

MRC CONFIDENCE IN CONCEPT GUIDANCE

Introduction

The Confidence in Concept (CiC) scheme is intended to accelerate the transition from discovery research to the early stages of therapeutic/biomarker development and rapidly de-risk projects through the translational lifecycle such that they can secure substantial funding awards.

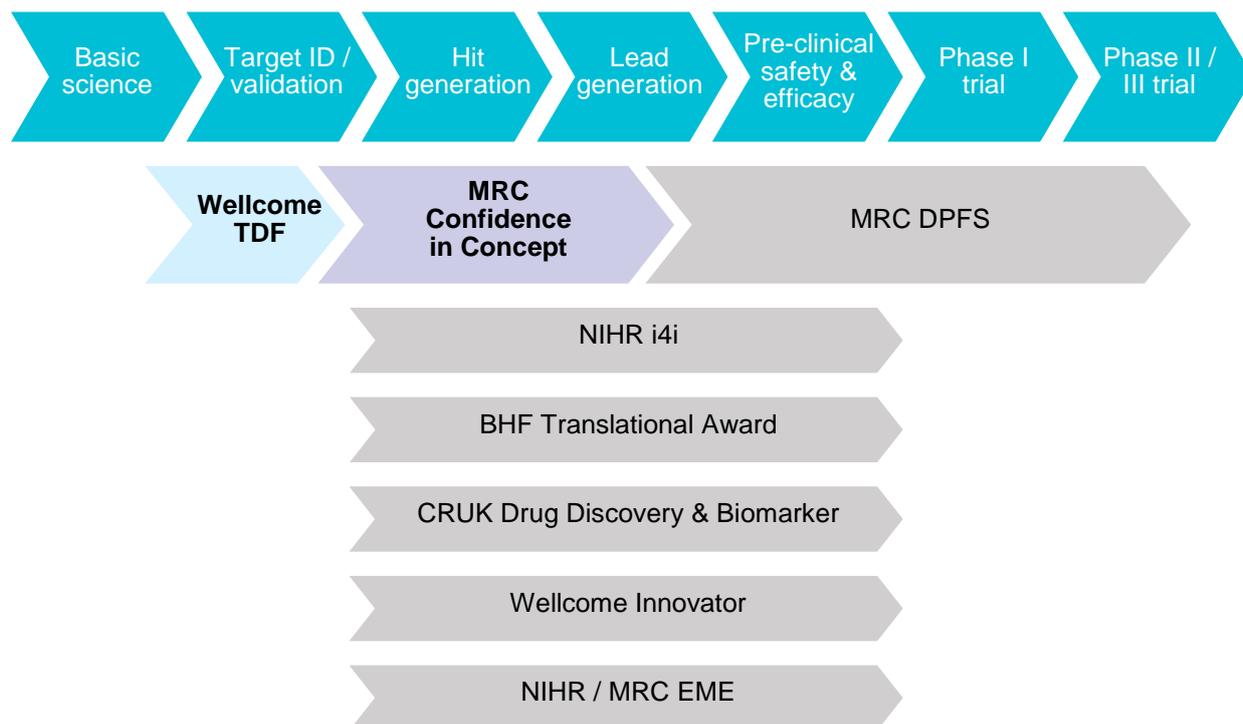


Figure 1: Position of Translational Funds

The projects supported should aim to deliver feasibility studies or sufficient preliminary data that **provide confidence in the underlying concept** before seeking more substantive funding. Applicants should be aware that translational research funding differs from a typical project grant in that the **underpinning basic research** will already be in place. **Up to 2 pages of preliminary data** must be included in the application. Programmes of work should be focused around a number of **key milestones** that de-risk specific elements of further development towards commercialisation or implementation.

Aims & Remit

All disease areas and modalities of intervention are eligible for support from the scheme, including small molecules, peptides, antibodies, vaccines, gene therapy, devices, surgical techniques and engineering / medical technology, bioinformatics and psychological approaches.

We encourage applications from across the **Colleges of MDS, LES and EPS**, and are particularly keen on interdisciplinary collaborative approaches. Teams that actively involve clinicians from partner NHS Trusts (including **Birmingham Health Partners**) are welcome.

The MRC wishes to promote **academic-industry interactions** through the CiC scheme, with the provision of a Confidence in Concept award expected to lead to:

- successful applications for more substantive funding from public funders, e.g. DPFS or equivalent schemes, or industry,
- increased interactions with and understanding of industry as demonstrated by research collaborations, joint funding applications, licencing of IP and successful knowledge exchange etc.

Further guidance from the MRC of the aims of the block grant can be found on the MRC [website](#).

Out of remit

The funding is not intended to support:

- Entire translational projects – applicants seeking funding for entire projects are directed to the MRC's Biomedical Catalyst: Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme (DPFS),
- Administration costs,
- Industrial partner costs,
- Staff between posts/funding (i.e. as "bridging" funds), or PhD studentships,
- Continuation of normal research grants,
- Costs related to protection of intellectual property,
- Or staff exchange into a spin-out company of the host institution.

Awards & Eligibility

The significant potential for further funding and impact inherent in these projects means that support is more substantial than other internal awards – typically we can support projects of **6 – 12 months of values up to £100k at 100% fEC (Cost to Funder)**.

Projects must be complete by 31st January 2022, to comply with the core institutional fund award.

Applicants are encouraged to consider how awards could be used to develop academic-industry interactions. People exchange (in either direction) is permitted, where focused on delivery of project objectives. Other routes such as co-funding projects and developing early-stage collaborations are also encouraged.

