

Translational Alliance Platforms

Call type: Invitation for outlines

Closing date: 16:00 on 28 May 2015

Related themes: Engineering & Healthcare Technologies

Summary

EPSRC invites participation in a funding initiative which aims to support researchers in the formation and development of new sustainable long-term translational partnerships which will deliver impact from existing EPSRC research investments. Partnerships should aim to develop research outcomes towards tangible application and use, and also to share engineering knowledge and approaches in order to co-design future user oriented research strategies. This call is open to those who wish to develop translational partners at the multi-disciplinary interface between Healthcare Technologies and the Engineering areas of Synthetic Biology, Chemical and Formulation Engineering, Robotics and Autonomous Systems, and Microsystems. A budget of £4 million is available to support a number of flexible translational partnership investments across this broad interface.

The primary aim of this funding activity is to enable the development of new long-term relationships between a researcher, or team of researchers, and an identified translational partner. Translational partners may be any non-academic user organisation (e.g. an industrial, charitable, clinical or not for profit organisation) which has the experience and capability to translate research outcomes into new or improved products, services or systems. The translational partner should be clearly appropriate for the translation of the research in question, and must have the expertise to work in collaboration with the academic partner in order to both deliver translational research outcomes and inform and co-design future research. A key focus of the partnership is to translate current research outcomes further along the innovation pathway, applicants should also aim to use awards made through this call to build an appropriate and useful long term sustainable partnership with the aim of developing future collaborative work. Applicants will be required to work in partnership with at least one translational partner throughout the duration of the award, and this partner must be demonstrably committed to the building of a relationship with the researcher(s), the duration of which is expected to outlast this award.

Applications to this call should focus on the development of new translational opportunities and directions for a current research grant with a view to engaging a new translational industrial collaborator. The foci of applications should be clearly distinct to the translational activities identified in the 'Pathways to Impact' document of the original research proposal, and should instead explore new, un-anticipated opportunities arising from the research. Furthermore, applications should be forward-looking, and consider how the proposed partnership will enable effective co-design of future research proposals and exploitation of research, thus encompassing a clear understanding of user needs.

This call is open to eligible UK academics that currently (i.e. at the time of application) hold an EPSRC grant which is clearly relatable to the Engineering areas of Synthetic Biology, Chemical and Formulation Engineering, Robotics and Autonomous Systems, and Microsystems, and who wish to translate this current research towards a health related product, system or service.

Proposals will be assessed on the appropriateness of the proposed new partnership and the strength of the demonstrated commitment therein, the proposed activities in relation to both the innovation pathways and relationship building, and the potential for the outcomes of both current and future research to be translated through the partnership.

Background

This call is being supported by EPSRC's Engineering and Healthcare Technologies themes, and is a pilot activity for the EPSRC. This pilot activity is intended to play a key role in delivering EPSRC's strategy of Accelerating Impact; a strategy to help make it more likely that impact will arise from research, to ensure that it has the potential to arise more quickly, and that it will bring benefit to the UK economy and society. Enabling researchers to work in partnership with users to exploit current research outcomes and to co-design future research activities with accelerated pathways to translation is a key component of this strategy.

Translational Alliance Platforms address the aim of Accelerating Impact by introducing a funding route for translational activities which, through its emphasis on long term partnership building, complements the current EPSRC Pathways to Impact and Impact Acceleration Account mechanisms. Many of the same activities are enabled through this call as through the two current mechanisms (see 'Funding Available'), however applications to this call must design a scheme of activities to enable the building of a new sustainable translational partnership rather than a one off translational activity. Applications to this call should design a scheme of such activities which enables the building of a sustainable long term translational partnership rather than performing one-off translational activities. Applications to this call should aim to take advantage of emergent translational opportunities, which were not anticipated at the time of writing your current research grant, and as such, should be clearly distinguishable from the activities proposed in the Pathways to Impact of said current grant.

EPSRC has introduced this complementary mechanism for Accelerating Impact in order to enable EPSRC supported researchers to build, grow, and sustain translational relationships which do not currently exist in their portfolio. EPSRC recognises that a number of factors might limit the development of translational partnerships by researchers it supports, including their early career stage, the fundamental nature of their research, the realisation or discovery of a new research direction, or the wide range of potential applications for their work. The introduction of Translational Alliance Partnerships aims to help EPSRC sponsored researchers to overcome this barrier to translation.

