

Pitching for Ceres Proof-of-Concept Awards

Guidance for
researchers

“Translating agri-tech innovation
from lab to field”



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About Ceres



Ceres Agri-Tech Knowledge Exchange Partnership



- Founded through a **£4.8M** Research England **Connecting Capability Fund** award



- Comprises the **Universities of Cambridge (Cambridge Enterprise), East Anglia, Hertfordshire, Lincoln** and **Reading** to focus on the innovation needs of the **food/agri-tech sector**



- Also partners with **John Innes Centre, NIAB** and **Rothamsted Research**, all demonstrating global excellence in agri-tech R&D, to share expertise and access facilities of these research institutes



<https://www.ceresagritech.org/>



Ceres Agri-Tech Proof-of-Concept Awards

- First round of Ceres Proof-of-Concept Awards are now open for application.
- To support plant agri-tech* innovations with commercial potential, e.g. for proof-of-principle work, prototype development, small scale field or plant trials.
- Awards of £5,000 - £20,000.
- Open to researchers from Universities of Cambridge, East Anglia, Hertfordshire, Lincoln and Reading.
- Funds awarded based on a 6-minute pitch to Ceres Investment Committee; decision on the day!
- Contact us at info@ceresagritech.org with an expression of interest by 5th November and we will help you develop your pitchdeck.

<https://www.ceresagritech.org/>

* Excludes small molecule agrochemicals and plant variety breeding.

Importance of pitching

What is a pitch and why does it matter?

- A pitch is the presentation of an idea, a project, a business or even yourself.
- Usually takes the form of a short talk, with a small number of slides.
- Very different from an academic research talk in style, length, and scope!
- Pitches are used in commercial settings to...
 - Secure investment e.g. in a project or a start-up company
 - ‘Sell’ a product to potential customers
 - Get partners, staff or resources for a project
- A pitch will usually focus on the business case and commercial benefits of the project being presented.
- **The Ceres Investment Committee decides whether to award proof-of-concept investment based on a commercial pitch of the idea.**



What support is available?

- A dedicated Ceres Team is available to help you develop your proof-of-concept project, from idea to final pitch, to give it the best chance of winning Ceres funding.
- Ceres can help you obtain important background information for the pitch, including but not limited to...
 - Size of the problem and market scoping
- The Ceres Team can also assist preparing and polishing the slide deck for your pitch.
- The Ceres Team can offer guidance on how to pitch for success, help you practise your pitch.
- **Ceres is here to help you – talk to us at info@ceresagritech.org**



What is a Ceres proof-of-concept pitch like?

You are selling a vision of an exciting, world-changing opportunity!

Content

- Minimal words – not *War and Peace*!
- No jargon; convey your project in an exciting way so non-expert listeners can understand it in a short time
- Highly visual: pictures and videos create impact and convey your message succinctly
- Focus on the commercial case and how a Proof-of-Concept Award will help

Delivery

- Talk clearly – no need to rush
- Engaging, relaxed, conversational tone – not a lecture!
- Only talk about a few (no more than 6) points per slide
- Build up the picture in a logical manner – don't jump straight in
- Akin to telling a story

What skills are required?

- Coming up with creative ideas is the easy part...
- Selling your idea to an audience of strangers is challenging.
- It takes time and effort to craft a slide deck and even longer to polish its delivery.
- Clarity, brevity, and enthusiasm are key.
- Ability to keep to time is essential; time limits are strictly enforced!
- Pitching is **not** a universal skill - but can be learned with **practice**.
- Rehearsing your pitch and answering questions in front of an audience is strongly advised.

Never made a commercial pitch before? Don't worry!

The Ceres Team can assist with all aspects of the pitching process, from preparing the commercial sections, polishing the slide deck, and upskilling in delivering pitch.



The proof-of-concept slide deck

What should my slide deck contain?

- The proof-of-concept slide deck consists of 5-6 slides including information on:
 - The problem
 - The opportunity
 - Your solution, work to date, rationale
 - Proposed activity, timescale, costings, outputs, disclosures
 - Future plans
- Ideas about the type of information to include on each slide are shown below.

Example pitchdeck slides: points to consider

The problem

- What is the problem or unmet market need?
- Why is it important?
- Are there any solutions currently available?
- If there are solutions on the market, what are they? How are these failing to solve the problem?
- What evidence do you have that there is (1) a real problem or (2) a real need for a solution?
 - e.g. written feedback or data from growers or others in the industry
 - e.g. data on loss of revenue/crop yield, etc. due to lack of a solution

The commercial opportunity

- How big is the problem?
- Who is affected? e.g. growers, manufacturers, retailers...
- Market size: value, volume, key geographical regions e.g. UK, EU, USA
- Total addressable market (how big is the market you could realistically sell to?)
- What would be gained by achieving a satisfactory solution?

Your solution

- What is your proposed solution?
- Rationale behind your idea
- Work to date
- What will your technology offer?
- What will be the applications of your technology?
- What will be the advantages over the competition?
- Why is it unique and for whom?
- Who, exactly, is your customer?
- What are the key benefits to customers – why will they buy it?

Proposed Proof-of-Concept: Work; Timescales; Costings

- Objectives
- SMART deliverables
- Timescales
- Proposed work plan
- Output
- Costings

Future Plans

- Immediate plans post Proof-of-Concept Award for commercialisation of your agri-tech innovation.
- How is this Ceres Proof-of-Concept Award going to help you reach the next stage?
- Vision for next 5 years.

Summary

In summary... address the predictable

- Have a plan – it might not be right, but have one at least
- The right team is vital – if you don't have it yet, show you plan to
- Be credible: the team, the pitch, the science, the plan
- Don't make unsupported statements – the pre read is important!
- Know your market and your 'product' in depth
- Have a specific goal: take the time to plan your project and think about what you want to deliver
- Be clear and focused
- Don't wing it – you will be found out!