

Innovation and Improvement grant guidance notes

MEC/IAI/25/ver1

This document aims to provide you with the necessary information and guidance to help you to prepare your application.

We advise that you prepare your application in good time to allow for checks and approvals from your line manager/division head, local finance team and host organisation, in accordance with internal timelines.

We recommend that you submit your application in advance of the deadline so that any technical issues can be resolved in good time.

Moorfields Eye Charity is committed to making the application process accessible to all and will aid you where needed. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with our Grants and Research team if you have any questions or concerns about the application process.

Email: moorfields.eyecharity.researchgrants@nhs.net

Table 1: Overview of scheme

Project lead	Any person employed by Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Trust or the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology who are in receipt of salary funding for the duration of the grant, are eligible to apply for an Innovation and Improvement grant. The project lead will lead the project and will be the main point of contact for MEC during the application process.
Project team	Members of the project team will usually hold a post at MEH or UCL or be at a recognised organisation (Higher Education, NHS, industry, consultancy etc.) and be directly contributing to the project on a regular basis.
Not eligible	• PhD students. • Staff who are not in receipt of salary support for the duration of the proposed grant. • Current Career Development Award holders.
Frequency	Consecutive rounds throughout the year. Check our website for deadline dates
Funding amount (£)	Between £3,000 - £100,000
Duration	Up to 18 months
Location	The project can be based at Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (i.e., City Road and any other network site) or UCL Institute of Ophthalmology. Parts of the project may be carried out at the site of external collaborators if justification for this is provided. The outcome of the project must result in a positive benefit to Moorfields Eye Hospital and/or its patients.
Impact	The proposal should show a clear pathway to patient benefit within months (normal max 2 years) after project completion

Table of contents

The Moorfields Eye Charity Innovation and Improvement programme	3
1. Who can apply.....	3
1.1 Project lead	3
1.2 Joint project leads.....	3
1.3 Project team.....	3
1.4 Those not eligible to apply.....	3
2 What's included.....	4
3 How to submit your application form	4
4 Application assessment considerations.....	4
5 What happens next	5
6 Preparing your application	5
6.1 Completing the application form.....	5
7 Additional guidance when completing your application.....	6
7.1 Application summary	6
7.2 Proposal summary.....	6
7.3 Proposal details	7
7.4 Proposal costs and justification	8
7.5 Additional information	9
Appendix 1.....	11

The Moorfields Eye Charity Innovation and Improvement programme

The purpose of this programme is to enable staff to develop and test new ideas to bring about impactful positive change, that will optimise, or improve clinical practice, service, staff and/or patient experience or participation.

During your award, we expect that as lead applicant you will:

- Devote an appropriate percentage of your time to carrying out the project
- Lead the team and the day-to-day running of the project
- Prepare timely reporting of the outputs of the project both for submission to MEC and in preparation for publication and future applications.

By the end of the award, you should be able to clearly show benefit to patients within months to 2 years of project completion.

This scheme is designed to support discrete and defined pieces of work, funded projects will include strong demonstration of:

- a clear and convincing problem that the project wants to address
- how the project will lead to positive change
- direct benefits and/or positive impact for patients within a relatively short timescale (months, not years).

This scheme is **not** intended to provide:

- bridging salary support
- complete or extend an existing project
- be used in combination with other small grants as a mechanism to commutatively fund a (typical/large) large project grant
- top-up or co-fund even with other schemes of a similar remit.

1. Who can apply

1.1 Project lead

Any person employed by Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Trust or the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology who are in receipt of salary funding for the duration of the grant, are eligible to apply for an Innovation and Improvement grant.

The project lead will lead the project and will be the main point of contact for MEC during the application process.

1.2 Joint project leads

Joint applications will not normally be permitted for this scheme.

1.3 Project team

Members of the project team will usually hold a post at MEH or UCL or be at a recognised organisation (Higher Education, NHS, industry, consultancy etc.) and be directly contributing to the project on a regular basis.

1.4 Those not eligible to apply

- PhD students.
- Staff who are not in receipt of salary support for the duration of the proposed grant.
- Current Career Development Award holders.

2 What's included

Applicants can request funding from £3,000 up to £100,000 per application. This could be salary for direct project costs for administrative or project support costs.

