Diabetes research grant scheme

Guidance for applicants

Introduction

Our vision is for everyone served by the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (RFL) to have access to world-leading healthcare, delivered by a thriving workforce and driven by medical research that has a global impact. We support the 10,000 staff of the RFL and their 1.6 million patients across Barnet, Chase Farm and Royal Free hospitals and more than 30 NHS services.

Through the services we provide, and the programmes and equipment we fund, we make a profound and immediate difference to patients' experiences of care. Our volunteering, support hub, and complementary therapy teams enhance the hospital journey for all patients – whether they live locally or come from further away to access the trust's specialist services.

Our support of the RFL workforce enables staff to perform at their very best. Spanning individual professional development and training through to organisation-wide interventions, our initiatives bolster employee resilience and mental health so staff can achieve the best outcomes for patients. We fund ground-breaking research with the potential to change people's lives, whether it's through our grants programme or delivering major capital funding appeals. We also support early career researchers through our PhD funding programme.

Remit of the scheme

This scheme will support research projects from £20,000 up to £100,000 and for up to 2 years. The projects must align with the trust's R&D strategy.

The scheme aims to provide support to researchers to undertake research in any area of diabetes. This can include access to healthcare and health inequalities, co-morbidities, research innovation or developing a new collaboration.

Where relevant and given the diverse communities RFL serves, applications must demonstrate consideration of diversity and inclusion that are relevant to the research aims. Projects should demonstrate the potential for patient benefit.

Laboratory-based and translational research applications must demonstrate how the outcomes will inform future clinical research at RFL.

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Application assessment

Applications will be assessed by the Royal Free Charity Research Review Panel against the following criteria:

- Alignment with the RFL R&D strategy
- Importance – the research need
- Research design and methodology – sound methodological approaches
- Feasibility – realistic objectives delivered within the timescale and budget
- Potential impact for patients – potential to deliver the eventual outcomes for patients
- Value for money – reasonable and justifiable costs

Eligibility

The lead applicant will need to be employed by one of these organisations:

- Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust
- Faculty of Medical Sciences, University College London

If a fellowship or grant is funding the lead applicant's salary, the lead applicant must have a co-applicant employed by one of the two organisations above. All lead applicants must be based at one of the two organisations above for the duration of the grant and the research must be primarily undertaken at the above organisations. Should the lead applicant move to another organisation during the grant period, the grant will not be portable and a new grantholder will need to be appointed with the approval of the charity.

Co-applicants and collaborators can be based outside of the two organisations above provided a justification is provided outlining their expertise.

How to apply

Applications must be received by **4:00pm on Monday 8 April 2024**. Applications submitted after this time will not be accepted. Applications must be sent to grants@royalfreecharity.org. You must allow sufficient time to get the necessary approvals and finance office checks prior to submission.

Projects based at RFL also require sign-off by the clinical director of research and innovation. Applicants should request these approvals **five working days** before the deadline, to allow time for checks to take place.

If you have any queries about the application or anything related to this scheme, please email grants@royalfreecharity.org.

Application form

Section 1: Application details

Lead applicant

The person with overall responsibility for the management of the grant and the primary contact even if the intellectual leadership and input is shared amongst the research team. The lead applicant will sign the award letter and ensure the grant terms and conditions are adhered to. The lead applicant will also be responsible for reporting to the charity.

Project title

The title should be descriptive while accurately reflecting the project.

Start date

The start date should be within three months of the notification of outcome. The date should be realistic to allow enough time for recruitment and any necessary approvals. The start date can be changed if your application is successful, within reason.

End date

Projects are for up to two years.

Research location

Indicate the location of the research. Tick all that apply. Tick 'Other' as well if some of the research will be undertaken by a co-applicant or collaborator who is not based at RFL or UCL.

Which organisation will administer this award?

This should be RFL or UCL and will be responsible for signing the grant terms and conditions, and providing the charity with invoices.

Please note, the administering organisation will normally be the same as the organisation sponsoring any associated study, unless other specific arrangements have been agreed.

Total amount requested

This will be in GBP and should match the total breakdown of costs in the finance section of the application. Funding from £20,000 to £100,000 is available.

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Is your application associated with a clinical study?

