

Moorfields Eye Charity

Springboard Awards guidance notes MEC/SBA/21/ver2

1. Introduction	2
1.1 Moorfields Eye Charity and strategy.....	2
1.2 Purpose and remit of MEC Springboard Awards	2
1.3 Application assessment considerations	3
1.4 Types of applications.....	4
1.5 Eligibility and suitability.....	4
1.6 Word count and format.....	5
1.7 How to submit your application form.....	5
1.8 What happens next	5
2. Guidance for completing the application form.....	6
Section 1: Application details	6
Section 2: Summary and classification of proposed research	6
Section 3: Details of research	8
Section 4: Related and future applications	9
Section 5: Budget details	10
Allowed costs.....	11
Disallowed costs	11
Section 6: Principal applicant details and CV	12
Section 7: Co-applicant details and CV	13
Section 8: Additional information	13
Section 9: Applicant sign off.....	13
Annex B: Research office approval	15
Annex C: Collaborator form	15
Annex D: research involving animals.....	15

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide applicants with the necessary information and guidance to enable them to complete and submit applications, for research funding, to Moorfields Eye Charity (MEC) under the schemes detailed within.

1.1 Moorfields Eye Charity and strategy

The principal way we support Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (Moorfields) is by providing financial support, through grant making. In addition our activities include the provision of non-financial support, eg advice and partnership making, and we use our other resources of knowledge, expertise and time. We are working in partnership with Moorfields and UCL to create Oriel, a new world class integrated centre for advancing clinical care, teaching and research in 2026-27. The new facility will benefit millions of patients in London, the UK and across the world.



Core belief

People's sight matters



Mission

Improving eye health by funding innovation in research, education and care to benefit Moorfields' patients



Vision

Moorfields Eye Charity's support enables Moorfields and UCL to provide world-leading eye care, research and education from the Oriel centre benefiting patients across the UK and globally.

Our strategy outlines five main objectives which include ambitions to:

- Create a world class integrated centre for advancing eye health, teaching and research in 2026-27.
- Be the leading charity for research into eye health.
- Support patient care.
- Support sharing knowledge.
- Shape national policy.

[Read our strategy here.](#)

1.2 Purpose and remit of MEC Springboard Awards

The Moorfields Eye Charity Springboard Awards offers the exciting opportunity for researchers to develop novel ideas and generate preliminary data that will go on to form part of larger, competitive, grant applications to external funders.

This scheme is primarily intended to support **early stage researchers** who are aiming to establish or develop their own independent research programme.

Applications from **established researchers** will only be considered when the proposed work is novel and falls outside of their established area of expertise. These applications must include collaborations or co-applicants who will bring additional expertise and multi-disciplinary work together.

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) project grant
- top-up or co-funding even with other schemes of a similar remit

It is expected that a competitive proposal(s) for a larger project will be submitted to an external funding organisation within a year of the completion of the Springboard Award.

Springboard Award proposals must identify the programme(s) and funding bodies to which future applications will be submitted and describe how the Springboard Award will result in a more competitive proposal for submission to the named external funders.

1.3 Application assessment considerations

This is a response mode, competitive funding scheme for hypothesis driven research with applications accepted twice a year. External peer review will be carried out on applications.

Each application will be judged, as appropriate, against a number of criteria including but not limited to:

- fit to remit
- eligibility and appropriateness of applicants
- intrinsic merit and strength of the work
- potential for the award to provide a basis for further research support from external funders
- potential impact/outcomes of the research (current and future larger project) on the academic or clinical field of study
- likelihood that the proposed work will commence and be completed during the award period

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 3 months of the award 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.

1.4 Types of applications

There are two types of Springboard Awards. For each application, you can select only one type. If research assistance is not being requested, the application must make it clear who will carry out the work and confirm that they will have the dedicated time to do so.

		<i>Maximum duration</i>	<i>Maximum award</i>
(i)	Research expenses/materials only	12 month	£50,000
(ii)	Including salary support for research assistance	18 month	£180,000

There is a normal £7,500 minimum funding request on both types of applications.

1.5 Eligibility and suitability

The research on which the application is based should fall within the normal funding remit of Moorfields Eye Charity and be appropriate for the remit and purpose of this scheme. The proposed work must be a suitable project for the scheme.