For Moorfields employees, clinical sessions or salary recovery may be included (where time is not available within current contracts or work plan) for time spent on delivering the grant. Applicants are reminded that the time and cost requested must be clearly linked to specific work and timescales outlined in the proposal. It should also be borne in mind that should an award be forthcoming and the grant is later extended, salary costs will not be automatically extended.

Additionally, the scheme remit states:

- Normal maximum of one award as principal applicant per year.
- Supplements will not normally be considered within this scheme.
- Follow on funding will not be considered within this scheme.

The maximum duration of an Innovation and Improvement grant is 18 months.

3 How to submit your application form

Applicants can submit an expression of interest form for this scheme at any point during the year via [Flexigrant](#).

Expressions of interest which meet the eligibility and remit requirements of the programme will be invited to submit a full application via [Flexigrant](#). Applicants should be aware that additional time is required for the institutional processing/sign off of applications by the relevant offices prior to the submission of applications to the charity office.

4 Application assessment considerations

This funding scheme will be open to expressions of interest throughout the year. Further programme details can be found on our [website](#). The expression of interest application form is now available on [Flexigrant](#).

Expressions of interest will be evaluated for eligibility and fit to the remit of the programme. If suitable, applicants will be invited to submit a full application.

External peer review of full applications may be carried out at the discretion of Moorfields Eye Charity and its Trustees.

Applications will be evaluated by multi-disciplinary experts and trustees of Moorfields Eye Charity. Applications will be assessed against a range of criteria including:

1. Fit to remit and eligibility criteria.
2. Potential positive impact of the innovation or improvement.
3. Potential benefit to Moorfields Eye Hospital Foundation Trust staff and/or its patients.
4. Feasibility of the project plan.
5. Delivery within an expected and reasonable timeframe.
6. Value for money.

For awarded grants: The following is not an exhaustive list of rules and expectations on awarded grants but are representative of key elements applicants should be aware of prior to applying for funding.

- No cost extensions, variations or supplements to awarded grants will not normally be considered.
- Awards are expected to commence within three months of the award start date unless agreed, in writing, by MEC.
- Extensive delays to the start of the award or stalling of work may result in the award being withdrawn/terminated.

Applications which require ethical approval should be conscious of these considerations.

5 What happens next

When you have submitted your expression of interest, you will receive a confirmation email via Flexigrant. Charity grant management staff will conduct an administrative review of your application to confirm that it meets the submission criteria, Moorfields Eye Charity reserves the right to not process your application if it doesn't meet the following criteria:

- Satisfactory completion of application requirements
- Eligibility and suitability for the programme applied for
- Project proposal within the funding remit of the charity.

Expressions of interest meeting submission criteria will be invited to submit a full proposal. The full proposal will undergo administrative review before being externally peer reviewed (as required) and reviewed by the Moorfields Eye Charity Scientific Advisory Panel and considered in competition with all other applications. Funding recommendations will be submitted to the relevant charity Trustee meeting where final funding decisions will be approved. Decisions will normally be released within two weeks of the trustee meeting at which they are discussed.

6 Preparing your application

6.1 Completing the application form

You are required to submit your application, ahead of advertised deadlines, via our grant management system, Flexigrant (<https://moorfieldseyecharity.flexigrant.com/>).

Guidance on registering for an account on Flexigrant and on using the system can be found on our [Advice for Applicants](#) webpage.

You are strongly advised to read through the guidance notes and application form before starting to complete your application. You are also encouraged to start contacting/discussing your application with the following (not an exhaustive list):

- Head of department / divisional director
- Hospital / Institute finance team(s)
- Collaborators
- Statistical support services

7 Additional guidance when completing your application

These additional guidance notes complement those contained within the application form. They provide you with expanded information which is important to consider when answering each question. You are therefore encouraged to refer to the sections below as you work through your application.

7.1 Application summary

- **Host organisations:** This is the organisation who will manage your award, where the offer letter will be issued and who is, mostly likely, your employer.
- **Start date:** Will usually be around six months after the submission deadline. This is to ensure that your proposed start date will fall after the release of decisions from the funding round you are applying to.

7.2 Proposal summary

These sections will be used by the trustees in particular so applicants are strongly advised to take time to prepare high quality responses.

Plain English summary (350 words max). You are strongly encouraged to spend time on this section. If the summary is too technical, or is not suitably presented for a lay audience, the section will be returned to you for revision. We reserve the right to hold processing of the entire application further if this section is not completed/revised to a satisfactory level.

