

## **FOLLOW-ON FUND PATHFINDER – SPECIFIC GUIDANCE NOTES**

*“The Pathfinder grant helped us complete a necessary ‘milestone 1’ in the form of a market research and product scoping exercise that will be used to focus the current work plan.”*

If you decide that further preliminary work is required before you can prepare a robust application for a Follow-On Grant, you should consider applying for a Pathfinder Grant.

Pathfinder awards are designed to help you fill essential gaps in your knowledge and information via activities such as market assessment and competitor analyses, IP searches, engaging with potential commercial collaborators and end-users, and milestone 1 work where the technical feasibility of the whole project depends on it.

The pathfinder application, plus any outputs that become available such as final reports and market surveys will be made available to NERC’s Assessment Panel to help their consideration of any ‘Full’ Follow-on Fund application arising from pathfinder work.

Please contact NERC at [knowledge@nerc.ac.uk](mailto:knowledge@nerc.ac.uk) when a Pathfinder application is submitted.

### **1. Eligibility and assessment criteria**

See separate document

### **2. Preparing your Pathfinder Grant application**

Applications should be made through Je-S. Select *Standard Proposal*, then *Follow-on Fund*, then *Follow-on Fund Pathfinder*.

#### **2.1 Points to consider, section by section**

The parts of the form not mentioned here should be completed in accordance with standard practice when applying for NERC grants.

The following points should be borne in mind when completing the sections listed below:

##### **2.1.1 Objectives section**

Briefly explain the information gaps that need to be filled and/or technical work to be undertaken before you will be in a position to apply for a Follow-On Grant. List the objectives of the proposed Pathfinder project in order of priority.

##### **2.1.2 Summary section**

Describe:

- The work to be undertaken
- How it will inform your understanding
- How it will help shape your strategy for, and execution of, your anticipated Follow-On project.

##### **2.1.3 Impact Summary section**

Explain your preliminary view of who will benefit and how they will benefit from the proposed technology/product/service you intend to develop. Your Pathfinder work is likely to provide greater clarity and certainty on both issues, but you should have an initial view at this stage.

Also explain briefly how you anticipate that a Follow-On project would improve the prospect of commercialisation and/or increase the value of your technology.

## **2.2 Additional documents**

The following attachments should be included with your application:

### **2.2.1 Case for Support**

Your Case for Support should comprise a Project Overview and Project Workplan, totalling 4 A4 pages max.

#### **2.2.1.1 Project overview**

This should explain:

- The background and context to your development project
- The current status of your technology
- Your understanding of the strength of your intellectual property position

#### **2.2.1.2 Project Workplan**

This should describe:

- The further information you need in order to define your Follow-On project, and why
- The specific work to be undertaken to satisfy each information need
- How you will use the knowledge/insights obtained to shape and define your Follow-On project.
- Where external suppliers are to be used, the selection process and criteria to be used in appointing them.

If helpful, include a Gantt chart or similar, showing the key milestones and activities for the proposed work.

When planning the work programme pay attention to scheduling work early in the programme that will provide Stop-Go decisions as to the feasibility of commercialising your research.

Many Pathfinder projects involve a market assessment exercise. Your application should describe the purpose and scope of the project, including either details of the methodology to be used or a copy of the brief to be provided to potential suppliers invited to tender for the work.

Market research (and other similar studies) should be undertaken by consultants who are independent of the project team and who have no direct interest in any company through which you anticipate commercialising the results of your work.

If you already have consultants in mind include the rationale for choosing them. The Assessment Panel will wish to see any reports that are produced for you.

Pathfinder projects can be valuable in helping you identify any legislative or regulatory requirements that may impact the technical and commercial development of your proposed technology, product or service.

In summary, for market research the Assessment Panel will expect you to be explicit on a number of points so panel members can understand who will be helping you ask the right questions and get the right answers:

- Who will do the assessment;
- What will they be looking for, and looking at;
- How will they go about this exercise, and why is it being done this way?

### **2.2.2 Supplementary documents**

You may include the following supplementary documents:

- A description of the track record of the investigators and any named staff (max 2 pages A4)
- Letters of support from project partners (no limit on page length)

One would expect all Follow-On Grant applications to be accompanied by letters of support from commercial partners. There is no reason why letters of support should not be available at the Pathfinder stage too, albeit that they may be more heavily caveated because the technology may be less developed and its viability for specific applications less certain.

### **3. Involving your Technology Transfer Office**

**All Pathfinder Grant applications must include a Letter of Support from their Technology Transfer Office.** This letter should include a statement confirming that the application has been developed in conjunction with the Technology Transfer Office.

The Assessment Panel will expect to see clear evidence of meaningful intellectual engagement by your TTO in scoping your Pathfinder application, particularly with regard to identifying the commercial and IPR issues that need to be addressed.

The Letter of Support should indicate:

- The support (financial, investigative, strategic, IPR-related) already provided to you
- The support the TTO anticipates providing to your project on an ongoing basis if your application is successful.