1.5.1 Principal Applicant

The principal applicant must hold an academic or clinical post with Moorfields Eye Hospital (MEH) or the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology (IoO) and will normally be in receipt of salary funding for the duration of the grant.

Postdoctoral researchers, research active clinical and allied health professionals and research assistants may apply as principal applicant but will normally have at least two years post-doctoral or equivalent research experience. They must hold an academic or clinical post with MEH or the IoO and be in receipt of salary funding for the duration of the grant. They will also require at least one co-applicant who fulfils the eligibility criteria for principal applicant. Researchers in this category are required to provide details of their current supervisor/manager.

A letter of support (from the current manager/supervisor) is required for postdoctoral researchers, fellows and research assistants who apply as Principal Applicant. The letter must include, at a minimum,

- statement of support for the application and proposed work
- confirmation that applicant will have time/support to carry out this work

Applicants who are on personal fellowships do not need to complete this section.

1.5.2 Joint Principal Applicants

Joint applications will not normally be permitted on Springboard Awards.

1.5.3 Co-applicants

Co-applicants must hold an academic or research post (or equivalent) at a recognised organisation and be contributing significantly to the research project on a day-to-day or regular basis. Applicants are advised to review the description of collaborator versus co-applicant to ensure that they select the most appropriate category.

1.5.4 Collaborator

Collaborators in this context are scientific/medical/academic colleagues, who are associated with the research proposal and named in the body of the application but who are not involved in the day-to-day/regular running of the project. Named collaborators must confirm their role as a collaborator by completing and signing (electronic signature is sufficient) the collaborator form.

1.6 Word count and format

Please follow these instructions when completing the form as this will help to avoid any unnecessary delay in the assessment of your application.

- You must ensure that all relevant sections of the form are completed.
- Answers should be entered in the text boxes provided. Additional pages will also be accepted but only where instruction is given.
- Please adhere to word and/or character limits where they are specified; applications exceeding word limit guidelines may not be processed further. [Sections where character limits have been exceeded will be returned to applicants.](#)
- Please use a typeface 11 point Arial font. If a typeface used is too small, the application will not be processed.
- If abbreviations are used, please ensure these are fully explained to assist the reader.

1.7 How to submit your application form

Applicants must submit an application form according to the advertised funding call deadlines. However, applicants should be aware that two weeks is required for the internal processing/sign off of applications by the relevant Research Offices prior to the submission of applications to the charity office. The application form must be submitted electronically in the format requested.

1.8 What happens next

Receipt of your application by MEC will normally be acknowledged within two weeks. Charity grant management staff will conduct an administrative review of the application to confirm that it meets the submission criteria. MEC reserves the right not to process the application should it not meet the following criteria:

- satisfactory completion of application requirements
- eligibility and suitability for the programme applied for
- research proposal within the funding remit of MEC

Applications meeting submission criteria will be reviewed by the Moorfields Eye Charity Scientific Advisory Panel and considered in competition with all other applications. Please note that additional external experts may be involved in this process as required. Funding recommendations will be submitted to the relevant Trustee committee where final funding decisions will be made. Decisions will normally be released to applicants within two weeks of the Trustee meeting at which they are discussed.

2. Guidance for completing the application form

Section 1: Application details

Applicant details:

- A maximum of two co-applicants are permitted.
- **Named researcher:** For type (ii) applications which include a salary request, name of research assistance salary post being requested can be included here. A copy of their CV using the additional CV template should also be attached to the application as an appendix.

Proposal summary details:

- **Host institution:** Select the institution who will administer the grant i.e. the institution to which the award letter will be issued.
- **Sponsor institution:** The sponsor is the organisation that takes on the overall responsibility for proportionate, effective arrangements being in place to set up, run and report a research project. All health and social care research should have a sponsor including all research that involves NHS patients, their tissues or information. A sponsor is not required for laboratory only based projects. More detail on sponsors can be found on the [Health Research authority website](#). If you are unclear who should sponsor the project, please speak to the research offices.
- **Start date:** Should be at least four months **after** deadline for receipt of applications by MEC.

