

Project Grant Award Guidance for Applicants



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This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the Conditions of Award to assist the completion of the Stroke Association Project Grant Award application form.

We have combined our previously separate forms for:

- **Clinical Trial Project Grants (for project applications incorporating a clinical trial) and**
- **Developmental Research Project Grants.**

The Stroke Association is the only medical charity working exclusively for stroke illness. The Stroke Association supports research directly related to stroke illness by means of project grants. These are awarded on the recommendation of the Research Awards Pool of the Stroke Association using the system of expert peer review and review by service users. Awards are made once a year in July, with the closing date in February. Applications are invited by means of advertisements in the medical press and the Stroke Association website (www.stroke.org.uk).

Award amount and duration

These awards are for up to £210,000 over a period of up to 3 years. In exceptional circumstances, awards may be granted for 5 years.

Deadline for applications

5pm on 5 February 2018

Priorities for funding

The purpose of the proposed research project must be directly related to stroke illness. Applications in the fields of epidemiology, prevention, diagnosis, imaging, childhood stroke, therapy both medical and surgical, assessment and rehabilitation are particularly welcome.

The Stroke Association's strategy is to increase the UK funding base and research capacity for stroke research. Priorities for funding therefore include research into the prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and long-term care of stroke patients. The majority of funded projects are patient-orientated.

Types of funding application

We welcome applications for two types of research proposal to this funding scheme.

- **Clinical Trial Project Grants**

These are project grant proposals which incorporate a randomised controlled trial or other clinical trial of a device or an intervention. I.e: trialling a previously developed intervention on a population of people, whether stroke survivors or people unaffected by stroke.

These grants are intended to:

- Support the early phases of trials with the intention that, if successful, they proceed to the full trial stage supported by a large funder such as the NIHR.
- Support the creation of UK centres for large international clinical trials in stroke medicine. Such applications will be in association with, and support the work of, the NIHR Clinical Research Network (NIHR CRN), or an equivalent regional research support network organisation before the application is submitted.

Projects which have a developmental and then a trial phase should be submitted in this category.

The form should not be used for study proposals in observational epidemiology, basic laboratory science and imaging studies, or early developmental/proof of concept studies. Projects involving the use of laboratory animals will not be funded in this particular scheme.

- **Developmental Research Project Grants**

These are project grant proposals that are focused on areas which do not incorporate randomised controlled or other types of clinical trials. This includes study proposals in observational or epidemiological studies, basic laboratory science or early developmental/proof of concept studies.

Although projects involving the use of laboratory animals are eligible, we do not expect project grant applications to include animal research due to the budget envelope of this scheme. Please see the [Stroke Association's Position Statement on Research Involving Animals](#).

We request anyone planning on including animal research in their application to discuss their proposed project with the Stroke Association Research Team prior to completion of their application form.

It is mandatory to complete all of the questions on the Research Involving Animals page if your proposal involves animals. Applications may be referred to the [NC3Rs](#) for review. Where animal work is sub-contracted, these questions must be completed by the organisation conducting the animal studies. Please note, we will also ask peer reviewers who will assess your application if there is appropriate justification for the use and number of animals.

Applicants should refer to the [NC3Rs website](#) for further information and guidance on the responsible and ethical use of animals in research.

If you are in doubt, please contact the Stroke Association Research Department.

Patient and Public Involvement

We expect that all applicants will have involved people affected by stroke in the planning and development stages of their funding application, and will continue to do so should their application be successful. This involvement should be meaningful, and people affected by stroke should have a real opportunity to contribute to your research.

You can find out more about how we can help you to involve people affected by stroke in your work [here](#).

Eligibility

Stroke Association Project Grant Awards must be carried out at Universities, NHS Trusts, Statutory Social Care Organisations or other Research Institutions within Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Applications will not be accepted from investigators (whether applicants, sponsors or collaborators) who have an overdue report from a previous project funded by the Stroke Association at the time of submission (i.e. the deadline date). Applicants should consult with any sponsors and collaborators involved in their application to ensure that they have submitted their reports; otherwise the application will be rejected.

The salaries (whole or in part) of Senior Academic Researchers/Collaborators or studentships are not supported by these grants. This may be waived only in exceptional circumstances.

