

Organ-on-Chip Technologies Network: Project funding – application guidance and regulations

Overview:

Funding is available to Organ-on-a-Chip Technologies (OOACT) network members for small pump priming projects. As ever, funding is intended to integrate research activity across traditional research disciplines (see the [Technology Touching Lives](#) (TTL) UKRI initiative) and to stimulate multidisciplinary collaborations between network members

However this funding round is also specifically focused towards leveraging additional more substantial funding to drive forward research in organ-on-a-chip technology and predictive in vitro models.

Key Features at a Glance:

- Projects should be research focussed
- Typical projects will be 1-3 months. Maximum project duration is 6 months.
- You can apply for: PDRA researcher salary and associated overheads; consumables; travel and subsistence.
- Investigator time cannot be funded. Only overheads associated with a PDRA researcher can be included in the budget.
- For projects developed via the Network sandpit event in September 2020 the maximum funding is £40k at 100% fEC. For all other projects (open call) the maximum funding is £30k at 100% fEC
- There is no ceiling on costs associated with specific headings, but consumable, travel or equipment requests in excess of £10k will require very clear justification
- Successful projects will be funded at 80% fEC which goes to the PIs' institution to manage as appropriate.
- All costings **must** have been approved by the PIs academic institution.
- Projects must be academic led with the PI from a UK academic institution.
- Early Career Researcher (ECR) engagement is strongly encouraged. PDRAs can be named as co-investigators and/or researchers.
- PhD student involvement must follow [UKRI guidelines](#), limiting the hours they can work. Their salary cannot be requested in project costings.

Funding Criteria:

Applications will be assessed with reference to the following criteria. Each aspect will receive a rating of 1-6, after which the application will be given a complete final rating.

1: Unfundable; 2: poor or unclear; 3: Good; 4: Very Good; 5: Excellent; 6: Exceptional

Project Aims & Plan:

- Is the proposed work clearly leading to novel research of importance?
- Are project aims & objectives clearly articulated?
- Is the proposed work well motivated and within the remit of the Network?
- Is the work plan appropriate for the duration of the award?
- Is the project plan appropriate to meet the stated aims?

Vision & Benefit to the Network and Future Plans:

- Is the longer term vision for the research work clearly articulated and motivated?
- Is it clear how this pump priming funding facilitates the wider research vision?
- Are the plans for leveraging the vision clear and appropriate?
- How does the vision benefit the research field and the Network?

Value for Money

- Are costs detailed in a clear and transparent manner?
- Are all costs clearly justified and appropriate?

Research Team:

- Is the research team capable of conducting the research and leveraging further research funding.

Terms and Conditions:

All funded projects must agree to abide by the full terms and conditions of award as detailed in the project funding agreement. **Please note, all projects must:**

- Comply with UKRI data sharing policy and upload non-IP sensitive data to Network web portal in accordance with UKRI data policy: www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/data-policy
- Complete an initial report on project outcomes (within 2 months of completing the project) and 1 year follow-up report
- Respond to requests to support the ResearchFish submission for the Network, providing the information requested
- Present at the subsequent OOACT Network meeting

Submit your application to the network administrator: network@organonachip.org.uk **by the published deadline on webpage:** www.organonachip.org.uk/funding/project/

In your email, please use the subject header: PoC application – (applicant surname) – (lead institution)

