

Research Innovation Awards: Guidance Notes 2025/26

Introduction

We have an ambitious aim: to create a world where no man dies from prostate cancer. Our Research Strategy sets out how we will invest in the most innovative research to accelerate our knowledge and understanding of prostate cancer, and develop better treatments and more effective approaches to diagnosis to transform the lives of all men with, or at risk of prostate cancer.

We have identified three key areas where there are substantive gaps in our knowledge or expertise and we would welcome innovative research proposals targeted towards:

- **Better Diagnosis**
(including risk stratification and disease prognosis)
- **Better Treatment**
(for both localised & advanced disease, including improved prediction of which treatment(s) will be effective for an individual)
- **Smarter Use of Data**

Awards Remit

This call is for bold, innovative research projects that have a real potential to impact the way prostate cancer is diagnosed and treated. As such, we want to see novel game changing research!

All proposals must align with our research strategy and must clearly demonstrate the innovative nature of the research, including how it will lead to improved health and wellbeing of men affected by, or at high risk of prostate cancer.

The application process and assessment of your proposal will reflect our increased focus on innovation and potential impact. You should make every effort to detail how your proposal meets those criteria.

There are no financial restrictions on requests in this call – you should simply apply for what you need. Value for money will be a consideration in making final funding decisions, so we would advise applicants to ensure that the amount they are requesting is proportionate and a realistic reflection of what is needed.

As a gauge, the budget for previous rounds of our Research Innovation Awards scheme has been approximately £3 million. If your proposal is likely to cost over £750k, please speak to us in advance of submitting your application to discuss eligibility. Our Research Innovation Awards are for focussed research projects. If you're considering a longer-term / broader

programme that's comprised of inter-connected workstreams you may wish to consider whether your proposed research is more aligned to our Transformational Impact Awards.

We would expect projects to be between 1 to 5 years in duration; however, you should apply for the length of time you need. Projects that are shorter or longer than this are still eligible but must be sufficiently justified.

Our Research Innovation Awards support a broad range of proposals spanning our entire research strategy. Whilst this scheme typically supports research projects 3-4 years in duration, **we do also welcome applications for smaller scale, yet highly innovative, pilot projects.** Funding for projects of this type would usually be for up to 24 months, costing less than £100,000, with a focus of establishing proof of principle and/or generating novel data, whilst still being hypothesis-led research. Although such 'blue skies' research can be applied for with less supporting preliminary data, your total funding request should be proportionate to the extent and strength of your preliminary data.

This scheme will fund both fundamental and clinical research (and all stages in between), and we expect proposals to have a focus on eventual benefit to men. Applicants will be expected to set out a logical and realistic project that has the potential to deliver that benefit to men.

We will also consider applications that bring innovative ideas from other cancer types and other diseases to be tested or translated for prostate cancer, and we encourage applicants to build teams that include experts from other disciplines and other countries where that will improve the project.

Eligibility

To apply to this call, the following criteria must also be met:

- Awards are available to established researchers working within a recognised academic or clinical institution in the UK. Applicants should have a strong track record in their field, and we welcome proposals from academics not currently working on prostate cancer (however, in such cases an expert from the prostate cancer research community should be named as a Joint-lead Applicant or Co-Applicant on the proposal).
- Lead Applicants should hold tenured or tenure-track academic appointments, or for clinical applicants, they should hold an honorary academic contract at a recognised academic institution.
- Lecturers on fixed term contracts or post-doctoral researchers holding competitively awarded external fellowships can be Lead Applicants, as long as their contract extends at least 6 months beyond the duration of the project **or** the host institution has agreed to award a permanent position at the end of the fixed term.
- Individuals with greater than 5 years postdoctoral experience (for clinical researchers) or 10 years (for non-clinical researchers) can apply as independent Lead Applicant.
- Experienced Early Career Researchers (see definition below) who wish to apply as a Lead Applicant must have a senior academic (usually the research group head) named on the proposal as a Joint Lead Applicant.

