**NORTH WEST CANCER RESEARCH**

**GRANT APPLICATION GUIDANCE** **NOTES: CANCER DISCOVERY RESEARCH CALL**

**Please direct any queries to** [**research@nwcr.org**](mailto:research@nwcr.org)**.**

**1.** **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to assist potential applicants wishing to apply to the Cancer Discovery Research Project Grant call from North West Cancer Research (“NWCR” or the “Charity”).

We invite applications from principal investigators and their research team that seek to uncover the foundational knowledge needed to advance the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer. Proposals should aim to understand the biological influences of cancer through greater understanding of cancer cell development, function, proliferation, spread and death. Proposals should seek to change the practice of oncology through new discoveries and practices that generate new knowledge relevant to basic biology and the causes of human cancers.

**2. Who we are**

We are the only independent cancer research charity funding quality research to benefit local people in the North West of England and North Wales. We fund pioneering research to tackle the cause, improve the care and find the cure for cancer.

**3. Our vision**

Our Vision is a cancer free future for all. Our research is focussed upon the cancer types which disproportionately affect our region.

**4. Research**

North West Cancer Research funds cancer research work at academic institutions and with our NHS partners and third sector collaborators that benefit the population of the North West of England and North Wales. Much of our funding goes to projects, but we additionally support Lectureships, Chair positions, Fellowships and PhD studentships. Please contact [research@nwcr.org](mailto:research@nwcr.org) for more information.

We have separate calls for research from the fields of cancer discovery, translational research and applied research. These calls have different eligibility criteria and direction is provided in guidance specific to each call enabling researchers to make considered applications.

**5. Award**

The Cancer Discovery Research call accepts grant proposals of up to three years, with funding of up to £300,000. A longer period of time is available where the project is provided as a PhD or where students/researchers are working on a part-time basis.

Researchers should be mindful of the current resources available to North West Cancer Research. All applications will be equally considered, regardless of whether funding is requested at the higher or lower end of the funding budget.

In making their applications, researchers should consider the relevance of their application to the people of the North West of England and North Wales. This could mean overall incidence or that the particular cancer type is more common or associated with poor outcomes within the region. Applications for this funding round are open to researchers across the United Kingdom. We encourage collaboration between research groups and encourage applications that include collaborations with researchers within our regional footprint of the North West of England and North Wales.

Applicants should focus on research which explores the cause of cancer.

Applications may consider:

* Cancer discovery
* Cancer biology
* Pathophysiology
* Research which will transform our fundamental understanding of cancer
* Foundational knowledge needed to advance the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer
* Biological understanding of cells, function, proliferation, spread and death
* Basic science which would help towards early diagnosis

We strongly encourage applications that aim to improve the outcomes in cancer care for cancers that are prominent and significant to our regional population.

**6. Application Process**

Applications should be submitted before **5pm on Monday 9th September 2024**. Applications must be submitted electronically via the charity website in one PDF document. Applications that do not meet this deadline will be held over until the next call round. Applications that are not submitted as a single PDF document will be returned to the investigator for modification and will not be included in the round if this falls outside of the call closure.

The North West Cancer Research Cancer Discovery Funding Panel will meet approximately 3 months after the submission date to review the submitted and externally reviewed applications. The Board of Trustees will then meet to consider the recommendations of the Funding Panel and give approval for funding. The applicants will be notified of the final decision within one month of the Panel meeting.

**7. Review**

The Charity’s review processes have been constructed in line with guidance and governance considerations set out by the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) Principles of Peer Review (<http://www.amrc.org.uk/publications/principles-peer-review>).

On receipt of an application, the Charity will conduct a ‘charity triage’ to ensure applications meet with the application guidance. At this stage, the Charity considers the principal investigator and co-applicants previously funded work and the added value they have provided to the Charity. The triage includes assessment in line with the guidelines, completion of all sections and adherence to specified word count for each section.

Applications, which pass the charity check, are sent to all members of the Funding Panel who recommend appropriate independent reviewers according to the specific cancer type and research activity or technology being proposed. In addition to this expertise, the Charity will contact nominated reviewers (named in the application by the principal investigator). The Charity may also request advice from other experts in their database.

Where there have been previous difficulties with projects not completing on a timely basis, or a lack of engagement from the researchers, the Funding Panel will be informed of this. This may influence the panel’s decision and voting.

Where the researchers wish to exclude independent reviewers this must be sent to the Research Grants Manager directly, [faye@nwcr.org](mailto:faye@nwcr.org). Researchers will be required to provide a full and detailed justification for excluding independent reviewers. The Funding Panel will be informed of the decision to exclude reviewers.