Indicate if your application is associated with a clinical study. If it is, state the name of the trial and its EudraCT/ISRCTN number.

Co-applicants/collaborator names

List all the co-applicants and collaborators that will be actively involved with the project.

Co-applicants will have had intellectual input into the design of the research project and application, and are expected to be involved in the project, for example oversight of elements of the research and management/leadership of the research.

Collaborators named in the application for a specific reason. This can include providing specific expertise, materials, reagents, access to patients or specialised equipment. Collaborators are not generally involved in the day-to-day work of the project and are not employed on the grant. Collaborators must provide letters of support which must be included with the application.

Section 2: Strategic alignment

You should outline how the application complements or aligns with the RFL R&D strategy.

The project research outcomes should inform future clinical research at RFL. Outline how this will be achieved.

Section 3: Project details

This entire section should be completed in scientific and technical language.

Scientific abstract

Provide a scientific abstract of the work that will be carried out during the project. You should briefly include background, aims, methodology and outputs and patient benefit.

Background

Describe the background to the project, the current state of knowledge and the work leading up to this application, including any preliminary data. You should also include why the research is needed referencing any gaps in knowledge.

Aims and objectives

The proposed research should be hypothesis-led and seek to answer a specific question(s).

Project plan

Describe the experimental and methodological approaches including how they relate to the aims of the project. Include the analyses you will use. You should reference published data and where necessary, any pre-prints or unpublished data.

Expected outputs and outcomes

Describe the anticipated outputs and outcomes, and their significance. In addition to potential patient benefit, this can also include academic outputs and impacts, such advancing knowledge and understanding.

References

Include the references to the research outlined in this application. Full author citations must be included.

Section 4: Plain English Section

This section of your application will be reviewed and assessed by the charity's research involvement group. The research involvement group is made up of patients, carers, and members of our community. This group assesses applications from a person with lived experience perspective. This section should act as a comprehensive, stand-alone explanation of your project.

This section should be completed in plain English using non-technical language avoiding scientific and technical jargon and abbreviations (unless they have been explained). This section should be accessible by non-scientists and the public. We may ask you to re-write parts of this section if it is not.

Furthermore, if your application is successful, our fundraising and communications teams may use some or all of this section, both to get a better understanding of the research and in communicating the research to others, such as our supporters and donors.

NIHR have developed an informative guide on how to write plain English lay summaries: plain English summaries. Further information and guides are also provided by the Plain English Campaign.

Summary sentence

Describe your project in one or two sentences that sum up the project.

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Plain English summary

The proposed research should be hypothesis-led and seek to answer a specific question(s). Please do not include any confidential information as this abstract may be published on the Royal Free Charity's website. You should refer to the guides above on plain English summaries.

Background

Outline what the background is to this application and the work leading up to this application. Is it a continuation of your existing research? You should explain the need for this research and the wider research landscape.

Aims and Objectives

Explain the aims and objectives of your project. Briefly outline the project structure and explain how the planned activities relate to these aims.

Impact

What impact will this project have for patients? If successful, when will the benefits of your research reach patients? What will the next steps be following this project?

Reducing inequalities

Addressing health disparities has been identified as a strategic priority for diabetes research. If applicable, explain how you have considered this when planning your project and the relevance of these issues to your research.

Patient and public involvement and engagement

Patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) in research helps ensure that research is focused on outcomes that are important to patients and people with lived experience. It makes research more relevant by helping to identify and prioritise wider research questions that researchers may not have considered[1].

PPIE in research is defined as research being carried out 'with' or 'by' members of the public rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them[2]. PPIE does not refer to the recruitment of patients or the public in a clinical trial. Involvement is different to participation and engagement.

[1] NIHR briefing notes for researchers. April 2021. Briefing note three: why involve members of the public in research? https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/briefing-notes-for-researchers-public-involvement-in-nhs-health-and-social-care-research/27371#briefing-note-three-why-involve-members-of-the-public-in-research

[2] NIHR INVOLVE. What is public involvement in research? https://www.invo.org.uk/find-out-more/what-is-public-involvement-in-research-2/

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Further resources are available from NIHR INVOLVE on how to involve patients and the public in research and in the research cycle. NIHR has also published briefing notes for researchers who are new to PPIE or have limited experience.