Section 2: Summary and classification of proposed research

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

Plain English summary: Applicants are strongly advised to spend time on this section. If the summary is too technical, exceeds the word limit or is not suitably presented for a lay audience, the section will be returned to applicants 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 our [‘what we fund’](#) section of our website to appreciate the level of information we are expecting in this section.

The following requirements are in place

- This section cannot exceed 350 words in total across the three sections. We recommend that this allocation can be split evenly across the three headings below.
- The section headings must be used and no additional headings can be included
 - **The challenge:** this should very simply explain what the project is looking at – the area of work, why it needs to be done and the key questions being posed.

- **The process:** without using technical terms, explain what methods will be used to tackle the questions being posed.
- **The potential:** what is the bigger picture – what is the change, what new knowledge will there be – why is this work worth doing for the wider research community, patients, society

Some do's and don't's

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

For awarded grants, this summary may be used by the Charity in the dissemination of funded grants with 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.

Strategic fit statement with Moorfields Eye Hospital/ Institute of Ophthalmology and Moorfields Eye Charity strategy

This section should be used to demonstrate how the research will help contribute to one or more of the strategic aims of both

- a) [MEH/loO research strategy](#), and
- b) [Moorfields Eye Charity Strategy](#)

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

Impact and outcomes statement

This statement should be as specific as possible and provide information that the Trustees, MEC and external reviewers will find helpful in assessing the potential impact and outcomes of the proposed research activity.

As examples applicants should briefly outline previous indicators and potential future indicators for: the relevance of the research: changes to the state of knowledge within a field, industrial interest in their past or current work, collaborative projects, companies formed, problems solved, documented changes to public policy or guidelines, improvements in public health.

For all other sections, all tick boxes should be completed as appropriate.

Section 3: Details of research

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

Aims and objectives: These should be clear and limited to reflect the scope and remit of this scheme. Applicants are reminded to consider that the differences between aims and objectives – see below our expectations for this section.

Aims:

- Are broad statements of desired outcomes, or the general intentions of the research, which 'paint a picture' of your research project.
- Emphasize what is to be accomplished (not how it is to be accomplished).
- Address the long-term project outcomes, *i.e.* they should reflect the aspirations and expectations of the research topic.

Objectives are subsidiary to aims and:

- 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.

Milestones: Please provide details of key milestones which will reflect how you can assess that you are making progress towards achieving your aims and objectives. Relevant dates/timelines can be included. If a gantt chart is used, it can be added as an appendix and cross referenced to from this section.

Background to proposed research: Please provide a clear and succinct overview of the research background and scientific progress to date related to the research questions being presented in the application. While space is limited, applicants need to ensure that they include all pertinent information and/or links to referenced papers which contain critical information underpinning the research.

Experimental design and methods: As per above, applicants need to ensure that they include all pertinent information and/or links to referenced papers which contain critical detail regarding experimental design and methods to be used. For patient/clinical research a full standard protocol is not appropriate but applicants must ensure they provide all the detail regarding participant recruitment, assessment and inclusion/exclusion criteria.

Where preliminary data is being collected to support a larger trial, applicants should include a brief justification of what type of trial could be carried out and how the preliminary data will inform this.

Statistical information/considerations: As appropriate for the research outlined, please provide details of the calculations of appropriate power/sample numbers for the study and any considerations that should be made to ensure the work is designed to provide the most robust data.

Suitable and appropriate design: The purpose of this question is to enable applicants to provide detail on how the work is specifically designed to ensure that a defined number of research questions can be addressed in the stated time and that outcomes will provide the necessarily robust preliminary data required for applying for, larger, grant applications.

Innovative aspects: This section provides the opportunity for applicants to highlight why any aspects of the proposal is supporting a novel, improved or innovative research question(s).

References: Give full citation including title, journal title and list all authors (use of et al is only appropriate where there are >5 authors)

Section 4: Related and future applications

Related awarded grants: Please provide details of awards from other funding bodies which are related to the current proposal. The purpose of this question is to allow applicants to clarify where funding from other sources is used towards the total cost of the current proposed work.

As this scheme is intended to support preliminary data generation, we would not expect there to be any substantial other funding supporting this proposal. However, there may be some discrete elements where other funding has been secured and which will provide important added value.

