



Guidance for the WT Translational Development Fund 2019/20

Background

The University of Birmingham has been awarded Wellcome Trust (WT) funding in the form of an Institutional Translational Partnership award (ITPA).

The award is intended to accelerate the transition from discovery research to translational development by removing specific translational research barriers and creating a culture change in the academic community to further translate their research findings. The iTPA will support various activities aimed at upskilling academics and engendering culture change. These activities will be led by the Translational Research Team from within MDS R&KT.

From discussions with the Wellcome Trust, we recognise that small awards aimed at early stages of translation are not easily accessible. The Translational Development Fund (TDF) is therefore aimed at providing small awards to overcome translational barriers enabling the project to progress further along the translational development pathway to ultimately achieve impact. **The TDF is focused on the first step from discovery research towards identification or initial validation of potential clinical, practical or commercial outcomes.**

Scope and Eligibility

The Translational Development Fund will provide £20,000-£30,000 of directly incurred costs and is intended to be very flexible in terms of the activities it will support. 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.

The most important aspect of the award is that the project will progress to a higher stage of translational development; the project must overcome a translational barrier, enabling follow-on translational funds to be attained. This could be to develop a pre-clinical model of disease for target validation purposes, to seek regulatory advice from the MHRA with support from a consultancy company or to develop tool compounds / biologics to explore the feasibility of a therapeutic approach.

Applicants are encouraged to focus on de-risking their projects towards a higher stage of translational development. **All projects must be discussed with Ryan Brown (r.m.brown.1@bham.ac.uk, 0121 371 8013), Jonathan Watkins (j.watkins.1@bham.ac.uk) or an Expert in Residence (David Fox, davidfox@vulpinescience.co.uk) prior to submission.** For general enquiries please contact Ryan Brown.

Preliminary data is welcome but not essential, up to two pages may be appended to the EoI. Programmes of work should be focused around key milestones that 'de-risk' specific elements of further development towards commercialisation / translation.

Application Process

The call for applications will consist of two stages – Expression of Interest (EoI) and a full-stage for shortlisted projects – to ensure that sufficient input is given to the design of robust translational projects with a high likelihood of delivering significant outcomes. Depending on the level of funding available, there may be a further call (however this is not guaranteed). The call will be held in parallel with the MRC Confidence in Concept call and mirrors the application process.

Investigators with no prior applications to WT TDF must also attend a **mandatory translational training session** (detailed below) prior to submitting the Expression of Interest application.

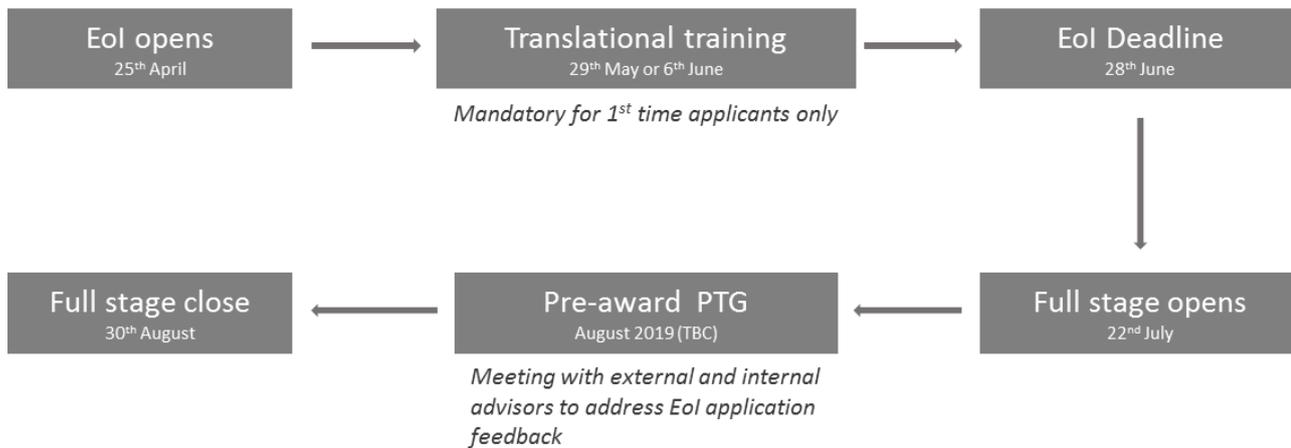


Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of the TDF Application Process.

Those projects shortlisted from Eol will have extensive input into further development of the case and formation of an appropriate support team (see below). Support will be provided to those applications not shortlisted, either to develop new Eols for the second call if appropriate or for external funding streams.

TDF Panel Membership

Scoring – Prof. Roy Bicknell (Chair, MDS), Prof. Ferenc Mueller (MDS), Prof. Liam Grover (EPS), Prof. Ole Jensen (LES), Dr Giovanni Bottegoni (MDS), Prof. Constantinos Constantinou, Dr Lloyd Czaplewski (External, ChemBioVentures).

Non-scoring advisors: Dr Kate Bishop (R&KT, MDS), Dr Ryan Brown (R&KT, MDS), Joanna Smith (BE, MDS), Dr Jonathan Watkins (UoB Enterprise), Dr Jen Jennings (LES).

Translational Training

Recognising that translational projects are non-typical and outside the comfort zone of many researchers, we will provide a programme of 'Translational Training' to support project development for WT TDF internal funding as well as the multitude of other external funding possibilities available (alongside the MRC CiC call).

The mandatory translational training session (for new applicants) will be held on **Wednesday 29th May, 14:00-15:00, MDS CM14 and Thursday 6th June 10:00 – 11:00, MDS CM14**. Please contact Ryan Brown (r.m.brown.1@bham.ac.uk) or Alice Sayers (a.e.sayers@bham.ac.uk) for more information and to confirm your place on one of the sessions.

Project Translation Groups

For each project invited to submit a full application, we will form a small Project Translation Group (PTG) comprising the lead academic applicant together with internal and external experts and professional support. These PTGs provide the expertise required to plan in detail the fundamental science, preclinical and clinical development, IP and commercialisation. For projects already engaging with industry collaborators, representatives of the latter may also be involved, and external advisors with industry backgrounds will chair each PTG.

Pre-award PTG meetings (approx. 30 mins) will be held in August 2019.



Additional information

The funding is not intended to support:

- Entire translational projects (applicants seeking funding for entire projects are directed to the MRC's BMC:DPFS and BMC:RMRC schemes)
- Staff between posts / funding (i.e. as "bridging" funds), or PhD studentships
- Continuation of normal research grants
- Costs relating to protection of intellectual property

Named individuals may be given within the application, however justification as to their importance to the project should be given and due consideration to the impact this will have on other projects they may be associated with. You may also find subcontracting out portions of the project to be a good option. Though judged against each other, each project is unique and as such there is no formula for the perfect application.

The WT wishes to promote academic-industry interactions through the TDF scheme; applicants are encouraged to consider how awards could be used to develop these interactions. People exchange (in either direction) is permitted, where focused on delivery of project objectives. Other routes (e.g. co-funding projects, developing early-stage collaborations) are also encouraged. Interactions with small and medium enterprises are particularly welcomed.

Applicants should consider relevant IP arrangements – Jonathan Watkins (j.watkins.1@bham.ac.uk, UoB Enterprise) can advise on this – but should also be assured that projects and PTGs will be covered by confidentiality agreements that will protect IP and these relationships.

Projects should ideally be complete by 28th February 2021, as this is the duration of the institutional funding award. Please direct any questions concerning this to Ryan Brown.