With lab-based research, meaningful PPIE can seem more challenging. Parkinson's UK, Alzheimer's Society and the NIHR UCLH Biomedical Research Centre have produced a practical guide to patient and public involvement in lab-based research which contains information on before involving patients and planning PPIE.

For this question of the application form, you should consider and outline:

- Whether you consulted patients and/or people with lived experience in your application?
- How have they been involved in the design of the research project?
- If the research project is funded, how will they continue to be involved?

Section 5. Relevance to priority areas

In 2023, Diabetes UK and the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) launched a new strategy to set the direction of clinical and applied diabetes research in the UK. It identified several key areas where there is a need to increase research activity. More information on these areas is available in the strategy document.

If relevant to your application, you should describe how your project aligns to these areas.

This funding scheme welcomes applications for any area of diabetes research. Applications without alignment to the priority areas will be given equal consideration.

Section 6. Further information

Ethics and regulatory approval

Research involving human participants, tissue or data requires ethical approval. You can check on the Health Research Authority website whether your research requires approval.

The research should not start before the necessary approvals are in place. Ethical approval does not need to be in place when applying for a grant. Once approval has been secured, the letter from the Research Ethics Committee must be sent to the charity.

If approval is already in place for the research, include the final letter as an attachment when you submit your application.

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Research involving human participants

If you answer yes to this question, you must also complete annex 1 and submit this along with your application form. Guidance for completion of the annex is available at the end of this form.

Research involving animals

The Royal Free Charity is an introductory member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC). The AMRC has a position statement on the use of animals in research and is committed to the principles of the 3Rs – reduction, replacement and refinement – of animal use in research.

If you answer yes to this question, you must also complete annex 1 and submit this along with your application form. Guidance for completion of the annex is available at the end of this form.

Intellectual Property

If you answer yes to this question, you must also complete annex 2 and submit this along with your application form. Guidance for completion of the annex is available at the end of this form.

Environmental sustainability

Research laboratories can consume significant amounts of energy. A typical laboratory uses 5 to 10 times more energy per metre squared than office buildings[3] with ultra-low temperature freezers being among the most energy consuming pieces of equipment[4].

Describe how you have considered the environmental impact of your research project and the measures, if any, in place to reduce the impact on the environment. This can include alignment with your institution's relevant policies. You should also consider:

- The impact of travelling to meetings or conferences and whether this is essential
- How will you reduce consumable and plastic wastage? Examples include using glass instead of plastic, recycling instead of using disposal single use items, creating your own reagents instead of purchasing them

[3] Connections between laboratory research and climate change: what scientists and policy makers can do to reduce environmental impacts. https://doi.org/10.1002/1873-3468.13932
[4] Ultra-Low Temperature Freezers: Opening the Door to Energy Savings in Laboratories. https://www.etcc-ca.com/reports/ultra-low-temperature-freezers-opening-door-energy-savings-laboratories?dl=1587500130

- How will research team members contribute to sustainability?
- Where equipment is being purchased as part of the grant, consideration should be given to the environmental impact

Sustainable UCL has developed the Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF), which is a standard for sustainable laboratory operations. The LEAF website has useful resources on how research laboratories can mitigate their environmental impact.

Please note that if two applications are judged to be equal by the Research Review Panel, further weight will be given to the answer to this question.

Section 7. Finances

Provide a breakdown of the costs requested in this application under each heading, if applicable. The Royal Free Charity will only fund directly incurred costs. Please ensure that the breakdown matches the total requested on Page 1 of the application form.

For RFL costs, the lead applicant can provide the RFL costs without costing the application via RFL R&D. However, if the application is intended to cover a new clinical trial, the application must be costed via RFL R&D.

For UCL costs, the lead applicant must provide the costings as calculated via Worktribe.