We define an experienced Early Career Researcher as:

- Non-clinical researcher: someone who has between 5-10 years post-doctoral experience.
- Clinical researcher: someone who has 0-5 years post-doctoral experience. Clinical Experienced Early Career Researchers must have completed their PhD by the time the grant will commence.
- Experienced Early Career Researchers may include their salary within the application budget (if it's not already covered through other means such as core institutional funds or fellowship funding). In this instance, they must truly be leading the research and spending a minimum of 80% FTE on the project. A detailed justification must be provided explaining how this salary support, and the research funding applied for, will support the individual in their career progression by achieving independence by the end of the project. If the individual secures a tenured position or fellowship funding then we expect their salary to be removed from the grant.
- Projects can include a period of research outside the UK where there is a Co-Applicant or Collaborator based overseas. However, research must be conducted predominantly in the UK and we will not make any direct payments to non-UK institutions or pay invoices in any currency other than British pounds (GBP).
- Funds requested in your proposal must be in accordance with our Finance Guidance.
- Grants will only be awarded to institutions that have official policies in place covering anti-bullying and scientific integrity.

Please note that we will NOT accept applications that:

- Do not fit our Research Strategy.
- Are intended solely or primarily to purchase substantial equipment and/or infrastructure
- Are led and submitted by researchers based entirely or primarily outside the UK
- Are submitted by commercial organisations
- Are incomplete or have been completed incorrectly
- Are solely intended to be a PhD studentship or Clinical Fellowship

Once the deadline has passed, you will no longer be able to submit your proposal. If your application has not been submitted AND approved by all necessary parties before the deadline, then your application will no longer be considered. There will be no opportunity to debate individual circumstances. Applications which are incomplete, or which do not meet the requirements detailed above or which are deemed to be outside of our Research Strategy will be rejected without being sent for further review. Please be aware, you may be asked to make changes to your application in the week following submission.

If you have any queries about completing the application form, please contact the Research Team **in advance** of the submission deadline (email: research@prostatecanceruk.org). If you are applying to us for the first time, we strongly advise you to reach out and discuss your application with us.

Assessment Process

The application process will consist of 2 phases, an initial Expression of Interest (EOI) followed by a more detailed Second Stage for shortlisted proposals. The submission deadline for EOI applications is **1pm on Tuesday 14 October 2025**.

1: Expression of Interest Stage

Deadline: Prospective applicants must submit their application and make sure that all online declarations and approvals have been completed by the relevant parties before **1pm on 14 October 2025**.

Shortlisting: Applications will be considered by our Research Advisory Committee in late **November 2025**, where a decision made as to which proposals will be shortlisted to the second stage.

Notification: Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their submission in the **w/c 5 January 2026**. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a second stage application form.

2: Second Stage (for shortlisted applicants)

Deadline: Shortlisted applicants must submit their second stage proposals and ensure that all online declarations and approvals have been completed by the relevant parties by **3 March 2026**.

Expert Review: Submitted applications will then be subject to external expert review (in line with AMRC guidance). The expert reviewers' comments will be sent to the applicants (anonymously) via our online system. Applicants will have an opportunity to submit a rebuttal to the reviewers' comments in **Early May 2026**.

Decision: All applications, external reviews and rebuttals will then be considered by our Research Advisory Committee in **June 2026**. It will make a final funding recommendations to our Board of Trustees. All applications will also be assessed by our panel of Patient and Public Involvement Representatives (consisting of people affected by prostate cancer).

Notification: Final funding decisions will be made, and applicants will be notified as to the outcome of their submission via email in **July 2026**.

We recognise that the outcome of your application is important to you. We will inform you of the outcome as soon as possible. We aim to provide feedback for all successful and unsuccessful applicants. We appreciate your patience during this time.

Contracting: Once notified of our intention to award, we will begin the contracting process immediately (subject to any conditions of award). Successful projects should aim to get underway as soon as possible, or at least within six months of completion of contracting.

Making your application

The deadline for application submission is **14 October 2025 (1pm)**.

Applications must be made through our online Prostate Cancer UK Grant Tracker [system](#). All sections of the application form must be completed accurately before submission.

