

## Springboard award guidance notes MEC/SB/26/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 local research office and host organisation, in accordance with their 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](mailto:moorfields.eyecharity.researchgrants@nhs.net)

**Table 1: Overview of scheme**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Principal applicant</b>                  | <p>Early career researchers / staff who would like to transition to independence through to those who are in the early stages of leading a research group and hold an academic or clinical post at Moorfields Eye Hospital (MEH) or the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology (IoO) who are in receipt of salary for the duration of the grant.</p> <p>They are driving this research project, are responsible for the delivery of the proposal and this research area is part of their overall research programme / ambition for the future.</p> |
| <b>Type of award and funding amount (£)</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The principal applicant requires funding to support research expenses to carry out the project themselves. Up to £50,000.</li> <li>The principal applicant will employ a research assistant who they will work with to carry out the project. Up to £180,000, including research assistant salary and up to £50,000 of research expenses / consumables.</li> </ol> <p>(Minimum £7,500 budget request for both types)</p>  |
| <b>Duration</b>                             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Without research assistant salary: maximum duration of 12 months</li> <li>With research assistant salary: maximum duration of 18 months.</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Joint principal applicants</b>           | Not normally permitted on this programme   |

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Co-applicants</b> | Must hold an academic or research post (or equivalent) at a recognised organisation and significantly contribute to the project on a regular basis.                                   |
| <b>Collaborators</b> | Scientific / medical / academic colleagues who contribute skills, expertise or resources to all or part of the project but are not involved in the day-to-day running of the project. |

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## 2 The Moorfields Eye Charity Springboard award

The purpose of the Moorfields Eye Charity Springboard award is to provide early career researchers with the protected time to develop novel ideas and generate preliminary data that will go on to form part of larger, competitive, grant applications to external funders. For a type 1 Springboard award you are able to devote an appropriate percentage of your time to carry out the work of the project. A type 2 Springboard award will involve work which cannot be carried out by you alone and so requires the inclusion of salary for research assistance.

During your award, we would expect that you will:

- Type 1:
  - devote an appropriate percentage of your time to carrying out the project
  - will carry out the day-to-day running and work of the project
  - develop and expand your research and leadership skills
  - where possible develop line-management skills
  - prepare timely reporting of the outputs of the project both for submission to MEC and in preparation for publication and future applications.
- Type 2:
  - devote an appropriate percentage of your time to leading the project
  - develop your leadership, collaborative and line-management skills by working with a research assistant who will carry out the day-to-day work of the project
  - develop and expand your research and leadership skills
  - 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 have obtained sufficient data to prepare an application for a larger grant or fellowship. You will have begun to establish or built on the foundations of your own independent avenue of research and will have gained project leadership experience. It is expected that competitive proposals for a larger project will be submitted to an external funding organisation within a year of the completion of the Springboard award.

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-fund even with other schemes of a similar remit.

This scheme does not allow applications from:

- PhD or master students
- researchers who are not in receipt of salary support for the duration of the proposed grant
- established and other researchers who cannot demonstrate that they are currently within one of the career progression stages (see table 2 below) required for this scheme.

### 3 Who can apply

As principal applicant you will hold an academic or clinical post with Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Trust or the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology (IoO) and will be in receipt of salary funding for the duration of the grant. Research active clinical staff, nurses, optometrists, allied health professionals and research assistants can apply as the principal applicant. **Your career progression stage should align with one of the stages listed in [Table 2](#).** If you are unsure where you fit in these career categories, you should contact the charity grants

and research team via [moorfields.eyecharity.researchgrants@nhs.net](mailto:moorfields.eyecharity.researchgrants@nhs.net). Clinical staff who are in the relatively early stages of their research career are particularly encouraged to get in touch with us to discuss their career stage.

You should compare your skills and experience to **Table 2** and state which career stage you fit within and why. You are also advised to ensure that your CV section of the application form (and / or linked ORCID) includes clear details that demonstrate your career stage. The selected stage will be reviewed as part of the eligibility criteria checks **and** by the decision-making panels / committees. The charity's decision on eligibility is final.