You will be asked to give details of whether you have involved your local Research Design Service (RDS) or Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) in the development of the research proposal, including details of any discussions you have had with the RDS/CTU, improvements to the proposal as a result of the advice offered and their ongoing involvement in the project. Please note: involvement of a RDS (or equivalent) is **recommended for all** applications. Involvement of a CTU is **mandatory** for clinical trial applications.

Adjudication procedure

Research Awards Panel

Project grants are adjudicated by two Research Awards Panels made up of members of the Research Awards Pool depending on which Panel is most suitable to adjudicate a particular application. The **Pre-clinical, acute care and prevention panel** adjudicates on applications in the areas of prevention, acute care, medicine, statistics and epidemiology.

The **Rehabilitation and long-term care panel** adjudicates applications focused on stroke rehabilitation and long-term care.

You will be asked in the form which panel you think would be best suited to adjudicate your application. We appreciate that there are some applications that could be adjudicated by either panel. Please note that the Stroke Association's Research Team and the Chair of the Research Awards Pool will make a final decision on which Panel adjudicates your application.

Stroke Association Standards of Adjudication and Peer Review

The Stroke Association is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), and meets all membership criteria. The research awards adjudication process aligns to AMRC

guidelines, and the Stroke Association holds an AMRC Certificate of Best Practice in Medical and Health Research Peer Review.

What happens to your application?

Once your application is received by the Stroke Association Research Department, the applications will be read to ensure that they are eligible and that all the mandatory questions have been answered appropriately.

The application form is then reviewed by two members of the relevant adjudication panel (made up of members of our Research Awards Pool). The lowest scoring applications (depending on numbers) will be removed from further assessment and rejected at this stage. The remaining applications will be sent for expert peer review to at least two relevant external peer reviewers. Reviewers complete an external review form assessing the quality of the science, value for money, feasibility and the potential impact of the proposed research. Reviewers also score the research on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 is poor and 6 is excellent. Applications that score above threshold will then be discussed by the relevant Research Awards Adjudication Panel. The threshold is usually an average of 4, this may be variable depending on the number of applications and a final decision will be taken by the Chairs of the relevant adjudication panels of where the threshold will lie in each application round. Those applications that do not score above threshold after internal and external peer review will be rejected at this stage.

Applications of sufficient quality will also be reviewed by the Stroke Association's Service User Review Panel who are sent the plain English summaries. The service users are asked to comment on and score the applications.

Applications are discussed, scored and ranked at the relevant Research Awards Adjudication Panel meeting. The Research Awards Panel then recommend to the Stroke Association which applications they recommend for funding. Successful applications need to be signed off by the Stroke Association's Council of Trustees.

When will you hear the outcome of your application?

The closing date (5 February 2018) is approximately four months prior to the adjudication panel meeting at which your application will be considered (June 2018). Following the closing date, applications are allocated to internal and then external reviewers if appropriate (see above).

Recommendations as to which applications should be funded will be made by the adjudication panel meeting, based on the highest scoring applications. The recommendations must then be ratified by the Stroke Association Council of Trustees.

Letters to unsuccessful applications are sent out at various stages depending at what stage the application is rejected i.e. after triage (within 2 months of the deadline), after external peer review (within 3 months of the deadline) or after the Stroke Association's Council of Trustees' meeting (within five months of the deadline).

Letters to successful applicants are sent immediately following the next Council of Trustees' meeting, which may be up to one month after the adjudication panel meeting.

The lead applicants of all applications will receive copies of the anonymised reviewers' comments as well as a summary of the Research Awards Panel feedback where applicable.

The Stroke Association is fully committed to ensuring that the process by which applications are adjudicated and funding decisions are made is as fair and transparent as possible. We will not enter into any discussion or debate over applications that are unsuccessful. The application process is reviewed after each round. Where improvement has been identified, changes are made and implemented before the next round of applications commence.

When you submit an application, the Stroke Association will use the information provided on the form to process the application, which may involve revealing details of the application to peer reviewers outside the Stroke Association. All personal data will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. If your award is funded, then details of the award may be used for dissemination and will be made publicly available. All reviewers and Research Awards Pool members must sign and abide by our Confidentiality and Conflicts of Interest Policy.