For more information on Pathways to Impact and Impact Acceleration accounts see:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/innovation/publicengagement/pathwaystoimpact/>

For more information about EPSRC's portfolio and strategies, see our website: <http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/>

More information on the EPSRC's Strategic Plan can be found here: <http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/newsevents/pubs/strategic-plan-2015/>

Scope of the Call

This call aims to support the development of new partnership building activities and the exploitation of unexpected translational opportunities arising from EPSRC funded research. All applications to this call should lie at the interface between Engineering and Healthcare technologies, and should be able to clearly demonstrate the relevance to both Engineering and Healthcare Technologies. All proposals should identify the pull through from their currently funded EPSRC grant to this translation partnership. Applications are only open to those who wish to translate research performed in one of the following areas in order to develop products, systems or services for health.

Areas open to application are:

- Synthetic Biology for Health
- Chemical and Process Engineering for Health
- Robotics and Autonomous Systems for Health
- Microsystems for Health Applications

More information on the definition and remit of these areas can be found in the 'Annex' to this call document.

Applications received which are not within the remit of these areas of research, and/or those which are not oriented towards translational activities within the remit of Healthcare Technologies will not be accepted.

For information on the remits and priorities of both themes please see our website:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/themes/engineering/>

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/themes/healthcaretechnologies/>

Funding Available

The EPSRC will commit up to £4 million to the call to support a number of projects. Individual Proposals submitted should not exceed £250,000 (at 80% FEC) and should be between one and three years in duration.

Funding will be available for activities which will demonstrably develop a translation relationship with a user organisation. The activities which can be accommodated as part of 'relationship building' are wide ranging, and the proposers should suggest a flexible programme of activities which they believe will foster the strongest and most useful relationship within their Translational Alliance Platform. Possibly activities include (but are not restricted to) secondments and people exchange, co-location of research effort, knowledge transfer activities, networking, travel, work to understand industrial processes and scale up, and product design. It might be that activities can be designed to

gain knowledge of the marketplace, with this in turn leading to further research and idea refinement, or to the discovery of a new translational path. Furthermore, a key aspect to this call is around enabling EPSRC funded researchers, to develop their translation knowledge and skills. Funding can therefore be used for training in relevant aspects of commercialisation, entrepreneurship, and regulation (for example).

Some funding will be available for small scale feasibility studies in order to enable collaborative co-designed research to be undertaken, but the proportion of the award to be used for these feasibility studies will be limited to 50% of the total requested costs. This cap has been put in place to encourage a focus on long-term relationship building rather than one-off translational research activities.

Equipment

Where possible, researchers are asked to make use of existing facilities and equipment, including those hosted at other universities. If equipment is needed as part of the research proposal, applicants must follow EPSRC's rules for requesting equipment over £10,000 in value. Individual items of equipment up to the current OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) procurement threshold can be included on research proposals submitted through this call, but research organisations will be expected to make a contribution to the cost. All requests for single items of equipment above the current OJEU threshold will need to go through a separate process which will assess the strategic need for the equipment and how to ensure maximum usage. These proposals will be assessed through the separate Strategic Equipment peer review process.

For more information on equipment funding, please see:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/facilities/equipment/>

The current OJEU threshold can be found at:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/facilities/equipment/process/>

Eligibility

This call is open to academics, from eligible UK research organisations, that have a live relevant EPSRC grant at the date of the deadline for submission of outline proposals. Each current EPSRC grant can only be used once for the purposes of applying to this call, and conversely each application should result from only one current grant. If the lead applicant of the submission to this call is not the Principal Investigator of the current grant, their support for the application should be demonstrated through the inclusion of a Letter of Support.

For information on the eligibility of organisations and individuals to receive EPSRC funding, see the EPSRC Funding Guide:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance/fundingguide/>

As this call is a targeted funding opportunity provided by EPSRC, higher education institutions, and some research council institutes and independent research organisations are eligible to apply. A list of eligible organisations to apply to EPSRC is provided at:

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/Eligibilityforrcs.aspx>

EPSRC's standard policy on resubmissions and repeatedly unsuccessful applicants apply to this call.

How to apply

Submitting Applications

Both the outline and full proposals will be submitted via the Je-S system, and guidance for each of these two stages is given below. Only applicants that are successfully funded as a result of their pitch interview will be invited to submit a full proposal through Je-S, and further guidance will be given at this point.

You should prepare and submit your proposal using the Research Councils' Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) System (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>).

When adding a new outline proposal, you should select:

- Council 'EPSRC'
- Document type 'Outline Proposal'
- Scheme 'Outline'
- On the Project Details page you should select the 'Impact Alliances Outlines' call.

