

Overview:

Funding is available to Organ-on-a-Chip Technologies (OOACT) network members for small pump priming sabbatical projects. The goals of funding are to:

- stimulate new collaborations between network members, and
- integrate research activity across traditional research disciplines.

We are strongly focused towards facilitating preliminary work to support full funding applications.

All awards will be short term and used to establish a new collaboration and carry out the scoping work which will lead to full research proposals.

All projects are expected to be sabbatical in nature, thus funding is available to cover salary, travel and subsistence for the researcher, who is expected to travel to conduct the pump priming work in a new department/institution (different to their current place of work).

We focus on projects which integrate advances in engineering and physical science technologies with the necessary life science understanding, and also encourage integration with industrial partners (see the [Technology Touching Lives](#) (TTL) UKRI initiative under which we operate).

Key Features at a Glance:

- Projects should be early stage (pre-competitive) research activity in the organ on a chip field
- Projects must be sabbatical in style, whereby a researcher will travel to a host laboratory different to their current place of work
- We expect a minimum of 2 investigators on a project (one from the home and one from the host institutes for the sabbatical), but projects can involve further partners as appropriate.
- Normally, home and host investigators will be from different disciplines and different institutions. However, they must always constitute a new collaboration
- Typical projects will be 1-3 months. Maximum project duration is 6 months.
- We will fund:
 - salary: up to a maximum of £15,500 (roughly 3 months full time for post-doctoral researcher)
 - consumables: up to £5k
 - travel, accommodation & subsistence: up to £5k
- Projects must be academic led. The PI must be from an academic institution, which can be either the 'home' or 'host' institute for the sabbatical.
- Standard Research council [eligibility rules](#) apply, with the exception that PDRAs and non-tenured staff are able to apply as full applicants / PI.
- PDRA engagement is strongly encouraged. In addition to leading applications, PDRAs can be named as co-investigators.
- All applicants must be Organ-on-a-Chip Network [members](#)
- The researcher undertaking the sabbatical can be from any sector and can also be a student, as long as the UKRI guidelines concerning funding are adhered to:
 - Salary for any academic or clinical staff member can be requested to the maximum of £15,500
 - Industrial or overseas researchers cannot claim salary
 - PhD student involvement must follow [UKRI guidelines](#), limiting the hours they can work. They cannot be paid salary. We strongly advise discussing PhD student involvement with the [OOACT leadership team](#) prior to submission.
- For projects with industrial or overseas collaborators: these collaborators can host sabbaticals or send researchers on sabbaticals as long as the project is UK academic-led, funding goes to the UK academic institution, and these collaborators cover their own costs. Industrial engagement is strongly encouraged. For overseas placements, a clear case for the benefits of the interaction should be made.
- Funding is available at 80% fEC and goes to the PIs' institution to manage as appropriate. Costings must have been approved by the PIs academic institution.

Priority Areas:

Based on our initial scoping meeting, we have not identified a priority area for this initial call, due to the widely varying status of current organ-on-a-chip technologies. However, we reiterate the importance of considering the TTL remit; cross discipline working to advance research activity in the UK.

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

Objectives & Project Plan:

- Is the proposed work well motivated and the benefits of the project clearly articulated?
- What are the strengths and weakness of the proposed approach?
- Are the objectives appropriate for the duration of the award?

Vision & Benefit to the Network:

- 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?

Value for Money

- Are all costs clearly justified and appropriate?
- Where do you see this project leading and is the spend likely to leverage further research activity?

Research Team:

- Is this a new collaboration?
- Are the rationale and benefits of the collaboration clear?
- Are the plans for supporting the researcher during the sabbatical clear and appropriate?
- Have potential benefits for the researcher been maximised?

Any Other Comments and Final Score:

Terms and Conditions:

All funded projects must agree to abide by the full terms and conditions of award (detailed in the funding guidelines document). **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: <https://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
- Present at the subsequent OOACT network meeting

Submit your application to network administrator: network@organonachip.org.uk by 16:00 hrs on Friday, 23 November. Use the subject header: PoC application – (applicant surname) – (lead institution)

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

Organ-on-a-Chip Network Funding Guidelines

1. Funding Eligibility

- 1.1 Applications must be received by 4pm on Friday 23rd November. 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 Network. Membership of the network is subject to registration through the [website](#).
- 1.3 Funding is available for Pump Priming Sabbatical projects, and as the basis of all projects, a researcher is expected to travel to a new laboratory and facilitate a new collaboration, carrying out work to support a future more substantive funding application
- 1.4 All applications must be led by a Principal Applicant (PI) based in an academic department eligible for research council funding.
- 1.5 All applications must involve a minimum of two applicants; the “home” and “host” institutions for the sabbatical. The PI can be either the “home” or the “host”.
- 1.6 All applications must include a named researcher to undertake the sabbatical.
- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 Project costs should be submitted at 100% fEC on the application form. Costs will be reimbursed at 80% fEC with the awarded institution covering the shortfall. Funding must be signed off at an institution level to ensure this shortfall is acknowledged and will be met.
- 1.9 The total cost of a project should not exceed £25,500 (fEC), with typical maximum awards for each category of: 3 months of salary, £5k consumables and £5k travel & subsistence.
- 1.10 Salary can only be met to a maximum amount of £15,500. Salary cannot be claimed for industrialists, PhD students or overseas researchers.
- 1.11 PhD student involvement must follow [UKRI guidelines](#), limiting the hours they can work.
- 1.12 For projects which require small equipment or additional spend on specific headers, there is some flexibility if the total amount does not exceed £25,500 (fEC). Any such projects should be discussed with the Network Leadership Team prior to submission.
- 1.13 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>. Specific points of note associated with *de minimis* aid:
 - 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).
 - Please incorporate relevant information within the justification for resources
- 1.14 Where IP is expected, a standard agreement has been drawn up, in which the PI’s institution (covering the 20% fEC shortfall) will hold all IP. You are strongly encouraged to discuss and make your own IP arrangements for projects in advance in order to prevent delays in project commencement (see 2.10)

2. Application and Evaluation Procedures

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 Each application will be assessed by 3 reviewers, who will grade the proposal relative to the identified funding criteria. All applications (along with their associated reviews) will be discussed and ranked at the next Network Leadership Team meeting, and applicants informed of funding decisions shortly after.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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/>.
- 2.5 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).
- 2.7 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 3 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.
 - 2.8 Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application as soon as possible after the Network Leadership Team funding prioritisation meeting.
 - 2.9 Funds will be allocated upon signature of the project agreement contract between QMUL (on behalf of the Organ-on-a-Chip Network) and the PI's institution.
 - 2.10 Subject to approval from the Chair of the Funding Prioritisation Panel, the start of the grant may be delayed by up to 2 months from the start date shown on the offer letter with the duration remaining unchanged. The start of the grant may precede the original date specified in the offer letter but must not be prior to receipt of the signed project agreement.

3. Payment, Monitoring and Reporting of Awards

- 3.1 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; and the plan for exploitation and dissemination of the knowledge, including details of the approach to apply for further funding.
- 3.2 A further short project report is required within 13 months of the project completion date, which details progress with project exploitation and dissemination and reports on additional project outputs and further funding applications (successful or not).
- 3.3 All project partners must respond to requests to support the ResearchFish submission for the network
- 3.4 Only actual incurred costs will be reimbursed. Any underspend will be reallocated by the network funds to assist in funding future applications.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 Projects must comply with UKRI data sharing policies.
- 3.8 Project partners will be expected to present their results at the next available Organ-on-a-Chip Network event.