

## **FOLLOW-ON FUND – GENERAL GUIDANCE NOTES**

### **What is the purpose of the Research Council Follow-On Fund?**

One of the major barriers to the take up and commercialisation of research results arising from the publicly-funded science base is the lack of funding to demonstrate the commercial potential of ideas.

The Research Council Follow-On Fund was therefore set up to help researchers achieve this. It provides support through two mechanisms: Follow-On Grants and Pathfinder Grants.

As the name suggests, the Follow-On Fund picks up where directed and responsive grants leave off. It enables the output from such projects to be further developed so that its commercial potential can be realised.

This is likely to be achieved by further developing that research output during the course of a Follow-On Grant to the point at which it can be:

- Either developed to the point at which the underlying concept is sufficiently proven that commercial interest to complete its development as a market-ready product or service can be secured;
- Or launched on to the market as a product or service.

Examples of the former include collaborative development deals with, and external investment by, commercial third-parties.

All intellectual property arising from Pathfinder or Follow-On Grants rests with the institution to which the grant is awarded. In the case of applications from NERC employees, the normal rules will apply.

### **What's in it for you?**

If your project is successful, the potential utility of a product or service based on your technology will be demonstrated to an interested section of the market place. This could be a company or might be the public sector.

The next step will be that your technology may be adopted by business with possibilities of new collaborative funding opportunities for you and your colleagues. Your research is likely to develop in new directions through interaction with the users of the product/service derived from your technology.

If your institution receives revenue from commercialisation, then you are also likely to benefit financially. Your institution can tell you about this.

### **What is the difference between a Follow-On Grant and a Pathfinder Grant?**

[Pathfinder Grants](#) help researchers undertake the preliminary work required to put them in a position to apply for a Follow-On Grant. This work typically focuses on evaluating the market potential for their research and the comparative strength of their intellectual property position and, if the technical feasibility of the project depends on it, the achievement of technical milestone 1.

Pathfinder Grants are usually between £7k-£10k (100% FEC), although up to £20k is available in exceptional circumstances.

A [Follow-On Grant](#) enables researchers who have a sound understanding of the market opportunity for their intellectual property to execute a defined programme of work of up to a year in length that has clearly defined and complementary technical and commercial milestones.

Although there is no upper limit for Follow-On Grants, they are typically between £80k-£100k for a maximum of twelve months.

Having read the information on both schemes, you may decide that you already have the information you need to prepare a compelling application for a [Follow-On Grant](#). If not, you are strongly recommended to apply for a [Pathfinder Grant](#) to help you gain the required knowledge and information.

## Confidentiality

NERC takes all reasonable steps to ensure that the contents of applications for Follow-On Grants and Pathfinder Grants are treated as **confidential**. All members of the Assessment Panel sign a non-disclosure agreement. You must obtain the necessary clearances from collaborators with a commercial interest in the content of the application before submitting it.

You must ensure that the title and summary of the proposed project are worded in such a way as to protect commercially confidential or sensitive areas, as project summaries and personal data from the first page of successful Follow-on Fund applications will normally be transferred to publicly available databases. The following details will be transferred for all funded projects:

- title and project summary
- institution
- name(s) of applicant(s)
- name of any project partners
- the value of the award
- start and end dates and duration of the award

**NERC must be notified in writing at the application stage if you do not wish personal data or information that could affect Intellectual Property Rights to be transferred to the databases.**

Applicants must abide by the principles of good scientific practice.

NERC will use information provided on the proposal form in processing the proposal, any grant awarded and subsequent payment, including maintenance and review processes. This includes:

- registration of proposals;
- operation of NERC grants processing and management information systems;
- the acquisition of UK and possibly international referee comments on the proposal;
- the preparation of material for use by peer review panels;
- statistical analysis to inform the evaluation of the quality of the work undertaken and to study demographic trends;
- policy and strategy studies.

Contact the NERC Data Protection Officer for further information (Lorraine Partridge, 01793 411766, [lp@nerc.ac.uk](mailto:lp@nerc.ac.uk)).