



## MRC PROXIMITY TO DISCOVERY GUIDANCE

### Aims & Remit

The **MRC Proximity to Discovery Industry Engagement Fund (P2D)** aims to support individual mobility and discovery days to enable early engagement with industry, as well as proof of principle projects with businesses that could accelerate the translational potential of your work.

All work supported by the P2D fund should be aligned to biomedical science areas of interest to the MRC, as stated on the [MRC Website](#).

There are several streams within P2D:

#### [Rapid Response Mobility \(RRM\)](#)

- RRM supports flexible funding requests for individual mobility to enable early engagement with industry. Researchers may visit companies anywhere in the world for face-to-face meetings to pursue early interactions.

#### [Knowledge Exchange & Dissemination \(KE&D\)](#)

- KE&D can support a discovery day seminar programme on discoveries, technologies and methodologies to transfer knowledge between companies and academic institutions to inspire new collaborations.

#### [Exchange & Explore \(E&E\)](#)

- E&E supports flexible interactions with businesses and industry partners that could accelerate the translational potential of your work and support longer-term relationships, through delivery of short term, initial proof of principle work around mutual areas of interest.

### Contact

The Proximity to Discovery fund is managed by the Translational Research Team based in MDS Research Delivery. Prior to submission, all projects **must** be discussed with a member of the **Translational Research Team** and your **College Business Engagement Partner**.

All enquires in the first instance should be directed to the Translational Research Team at [TranslationalResearch@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:TranslationalResearch@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

*Table 1: College Business Engagement Partner Contacts*

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## Awards & Eligibility

Each P2D stream supports different levels of funding and activities but cannot support staffing costs. Previous MRC funding is not a prerequisite. Value for money **must** be apparent.

### Rapid Response Mobility

Supported activity	Travel, accommodation and childcare cover
Proposed outcomes	Direct industry investment or collaborative grant awards
Award value	<b>Up to £2,000</b> per project
Review process	<b>Open call for applications (no deadlines)</b>

This stream will support applications for funding to mobilise researchers and enable accelerated industry engagement. This may be for travel (including international flights), accommodation where necessary and will fund childcare cover where needed (to ensure equality in line with our commitment to Athena Swan).

One of the main issues raised by researchers is the lack of available funding to enable a quick response to ensure emerging ideas can be translated into real opportunities for collaboration. This is primarily where contact is made between industry and an individual academic with no prior experience of working together to rapidly progress potential collaborative opportunities. The current global pandemic has changed the way we work and has shown that collaborations can be successfully fostered through online interactions using platforms such as Zoom and Teams. However, we appreciate that in some cases there will still be a need to mobilise academics to physically visit an industry partner, and as such, we will continue to accept requests of this type.

### Knowledge Exchange & Dissemination

Supported activity	To arrange workshops / conferences with definite industry links
Proposed outcomes	Training of researchers to enhance their commercial awareness skills and stimulation of new collaborative relationships between academic and industry research teams
Award value	<b>Up to £2,000</b> per activity
Review process	<b>Applications reviewed competitively every quarter</b>

This stream focuses on the delivery of seminars as a simple and effective tool for transferring knowledge into and out of companies and academic institutions and to inspire new collaborations. Applications to fund small-scale workshops will be considered, as will larger industry match-funded conference and networking opportunities. These activities should encourage open dialogue around areas of strategic interest for numerous academics across the University.

#### *Collaborations & Intellectual Property*

It is important to consider how confidential information such as IP is exchanged as part of these workshops and conferences. It is therefore a condition of award that where appropriate, Confidential Disclosure Agreements (CDAs) are put in place during workshop development. The Translational Research Team will be able to advise and facilitate these conversations. Evidence of these agreements will be required to release award funds.

## Exchange & Explore

Supported activity	Direct project costs (staff costs should <b>not</b> be requested)
Proposed outcomes	Establishment of proof of principle, provision of pilot data, de-risking of projects and leveraging of external funding / investment
Award value	<b>Up to £6,000</b> per project (it is expected that projects would last no longer than 6 month)
Review process	<b>Applications reviewed competitively every quarter</b>

This stream will support clearly defined exploratory projects with the objective of generating sufficient preliminary data to build towards a collaborative application. Applications of up to £6,000 are welcomed (consumables only, i.e. no staffing costs). This can support exchange into and out of industry, including some elements of personal support for travel / accommodation.