Finance costs

In-line with being an introductory AMRC member, the funding available will only support directly incurred costs and not directly allocated or indirect costs. These include:

1. Directly incurred costs (permitted costs)

   The direct costs of research include:

   - Research staff (e.g. junior postdoctoral researchers and research assistant salaries)
   - Consumables and other costs directly attributable to the project
   - Cost of equipment specific to the needs of the project
   - Access fees for specialist equipment
   - Animal costs
   - Publication fees
   - Conference travel and registration (limited to £3,000)

2. Directly allocated costs (not eligible for funding)

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These are shared costs based on estimates and do not represent actual costs on a project-by-project basis. They may include:

- Research investigators: the proportion of time spent by senior researchers such as the principal investigator and co-investigators on a research project
- The cost of shared resources such as clerical and administrative staff, nurses, lab technicians, supervisors and collaborators who are already employed. Equipment not specific to the research
- Estates: the space used by researchers

3. Indirect costs (not eligible for funding)

   These costs are necessary for underpinning research but cannot be allocated to individual projects. They usually cover computing and information support, central services, general maintenance, lighting, heating and other infrastructure costs

Research staff

If a particular expertise is needed for the project such as statistical expertise or technicians skilled in specific techniques, you may include a cost for a proportion of their time specifically for the work required as long as a justification is provided.

Salaries are expected to be costed by the host organisation's research office according to an applicable pay model. Add the following figures to each box in the salary section: Basic Salary, National Insurance, Superannuation, London allowance.

Consumables

All research consumables and expenses that are necessary for the project should be listed. These should be directly attributable to the project. Any costs for access to specialist equipment should be broken down to per hour and number of hours. We assume that there is a basic level of equipment and computers in research laboratories. Equipment costs are capped at £10,000.

Animal costs

If the project involves using animals, you must provide adequate details on the number, species, sex, strain and maintenance/associated costs of the animals to be used.

Travel

Travel to conferences to present data that is a direct result of the grant is allowed for staff employed on the grant. Costs include accommodation, standard class travel and conference registration. The total cost should be no more than £3,000.

Publications

Publication fees can be included in the application. We strongly encourage researchers to make their publications open access and freely available either immediately upon publication or after six months.

Patient and public involvement and engagement

Involvement costs and payments to patients or the public that are directly attributable to the research are permitted. NIHR provides guidance on how to cost these activities.

Ineligible costs

These costs include:

- Costs relating to staff recruitment
- PhD studentship fees
- Computers
- Personal license fees and a Home Office license
- Funding to provide maintenance and/or insurance of equipment
- Office stationery costs unless required for the project and a justification provided
- Indemnity insurance
- Training courses (including Home Office animal license courses)

Justification of costs

Provide a detailed justification for the costs requested in this application, clearly outlining how these relate to the objectives and proposed timescales. The justification should be sufficiently detailed to allow the reviewers, panel and charity to have an informed opinion on the need of the costs requested.

Additional funding and support

If this application is associated with any matched funding to another funder or other source, provide details including whether the funding has been granted or an application has been submitted. You should also outline how the matched funding complements this application.

You should also include any support your host institution is providing and whether you can access a special purpose fund that will support your application.

If the research project is successful, outline any planned applications to other funders.

Section 8. Applicant details

Lead applicant

Input how much time you spend on research generally and the time you will spend on this project in hours per week.

List your present and last employment position. Include any further positions that you think are relevant to the application.

List all your current grants and any closed grants that you think are relevant to the application.

List your most important research publications that are relevant to the application and any others you think would aid your application.

Co-applicants

Co-applicants will have had intellectual input into the design of the research project and application, and are expected to be involved in the project, for example oversight of elements of the research and management/leadership of the research.

Input how much time the co-applicants spend on research generally and the time they will spend on this project in hours per week.

List all current grants and any other closed grants that are relevant to the application.

List the most important research publications that are relevant to the application.

Collaborator(s)

Collaborators named in the application for a specific reason. This can include provide specific expertise, materials, reagents, access to patients or specialised equipment. Collaborators are not generally involved in the day-to-day work of the project and are not employed on the grant.

All collaborators must provide a letter of support outlining what support will be provided for the project.

Section 9. Peer reviewer suggestions

This information will be treated confidentially. You may wish to include the names of up to three peer reviewers who we may or may not contact to review your application. You must not have any conflicts of interest with your suggested reviewers. These include they must not be from the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust or UCL and you must not have published or collaborated with them in the last three years. Please provide their names and contact details.