Please include:

- Name of funding body
- Title of project
- Brief description of how the grant relates with the current application
- Total value of award and value of the contribution to work related to this application
- Start/end dates

Next steps: planned external funder applications: This section must be completed in all applications. It is expected that at least two follow on funding avenue has already been identified and should be detailed here. The schemes selected should be relevant and realistic. Timelines for application deadlines should be appropriate e.g. we would not expect to see deadlines for applications within the duration of the Springboard Award as logically the pilot data would not be prepared in time.

Applicants should be aware that as a primary purpose of this scheme is to provide small grant funding to support the generation of preliminary data that will underpin/form part of larger, competitive, grant applications to external funders. For clarity, the Trustees may not be willing to consider future applications from individuals who fail to apply for any follow on external funding having received a Springboard Award from MEC.

Section 5: Budget details

Annex A – grant budget [excel file]

Prior to completing the excel sheet, applicants are advised to read the section on allowed/disallowed costs below and to discuss the costings with their research finance/administrative representatives where necessary.

Applicants should ensure that they only include details of costs being requested in the current application.

Within the excel file, cells which are white can be edited by applicants. Please be aware that most grey cells contain formula. Grey cells should not be adjusted by applicants as the totals and subtotals will be automatically calculated.

[1] Budget summary

The information in this section will be automatically updated so no input is required. Applicants should not try to edit this section in any way.

[2] Breakdown of support requested

Location: For all budget entries made, please select the location where that cost will be incurred. This is irrespective of what institution will host the award. For example, if your grant will be hosted by MEH but you are using accessing a microscope at IoO, the access charge for that microscope should have 'UCL IoO' selected in the location field.

Salaries: Salary costs sought should be commensurate with the skills, responsibilities and expertise necessary to carry out the role required.

The host institution 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 institution and the relevant Government departments.

Materials and consumables: Funds may be used to meet the directly incurred costs only.

Miscellaneous costs: Examples include software licences, 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.

Equipment: Computers of any type will not normally be requested. 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.

Access charges: This section should be used to detail the direct costs that will be incurred to access equipment (e.g. confocal microscope) or resources which are charged by the 'owner' on a cost recovery basis i.e. fixed charge per hour etc. The number of hours/days should be included and the total cost to the grant per year. Depreciation or inflation costs should not be included.

Animals: Complete a separate section for each species/strain and duplicate as necessary. Enter the name of the species and divide costs under the rows outlined – purchase and maintenance costs.

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 research assistance on that specific application type.
- 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). Salary recovery costs of staff currently funded by HEFCE, NHS or other research award will not be considered.
- consumables directly attributable to the proposed work.
- animal costs.
- 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
- salaries on research material only applications
- dissemination costs including PPI
- salary recovery on tenured posts
- research sessions for clinical or allied health professionals
- 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
- a proportion of Principal or Co-Applicant's salaries for supervision
- 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 (including Home Office animal licence 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

Justification for requested costs

All funding requests must be robustly justified and directly related to the research programmes and equipment requirements. Annex A excel sheet is used to detail the actual costs being requested and section 5 of the application provides the narrative justifying why the level and type of funding is required. The breakdown of costs should not be fully reproduced in the justification boxes. Any applications which contain only costs and no justification will be returned to the applicant.

Each section has a maximum **300 word limit**.

Salaries: Only one post can normally be requested. The justification should explain why the level/salary scale of the person is required to complete the work. If the person will not spend 100% of their time on the current work, details of the source of their other salary and work commitments should be included here. Salary level requested should be commensurate with the skills, responsibilities and expertise necessary to carry out the role required. MEC Trustees reserve the right to award support at a different level if considered appropriate.

The host institution 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 institution and the relevant Government departments.

NOTE: Posts which are not direct allocated costs to the grant should not be included here.

Section 6: Principal applicant details and CV

In total the CV pages must not exceed 2 sides of A4.

Grant applications/awards from Moorfields Eye Charity: List, most recent first, all current and completed awarded grants and unsuccessful applications to include: grant title, grant reference, role on the grant (e.g. PI, Co-PI), amount awarded and start/end dates. For all active grants, indicate the number of hours per week (FTE) that are spent on each project. Relevant awards from the Special Trustees should also be included here.