- The Joint-Lead Applicant (if applicable) and all Co-Applicants must confirm their involvement in the proposal, as well as approve the application before it can be submitted.
- Collaborators must confirm their participation on the application before it can be submitted.
- Whilst Co-applicants and Collaborators are not required to enter their full CV details, we do request that they add their ORCID ID's.
- Expressions of Interest applications do not require approval from Heads of Department or Finance Officers. This will be required if your application is shortlisted to the Second Stage.

Lead Applicant details

The Lead Applicant must be the Principal Investigator who will lead the research and be responsible for delivering the project.

CV Information

CV information in this section is automatically populated from your contact record. Please therefore ensure that your CV (including your employment, education and grant funding) and Basic Information are up to date via the 'Manage My Details' section in the system. Please note that this section is not accessible directly from the application form, and so to update your personal details you must first 'Save and Close' your application and then click on the 'Manage My Details' link in the left-hand menu.

When updating your personal details please note the following:

- You, and all applicants, must have an up-to-date [ORCID](#) account, and the ORCID ID must be added to the corresponding section under 'Basic Information' via 'Manage My Details'. Our committee will refer to your ORCID account for further details about your career and track record. Please ensure that you have populated your ORCID record and set visibility to 'public'. For more details, please visit the [ORCID website](#).

Publications

Please enter up to 10 of your most significant/relevant publications for this application.

Grants

Please enter up to 10 of your most significant/relevant grants for this application.

Your role

Briefly describe your role on the project (up to 200 words).

Joint Lead Applicant

We would ordinarily expect a project to be led by a single Lead Applicant; however, you may include up to ONE Joint-Lead Applicant.

To include a Joint-Lead Applicant onto the proposal, click on 'Add Joint-Lead Applicant', input their name within the corresponding search fields and either select the contact if already on our database or otherwise input their details. Once added, an email will be sent to the potential applicant inviting them to take part in this application.

The Joint-Lead Applicant **must** accept this invitation to confirm their participation on the proposal.

The Joint-Lead Applicant must confirm their participation AND approve the application BEFORE the proposal can be 'submitted'.

The Joint-Lead Applicant should ensure that the Basic Information (including ORCID ID) on the 'Manage My Details' page of their account is up to date as these will populate on the application form.

Joint Lead Applicant Role (up to 200 words)

You **must** then provide sufficient explanation (under Role Description) to justify the need for a Joint-Lead Applicant, as well as which aspects of the proposal they will be leading on and why they are appropriate to lead on that aspect of the project.

If the Lead applicant is an Experienced Early Career Researcher, a senior academic must be added as either a Joint-Lead Applicant or Co-Applicant.

If the Joint-Lead Applicant is to be an experienced Early Career Researcher (see our definition in the introduction section), then you must also justify why they are suitable to be a Joint-Lead Applicant.

Additional information of relevance to the review of your application (up to 500 words)

You may use this section if you wish to highlight details of any significant breaks, periods of part-time working or reduction in activity in the research careers of the Lead and/or Joint-Lead applicants.

Please note, where this is applicable, we're not looking to capture the details of what happened but ask that you focus on the consequences and impact on your career, or your ability to deliver your research. This can include but is not limited to:

- Change in personal circumstances such as inability or reduced ability to work due to illness or additional caring responsibilities.
- Pause on experiments/research plans/access to facilities (e.g. being furloughed during the COVID-19 pandemic)
- Delays in publishing/submitting a key paper(s) or other outputs and markers, e.g. panel membership, presentation invitations, conference participation, promotions
- If you have not been impacted by any situation, please detail "N/A".

Click the help icon '?' in this section of the online application form for examples of how to capture this.

We ask that you only disclose personal information that you would be comfortable being seen by our external reviewers and committee members. For the same reason please do not disclose any information that is about a third-party including name, circumstances, or information that allows them to be identified.