Note that clicking 'submit document' on your proposal form in Je-S initially submits the proposal to your host organisation's administration, not to EPSRC. Please allow sufficient time for your organisation's submission process between submitting your proposal to them and the call closing date. EPSRC must receive your application by 16:00 on 28 May 2015.

Guidance on the types of support that may be sought and advice on the completion of the research proposal forms are given on the EPSRC website (<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance/>) which should be consulted when preparing all proposals.

Application and Assessment Procedure

The application and assessment process for this call will involve:

1. The submission of a four page outline proposal.
2. Assessment of all outlines by a sift panel consisting of experts from both academia and the user base. Shortlisted applications at this stage will be invited to:
3. Submit a full proposal, which will consist primarily of the outline proposal with some further information.
4. A 'pitch' style interview to an EPSRC run panel consisting of both academics and users. Funding decisions will be made based on this pitch and the outline proposal submitted.

The Pitch panel will offer applicants who are not successful at interview stage feedback and advice to aid applicants to build on their ideas.

Stage 1: Outline Proposals and Their Assessment

Outline proposals may only be submitted by researchers with eligible current grants. Only one proposal may be submitted to this call in relation to a given current grant.

At the outline stage, the following information should be submitted through the Je-S system:

- **A Je-S application form**
- **A Justification of Resources** – No more than one side of A4, which lays out why your requested resources are required to complete the proposed activities.
- **Statement(s) of Support** from your proposed translational partner, which should include an explanation of the motivation of the translational partner in committing to the building of a long term relationship with the researchers in question. Furthermore, it should discuss the partner's ability to translate the outcomes of the current research, and should clearly outline the nature of the commitment offered. This statement should clearly link to the partnership section of the Case for Support (below).
- A Four Page **Case for Support** Document comprised of details of the following:
 - 1. Your current grant** and its relationship to this work (up to one A4 Page). Please include:
 - The title, grant reference number, and start/end dates of the current grant to which this relates
 - A discussion of the current and/or anticipated outcomes from the grant which are pertinent to this proposal, and their potential to be exploited through this route
 - 2. The Translational Alliance partners** (up to one A4 page) including an explanation of the appropriateness of the relationship, current experience of such work, and an indication of the commitment from both sides (this should link to the Statement of Support, and may be co-authored by the researcher and translational partner).
 - 3. The Proposed Activities** (up to two A4 pages) - This should answer the following questions:
 - What innovation pathway(s) are you proposing for the outcomes of your research? Please include detail of how this relates to the research undertaken in your current EPSRC grant.
 - What activities do you propose in order to build a new long-term Translational Alliance with your partner?

Please note that the panel considering both your outline proposal and your potential pitch will have access to the Case for Support and Pathways to Impact

components of your original (current) proposal. The Case for Support will be supplied for further information about the high quality science proposal to which this work will be additional. The Pathways to Impact document will be available in order for the panel to understand how this proposed work fits into the context of translational activities previously proposed.

The closing date for outline submission is 28 May 2015.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their submission on the week commencing 20 July 2015.

Stage 2: The Pitch & Interview (for those successful at outline stage)

Applicants who are successful at the outline stage will be invited to submit a full proposal, which will constitute a resubmission of the outline proposal documentation, with some further details including a work-plan and management plan, and a full Justification of Resources. The deadline for submission of full proposals will be the 22 September 2015.

All applicants who are successful at stage one (and are hence invited to submit a full proposal) will also be invited to attend an interview in the week commencing 16 November. Applicants are expected to be available during this week for interview. Interviews will have a two component format, with an initial pitch from the applicant followed by an interview from the panel. The interview will take 40 minutes in total.

The interview should be attended by the leading researcher on the project, who should give the pitch. The attendance of a representative of the translational partner organisation at the interview is strongly recommended, as the interview is intended to test the potential of the partnership, but their attendance is not mandated. A maximum of two attendees, one researcher and one representative of the partner organisation, may attend the interview. If no representative of the partner organisation attends, only one researcher should attend. Applicants who are successful at the outline stage will receive further information on the timing and format of the interview closer to the date.

The interview panel will use the proposal submitted as their main source of prior information, although they will also access the Case for Support and Pathways to Impact documents from the original grant. The primary purpose of the interview will be to test the potential of the relationship, with the majority of questions focussed on the assessment criteria given below. However, the panel will be permitted to ask technical questions of clarification if appropriate.