Awarded grants from other funders: Please list, most recent first, current and past grants held in the **last five years** or 10 most relevant grants to work in this proposal. For each award, provide grant title, name of awarding body, details of role on the grant (e.g. PI, Co-PI), amount awarded and start/end dates. For all active grants, indicate the number of hours per week (FTE) that are spent on each project.

ORCID ID is a unique digital identifier for researchers. If you do not have one and want to register please see <https://orcid.org/>

Publications: These should be listed most recent first. List your publications in the following format: all author's names (surname, initial (do not use *et al* unless >5 authors on the paper), year of publication, title of article, journal name, volume number, page numbers. **Please highlight your name in the author list.**

Section 7: Co-applicant details and CV

For guidance, please see details for principal applicants

Section 8: Additional information

Data management and data sharing: All researchers are expected to maximise 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, applicants should provide a data management and sharing plan. **Maximum 300 words**

Data management and sharing plans should be clear, concise and proportionate. Applicants are free to structure their plan in the manner that best meets their needs but 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

Applicants are advised to discuss any matters relating to the IP/commercialisation questions with their local intellectual property/commercialisation representative.

Section 9: Applicant sign off

This section must be signed by the principal applicant prior to the application form being submitted to the relevant research office.

Consultancies, equities and directorships: The purpose of this question is to monitor potential conflict of interest. If **YES**, please provide details, **maximum 100 words**.

External peer review: The Trustees reserve the right to request external peer review on any grant if considered appropriate and necessary.

Proposed external peer reviewers: Up to four reviewers may be recommended here. Do not include individuals who may present a conflict of interest with your application (e.g. same institution, close/recent collaborator, co-authorship in the last three years). MEC may or may not choose to approach some, or all, of the individuals you have selected.

Peer review restrictions: A reasonable number of reviewers who are considered to be in direct conflict with the application may be listed here. While MEC will endeavour to omit these reviewers, the final decision on reviewer selection lies with MEC and Trustees.

Annexes and Appendices: Please tick all that you intend to attach to the final application. These can be submitted as separate files.

Annexes

Annex B: Research office approval

Please ensure you refer to the scheme specific 'how to submit your grant application' guides which can be found on the relevant website pages where application forms are downloaded from.

This Annex must be completed for all applications irrespective of where the research will be carried out or which institution will host the grant if awarded. It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that they adhere to and work within any deadlines set by their institution(s) with regards to grant application sign off procedures. These deadlines are managed by the institutions, not MEC.

- All applications must be approved by MEH R&D office even if all the research (and costs) will be carried out at UCL Institute of Ophthalmology (IoO) or other institution.
- If hard copies of this form are used, signatures must be signed and not typed and the completed page scanned and submitted as a PDF/TIFF file.

The purpose of these approvals is to confirm that the budget presented is accurate and appropriate and that all necessary costs have been considered. In addition, the approval is agreeing that should the grant be awarded, the grant could be hosted by the institution subject to all other necessary approvals e.g. ethics, sponsorship, being secured.

Please refer to the specific guidelines for submitting a Springboard Award application and the additional signature(s) required. Details can be found on the relevant website.

Applicants should not assume that the sign off the grant submission is approval for the work to be started/conducted.

Annex C: Collaborator form

A collaborator form should be completed for each collaborator and attached to the final application form. Please download a copy of the form from our website.

A collaborator, in this context, is normally a person who will provide specific input/expertise into a discrete part of the project but who will not be involved in the majority/day-to-day activity of the project. This person(s) may for example provide a reagent, resource or a portion of their time but they will have no rights to the research outcomes of the project. Funds cannot be requested to pay/reimburse a collaborator for their time. If a fee is charged then in this context the person is considered to be providing a service (consultancy service) and cannot therefore be considered a collaborator.

Annex D: Research involving animals

The Trustees prefer not to use animals in research unless absolutely necessary for long-term research.

This annex should be completed by the applicant where the proposed research will involve animals and/or animal tissue. The requested information is for monitoring purposes only. It is the responsibility of the Host Institution to ensure that research involving the use of animals complies at all times with relevant laws and regulation and adheres to the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and any amendments.