Note: The details in this section will be taken into consideration by our reviewers when assessing an individual's track record, outputs and career progression

Personnel

This section allows you to add the details of any Co-Applicant(s) and Collaborator(s) involved in the proposal. Contacts will automatically pull through from your Expression of Interest, but please update the personnel to reflect any changes made if applicable. You must also clearly specify everyone's individual's role in the project. Co-Applicant(s) and Collaborator(s) should

ensure that the Basic Information (including ORCID ID) on the 'Manage My Details' page of their account is up to date as these will populate on the application form.

Co-Applicant(s) (up to 100 words)

Please include details of all Co-Applicant(s) to be involved in the project. It is our expectation that all Co-Applicant(s) must have an active role in the proposed project (any other personnel should be listed as a Collaborator). Please detail everyone's individual's role in the project along with the skills and/or expertise they will bring to the project.

To add Co-Applicant(s), click on 'Add Co-Applicant', input their name within the corresponding search fields and either select the contact if already on our database or otherwise input their details. Once added, an email will be sent to the potential Co-Applicant inviting them to take part in this application. Repeat this procedure for all Co-Applicant(s) on the proposal.

Co-Applicant(s) added at the Expression of Interest stage will automatically be pulled into the second stage application form and will not receive an automated email. It is the Lead Applicant's responsibility to contact these Co-Applicant(s) themselves and let them know what's required of them.

All Co-Applicant(s) must confirm their participation AND approve the application BEFORE the proposal can be 'submitted'.

You **must** detail how each Co-Applicant will be involved in the project. To do so, click on 'Add Co-Applicant Role', select the relevant name from the dropdown list provided and input their role in the corresponding section. Please repeat this for all Co-Applicant(s) on this proposal.

Collaborator(s) (up to 100 words)

To include a Collaborator onto the proposal, click on 'Add Collaborator' and follow the same procedures as with adding a Co-Applicant (detailed above). You **must** detail how each Collaborator will be involved in the project, as with the Co-Applicant(s). Please repeat this for all Collaborator(s) on this proposal.

We no longer require letters of support from all your Collaborator(s); instead, they are required to confirm their participation before submission. Please note that if invited to the second stage, letters of support should only be provided if they provide crucial additional details regarding the Collaborator's involvement in the study, such as the provision of key datasets, models or patient samples.

All Collaborator(s) must confirm their participation BEFORE the proposal can be 'submitted'.

Excluded Reviewers:

Prostate Cancer UK recognises that there are certain situations in which approaching a particular reviewer may not be appropriate. Applicants may only request exclusions when there is a serious conflict of interest or commercial sensitivity.

Please provide details of anyone you wish to be excluded from the assessment of your proposal (up to 3 people). For those people you do not wish to be approached to review the proposal, you must also provide a valid reason in the text box provided (in no more than 200 words).

Please note that we are under no obligation to take up applicants' exclusions for reviewers and will not enter into discussion with applicants on this matter.

Project Summary

Provide a concise scientific title for your project and include the duration of the research project (in months). It is our expectation that projects should be between 12 and 60 months in duration. Projects shorter or longer than this are still eligible; but you should justify why funding for this length of time is required.

Is this a resubmission of a previous funding application to Prostate Cancer UK? If so, please provide details on the application number, project title, Lead Applicant and funding round.

Within this section you must indicate which one (or more) of the Prostate Cancer UK priority areas your project predominantly addresses (please refer to our [Research Strategy](#) for further details), explaining why your research meets the selected priority area(s) (in no more than 100 words).

You must then provide a brief scientific abstract (in no more than 300 words), outlining the background to the application, the proposed aims of the research to be undertaken and the expected outcomes. All proposals must clearly state how the planned research aims to improve the health and wellbeing of men affected by, or at high risk of prostate cancer.

Please do not include any confidential or commercially sensitive information in this section.

Key hypotheses, objectives and milestones (up to 300 words)

Please summarise the main aims of the project. Bullet-point the key hypotheses to be investigated, along with short descriptions of how this will be achieved and a brief timetable of milestones, in no more than 300 words.

All proposals should articulate a strong, central research question and be placed in the context of current knowledge and the potential benefit for men affected by prostate cancer.