Please visit the [‘what we’re funding’](#) section of our website to see examples of the level of information we are expecting in this section.

Some do’s and don’ts:

- Avoid jargon.
- Keep it short and concise.
- Avoid including every detail about you, the team or the work proposed.

For awarded grants, the summary may be used by the charity in the dissemination of funded grants to public audiences. Potential channels for sharing include but are not limited to charity/hospital website, press release, annual reports and other publications. Therefore, commercially sensitive or confidential information **should not** be included in this abstract. On occasion anonymised details of your project may be shared, for fundraising related

activities only, during the decision-making process. In these instances, no details beyond those provided in the plain English summary and budget cost summary will be used without prior written consent.

Fit to Moorfields Eye Charity strategy statement (350 words max)

Our strategy can be found [here](#) and you are encouraged to take time to consider which objective the primary purpose of your project sits within. Many projects span more than one objective, but we ask you to just select one for this internal data collection process.

If the proposed work falls outside of these aims you should clearly explain the importance and relevance of your proposal to the trust/loO and MEC and towards the understanding, prevention, treatment and cure of vision disorders.

7.3 Proposal details

You are reminded that it is your sole responsibility to ensure that complete details of the research section are submitted as part of your application and that it, together with any appendices and references, provides all the necessary information needed by reviewers, the MEC Scientific Advisory Panel and trustees to consider and make a funding decision.

7.3.1 Aims (100 words max)

- are broad statements of desired outcomes, or the general intentions of the research, which 'paint a picture' of your research project
- emphasise what is to be accomplished (not how it is to be accomplished)
- address the long-term project outcomes, reflecting the aspirations and expectations of the research topic.

7.3.2 Objectives (100 words max)

are the steps you are going to take to answer your research questions or a specific list of tasks needed to accomplish the goals of the project

- emphasise how aims are to be accomplished
- must be highly focused and feasible
- address the more immediate project outcomes
- make accurate use of concepts
- must be sensible and precisely described
- should read as an 'individual' statement to convey your intentions.

7.3.3 Innovative aspects (300 words max)

You should consider how your proposed work is itself innovative and has the potential to stimulate new and innovative research. This can be used as an opportunity to highlight the novelty of the work in terms of the area of investigation or the application of a new or repurposing of an existing methodology. Examples to demonstrate this should be include.

7.3.4 Preliminary data

Upload a maximum of 2 pages (PDF) of preliminary data, avoid repeating information to be covered in experimental design and methods. Any video content should be included as a hyperlink in the PDF.

7.3.5 Key performance indicators

Indicate how the impact of the project will be assessed quantitatively and qualitatively, using:

- Outcome measures: measures used to evaluate the endpoint as a measure of effect of the project carried out.
- Process measures: specific steps or outputs which will contribute to the overall outcome of the project.
- Balancing measures: Measures introduced to counteract changes in the system or environment as a result of the project.

See the [NHS How-to guide for measurement for improvement for further information](#).

7.3.6 Gantt chart (PDF file upload)

For projects over £50,000 it is mandatory to submit a Gantt chart with this section. Projects with a budget under £50,000, you may choose to submit a Gantt chart, but it is optional. Gantt charts can take any form appropriate but should clearly present an overview of the work planned across the grant duration. Training, key time points and additional learning opportunities should cross-cut the research programme also.

7.4 Proposal costs and justification

7.4.1 Funding requested (table)

Prior to completing the budget table, you are advised to read the section on allowed/disallowed costs ([appendix 1](#)) and to discuss the costings with your research finance/administrative representatives where necessary.

You should make sure that you only include details of costs being requested in the current application.

7.4.2 Budget justification

All funding requests must be robustly justified and directly related to the scheme being applied to. The budget table is used to detail the actual costs being requested, with the budget justification narrative justifying why the level and type of funding is required.

7.4.3 Salaries

If salary costs are included, provide details in the table on the role, name of the candidate (if known), the percentage of their time that will be dedicated to the project, salary grade and cost. Salary costs sought should be commensurate with the skills, responsibilities and expertise necessary to carry out the role required. Please note this salary support cannot be used to support the principal applicant and can only support up to 1 FTE which can be split between up to three posts. Posts which are not direct allocated costs to the grant should not be included here.

The host organisation is responsible, as the employer, for the contracts of employment of the staff concerned, and consequently for any redundancy or other compensatory payments that may be required. Work permits, where required, are a matter for direct negotiation between the host organisation and the relevant Government departments.

