

VALIDATE Fellowship Application Guidance

Summary

The VALIDATE Network aims to accelerate vaccine research and development for complex intracellular pathogens that cause diseases significant to low and middle-income countries (LMIC), with an initial focus on *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, *Leishmania spp*, *Burkholderia pseudomallei* and *Mycobacterium leprae*. The Network's priorities lie in cross-pathogen, cross-discipline, cross-species and cross-continent research, with the aim of making step-change progress towards efficacious vaccines targeting these pathogens.

The Network also aims to facilitate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and career progression amongst its members. As part of this, 1-2 VALIDATE Fellowships will be available in 2018 for Early Career Researcher (Associate) Members to fund two years' independent scientific research, with the aim of producing initial/pilot data and a funding and experience track record that can be used by the Fellow to go on to obtain independent external funding and launch their career as a Principal Investigator and/or Group Leader. The Fellow's proposed research must be scientifically excellent, and fall within the VALIDATE remit.

The VALIDATE Fellowships cover costs for 24 months' salary for the Fellow (up to £100,000 per year maximum), plus up to £20,000 consumables per year. Relevant training costs, or travel costs to visit essential collaborators may be included within the consumables budget. Fellows will be promoted to the Investigator membership level, and will become a member of the VALIDATE Network Management Board to gain Board experience.

Fellowships are via competitive application to the Network Management Board ([NMB](#)). Please submit your application form and associated documents **as one pdf document** by 4pm on the closing date to the Network Management Team at validate@ndm.ox.ac.uk.

All Fellows will be required to submit narrative and financial reports at 6, 12, 18 and 24 months. All awardees must agree to sharing unpublished project data via the VALIDATE portal (a secure area only accessible to Network Investigators who have signed the VALIDATE confidentiality agreement) to accelerate the progression towards development of efficacious vaccines for these pathogens.

We strongly advise you to get input and seek help/guidance from more experienced Senior Scientists in your institute to review, and help you improve, your application prior to your submission. Ensure your application is focused, has clear objectives that are achievable within the timeframe, and that your hypothesis and methods are scientifically rigorous. You may need Institution/finance approval sign off for your application so ensure you leave plenty of time to obtain this prior to the call deadline.

Please see the further details below about this award and how to apply. Do contact Sam with any further queries.

Details

Funding eligibility

Applicants: Funding is for VALIDATE Network Associates only. Associates based at academic institutes, governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations and in industry are all eligible.

Activities supported: all proposed research must be within the scope of the VALIDATE network and its remit (further information on this can be found on our [website](#)).

Eligible costs: 24 month's salary for the Fellow (at Full Economic Costing [FEC], up to £100,000 maximum per year), plus up to £20,000 of consumables per year (which can include animal purchase & housing, sample shipment etc). A small amount of costs for training (e.g. tech transfer from another VALIDATE laboratory) or travel costs for meetings with essential collaborators may be included in the consumables budget if relevant and justifiable. Costs stated must be reasonable, and travel must be via economy class only. VAT is allowable. Costs must be in Great British Pounds (GBP).

Activities & costs not eligible: research outside the VALIDATE objectives and remit; applications from Investigator or Affiliate members, or non-members, of VALIDATE; equipment purchase; no indirect costs/overheads other than FEC on the salary are allowed.

LMIC: to be considered 'LMIC' you must be a national of an LMIC country and still be based for your work in an LMIC country (although your nationality and current residency do not have to be for the same LMIC). A list of LMIC countries can be found [here](#); all listed countries are eligible.

Application process

There will be 1-2 Fellowships available in 2018. Deadlines will be advertised on the VALIDATE website.

Complete the application form as directed on the form itself, adhering to the word limit where stated. Ensure you complete all sections, and make clear the importance and impact a) of your proposed research to the acceleration of vaccines against VALIDATE target pathogens, and b) that the Fellowship would have on your career. Make sure you attach all the required supporting documents (listed in section 13 of the application form).

The application form and supporting documents must be submitted **as one pdf** by email by 4pm on the closing date to the VALIDATE Network Management Team at validate@ndm.ox.ac.uk. You will receive acknowledgement of your application within two working days.

Use of Human Samples or Data

VALIDATE expects all research involving human participants to be undertaken in accordance with MRC policies and guidance available from <http://www.mrc.ac.uk/research/policies-and-guidance-for-researchers/#ethics>. These include:

- Good Research Practice (2012);
- Medical research involving adults who cannot consent (2007);
- Medical Research Involving Children (2004);
- Human Tissue and Biological Samples for Use in Research (2014);
- Personal Information in Medical Research (2000)

Independent Research Ethics Committee approval is required for research that involves human participants (whether patients or healthy volunteers) or records. Such approval is also required for certain studies of human tissues.

In the case of social science research, VALIDATE recommends that award holders follow the [ESRC Framework for Research Ethics](#) (revised 2015) which highlights the responsibility of the research organisation for ensuring that the research is subject to appropriate ethics review.

Research involving human participants in developing societies presents specific ethical challenges and the [MRC guidelines Research Involving Human Participants in Developing Societies](#) must be followed.