For queries, please email: network@organonachip.org.uk

Detailed Organ-on-a-Chip Network Funding Guidelines

1. Applicants

- 1.1 Applications must be received by the published deadline. Applications received after this time will not be considered.
- 1.2 All applicants on a project must be members of the Organ-on-a-Chip Technologies Network. Membership of the network is subject to [registration](#). Potential partners can be found or checked on our website for [OOAC membership](#).
- 1.3 All applications must be led by a Principal Applicant (PI) based in an academic department eligible for research council funding. Standard Research council [eligibility rules](#) apply. PDRA engagement is strongly encouraged. PDRAs can be named as CoIs but not PIs.
- 1.4 All applications must include at least one named researcher to undertake the project.
- 1.5 Salary can only be requested for a Named Researcher on the project if they are a PDRA
- 1.6 The Named Researcher is permitted to undertake the project overseas. However, the application must justify why this approach is needed; why the work cannot be done in the UK; and how this will benefit the UK. Overseas partners cannot receive funding.
- 1.7 The named researcher undertaking the project can be a student, as long as the UKRI guidelines concerning funding are adhered to. PhD salary requests are not permitted. Any involvement must follow [UKRI guidelines](#), limiting the hours they can work on this project. We strongly advise discussing PhD student involvement with the [OOACT leadership team](#) prior to submission.
- 1.8 Industrial engagement is strongly encouraged. For projects with industrial or overseas collaborators: these collaborators can host named researchers or send researchers to other institutions as long as the project is UK academic-led with funding going to the UK academic institution. These collaborators must cover their own costs. Industrial or overseas researchers cannot claim salary.

Applicant Eligibility

Role	PI	Co-I	Named researcher
Permanent academic staff	✓	✓	✓
Clinicians, Fellows & PDRAs		✓	✓
Industrial staff		✓	
Students (PhD, MSc, BSc)			✓

2. Biological tissue

- 2.1 There are no restrictions on the use of animal cells rather than human cells in project applications - as long as relevance to the OOAC research field is shown and it is evident how the research will help advance human-relevant in vitro models.
- 2.2 Applicants must ensure compliance with current legislation regarding use of any human or animal tissue under relevant regulations.

3. Intellectual property

- 3.1 Where IP is expected, a standard agreement has been drawn up, in which the PIs institution (covering the 20% fEC shortfall) will hold all IP. You are strongly encouraged to discuss IP in association with your project. If this arrangement does not suit your project, you are able to make your own arrangements which should be signed off at the same time as the project to ensure all parties are clear.

4. Costings

- 4.1 Project costs should be submitted at 100% fEC on the application form. Costs will be reimbursed at 80% fEC with the PI's institution covering the shortfall. Funding must be signed off at an institution level to ensure this shortfall is acknowledged and will be met.
- 4.2 Overheads can be requested, but only those associated with the Named Researcher's salary (PDRAs only).
- 4.3 For projects developed via the Network sandpit event in September 2020 the maximum funding is £40k at 100% fEC. For all other projects (open call) the maximum funding is £30k at 100% fEC.
- 4.4 Organ-on-a-Chip Network funds may be considered de minimis aid. By applying, applicants are confirming they will not breach the rules of de minimis aid. For further information see <https://www.gov.uk/state-aid>.
- 4.5 The Network will support only pre-competitive research. Any funding in relation to industry involvement must comply with state aid rules. If you are planning to apply for any funding to support an ineligible industry partner's work under de minimis, you must provide evidence you meet the requirements up front (i.e. you aren't exceeding the overall threshold for this type of funding).
- 4.6 Project costs incurred by partners not eligible to receive UKRI funding will not be eligible for reimbursement under the Organ-on-a-Chip Network funding scheme. Management of funds is the responsibility of the PI's academic institution which will receive the monies. They will be responsible for making any necessary arrangements for the transfer of funds to co-investigators.
- 4.7 The timetable for the Funding Prioritisation Meeting and subsequent notification to applicants can be found on our funding webpage. Please consider this in setting the project start date.
- 4.8 Successful applicants will be asked to sign the funding agreement. This agreement requires signing by several parties including project PIs and Co-Is. Please be aware that this might take a couple of weeks to complete. The funding agreement template can you found on our webpage: see above.

5. Application and Evaluation Procedures

- 5.1 Applicants must complete all sections of the application form. Failure to complete the form will result in the application being rejected. Submitted forms will be collated after the closing deadline and held in confidence.

