MRC Proximity to Discovery Guidance

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# About Proximity to Discovery Funding

The **MRC Proximity to Discovery and Impact Fund (P2D)** aims to support individual mobility and discovery days to enable early engagement with industrial and other non-commercial partners such as charities, as well as proof of principle projects with businesses or other partners 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](https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/remit-programmes-and-priorities/). Previous MRC funding is not a prerequisite. In contrast to previous P2D rounds, the scope of the fund has been broadened to include non-commercial partners and projects/activities with a clear translational impact such as patient benefit or knowledge exchange.

The three streams within P2D funding are:

1. **Rapid Response Mobility (RRM)**

* RRM supports flexible funding requests for individual mobility to enable early engagement with industry or other non-commercial partners. Researchers may visit partners anywhere in the world for face-to-face meetings to pursue early interactions.
* *RRM is an open call with no submission deadlines.*

1. **Knowledge Exchange and Dissemination (K&ED)**

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

1. **Exchange and Explore (E&E)**

* E&E supports flexible interactions with businesses, industry and other non-commercial 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.
* *KE&D and E&E are competitive funding calls with quarterly deadlines.*

Application forms for each stream can be downloaded from [Internal Research Funding (birmingham.ac.uk)](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/rss/research-development/internal-funding/index.aspx).

Table 2: KE&D and E&E Application and Outcome Deadlines – further deadlines to be announced.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Applications deadline, 12 noon | Outcomes anticipated, week commencing |
| **2023 Q3** | ~~Wednesday 6~~~~th~~ ~~September 2023~~ | ~~25~~~~th~~ ~~September 2023~~ |
| **2023 Q4** | ~~Wednesday 29~~~~th~~ ~~November 2023~~ | ~~18~~~~th~~ ~~December 2023~~ |
| **2024 Q1** | ~~Wednesday 28~~~~th~~ ~~February 2024~~ | ~~18~~~~th~~ ~~March 2024~~ |
| **2024 Q2** | ~~Wednesday 29~~~~th~~ ~~May 2024~~ | ~~17~~~~th~~ ~~June 2024~~ |

# Open Call: Rapid Response Mobility (RRM)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supported activity | Travel, accommodation, and childcare cover |
| Proposed outcomes | Direct investment or collaborative grant awards |
| Award value | **Up to £2,000** per project (larger awards may be considered under exceptional circumstances) |
| Application and review process | Open call with no submission deadlines. Reviewed by our MRC IAA External Chair Lloyd Czaplewski (Chemical Biology Ventures) and Claire Fenlon (Programme Operations Team Lead & Translational Research Team Lead, Research Delivery). |
| Outcomes anticipated | Within **2** weeks following submission to Reviewers |
| **Spending deadline** | Spending deadlines will be outlined in the award letter |

This stream will support applications for funding to mobilise researchers and enable accelerated partner 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). Value for money must be apparent.

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 or other non-commercial partners and an individual academic with no prior experience of working together to rapidly progress potential collaborative opportunities. The Covid‑19 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 a partner, and as such, we will continue to accept requests of this type.

# Quarterly Deadline Calls: KE&D and E&E

## Knowledge Exchange and Dissemination

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supported activity | To arrange workshops / conferences with defined links to industrial or non-commercial partners. Staffing costs are not supported. |
| Proposed outcomes | Training of researchers to enhance their commercial awareness skills (as appropriate) and stimulation of new collaborative relationships between academic and non-academic research teams. |
| Award value | **Up to £2,000** per activity (larger awards may be considered under exceptional circumstances) |
| Application and review process | Applications reviewed competitively every quarter by the internal MRC IAA and P2D Panel. Outcomes anticipated within **3** weeks following submission to Panel. |
| **Spending deadline** | Spending deadlines will be outlined in the award letter |

This stream focuses on the delivery of seminars as a simple and effective tool for transferring knowledge into and out of companies/non-academic partners 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. Value for money must be apparent.

### Collaborations and Intellectual Property (KE&D)

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 and Explore

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Supported activity | Direct project costs (**staff costs should not 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 | **Up to £6,000** per project (larger awards, up to £10,000, may be considered under exceptional circumstances) |
| Application and review process | Applications reviewed competitively every quarter by the internal MRC IAA and P2D Panel. Outcomes anticipated within **3** weeks following submission to Panel. |
| **Spending deadline** | Spending deadlines will be outlined in the award letter |

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). While P2D E&E cannot support staffing costs, the fund can support people exchange into and out of industry or non-commercial organisations, for example the movement of postdoctoral or technical staff, including some elements of personal support for travel and accommodation. Value for money must be apparent.