You can also include names of people who you do not want to review your application.

Please list up to 5 keywords that describe the research content of your application. These keywords will be used to identify peer reviewers with the necessary expertise to review your application.

Section 10. Attachments

A GANTT chart must be submitted with the application.

The following must also be attached to this application only if they are relevant:

- For UCL submitted applications, a Worktribe costs spreadsheet, unless provided in the Finance table
- Collaborator(s) letter of support
- Other letters of support, such as host institution
- Ethical approval letter(s)
- Quotes for equipment greater than £5,000
- Annexes on human participants, animal use and intellectual property

Section 11. Submitting your application

You must ensure you have all the necessary approvals and sign-offs before you submit your application. All applicants must get their application endorsed by the RFL theme 2 director. Projects based at RFL also require sign-off by the clinical director of research and innovation. Applicants should request these approvals **five working days** before the deadline, to allow time for checks to take place.

The completed application including approvals and sign-offs must be submitted by **4:00pm on Monday 8 April 2024**. Applications received after 4:00pm will not be accepted.

Applications must be sent to grants@royalfreecharity.org. You will receive confirmation of receipt of your application.

Annexes

Annexe 1: Research involving human participants

Study Design

Describe and justify the choice of study design, including planned interventions (experimental and control) and duration. If the study is randomised, what are the proposed practical arrangements for allocating participants to groups?

Provide details of the proposed target population groups, e.g. gender, age range. Include key inclusion/exclusion criteria and any relevant details about how that population will be selected.

Outline the planned frequency and duration of follow-up for participants. Describe any anticipated problems with non-compliance and/or loss to follow-up and how these problems could be addressed.

Outline the outcome measures and endpoints and how these will be assessed.

Describe any risks to the safety of patients taking part in the research and explain how the level of risk will be assessed.

If any investigational products are to be used, provide brief details, including relevant information about availability, manufacture, quality and consistency.

Recruitment strategy

Outline and justify the patient recruitment strategy for the study. If appropriate, provide evidence of feasibility to support your application and pilot work to establish numbers of available patients.

Describe and justify the sample sizes and proposed statistical analyses. Include the number of samples for each analysis, the associated level of statistical power, and potential limitations or bias.

Outline the possible challenges in recruiting the required number of people to take part in the research, and how these challenges would be addressed.

Study team

In addition, does anyone involved in your research proposal hold any consultancies, advisory roles, or equities in, or directorships of, companies or other organisations that might have an interest in the results of your proposed research?

Study governance

If applicable, list the proposed membership of the Trial Steering Committee and the Data Monitoring Committee.

Applicants must identify a sponsor (which will normally be either a university or NHS Trust), who fully understands the responsibilities and costs associated with assuming this role. Please note that the Royal Free Charity cannot act as sponsor.

Annexe 2: Research involving animals

If you are using animals in the research, you must use this annexe to provide sufficient detail and justification to help the Research Review Panel come to an informed opinion on the use of animals in your project. We also require this information for AMRC reporting purposes.

The charity expects that applicants give appropriate consideration to the 3Rs when designing experiments involving animals. The National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) has information and resources on the 3Rs. Researchers can also access the NC3Rs Experimental Design Assistant (EDA) which is a free resource to help researchers design robust experiments more likely to yield reliable and reproducible results. The EDA can also help with statistical analysis methods, support for randomisation and blinding, and sample size calculations.

The ARRIVE guidelines (Animal Research: Reporting of *In Vivo* Experiments) are a checklist of information to include in publications when describing animal research. Applicants should consider following the guidelines when designing their experiments to ensure enough detail is reported to add to the knowledge base which will help with reproducibility and review.

Annexe 3: Intellectual Property (IP)

If there is existing or potential IP associated with your project, you must complete this annexe. You should provide information on the IP potential of your project and if there is any existing IP associated with your project.

We consider IP to be defined as patents, copyright, trademarks, trade names, service marks, domain names copyrights, moral rights, rights in and to databases (including rights to prevent the extraction or reutilisation of information from a database), design rights, topography rights and all rights or forms of protection of a similar nature or having equivalent or the similar effect to any of them which may subsist anywhere in the world, whether or not any of them are registered and including applications for registration of any of them.