7.4.4 Consumables (300 words max)

Use the text box to provide any additional information on the consumables and materials to be used in the project. Funds may be used to meet the directly incurred costs only.

Regardless of which type of Springboard award is being applied for a maximum of £50,000

for direct research related expenses or consumables which are needed to carry out the experiments outlined in the proposal may be applied for.

7.4.5 Equipment (300 words max)

Provide any necessary justification of equipment costs. Computers of any type will not normally be funded. Only small items of equipment will be considered and applicants will need to justify why the equipment is not available elsewhere. Depreciation or inflation costs should not be included.

7.4.6 Other (300 words max)

Use the text box to provide any justification of any further costs not covered by the previous questions. Examples include software licences, access charges, research participant travel and expenses. Collaborative travel may be included but only where a collaborative project is being proposed and all costs are reasonable for the level of collaborative work being undertaken on the proposed project.

Allowed and disallowed costs – see [appendix 1](#)

7.5 Additional information

7.5.1 Data, software and materials outputs (free text)

All researchers are expected to manage data safely during the project and to maximize the availability of research data with as few restrictions as possible. Where no restrictions apply and where the proposed research is likely to generate datasets that will hold significant value as a resource for the wider community, you should provide a data management and sharing plan.

Data management and sharing plans should be clear, concise and proportionate. We encourage you to incorporate [FAIR principles](#) into your plans. You should consider the following key questions and ensure they are addressed clearly:

- What data outputs will your research generate and what data will have value to other researchers?
- When will you share the data?
- Where will you make the data available?
- How will other researchers be able to access the data?
- Are any limits to data sharing required – for example, to either safeguard research participants or to gain appropriate intellectual property protection?
- How will you ensure that key datasets are preserved to ensure their long-term value?
- What resources will you require to deliver your plan?

7.5.2 Intellectual property, commercialisation

You are asked to consider each of these questions, even if an immediate IP/commercialisation opportunity may not seem to be immediately apparent. The trustees wish to ensure that you have considered all the potential outputs from the research and also the steps which will/should be taken to protect them if necessary.

7.5.3 Restrictions on intellectual property rights (IPR)/publications

If there are any restrictions on IPR or publications arising from your research, you must provide a written statement detailing these. Restrictions on intellectual property may affect

your eligibility to apply to the charity.

You are advised to discuss any matters relating to these questions with your local intellectual property/commercialisation representative.

Appendices

Appendix 1.

Allowed and disallowed costs

The lists in this section are not considered exhaustive. The Trustees may query and/or remove any costs that are deemed to be outside of the charity's funding remit and/or not justified within the application submitted. The Trustees also reserve the right to update/amend the allowed and disallowed costs as considered necessary.

Allowed costs:

- Salary for administrative or project support or salary (sessions) cover (for MEH staff only) for time spent on the grant where time is not available within current contracts or cannot be reasonably covered within work plan. Access charges including statistical/database/trial co-ordinator support provided on a costs recovery basis (i.e. number of hours/days/sessions required X cost per hour/day/session) are also permitted for direct project related activity.
- Laboratory materials and consumables directly attributable to the proposed work.
- Small pieces of equipment if essential for the work proposed and not available elsewhere within the institution.

Disallowed costs

In general, the Trustees will not:

- award grants to cover expenditure already incurred
- fund individuals who are employed by a commercial organisation
- fund individuals who are applying for, holding, or employed under a research grant from the tobacco industry.

They will also not normally fund within this scheme;

- travel/collaborative travel/conference/dissemination costs
- social events/hospitality costs
- personal or bespoke computers
- PhD stipends
- dissemination costs including PPI
- full economic costs including infrastructure costs such as lighting, heating, telephones, use of library, general clinical or laboratory equipment
- course registration fees including PhD, MD registration fees
- general office expenses (photocopying, postage etc.). Exceptions may be made for printing/phone costs associated with patient based studies
- indirect costs - this includes: general administration costs such as personnel, finance, library, and some departmental services
- equipment running costs
- staff recruitment related costs other than advertising costs
- purchase/subscription costs of books, journals, magazines
- training courses
- indemnity insurance (insurance cover against claims made by subjects or patients associated with a research programme)
- redundancy costs for staff

- waste disposal costs/radiation protection costs
- ethics reviews.