This scheme is aimed to support hypothesis-driven research. Proposals that are not sufficiently hypothesis-driven are likely to be rejected in all but exceptional circumstances. Please speak to the Research Team if you have any queries about eligibility (email: research@prostatecanceruk.org).

This section is meant to provide an 'at a glance' summary of your project plan. Please keep it succinct and to the point.

Project Description

Please provide details about your proposal by answering **all** questions within this section:

What is innovative about your application? (up to 300 words)

We want to see innovative research which has high potential to make a real impact on the lives of men with, or at high risk of developing, prostate cancer. You should therefore make a

clear case as to what is innovative about your application. Prostate Cancer UK will only fund novel and innovative research, and so this question is of great importance. You should also explain why such a study is needed now and how it will differ from or complement any planned, ongoing, or recently completed studies.

Projects that are NOT deemed to be sufficiently innovative by our Research Advisory Committee will be rejected before the Second Stage.

Brief summary of the background to the project (up to 300 words)

Introduce only the most relevant background information necessary to understand the wider context of your proposal - do not write a literature review. You should describe both your own and others' results that provide a basis for doing this research now, as well as any ongoing work that may impact either positively or negatively on your proposed study. It is advised that you place your proposal into a patient-centred context rather than focussing on scientific questions alone.

Project Design (up to 750 words)

Please describe what you propose to do. This section should provide a clear and succinct summary of the proposed project. If applicable, please also detail the sample sizes and statistical analysis methods for your planned experiments (applicants shortlisted to the Second Stage will have the opportunity to elaborate further on their project design).

Optional attachments

You may attach no more than 5 sides of A4 of additional information to support your proposal. This can include supporting and preliminary data, in addition to any figures/legends, diagrams, Gantt charts and/or letters of support. Please upload as a pdf file only. Anything in excess of 5 sides of A4 will be removed from your proposal and will not be considered.

What will be the impact of your proposed project (both in the short and long term)? (up to 200 words)

We wish to understand the potential impact of your research both in the short and longer term. Our ultimate aim is to deliver clinical impact as quickly as possible to improve the lives of men affected by, or at high risk of, prostate cancer. Your response should focus on the impact to these men rather than just academic outputs.

What would need to happen after this grant (if successful) to realise the long-term impact for men described above? (up to 200 words)

We wish to understand how your research fits into the wider research landscape and the potential impact of your work across a timescale longer than this project to assess your plans for achieving impact.

We are aware that several additional steps and significant follow-on funding may be required in order to deliver longer term impact. Please provide brief details of those subsequent steps and how you intend to fund them (including proposed funders and funding schemes, if relevant, or describe any plans to fund future work through commercial licencing or exploitation).

Our ultimate aim is to deliver clinical impact as quickly as possible to improve the lives of men affected by prostate cancer. Your response should focus on the impact to these men rather than pure academic outputs.

Patient & Public Involvement

PPI in research is research done 'with' or 'by' patients and the public, not 'to', 'about' or 'for' them. It is a two-way conversation, working collaboratively with patients and the public throughout the research life cycle. Patient and public engagement focuses on raising awareness, sharing research knowledge and findings.

Please describe how men with prostate cancer, or their relatives/partners etc., have been involved in the design of this research and what impact their involvement had. Please also describe how you plan to involve them in the planning, delivery and management of this research, and what their specific role will be. Any PPI activities described must be relevant and specific to the studies outlined in this application. (up to 500 words)

We support the active involvement of patients and the public in research activities enabling high quality patient focused research. Involving people affected by prostate cancer throughout all stages of your research will likely lead to better quality funding applications and improved outcomes of research, thus resulting in applications that are more likely to be successful.

Tips for including PPI in your research:

- You can use our [Patient Representative Network](#) to discuss your proposed research question(s) with people affected by prostate cancer to ask whether your planned research is relevant to them, and how they might be involved throughout your project.
- Refer to [NIHR involve PPI guidelines](#) for good PPI practice.

References

You may include up to 20 full references which have been referenced within the Project Description section (in Vancouver format).

Click the help icon '?' on the online application form for examples of Vancouver formatted references.