E&E project objectives should be clearly defined, including details on the project endpoints and next steps. Further funding could be through an internal fund such as [MRC Impact Acceleration Account](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/rss/research-development/internal-funding/mrc-iaa/index.aspx#id_token=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJSUzI1NiIsIng1dCI6Ild3dXdRSWFCSWZvRURkbHd4VXpSRUVJbmtvMCIsImtpZCI6Ild3dXdRSWFCSWZvRURkbHd4VXpSRUVJbmtvMCJ9.eyJpc3MiOiJodHRwczovL2Ntcy11b2IuY2xvdWQuY29udGVuc2lzLmNvbS9hdXRoZW50aWNhdGUiLCJhdWQiOiJXZWJzaXRlQWRmc0NsaWVudCIsImV4cCI6MTY4ODQ3NTMzOCwibmJmIjoxNjg4NDc1MDM4LCJub25jZSI6IjgzMDhiOWM1YzNlNTQ4ZDhiMGM2ZTgzZTg0NTNmODAyIiwiaWF0IjoxNjg4NDc1MDM4LCJzaWQiOiJlMDU0Yzk0MTcwYzIxNzAyZmI0MWFmYWVkYzM1MjA1OCIsInN1YiI6ImYzN2YzZWUwLWFiODItNDIxYS05M2VmLTg2Y2IzN2JiZGM4NSIsImF1dGhfdGltZSI6MTY4ODQ3NTAzOCwiaWRwIjoiaWRzcnYiLCJhbXIiOlsicGFzc3dvcmQiXX0.aSTN3DtB1fIN787e0iZ0Hb3rVUoOPVtDg4Xhnoo3Yn9ShnSgqesv29eQ--xnfHbRZO1Tl54bqIrPqQhbNmQURIRno5AG0zUhJI3eeawdqXNQsDW4CYfSSD4R23E-kunQNPmvZ0yp9ctOoS0jJ0izH9S1uGyXkP1mvH-9quGBVD8HZ4RoZcFQ4p_Jdx0yVw3l9-7Aea54SZPy1RCNaf_q0RU3NX6q_jgad3zgocjmXuC8SufmirLax_Zw76zyo28SxUuvwB-tqP_R62coXyPCbuvBCSNQn1uhfXTeoI0YETD8w_k1nUvoSZ1_3CZ9GBj95mQjh3NoN2MqAbejpctA9Q&scope=openid&state=39e807f678f64ecf911f1126dca83518&session_state=m1mxfnPFcqwn4Rwx3yyuoRqs6yz4xets2nqQC-yr3vM.d053563d19469cd36f2e4e22e09845f5), or external funding such as a larger scale industry funded collaborative project, CASE Studentship or project grant.

### Collaborations and Intellectual Property (E&E)

In line with the MRC’s policy on collaborations, we would welcome a contribution from the industrial or other non-commercial 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 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 a partner wishes to **part-own resulting IP**, collaborations and contributions should be captured using the [MRC Industry Collaboration Framework (ICF)](https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-applicants/types-of-funding-we-offer/mrc-industry-collaboration-framework-icf/). Applicants can [use the decision tree to check if an ICF is required for their application](https://www.ukri.org/publications/mrc-industry-collaboration-framework-decision-tree). If you think there will be an expectation that you will need an ICF, please discuss this with the Translational Research Team. As well as the E&E application form, a letter of support from your collaborator must be appended to the final submission. It is a condition of award that an ICF (or other existing third-party agreement) be in place prior to implementation of a project.

# Costings

The P2D scheme now falls under the MRC Impact Acceleration Account institutional block grant and will provide up to **£6,000 for E&E and up to £2,000 for RRM and KE&D at 100% fEC**.

# Submission and Authorisation Process

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

Contact the Translational Research Team at [TranslationalResearch@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:TranslationalResearch@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

Visit the intranet to find your [College Business Engagement Partner](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/rssd/contacts/beri.aspx) or contact the team at [businessteam@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:businessteam@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

Application forms for each stream can be downloaded from the [Internal Research Funding](https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/rss/research-development/internal-funding/index.aspx) intranet page. Completed applications should be submitted to [TranslationalResearch@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:TranslationalResearch@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

Successful applicants will receive an Award Letter detailing the amount of funding awarded, how to access it and your spending deadline. Unsuccessful applicants will receive feedback from the panel and the Translational Research Team will be available for further advice.

# Award Holder Expectations

## Funding Acknowledgement in Research Publications

P2D projects awarded in 2023-24 are funded by the MRC Impact Acceleration Account institutional block grant, grant number **MR/X502996/1**. Grant supported work should formally be described as “MRC [Co-]funded” or “This work was supported by the Medical Research Council [grant number **MR/X502996/1**]”.

## Spending Deadline

Spending deadlines will be outlined in the award letters. If relevant circumstances change that might adversely affect the proposed activity, contact the Translational Research Team at [TranslationalResearch@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:TranslationalResearch@contacts.bham.ac.uk) as soon as possible.

## Reporting

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.