Nominated and Independent reviewers are asked to provide a written report on the proposals and provide a score which will inform the Funding Panel when voting.

**Scoring Guidance**

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| **Criteria 1 and 2: Importance of scientific question and quality of proposed study** |
| **6 Exceptional** – equivalent to top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance (fundable)   * Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap in area of strategic importance * Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact * Work that is at the leading edge internationally, addresses all of the assessment criteria, and meets the majority of them to an exceptional level. Likely to have a significant impact on the field. |
| **5 Excellent** - equivalent to internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance (fundable)   * Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance * Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact. * Work that is of a high international standard, and addresses and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to a very high level. Will answer important questions in the field. |
| **4 Very Good** - equivalent to internationally competitive in parts (fundable)   * Good scientific question or knowledge gap or in area of strategic importance * Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact * Work that is internationally competitive and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to a high level. Will advance the field. |
| **3 Good** (fundable)   * Worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap or a valuable scientific resource * Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact * Work that has merit and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to an adequate level. Likely to advance the field. |
| **2 Potentially fundable**   * Worthwhile scientific question with potentially useful outcomes * Likelihood of successful delivery * Work that is potentially of some merit, and meets some of the assessment criteria to an adequate level, but which is not internationally competitive. Unlikely to advance the field significantly. |
| **1 Unfundable**   * Poorly defined question * Limited likelihood of new knowledge generation * Work that is of no significant scientific merit, flawed, or duplicative of other research, or for which the applicants do not present evidence of a satisfactory track record, and which does not meet the majority of the assessment criteria to an adequate level. Unlikely to advance the field |

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| **Criteria 3: Technical Feasibility** |
| **6 Exceptional** – equivalent to top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance (fundable)   * Excellent leadership team *(track record, team, environment, and collaborators)* * Well-planned, original and innovative design and methodology, with a novel aspect clearly explained * Ethical and/ or governance issues are fully considered * No impediments to progress identified, clear contingency planning in place |
| **5 Excellent** - equivalent to internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance (fundable)   * Excellent leadership team *(track record, team, environment, and collaborators)* * Well-planned, original and innovative design and methodology, with a novel aspect clearly explained * Ethical and/ or governance issues are considered * Unlikely to be impediments to progress, clear contingency planning in place |
| **4 Very Good** - equivalent to internationally competitive in parts (fundable)   * Excellent leadership team *(track record, team, environment, and collaborators)* * Robust methodology and design *(innovative in parts*) and evidence of a novel idea * Ethical and/ or governance issues are fully considered |
| **3 Good** (fundable)   * Strong leadership team *(track record, team, environment, and collaborators)* * Methodologically sound study with some evidence of a novel idea * Ethical and/ or governance issues are well considered |
| **2 Potentially fundable**   * Appropriate leadership team *(scope to strengthen team; environment; collaborators)* * Methodologically sound study but areas require revision, minimal evidence of novel aspect * Ethical and/or governance issues are adequately considered |
| **1 Unfundable**   * Poor leadership team * Methodologically weak study and no novel idea considered * Ethical and/ or governance issues are not adequately considered |

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| **Criteria 4: Financial Feasibility** |
| **6 Exceptional** – equivalent to top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance (fundable)   * Potential for high return on investment *(resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation).* Realistic request, highly appropriate for suggested experimental plan. |
| **5 Excellent** - equivalent to internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance (fundable)   * Potential for high return on investment *(resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation).* Realistic request, highly appropriate for suggested experimental plan. |
| **4 Very Good** - equivalent to internationally competitive in parts (fundable)   * Potential for good return on investment *(resources requested, likelihood of projected delivery, anticipated knowledge generation).* Realistic request, appropriate for suggested experimental plan. |
| **3 Good** (fundable)   * Potential for reasonable return on investment *(resources requested, likelihood of projected delivery, anticipated knowledge generation).* Mostly realistic request, appropriate for suggested experimental plan. |
| **2 Potentially fundable**   * Potentially more limited return on investment *(resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, and anticipated knowledge generation)* * Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal |
| **1 Unfundable**   * Potentially poor return on investment |

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| **Criteria 5: Training Potential** |
| **6 Exceptional** – equivalent to top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance (fundable)   * Wide range of realistic training and development opportunities with clearly structured plans and appropriate resourcing in place. |
| **5 Excellent** - equivalent to internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance (fundable)   * Wide range of realistic training and development opportunities described, clear plans for delivery and resourcing. |
| **4 Very Good** - equivalent to internationally competitive in parts (fundable)   * Training and development opportunities considered, clear plans for progression and resource allocation. |
| **3 Good** (fundable)   * Training and development opportunities considered (limited in parts), clear plans for progression and resource allocation. |
| **2 Potentially fundable**   * Training and development opportunities considered but limited in parts |
| **1 Unfundable**   * Training and development opportunities not adequately considered |

At the Funding Panel meeting, the members consider the nominated and independent reviews, together with their own assessment of the quality of science and grade and rank the applications accordingly. The applications are scored and the mean average then calculated.