A funding decision will be made on the basis of the proposal and interview in the week commencing 30 November 2015.

All unsuccessful applicants at the interview stage will be provided with panel feedback in order to help them develop their translational partnership. The outline stage proposals will not count towards our demand management or resubmission policies. Feedback will be provided for applications which were unsuccessful at the outline stage only if application volume allows.

Assessment criteria

The outline proposals will be assessed and interviews conducted by an expert panel(s) that will be assessing the proposed Translational Alliances and their component activities against the following criteria:

- **The relationship:** The panel will be asked to consider the potential, strength, and appropriateness of the relationship between the researchers and the translational partners, as compared to other potential partnerships for the research. Specific attention will be paid to the evidence given of the long term commitment of both parties to the relationship, including the strength of the support offered by the partner organisation, and to the ability of the partner organisation to translate the outcomes of the research.
- **The proposed methodology:** The panel will evaluate the proposed innovation pathways, especially in terms of the relevance to and potential for translation of the research in question.

The panel will also assess the methodology proposed for relationship building and the extent to which they believe the activities will benefit both the researchers and the translational partners. The panel will be looking for proposals which have clear potential to build strong long-term partnerships, with activities appropriate to the nature of the partnership.

Applicants should be prepared to be challenged as to how the activities proposed in their application is distinct to that in the Pathways to Impact document of the current grant, and to demonstrate how this new application will better facilitate the acceleration of impact.

- **The potential for outcomes:** The panel will assess the appropriateness of both the partnership and the methodology in terms of the potential of the outcomes of current or future research to be translatable through, or as a result of, this partnership.

EPSRC reserves the right to reject proposals that are deemed to be outside of EPSRC remit, the remit of the call, or are not in the correct format, without reference to peer review.

Key dates

Activity	Date
Call launched (Outline stage)	3 March 2015
Closing date for outline proposals	28 May 2015
Outline sift panel	w/c 13 July 2015
Outcomes of Sift Panel given	w/c 20 July 2015
Full Proposals Due	22 September 2015
Interviews	w/c 16 November 2015
Outcomes of Interviews (funding decision)	w/c 30 November 2015
Funding decisions announced	Q3 15/16

Contacts

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For any queries regarding the Je-S system please contact the Je-S helpdesk on Je-SHelp@rcuk.ac.uk or 01793 444164.

Annex: Scope of the Engineering Areas Open for Application

- **Synthetic Biology for Health:** Applications will be accepted from those who wish to translate their Engineering focussed research into Synthetic Biology towards Healthcare Technologies applications such as (but not restricted to) scale up of Regenerative Therapies and technologies for Antimicrobial Resistance. Within the EPSRC's remit, Synthetic Biology primarily focuses on the application of the engineering tenets of Modularity, Standardisation and Characterisation, or the application of classical engineering paradigms to biological and biomedical systems. Interdisciplinary translational applications to this call in the field of Synthetic Biology are strongly encouraged, however applications without a clear focus on the translation of a diagnostic, therapeutic or preventative device or system, or those not deemed to be within EPSRC's remit will not be accepted.
- **Chemical and Process Engineering for Health:** Applications to this area should clearly focus on the application and translation of engineering approaches to the design, modelling, control and optimisation of bulk products and processes towards healthcare products and systems. This includes the translation of research into formulations and complex fluids. Applications in this area must demonstrate a clear linkage to health, including but not restricted to the scale up of therapeutic formulations and the design of bioreactors for regenerative therapies. Applications must focus on the translation of engineering processes; applications which primarily focus on the translation of newly synthesised entities such as drugs will not be accepted.
- **Robotics and Autonomous Systems for Health:** Applications to this area should focus on the application of novel robotics, automation and autonomy engineering to health applications. Applications are specifically encouraged from those who do not currently work in the medical robotics domain, but who see the potential to thus translate their research through the development of a translational partnership. Applications must be based on underpinning Engineering focussed research into Robotics and Autonomous Systems. Applicants who are unsure of their fit to this area are strongly advised to contact EPSRC in advance of submitting their application.
- **Microsystems for Health Applications:** Applications of this area should focus on the translation of novel underpinning microsystems research

(including the development of novel microfluidic, microelectromechanical and microfabricated devices) towards a health application such as diagnostics, therapeutics or monitoring. Applications in this area should have a strong focus on Engineering challenges rather than optical and information processing. Applicants who are unsure of their fit to this area are strongly advised to contact EPSRC in advance of submitting their application.

Name	Date	Version	Change