Principal Investigators (PI) must be a member of academic staff employed by the University of Birmingham. We welcome applications from all lecturers, senior lecturers, readers and professors, along with Early Career Researchers (ECRs). The minimum formal qualification required for an award is a PhD.

Co-investigators (CoI) must meet the same eligibility criteria as PIs, but in addition may include post-doctoral researchers.

Researcher Co-investigators (RCoI) are those who have made a substantial intellectual contribution to the formulation and development of the project but are not eligible to be either PI or CoI in their own right, e.g. they do not have an employment contract with UoB. This could apply to include clinical fellows, PhD students and technology specialists or equivalent roles.

For more details, please see the MRC [guidance](#).

How to Apply

The funding call is a two-stage process: **Expression of Interest (Eol)** and **Full Stage** for shortlisted projects.

All applications **must** be discussed with a Project Manager from the Translational Research Team (TRT) prior to Eol submission to ensure your intended project is appropriate for this funding scheme. Additionally, you will need to consult your Institute / School's Research Facilitator for accurate project costs. **You are expected** to have engaged with external funders before submitting this application, to establish what proof of concept, translational viability, or any other data they would wish to see to support any future application.

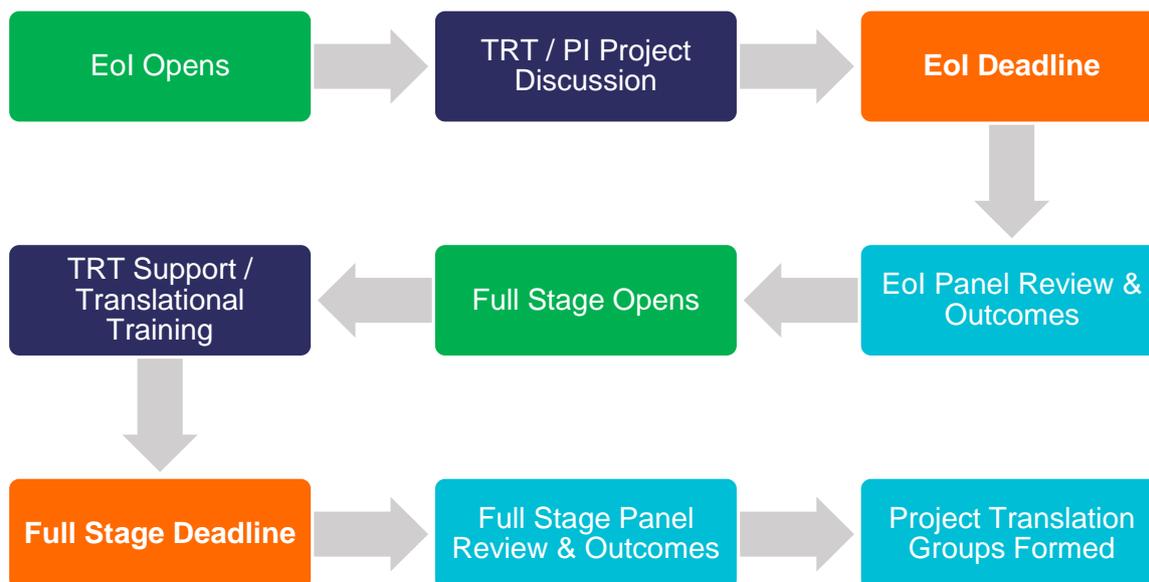


Figure 2: MRC CiC Application and Award Timeline

Please note, investigators with **no prior Full Stage applications to either MRC CiC or Wellcome TDF** must attend a mandatory online **Translational Training** session prior to submitting the Full Stage application. Details of this session (due to take place in the period of 20th July – 27th August 2020) will be circulated following the Eol panel review.

Those invited to submit Full Stage applications will be able to access additional support from the Translational Research Team, UoB Enterprise, Business Engagement and external consultants as required. We advise applicants to **engage as early as possible after shortlisting**.

All Full Stage applications must be signed off by a member of the Translational Research Team and your Research Facilitator on behalf of your Head of Institute / School.

The latest internal guidance and application forms can be found on the [Internal Research Funding](#) intranet page.

Assessment

Projects are reviewed and scored by a **panel of translational scientists and clinicians**, including independent experts, chaired by **Professor Ferenc Mueller**, Deputy Director of Research for the College of Medical and Dental Sciences. The panel consists of scoring members and non-scoring advisors from MDS, LES and EPS Professional Services.

All applicants (successful and unsuccessful) will be provided **written feedback** following both Eol and Full submission stages. Applicants unsuccessful at either stage will still be able to access TRT support, either to develop grant proposals for external funding streams or new Eols for the next internal translational funding call.

Timeline

Date	Activity
Week commencing 25 th May 2020	Call open
Wednesday 1st July 2020	Expression of Interest application deadline
Friday 17 th July 2020	Eol panel review
Week commencing 20 th July 2020	Shortlisting / feedback
Period 20 th July – 27 th August 2020	Translational Training
Thursday 3rd September 2020	Full stage application deadline
Week commencing 14 th September 2020	Full stage review panel
Week commencing 21 st September 2020	Panel outcome notifications

Contact

The Confidence in Concept fund is managed by the **Translational Research Team**, based in **MDS Research Delivery**. The Translational Research Team provide pre-award application support and post-award project management support to awarded projects. If you are unsure which translational funding stream to apply for, please contact the team who can advise where your project best fits.

All enquires, including which translational fund you could apply for, please email the Translational Research Team at TranslationalResearch@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

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