**Table 2: Career progression stages**

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <p><b>Developing research</b></p>    | <p><b>This incorporates postdoctoral researchers who are at the early stages of developing their career and are just starting to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop and deliver their own research projects and produce important research outputs</li> <li>• create their own research network which is independent from their supervisor's contacts</li> <li>• learn leadership skills by, for example, organising workshops and supporting students.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Reaching independence</b></p>  | <p><b>This incorporates researchers who are close to reaching independence. Their CV and track record will demonstrate:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a record of novel research that has already produced an increasing number and wide range of research outputs</li> <li>• a set of collaborations with researchers in different research organisations and/or disciplines</li> <li>• recognition of their expertise by being selected for opportunities such as peer review or conference presentations</li> <li>• clear plans for their own independent research group</li> <li>• continuing development of and putting into practice the relevant leadership skills required to run a research group, for example increased supervision of PhD students as principal supervisor</li> <li>• beginning to apply for larger grants including personal fellowships and multi-year project/programme grants.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Embedding independence</b></p> | <p><b>This incorporates researchers who have recently reached independence and are embedding it. Their CV and track record will demonstrate that they are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leading a recently established and likely growing research group which is delivering novel research and research outputs from a number of programmes of research</li> <li>• building up national and international collaborations</li> <li>• planning to work towards becoming an internationally recognised research group</li> <li>• securing increasing levels of funding for the research and usually across more than one programme of work</li> </ul>   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>embedding leadership skills, for example increased size of research group, evidence of supporting their staff to develop their own research careers.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

### 3.1 Letters of support

Your application may require a number of letters or statements of support. These will vary depending on your circumstances and proposal so please ensure you read the guidance and approach the individuals who will provide these letters well in advance of submission deadlines.

#### 3.1.1 If you are currently employed on a grant held by another individual

You are required to provide details of your current supervisor/manager and **upload** a letter of support (PDF) from your current manager/supervisor **as part of your application**. The letter must include, at a minimum:

- a statement of support for your application and proposed work
- confirmation that you will have time/support to carry out this work.

#### 3.1.2 If you hold tenure, open-ended contracts or are on personal fellowships

You do not need a letter of support if you will hold one of the above for the duration of the proposed grant.

#### 3.1.3 Collaborators

Named collaborators must confirm their role as a collaborator by providing a letter of support which will be uploaded as a PDF as part of the application process.

## 4 What's included

There are two types of Springboard award. For each application, you can select only one type. For the type one Springboard award you are expected to devote an appropriate percentage of your time to leading and carrying out the project work. Where the proposed work justifies the requirement of additional research assistance, you can apply for the second type of Springboard award which includes salary for a research assistant. If you are applying to the second type of Springboard award you are still expected to devote an appropriate amount of time to leading the project and working closely to guide the work of the research assistant. If research assistance is not being requested, you must make 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)  | <b>Research expenses/materials only</b>                 | 12 months               | £50,000              |
| (ii) | <b>Including salary support for research assistance</b> | 18 months               | £180,000             |

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

## 5 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 all 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 three 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.

## 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 Flexi-Grant and on using the Flexi-Grant 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):

- Research finance teams
- Study design teams e.g. NIHR
- Statistical support services
- Collaborators

### 6.2 What happens next

When you have submitted your application, 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 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 the charity

Applications meeting submission criteria will be externally peer reviewed and then 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.

## 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 organisation:** This is the organisation who will manage your award, where the offer letter will be issued and who is, most 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 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 included.

### **7.3.4 Preliminary data**

Upload a maximum of two 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 Figures or tables**

Upload any relevant supporting figures or tables (PDF). Any video content should be included as a hyperlink in the PDF.

### **7.3.6 Statistical information/considerations (500 words max)**

As appropriate for the research outlined, you need to 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. Where standard power calculations are not normally done, you should try to include references to other work which has demonstrated power calculations/sample numbers required to provide confidence in result data analysis.

Further reading for **animal research**: [Group and sample size | NC3Rs EDA](#)

### **7.3.7 Gantt chart (PDF file upload)**

Please upload a Gantt chart or equivalent style project plan timeline. 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 Your research career**

### **7.4.1 Securing follow on funding (table)**

This section must be completed in all applications. It is expected that at least two follow-on funding avenues will have already been identified and should be detailed here. The schemes selected should be relevant and realistic. Timelines for application deadlines should be appropriate. For example, 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 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 and 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.

## **7.5 Proposal costs and justification**

### **7.5.1 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.

### **7.5.2 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.

### **7.5.3 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 directly 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.

### **7.5.4 Animals**

If the proposed project involves animals complete the table 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. Use the text box (300 words max) to provide any further information regarding the animal costs.

### **7.5.5 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.

### **7.5.6 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.

### **7.5.7 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](#).

## 7.6 Additional information

### 7.6.1 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?

### 7.6.2 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.

### 7.6.3 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

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## 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 research assistance on that specific application.
- Access charges including statistical/database/trial co-ordinator support provided on a cost recovery basis (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.), although exceptions may be made for printing/phone costs associated with patient based studies
- a proportion of Principal or Co-Applicant salaries for supervision
- indirect costs - these include: 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.