Award holders whose research involves the removal, use or storage of human tissue as specified in the relevant legislation must:

- comply with the appropriate legislation, i.e. the Human Tissue Act 2004 and/or the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006
- follow the relevant standards and Codes of Practice issued by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) (the [MRC Regulatory Support Centre](#) has summarised these)
- follow the [MRC guidance detailed in Human Tissue and Biological Samples for Use in medical Research](#) (2014).

For research taking place outside the UK, in addition to UK guidelines local national guidelines and international best practice must be followed. All legal requirements for the import/export of biological materials must be adhered to.

Use of Animals

VALIDATE supports the principles of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement). Award holders are expected to abide by the core principles set out in the cross-funder guidance '[Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research: Expectations of the major research councils and charitable funding bodies](#)' and [GC2 of the RCUK Terms and Conditions](#).

The provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 must be observed. All VALIDATE awards are made on the absolute condition that no work which is controlled by the Act will begin until the necessary licences have been obtained from the Home Office (or equivalent body if work is outside the UK). Any recommendations arising from the VALIDATE review process with regards to animal use must be followed. When animals are purchased from commercial suppliers, in-country suppliers should be used wherever possible, to minimise the risk of suffering during transport.

All research involving non-human primates must comply with the [NC3Rs Guidelines: Primate accommodation, care and use](#).

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)

National regulations and international best practice must be followed. Researchers who carry out genetic modification should be familiar with the legislative requirements and with the [Scientific Advisory Committee on Genetic Modification \(Contained Use\) guidance](#).

Dangerous Pathogens

Research organisations accommodating projects involving the use of dangerous pathogens must comply with the safeguards recommended by the UK Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens in their guidance '[Infection at work: controlling the risk](#)', '[Biological Agents: the principles, design and operation of containment in a level 4 facility](#)' and '[Biological agents: Managing the risks in laboratories and healthcare premises](#)', as well as local national regulations.

VALIDATE Fellowship application guidance document v2.0

Application Review

All applications received in the funding round go to the VALIDATE Network Management Board ([NMB](#)) for competitive assessment. NMB members review and score applications using a standard template. NMB members do not input into discussions about an application where they have a conflict of interest (see below for details on conflicts of interest). Following review of all applications, a ranked list is used to select applications for funding. Quorum for the review meeting is the NMB Chair plus 5; the NMB Chair will accept written reviews from members who cannot attend the meeting.

The VALIDATE Scientific Advisory Board ([SAB](#)) have oversight of the NMB and the NMB review of Fellowship applications to ensure transparency, fairness and consistency. All information submitted is held in strictest confidence; all NMB and SAB members have signed a confidentiality agreement as a requirement of their Board participation.

Notification of Review Results

Successful Fellows will be sent award letters confirming the funds available within two weeks of the NMB decision. Projects must start within two months of the date of the award letter, so it is advised that any contractual issues with collaborators are discussed prior to your Fellowship application.

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed promptly and the Network Manager may pass on specific feedback if available.

Post-award Administration

The University of Oxford will issue a simple award letter contract for the awardee; projects may not start until this contract has been fully executed. Projects must start within 2 months of the date on the award letter and the actual start date must be confirmed to the Network Manager.

Before a project can start, projects must consider whether a collaboration agreement is required for the project. If required, collaboration agreements must be in place before the project starts.

Funds must be spent as detailed on the application. Awardees are required to submit narrative and financial reports at 6, 12, 18 and 24 months into the project. These reports must be submitted to the Network Manager before the grant funds will be released. Payment is usually made in arrears to the awardee's Institute in four 25% tranches, on approval of each of the project reports. Payment will be for actual expenditure up to the value agreed in the original award letter.

All funding comes from the MRC GCRF grant to University of Oxford. VALIDATE does not require receipts to be submitted but these **must** be kept by the host institution as they may be required for future audits. The grantee's host institution must follow their standard procedures for financial accounts.

Any underspend on grants will be retained by VALIDATE.

Fellows are strongly encouraged to submit their project's results for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, or as a case-study. A non-confidential brief summary of the project's outcomes, taken from the final report, will be published on the VALIDATE website and in other publicity. All data from funded Fellowships must be uploaded to the VALIDATE data portal within a timely fashion, and all data within six months of the end of the Fellowship to aid the progression towards development of efficacious vaccines for these pathogens.

Publicity and Data Protection

Successful Fellows will be listed on the VALIDATE website and in other publicity, with a non-confidential abstract outlining their planned research. Copies of applications will be made available to the VALIDATE NMB and SAB who will use information provided for reviewing the proposal and post-award administration. VALIDATE may choose to publish further details of awards, awardees, and information about Fellows and their research.

All funding comes from the MRC, so to meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, non-confidential details of awards may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists. The MRC will use this information for research related activities, including but not limited to, statistical analysis in relation to the evaluation of MRC funding, study of trends and policy and strategy studies. Recipients of Fellowships may be required to attend and contribute to MRC events within relevant areas at the request of the MRC.

Conflict of Interest

Examples of a conflict of interest include:

- Employed by the same department in the same institution as the applicant
- Close active collaboration impacting on the application being reviewed
- Holding a current position on the governing body of the applicant organisation
- Personal/family relationship with the applicant

Useful Resources

UK Government information on ODA strategic objectives:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/official-development-assistance-oda--2>

List of LMIC countries (all listed countries count as LMIC):

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC%20List%20of%20ODA%20Recipients%202014%20final.pdf>