**8. Resubmissions**

Resubmissions of applications are not permitted within 12 months unless invited to do so by the Funding Panel. If an application is resubmitted after an invitation, a covering letter outlining the changes to the original application, and how the comments made by reviewers and/or the Funding Panel have been met must be provided. Covering letters should be part of the single PDF document electronically submitted.

**9. Data protection**

Applicants must understand and agree to North West Cancer Research holding information about their Research Grant. The information we hold will be used to support our impact measurement work at North West Cancer Research. We will not share your details with any third parties for their marketing purposes although we reserve the right to provide details of funded projects to other charities, sector umbrella bodies and other institutions where this is required in order to fulfil the requirements of memberships held by North West Cancer Research.

**NORTH WEST CANCER RESEARCH GRANT APPLICATION CANCER DISCOVERY RESEARCH CALL: GUIDANCE ON COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM**

The sections below provide guidance on completing the individual sections of the application form. Please remember to adhere to the word count for each section as word count in excess of the limits below will be penalised.

1. **Project Title**
   1. The project title should give potential reviewers a clear idea of the proposed research. Any confidential or commercially sensitive information should not be included in the title.
2. **Re-submission**
   1. If the application is a resubmission to the Charity, please include a covering letter and highlight details of changes from the original application. Please address the concerns raised by both the Funding Panel and external reviewers following the original application.
3. **Proposed Start Date and Duration**
   1. The award should ideally begin as soon as possible and no later than six months after the date of the award letter.
4. **Applicant(s)**
   1. Only one application will be considered for a principal investigator. One additional application will be considered where the applicant is named as a co-investigator. Applicants should not appear on more than two applications. Applications will be returned if these guidelines are not adhered to.
   2. Co-investigators should be experienced researchers and the roles of each co-investigator must be justified within the application.
   3. All applicants named on the grant MUST sign the application form. If signatures are not included, the application form will not be accepted.
5. **Scientific Summary of Proposed Research**
   1. Please do not include confidential or commercially sensitive information in this summary as it can be circulated outside of our organisation. Word limit 300.
6. **Lay Summary of Proposed Research**
   1. This summary must be understandable for the general public as the North West Cancer Research Review Panel includes patient and public representatives who are not from a scientific or academic background. Your lay summary must be understandable to someone with no formal science education. Do not use technical language. Poorly written lay summaries will be penalised. Word limit 300.
7. **Relevance to region**
   1. Within this section, you should provide a clear case as to why this work is of relevance to the local population of the North West of England and North Wales. This could include incidence, research specialisation of the leading groups, collaboration with regional centres of excellence in the NHS or patient group interactions. This should be written in lay terms. Word limit 250.
8. **Proposed Investigation**. This section should not exceed 2,000 words.
   1. The following information should be included:
   2. Title of project
   3. Supporting evidence: Work which has led up to this project including collaborations at other institutions
   4. Project objectives: Hypothesis and specific aims
   5. Detailed plan of investigation: Research plan including background, preliminary results (if appropriate), hypothesis and specific aims.
   6. Project risks and contingencies
   7. Public/patient involvement plans

References (max. 20), tables, images and graphs can be included. These will not be included in the 2,000-word count.

* 1. If the project involves patient information, human volunteers or tissue samples, or animals, Appendix A should be completed and submitted with the main application form as part of the submitted PDF document.

