

SEED AWARD

Scheme Information and Guidance for Applicants

Who can apply?

- We encourage applications from non-tenured early career researchers.
- Researchers in Higher Education Institutions, NHS based clinicians and clinical researchers, and allied healthcare professionals.
- We accept applications for projects that will be carried out across multiple UK institutions, but the funding will be awarded to the lead applicant's host institution.
- We accept applications for projects that will be carried out in collaboration with international research partners, but the funding will be awarded to the lead applicant's UK host institution.
- We encourage multidisciplinary applications in which the lead applicant and co-applicants/collaborators have different skill sets.

What does the scheme support?

The Seed Award supports a diverse portfolio of research projects aiming to address an unmet clinical need for people living with sight threatening conditions. These can include any of the following:

- Proof of concept, fundamental or basic, and disease modelling research with a clear pathway to patient benefit.
- Laboratory based, pre-clinical research projects, building on existing proof-of-concept data, with a clear pathway to patient benefit. In particular, we will consider **discrete elements of larger translational research projects** (at [Translational Readiness Level 5, 6, or 7](#)) such as:
 - Projects that are relevant to and highly promising in the clinical setting (i.e., the applicants have already shown that the idea might be used as therapy in man).
 - Projects that are focused on therapeutic entity/drug development/repurposing. We welcome projects that assess properties such as potency, efficacy, selectivity, or bioavailability of compounds identified by previous research as potentially strong candidates for therapeutic applications.
 - We will also consider requests for funds required to investigate unexpected research developments arising from ongoing translational projects which have the potential to signpost new solutions for patients.

- Research delivered in a clinical setting as supported by the NIHR Clinical Research Network (**Sight Research UK is an NIHR Non-commercial Partner**).
- Applied healthcare projects that can deliver tangible patient benefit, including the development of new low vision devices.

Applications must:

- Provide a clear rationale for the proposed research including any supporting proof of concept data, where applicable.
- Whether the proposed project is a standalone project or a contribution to a larger study, it must illustrate the advantages of the proposed solution over competing or existing solutions.
- Identify progression pathway beyond the Sight Research UK Seed Award.

Applications can include:

Please note that the project can be a standalone project or a contribution to a larger study (see above), such as any involving the following:

- Contribution to developing candidate therapeutic entities, such as potential new drugs.
- Contribution to the pre-clinical testing of novel therapeutic entities (e.g., potential new drugs and devices).
- Contribution to drug repurposing clinical studies – using existing therapies for new indications in eye diseases.
- Developing or contributing to developing and testing novel devices.
- Developing or contributing to developing and testing diagnostics (including biomarker validation).
- All research should be applicable to eye conditions.

Value of the grant:

- Up to £15,000.

Duration of the grant:

- Up to 12 months

What is covered by the grant?

The grant can be used flexibly to meet several types of expenditure:

- Salary (or portion of salary) of staff directly working on the project. Please note that the grant is not intended to cover the stipend of PhD students.
- Please note that salary contributions are not to be used to supplement or replace salary funding for core staff provided by HEFCE or the NHS, or by other funding sources (other grants on which the researchers' salaries in question are already fully funded). Full salary cost justifications are required in your application. Please ask us if in doubt before submitting your application.
- Please note that salary costs of core funded staff are only covered (pro rata) in the exceptional circumstances that their time needs to be "bought out", partially or in full, from other duties such as teaching or clinical work to allow them to dedicate time to directly carrying out the proposed project (i.e., directly carrying out laboratory work, conducting field work, etc.).
- Project consumables. Please note that the grant is not intended to cover consumables of PhD projects.
- Any other direct costs, such as a contribution towards equipment needed for the research project. Please note that the grant is not intended to cover general laboratory running or equipment costs that ought to be covered by the host institution's departmental budget (e.g., no general laboratory equipment).

Applications for the following are not accepted:

- Contribution to PhD led projects.
- Projects with no clear pathway to patient benefit.
- Salaries of staff between posts/funding (i.e., as "bridging" funds).
- General consumables or equipment for a research group.
- General support for a research group.

Other indirect costs not covered by the scheme:

Any costs not directly incurred by the project (departmental costs, general university charges, apprenticeship levy, patient recruitment, etc.).

- Indirect costs of research in universities can be covered by the [Charity Research Support Fund](#).

- Indirect costs of clinical research in the NHS can be covered by NIHR Clinical Research Networks under the [Attributing the costs of health and social care Research and Development](#) agreement.

Use of animals in research:

Applicants planning to use animals in their project will need to provide justification for their use, and for the numbers of animals used. Please note that an assessment of [the 3Rs \(reduction, refinement, and replacement of animals\)](#) forms part of our assessment process.

How to apply:

All application and reporting forms are available on our [website](#). Applications are submitted by email to grants@sightresearchuk.org, are accepted on a rolling basis, and are considered at the next available award discussion date from the date of submission. A list of current dates is available [here](#).

How we assess applications:

Applications for Seed Awards are assessed in a one-stage process:

- [Applications are accepted on a rolling basis](#) and are considered at the next available Seed Award Panel assessment period from the date of submission.
- [Seed Award Panel](#): All applications received are sent to the Seed Award Panel members for individual scoring.
- [Trustees Research Subcommittee](#): The recommendations from the Seed Award Panel are shared with the Research Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees who will present to the rest of the Board of Trustees. The Trustees make their grant-making decisions based on the expert advice received and on the financial capacity of the organisation at the time.
- [Feedback](#): Following the Board of Trustees' decision, the SRUK Grants Team provides feedback to all applicants, whether successful or unsuccessful. We share the anonymised comments received from the Seed Award Panel and the Research Subcommittee. Grant Award contracts are issued to all successful candidates and

the SRUK Grants Team liaises with the award holders throughout the life of the award.

Intellectual Property:

Grant holders will be asked to report on any intellectual property (IP) generated by their Sight Research UK funded research and describe the development and commercialisation plans of any results and any IP.

Reporting:

Grant holders are expected to report to Sight Research UK in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of the Seed Award. Reporting requirements will be outlined at the time of the award offer, but these typically include a final report at the end of the project. If the project lasts for more than six months, there will be a brief touchpoint at six months after the start of the project to ensure that the project is running on schedule.

Grant holders are also required to continue to report on their post-award progress up to 5 years after the award has been completed (via Researchfish). This is mandatory to ensure evaluation of the ultimate patient benefit of this scheme.

Confidentiality:

To protect the confidentiality of the information shared with us by the applicants, everyone involved in the assessment process of any Seed Award application is asked to abide by our [Conflict of Interest policy](#).

Timelines

Seed Award grant round timelines are available on our [website](#).

Contact details

For all enquiries, please contact grants@sightresearchuk.org or call 0117 325 7757.