E&E project objectives should be clearly defined, including details on the project end-points and next steps. Further funding could be through an internal fund such as [MRC Confidence in Concept](#), or external funding such as a larger scale industry funded collaborative project, CASE Studentship or project grant.

Funding is extremely limited and applications to this stream are likely to be extremely competitive. It is likely only one E&E project will be awarded per quarter.

### *Collaborations & Intellectual Property*

In line with the MRC's policy on collaborations, we would welcome a contribution from the industry partner where **IP is being generated that will directly benefit that partner**. It is therefore a condition of award that IP arrangements are agreed between all parties prior to release of funds. The Translational Research Team are happy to advise on specific discussions. If the industry partner is willing for the resulting IP to be the property of UoB (which they will still be able to access, e.g. through licensing), then the full project cost will be funded through P2D.

If the Industry partner wishes to **part-own resulting IP**, collaborations and contributions should be captured using the **MRC Industry Collaboration Agreement** ([MICA](#)) form. If you think there will be an expectation that you will need a MICA, please discuss this with the Translational Research Team. As well as the E&E application form, a letter of support from your industry collaborator **must** be appended to the final submission. It is a condition of award that a MICA (or other existing third-party agreement) be in place prior to implementation of a project.

### *Out of Remit*

**Note:** While we do not support staffing costs, the P2D E&E fund can support people exchange into and out of industry, for example the movement of postdoctoral or technical staff, including some elements of personal support for travel and accommodation. However, for short term people exchanges between universities and other non-industry organisations, you may wish to consider the centrally managed [Wellcome ISSF Career Development Hub](#), which runs open calls throughout the year. For queries about Wellcome ISSF, please email [WellcomeISSF@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:WellcomeISSF@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

## Application Process

**Application forms** for each stream can be downloaded from the [Internal Research Funding](#) intranet page. Completed applications must be approved by a member of the **Translational Research Team** and your **College Business Engagement Partner** prior to being submitted by email to the [Translational Research Team](#).

Applications are reviewed by the internal MRC CiC & P2D Panel chaired by Professor Ferenc Mueller, Deputy Director of Research for MDS. Table 2 summarises the review process for each P2D stream and the total funding available for **all** awardees, as an indication of the competitive nature of this funding scheme.

**Award Letters** confirming details of the funding will be sent to successful applicants. Unsuccessful applicants will receive feedback from the panel and the Translational Research Team will be available for further advice.

Table 2: Review Process per P2D Stream

Stream	Application & Review Process	Total Funding Available
RRM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open call from January 2021, no deadlines.</li> <li>Reviewed by MRC P2D Panel Chair and Head of Research Delivery only.</li> <li>Outcome within 2 weeks following submission to panel.</li> </ul>	~ £1,000 per month for <b>all</b> awardees
KE&D and E&E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitive, quarterly call throughout 2021 (see Table 3).</li> <li>Reviewed by MRC P2D Panel.</li> <li>Outcomes within 3 weeks following submission to panel.</li> </ul>	£8,000 per call for <b>all</b> awardees

Table 3: KE&D and E&E Application Timetable

	2021 Q1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3
Applications deadline	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	27 <sup>th</sup> May 2021	26 <sup>th</sup> August 2021
Outcomes anticipated	18 <sup>th</sup> March 2021	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	16 <sup>th</sup> September 2021

## Award Holder Expectations

Grant supported work should formally be described as “MRC [Co-]funded” or “This work was supported by the Medical Research Council [grant number **MC\_PC\_19029**]”.

All awardees will be expected to complete an **Outcome Report Form** when requested detailing collaborative projects, funding grant applications, partnerships, donations or agreements on how to move forward together resulting from the activity or project. This information will be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the implementation of this scheme in further funding applications to the MRC.

The MRC impose strict spending deadlines on the institutional award and it is therefore imperative that all spending be complete by **31<sup>st</sup> July 2022**. If relevant circumstances change that might adversely affect the proposed activity the [Translational Research Team](#) should be contacted as soon as possible.