GUIDANCE FOR PEER REVIEWERS

Sight Research UK funds research projects with a clearly defined pathway to achieve patient benefit. Its goal is to help to accelerate the translation of discovery science to the early stages of development of new therapies, devices, and diagnostics.

As a catalytic funder, it is our responsibility to choose projects which have robust translational potential and are likely to attract follow-on, large-scale funding from other charitable funders, industry, or statutory funders such as the Medical Research Council (MRC).

To streamline the process of application and selection for researchers and reviewers we have agreed with the MRC that we can base our peer review assessment guidelines on theirs. The guidance below is reproduced with the express permission of the MRC.

GRANT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Confidentiality

We are very grateful to you for agreeing to review this grant application. It's an essential part of our research funding process and we couldn't achieve this without the help of experts like you. Thank you.

Please remember that reviewers must maintain confidentiality of the research projects they are assessing. Should you wish to seek advice from colleagues while assessing this grant application, please also ask them to also maintain confidentiality. Thank you very much in advance for your compliance with this essential requirement.

Need and solution

- Does the proposal address an unmet clinical need and would meeting it significantly reduce disease burden and/or alleviate an important development bottleneck?
- Is the proposed solution reasonable and would it provide sufficient benefit over alternative or existing approaches?

Rationale

- Is the project underpinned by a good medical/scientific rationale?
- Is there a reasonable body of evidence to support the proposed rationale?

Deliverability

- Is the proposed approach reasonable, appropriate, and justified?
- Does the plan propose appropriate go/no-go milestones?
- Do the applicants have the necessary expertise to deliver the plan?
- Is the proposed risk management approach for the key risks appropriate?
- Is the methodology appropriate and statistically sound? Robust methodology and experimental design should be at the centre of any proposal to aid reproducibility of research findings. Has the applicant clearly set out and justified the following?
    - Measures for avoidance of bias (e.g., blinding, randomisation).
    - Number of experimental and control groups and sample size per group.
    - How the sample size was calculated, showing power calculations, and including justification of effect size.
    - Overview of the planned statistical analyses in relation to the primary outcomes to be assessed.
    - Frequency of measurements/interventions to be used.
    - Circumstances in which power calculations are not appropriate to determine sample size.

Resources requested

- Is any animal use fully justified in terms of need, species, proposed number, conformance to guidelines, and ethical consideration? Please refer to the guidance from the [UK's National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement, and Reduction of Animals in Research](#) (the 3Rs).
- Are the funds requested essential for the work and justified by the importance and scientific potential of the research?
- Is the applicants' stated time commitment to the work appropriate and sufficient?
- Does the proposal demonstrate value for money in terms of the resources requested?

Impact

- What is the potential economic and societal impact of the proposed research? Please comment on:
    - identification of realistic potential improvements to human or population health.
    - contribution to relieving disease/disability burden and/or improving quality of life.
    - identification of potential impacts of research and plans to deliver these.

Translational Readiness Level (Please see [Appendix 1](#) for our TRL chart)

- What is your assessment of the Translational Readiness Level for this project?
- Do you agree with the TRL stated by the applicant?

Overall evaluation

Please comment on the overall strengths and weaknesses of the proposal and its quality.

MRC SCORE INDICATORS

6 – EXCEPTIONAL
Top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance

- Scientific quality and impact:
    - Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance.
    - Original and innovative; novel methodology and design.
    - Potential for high health impact.

- Scientific leadership:
    - Excellent leadership *(track record, team, environment, and collaborators).*

- Justification of resources:
    - Potential for high return on investment *(resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation).*
    - Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (*Principal investigators and co-investigators*).

- Other: Ethical and/ or governance issues are fully considered.

5 – EXCELLENT
Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance

- Scientific quality and impact:
    - Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance.
    - Original and innovative; novel methodology and design.
    - Potential for high health impact.

- Scientific leadership:
    - Excellent leadership *(track record, team, environment, and collaborators).*

- Justification of resources
    - Potential for high return on investment *(resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation)*
    - Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (*Principal investigators and co-investigators*).

- Other: Ethical and / or governance issues are fully considered.

4 - VERY HIGH QUALITY
Internationally competitive in parts

- Scientific quality and impact:
    - Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance.
    - Robust methodology and design *(innovative in parts)*.
    - Potential for high health impact.

- Scientific leadership:
    - Excellent leadership *(track record, team, environment, and collaborators)*.

- Justification of resources:
    - Potential for high return on investment *(resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation)*.
    - Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (*Principal investigators and co-investigators*).

- Other: Ethical and / or governance issues are fully considered.

3 - HIGH QUALITY

- Scientific quality and impact:
    - Worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap or a valuable scientific resource.
    - Methodologically sound study.
    - Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact.

- Scientific leadership:
    - Strong leadership *(track record, team, environment, and collaborators)*.
- Justification of resources:
    - Potential for significant return on investment *(resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation)*.

- - Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (*may be scope strengthen management of the project).*

- Other: Ethical and / or governance issues are fully considered.

2 – GOOD QUALITY

- Scientific quality and impact:
  - Worthwhile scientific question with potentially useful outcomes.
  - Methodologically sound study but areas require revision.
  - Likelihood of successful delivery.

- Scientific leadership:
  - Appropriate leadership *(scope to strengthen team; environment; collaborators).*

- Justification of resources:
  - Potentially more limited return on investment *(resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, and anticipated knowledge generation)*
  - Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal.

- Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are adequately considered.

1 – POOR QUALITY

- Scientific quality and impact:
  - Poorly defined question.
  - Methodologically weak study.
  - Limited likelihood of new knowledge generation.

- Scientific leadership:
  - Poor leadership.

- Justification of resources
  - Potentially poor return on investment.

- Other: Ethical and / or governance issues are not adequately considered.

APPENDIX 1 – TRANSLATIONAL READINESS LEVELS