- 5.2 All reviewers are members of the Organ-on-a-Chip Technologies Network.
- 5.3 Each application will be assessed by a minimum of 2 reviewers, who will grade the proposal relative to the identified funding criteria. All applications (along with their associated reviews) will be discussed and ranked by the Project Funding Prioritisation Panel at the next Network Leadership Team meeting.
- 5.4 Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application as soon as possible after the Network Leadership Team funding prioritisation meeting.
- 5.5 All panel work by members of the Network Leadership Team and any additional reviewers will be covered by UKRI's code of practice that embraces the [seven principles of public life](#). Panel members and reviewers accept an obligation of confidentiality when dealing with proposals, and of respect to the original ideas research colleagues have disclosed.
- 5.6 Conflicts of Interest: Applicants must declare conflicts of interest with any members of the Network Leadership team on application. The leadership team can be viewed at: <https://www.organonachip.org.uk/people/>.
- 5.7 The Network Leadership Team and any additionally recruited reviewers will declare any conflicts of interest associated with a project application to the Chair of the Funding Prioritisation Panel and Network Administrator.

Examples of a reviewer conflict of interest include:

- Employed at the same institution at the applicant(s),
 - Actively involved in research collaborations or collaborated / worked closely with the applicant(s) over the preceding 5 years,
 - Involved in the governing body or holds an honorary position at the applicant(s) institutions(s),
 - In receipt of personal remuneration in excess of £5,000 per annum from the applicant's organisation,
 - Personal / family relationship with the applicant(s).
- 5.8 Reviewers with potential conflicts of interest will stand down and not review the relevant application(s); the Network Administrator will secure additional reviewers, to ensure a minimum of 2 reviews for each application. Members of the Leadership Team with conflicts of interest will not be permitted to review the application in question and will be asked to leave the room when the application is discussed at the Network Leadership Team meeting.
 - 5.9 Funds will be allocated upon signature of the funding agreement between QMUL (on behalf of the Organ-on-a-Chip Technologies Network), the PI's institution and Co-Investigators. Please see funding agreement template on our webpage: <https://www.organonachip.org.uk/funding/project/>
- 6. Payment, Monitoring and Reporting of Awards**
- 6.1 All projects will be required to submit an initial report to the Network within 2 calendar months of the project completion date. This report must include:
 - a financial summary from the awarded institution to indicate actual incurred costs;
 - a public (lay) summary of project outcomes;
 - Updated plans for exploitation and dissemination of the knowledge, including details of progress with the applications for further funding.

- 6.2 A further short project report is required within 13 months of the project completion date detailing:
- progress with project exploitation, dissemination and further funding applications (successful or not)
 - additional project outputs
- 6.3 All project partners must respond to requests to support the ResearchFish submission for the Network
- 6.4 Only actual incurred costs will be reimbursed. Any underspend will be reallocated by the Network funds to assist in funding future applications.
- 6.5 Payment of funds will be made in arrears and only after satisfactory completion of the initial project report and its sign off by the Chair of the Funding Prioritisation Panel.
- 6.6 The lay summary of successful projects (submitted with the initial application), will be made publicly available on the Network webpages. The lay project report (submitted with the initial project report) will also be made publicly available on the website. Alongside these details, the project title, investigator team, amount of award, duration of award and details of other public outputs (papers; further funding) will also be made publicly available. All other submitted information will be treated strictly confidentially.
- 6.7 Projects must comply with [UKRI data sharing policies](#).
- 6.8 Project partners will be expected to present their results at the next available Organ-on-a-Chip Network event.
- 6.9 All funds awarded in each round must be spent by the round completion date: 13 August 2021.

References:

Organ-on-a-Chip Technologies Network website:

www.organonachip.org.uk

Organ-on-a-Chip Technologies Network: Project funding webpage:

www.organonachip.org.uk/funding/project/

Technology Touching Life:

www.ukri.org/research/themes-and-programmes/technology-touching-life/

UKRI guidelines:

www.ukri.org/files/legacy/publications/rcuk-training-grant-guide-pdf/

UKRI data policy:

www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/data-policy

Government state aid:

www.gov.uk/guidance/state-aid

Seven Principles of Public Life:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/about/standards/employment/principlesofpubliclife/>

Standard Research Council eligibility rules:

www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/