to support the transfer of new technologies)

[www.wales4innovation.com/default.asp](http://www.wales4innovation.com/default.asp)

#### Northern Ireland

Invest Northern Ireland (formerly Local Economic Development Unit for Northern Ireland)

[www.investni.com](http://www.investni.com)

IRTU - Industrial Research and Technology Unit

[www.nics.gov.uk/irtu](http://www.nics.gov.uk/irtu)

### England

Government Offices in the English regions

[www.government-offices.gov.uk/GO/default.asp](http://www.government-offices.gov.uk/GO/default.asp)

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)

[www.rdauk.org/rdauk](http://www.rdauk.org/rdauk)

RDAs aim to promote economic development and regeneration in the regions. They operate as non-departmental public bodies. They provide funding towards regional regeneration activities in conjunction with other regional partners. Each RDA has its own website which can be reached through the main RDA website (address above). The nine RDAs are One NorthEast, Advantage West Midlands, South East England Development Agency, North West Development Agency, South West of England RDA, Yorkshire Forward, East Midlands Development Agency, East of England Development Agency and London Development Agency.

## ● BIOTECHNOLOGY

### i-bio UK

[www.i-bio.co.uk](http://www.i-bio.co.uk)

The website gives easy access to a wealth of information about UK biotechnology. It provides links to DTI programmes such as BIO-WISE; grants for research and development; an overview of relevant activities in industry, academia and medicine; information about regulatory issues; and a summary of the latest biotech-related news.

Information includes establishing industry partnerships and navigating the complex regulatory system, current investment opportunities, the latest technical developments and initiatives from across the research community, support available from UK Government and the Research Councils.

The Biotechnology Regulatory Atlas is a rapid retrieval system providing a guide to the regulatory architecture of biotechnology, which signposts laws, offers official guidance and provides details of how to comply with UK regulations, as well as an overview of the EU and US frameworks.

### BioIndustry Association

[www.bioindustry.org](http://www.bioindustry.org)

The trade association for innovative enterprises in the UK's bioscience sector exists to encourage and promote a thriving, financially sound sector of the UK economy, built upon developments across the biosciences.

## ● TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

### University Units

UK Universities have support networks to help academic researchers through the commercialization process. Many have dedicated technology transfer offices, where academics can find out about and get help with intellectual property rights, sourcing funding and starting a spin-out company, etc. Information is available on individual university websites.

### Unico

[www.unico.org.uk/members.htm](http://www.unico.org.uk/members.htm)

Unico represents the technology exploitation companies of UK Universities. It provides a forum for exchange and development of best practice. Member companies transfer

technology and expertise through the formation of spin-out companies, licensing, consultancy, training, design and development projects, contract research, testing and evaluation, and problem solving.

### Office of Science and Technology (OST)

[www.ost.gov.uk/enterprise/knowledge/index.htm](http://www.ost.gov.uk/enterprise/knowledge/index.htm)

Includes information about knowledge/technology transfer and how the Government supports it.

### OST Science Enterprise Challenge

[www.ost.gov.uk/enterprise/knowledge/sec.htm](http://www.ost.gov.uk/enterprise/knowledge/sec.htm)

The Challenge forms part of the Government's strategy to introduce a 'third mission' for higher education, alongside teaching and research, to encourage transfer of science and technology innovation to the business sector. £28.9 million has been allocated to a challenge competition, leading to the establishment of 12 Science Enterprise Centres in universities around the UK. OST University Challenge

[www.ost.gov.uk/enterprise/knowledge/unichal.htm](http://www.ost.gov.uk/enterprise/knowledge/unichal.htm)

University Challenge enables universities to establish seed funds, which will assist the successful transformation of good research into business. This early funding is the riskiest stage of the venture process. Seed funding helps the commercialization process in a number of ways:

- financing access to managerial skills by securing or enhancing intellectual property
- by supporting additional R&D
- construction of a prototype
- preparation of a business plan
- covering legal costs, etc.

### Faraday Partnerships

[www.faradaypartnerships.org.uk/index.html](http://www.faradaypartnerships.org.uk/index.html)

Faraday Partnerships are dedicated to improving the competitiveness of UK industry through more effective interaction between the science and technology base and industry. Each Faraday Partnership employs a number of technology translators – people with broad experience of knowledge transfer – who can facilitate projects between Partnership members.

Faraday Partnerships aim to:

- be widely recognized for their technical expertise and be UK industry's first choice for help with new product and process development
- provide better ways of exploiting R&D to create new products and processes
- provide more effective and coherent uptake of the various support mechanisms available, e.g. LINK, CASE awards, SMART, European Union Framework Programmes.

There are 24 Faraday Partnerships, some of which have interests linked to microbiology.

### Technology Transfer and Innovation Limited

[www.tti-ltd.com](http://www.tti-ltd.com)

## ● FUNDING

### Research Councils

Research Councils UK support the further development of research ideas and technology transfer. Many have dedicated sections on their websites containing valuable information on knowledge/technology transfer, intellectual property and funding schemes.

### Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

[www.ktponline.org.uk](http://www.ktponline.org.uk)

These are supported by the Research Councils.

### LINK scheme

[www.ost.gov.uk/link/info.html](http://www.ost.gov.uk/link/info.html)

BBSRC and NERC also support this Government scheme.

### Medical Research Council

[www.mrctechnology.org](http://www.mrctechnology.org)

The MRC has its own dedicated technology transfer unit, Medical Research Council Technology (MRCT). MRCT files patents and negotiates licensing arrangements on behalf of MRC, as well as assisting in starting up new companies.

### Wellcome Trust

[www.wellcome.ac.uk/en/1/biottd.html](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/en/1/biottd.html)

The Wellcome Trust provides translation funding and technology transfer. The service superseded Catalyst BioMedica Ltd in March 2003, which had supported early stage projects with potential healthcare applications.

### NESTA

[www.nesta.org.uk/insidenesta/hwf\\_invent\\_inno.html](http://www.nesta.org.uk/insidenesta/hwf_invent_inno.html)

NESTA's Invention and Innovation programme aims to turn ground-breaking ideas into innovative products, services or techniques with commercial or social potential. NESTA is the UK's biggest single source of early-stage seed funding, enabling the development of projects that might otherwise not get off the ground. They also prepare promising projects for further investment elsewhere.

### Prince's Trust and Livewire

[www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

[www.shell-livewire.org](http://www.shell-livewire.org)

Young people wanting to set up a business can find advice and sometimes finance from these bodies.

## ● INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

### UK Intellectual Property

[www.intellectual-property.gov.uk](http://www.intellectual-property.gov.uk)

A government-backed site dealing with all aspects of intellectual property including copyright, designs, patents and trademarks.

### IP2IPO Group Plc

[www.ip2ipo.com/introduction/introduction\\_a.htm](http://www.ip2ipo.com/introduction/introduction_a.htm)

Forms partnerships with universities to invest in their intellectual property.

