**Guidance document for the review of**

**Seed Award applications**

This document provides guidance to the members of the Seed Panel (and co-opted members) to carry out the process of reviewing and evaluating Seed Award applications.

**Stages of review**

1. Seed Award applications are received and validated by the SRUK Grants Team.
2. Seed Panel members **review applications** ahead of the meeting. Any additional significant queries may be passed (via the SRUK Grants Team) to the applicants for comment ahead of the meeting. Each application is allocated to a Seed Panel member who will **present** that application at the Seed Panel meeting.
3. A Seed Panel meeting is held, where applications are discussed, scored and funding **recommendations** are made to the SRUK Board of Trustees.
4. The SRUK Board of Trustees meets and makes awards considering the Seed Panel’s guidance and the charity’s financial capacity.
5. Once the awards are approved, the SRUK Grants Team provides **feedback** to all applicants and issues a **letter of award** to the new grant holders.

**Preparing for the Seed Panel meeting**

Approximately four weeks in advance of the annual Seed Panel meeting, all applications (accounting for conflicts of interest) will be made available to Seed Panel members and all other persons included in the meeting. Seed Panel members are asked to complete a **PRE-MEETING SCORING SHEET** for each application before the meeting, to aid discussion.

You will be informed by email which applications you have been allocated to present at the Seed Panel meeting. You should be prepared to provide a brief verbal account of the application and your own reflections, focusing on strengths and weaknesses.

Please check the applicant details for any potential conflicts of interest and notify the SRUK Grants Team as soon as possible so that the application can be re-allocated. Reasons for conflict are typically due to the fact that the Seed Panel member:

* Is based at the same institution as the applicant or co-applicant.
* Is an applicant, co-applicant or collaborator.
* Has published with an applicant or co-applicant in the last three years.
* Has been a co-applicant on a previous SRUK grant in the last three years.

**Seed Panel Meeting**

The Seed Panel will meet annually (via MS Teams) to discuss applications and agree which applications should be recommended to the SRUK Board for funding.

During the meeting, members will be assigned to a virtual breakout room if they are conflicted with the application being discussed.

As each application is being discussed, the Chair will invite the Seed Panel member leading on the discussion of a specific application to briefly summarise (2-3 minutes):

1. Why the unmet need the application aims to address is important and how the applicants plan to address it.
2. The relevant points in the application, focusing on the aspects that are particularly positive/negative and any remaining unanswered questions.

The Chair will open the discussion up to the whole Seed Panel focusing particularly on the areas outlined in the **PRE-MEETING SCORING SHEET**

Namely:

1. Scientific merit
2. Patient benefit
3. Strength of proposal
4. Project timeline
5. Methodology
6. Budget
7. Scalability

Following discussion the Chair will summarise, agree key points for consideration and assess the consensus as to whether the application is fundable or not. You will be asked to send a **Funding Score** and **Patient Benefit Score** in real time via your **Portal** by clicking the ‘Start Scoring’ button which is activated during the meeting.

Once all applications have been discussed and scores collected, the SRUK Grants Team will collate and present scores.

Seed Panel members will then discuss scores and agree a final ranking of applications according to which they most highly recommend for funding.

**Next Steps**

Recommendations for funding are discussed at the SRUK Board of Trustees meeting which follows the Seed Panel meeting in the charity’s governance calendar.

Once applications have been approved by the SRUK Board of Trustees, successful applicants will be informed of the outcome and issued a letter of award. All applicants will receive feedback.

In some instances, applicants may be asked to make amendments in their application. In these cases, the Seed Panel members who suggested the changes may be contacted by email to both clarify the amendments required and to comment on whether the changes have been made satisfactorily once received back from the applicant. The Chair will have final approval of any such changes.

**Conflicts of interest**

All Seed Award Panel members must comply with our [Conflict of Interest Policy](https://www.sightresearchuk.org/our-research-funding/our-approach-research/our-research-policies/managing-conflicts-interest/). If you are concerned you may have a conflict of interest for an application you have been asked to review, please speak to the Sight Research UK Grants Team or email [grants@sightresearchuk.org](mailto:grants@sightresearchuk.org)