Finances

Please refer to our [Finance Guidance](#) or further details regarding cost eligibility.

We do not require a full breakdown of costs at this stage (this will be requested if shortlisted to the Second Stage). However, you should give a reasonable estimate of costs under the following headings:

- Salary costs (please specify each post individually)
- Research expenses
- Animal purchase costs
- Animal maintenance costs
- Other costs (including conference fees, PPI costs and any equipment)

Where applicable, applications should be costed in line with the [AcoRD framework](#) for attributing the costs of clinical research, and our standard [Terms and Conditions](#) regarding eligibility of certain costs apply.

Justification of budget (up to 300 words)

Please provide a brief justification of the costs that you expect to incur (in no more than 300 words). You should provide a direct justification for each salary, research expense, animal purchase/maintenance or other cost line you have included in the finance section.

If you are an early career researcher seeking to cover your salary costs, please provide a detailed justification on how this salary support and the research funding applied for, will support you in achieving independence.

If the amount requested does not cover the full study costs (e.g. where the work would be part funded by another source) please also provide brief details as to how the remaining costs of the study will be met.

Whilst Research Innovation Awards are not a mechanism to solely support PhD Students or Clinical Fellows, it is permissible to include an allowance for a PhD Student or a Clinical Fellow working towards a PhD qualification. In such instances, the studentship/fellowship must form part of a larger project and must be robustly justified as the most appropriate way to deliver the proposed research. If you are considering including a PhD Studentship and/or Clinical Fellowship in your Research Innovation Award application, we strongly recommend that you discuss this with a member of the Research Team at Prostate Cancer UK before submitting your proposal.

Declaration

Other sources of funding

Are you in receipt of, or have you applied for, other funding for the proposed work? (up to 200 words)

Please provide details of any other funding received, or applied for, on the topic of this application. In the case of funding already received, it is important to explain how this proposal differs from, and complements, ongoing work and how it forms a discrete project in its own right. For recent funding applications, it is acceptable to have submitted the same project to another funder; however, please give an indication as to when you will know the outcome of the other submission(s). You must inform the Research Team of the outcome as soon as it is known. In both instances, please provide the name of the funding body(ies) and the amount awarded/applied for.

Declaration - Applicant

Declaration from the Lead Applicant is required to confirm that all of the information provided within the application is accurate and correct (to the best of your knowledge) and that you have read and accept our Terms and Conditions of award (approving the application will imply that the approver agrees to abide by our terms and conditions if a grant is awarded).

Submitting your application

Once you have completed all sections of the form you must go to the 'Validation' tab in the left-hand menu of the online application. This will highlight any sections which still need completing, or that exceed the stipulated word limits, or require your action before you can submit.

Please note that all mandatory sections of the form must be completed (within the stipulated word limits), and the Joint Lead Applicant (if applicable) and all Co-Applicants must confirm their involvement and approve the proposal before the application can be submitted. All Collaborators must confirm their involvement before the application can be submitted. You will be unable to submit your application until these have been resolved.

When all sections are complete and all necessary approvals have been made, the application is ready to be submitted. You must 'Save and Close' the application and this will then take you back to the application details page. The Submit button on the right-hand side should now be activated, and you can click this to submit your proposal.

Please be aware that Expressions of Interest do not require approval from Heads of Department or Finance Officers. This will be required if your application is shortlisted to the Second Stage.

Key Dates

- **14 October 2025 (1pm):** Deadline for Expression of Interest (EOI) stage application submission
- **November 2025:** Shortlisting of EOI applications
- **w/c 5 January 2026:** Notification of EOI application outcomes
- **January 2026:** Stage two opens for Invited Applicants only
- **3 March 2026:** Deadline for stage two application submissions
- **w/c 20 April 2026:** Applicants invited to submit a rebuttal to reviewer comments
- **May 2026:** Deadline for rebuttal submission
- **June 2026:** Final funding decisions will be made
- **July 2026:** Notification of funding decisions

Contact Us

Please read our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) or contact the Research Team via email if you have any other queries regarding your application: research@prostatecanceruk.org