1. **Human and/or Animal Subjects**
   1. North West Cancer Research expects the research they fund to be conducted to the highest levels of integrity, probity and good management. The research grant will be managed by North West Cancer Research. Research grants are made between North West Cancer Research and the research institution, and the charity expects that researchers and their employers will work within the appropriate legal and ethical boundaries and with the approval of research ethical committees where appropriate. If the answer to the question is yes, please complete the supplementary document Appendix A.
   2. North West Cancer Research recommends that researchers follow the guidelines for the welfare and use of animals in research as outlined [here](https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/responsibility-use-animals-bioscience-research). The Charity also promotes the reporting of research using animals according to the ARRIVE (Animal Research: Reporting of In Vivo Experiments) guidelines, as outlined [here](https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/arrive-guidelines). North West Cancer Research do not fund research involving animals under special protection (non-human primates, cats, dogs, equines).
2. **Communications Plan**
   1. This must include an outline of your plans for engagement, communication and dissemination of this research. This should include potential impacts for academic and non-academic users. Word limit 250.
3. **Impact Summary**
   1. Outline the potential impact of your work and the steps you will take to achieve this. We appreciate Cancer Discovery work has a longer impact timeframe, please therefore consider the winder definition of impact and how as a charity we measure it. In your summary, please consider what your project will do to: generate new and novel ideas; translate research into new ideas and services, create evidence that could influence policy and stakeholders; develop the human capacity to do research; stimulate further research via new funding partnerships; for research in the long-term.
   2. Please consider the pathway which would need to be taken to ensure that your research benefitted patients and the population in our region. Please describe the additional steps and resources which would be needed. Word limit 300.
4. **Nominated External Reviewers**
   1. Nominated reviewers must be experts in the research field and/or be able to provide an expert view on the value and benefits of the research proposal. Please make your referees aware you have nominated them in advance of submitting your application and ensure that they would be willing to provide a reference.
   2. Applicants should not provide reviewers from their own department or research group or where any possible conflict of interest may arise. This conflict includes people with whom you have held grants within the last five years. It also includes anyone with whom you have published in the same period. Close personal relationships are also considered a conflict of interest.
   3. If the applicant does not want a particular reviewer contacted, this should not be added to the main application form but should be submitted directly to the Research Grants Manager. Researchers must provide justification for this exclusion e.g. “main scientific competitor” or “commercial sensitivity”.
5. **Summary of Costs**

Costs (not amounting to more than £300,000 in total) should be included under a number of categories:

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| **Salaries:** | Funding will be available for research staff working directly on the project. This can include PhD students, Post-Doctoral Assistants or Graduate Research Assistants. Any student stipend should not exceed £21,000 per annum with a stipend being available for up to 3½-years. |
| **PGR registration fees:** | Please include these if appropriate. |
| **Equipment:** | Funds can be requested for small pieces of specialist equipment that are essential for the project. Personal computing for named individuals to work specifically on the grant are justified and capped at £1,000 per person for the duration of the grant unless otherwise discussed prior to submitting the application. |
| **Consumables:** | Funds can be requested for routine research consumables. |
| **Animal costs:** | To be include in Appendix A. |
| **Engagement overheads:** | PPI engagement collaboration, incentivising payments to participants including travel reimbursement and rewards. Projects requiring ethical applications should additionally submit details of overheads and procedures in an Appendix A. |
| **Publications/conference attendances** | Costs for open access publications and/or attendance at conferences primarily for the dissemination of findings and results. |

Research carried out in the NHS: Grant holders carrying out research in the NHS must ensure that all costs are attributed according to the [AcoRD (Attributing the costs of heath & social care Research & Development) Guidelines (link is external)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-attributing-the-costs-of-health-and-social-care-research" \t "_blank), or equivalent. It is expected that researchers use the study support service when applications are written.

1. **Justification for Support Requested**

This information should clearly describe how the resources requested are appropriate for the research proposed. Please note under resourcing a proposal will not give precedence for funding. Where staff who have substantive posts are not calculated within the budget but are intending to work, in part on the proposal, this should be added and clarified in this section.

1. **CVs**

Please include CVs within the PDF document for all named applicants with a list of publications.

1. **Published Papers**

* Please include a publication list related to the work proposed in this application. Additionally, if applicants have previously received grants from North West Cancer Research please provide a list of publications resulting from this funded work. This includes work funded by the charity or any of its predecessor bodies including:
* North West Cancer Research Fund
* Clatterbridge Cancer Research
* Cancer and Polio Research Fund Ltd

1. **Signatures**
   1. Please ensure that ALL named applicants sign the form.
   2. The approval of the Head of Department and Administrative representative confirms that the Institution agrees with the budget request and use of facilities.
2. **Letters of Support**

A relevant letter of support should confirm commitment to the proposed project by articulating the benefits of the collaboration, its relevance and potential impact.

1. **PhD Supervision**

Where appropriate, please provide details of the number of students supervised in the last 5 years, including current students of the PI and co-supervisors. At least one member of the research team should have a track record of supervising PhD students. The start and completion dates (where possible) should be listed.

Please provide details of the environment in which the student will be working. This should include the number of group members e.g. PhD Students, Post-Doctoral Researchers and details of equipment available. Details of the daily support should also be included.

Please note, the relevant Research Office will be asked to provide the institutional procedures for the support and monitoring of postgraduate students.

1. **Student Experience**

Please describe the range of training and scientific development opportunities that the student will get during this PhD. Consider the parameters for the student on this project within which they will be able to shape it to their own learning style and interests.