

# The Patricia Swannell dormancy and late recurrence research funding programme Information for applicants



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## About us

We're Breast Cancer Now, the charity that's steered by world-class research and powered by life-changing care.

We want to change the future of breast cancer and to date, we have invested over £284 million in ground-breaking research. We work solely on bringing together research and support to tackle breast cancer more effectively, to reduce the risk and to better support anyone affected.

## Purpose and scope

This funding programme aims to support research addressing dormancy and late recurrence of breast cancer. It has been created thanks to the Patricia Swannell Appeal for secondary breast cancer and the incredible generosity of the everyone who has supported the appeal.

Driven by a selfless passion and determination to make a difference for those who come after her, Patricia devoted the last 18 precious months of her life to driving change for people affected by secondary breast cancer. With the loving support of her family, The Patricia Swannell Appeal for Secondary Breast Cancer was set up in 2022 to:

- Raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of secondary breast cancer
- Support healthcare professionals with education and training
- Develop better testing, diagnosis and treatment through funding research to tackle the challenge of dormancy

In the UK an estimated 600,000 people are living with a diagnosis of breast cancer. This group is discharged from primary cancer treatment without consistent follow up nor is follow up available to everyone. Approximately 65,000 people have already been diagnosed with secondary breast cancer.

There is a need for further research to understand more about breast cancer dormancy and recurrence. Through supporting research, we can develop better testing, diagnosis, and treatment in this area.

This is a one-off non-renewable programme. The expectation is that projects will further our knowledge and understanding of the mechanisms of dormancy and late recurrence of breast cancer. The areas that are in scope include but are not limited to the following:

- Improving and developing effective research models (*in vivo* and *ex vivo*) to understand dormancy and recurrence
- Studies to understand the role of the microenvironment in maintaining or triggering escape from dormancy
- Translational research to better understand the genetic and molecular mechanisms underlying recurrence, and to understand at a cellular level what happens to breast cancer cells that become dormant during initial treatment and when treatment ends
- Studies focused on what happens to patients at the end of their primary treatment, particularly those ending endocrine therapy, and including ways to identify those who would benefit from additional or altered treatment
- Studies on adjuvant therapy (such as endocrine, targeted and immunotherapies), exploring what factors determine both the optimal timing/duration of different adjuvant therapies and their impact on breast cancer dormancy and recurrence, and to make treatments as effective as possible
- Identifying and developing biomarkers of dormancy and late recurrence

- Developing and establishing a cohort of women who have completed their primary treatment for breast cancer, to investigate the aetiology of dormancy and late recurrence, including involving those in the cohort in other clinical studies

Applicants should indicate how their proposal meets Breast Cancer Now's strategic objectives:

- Improving treatments, care and services for those affected by secondary breast cancer
- Improving support for the physical and mental health, and the emotional wellbeing of people affected by breast cancer
- Developing kinder, smarter treatments for people with breast cancer and improving access to treatments for those affected
- Improving detection and diagnosis of breast cancer
- Furthering our understanding of why breast cancer occurs and spreads and using our knowledge to help prevent breast cancer developing

## Details of the programme

- Projects can be **up to 60 months**
- Grants are available **up to a maximum value of £500,000** and will cover staff salary, research expenses and essential equipment; we are flexible in how this amount is distributed across the project's active years
- Applications can be for PhDs, projects, programmes or fellowships, or a mixture of those funding types
- Please bear in mind, your application's cost/value for money and the funds available for each round are factors that will be considered by the Grants Committee when making funding decisions

This funding programme is intended to support discovery and translational research leading to new understanding of, or and treatments for, dormant and late recurring breast cancer.

We will **not** support:

- Infrastructure, such as setting up or maintaining research units
- The development or implementation of services for breast cancer patients
- Audits or surveys (although these elements may be part of an integrated research study)
- Market research
- Policy development that does not involve new data collection or analysis
- Direct support (such as financial support) to those affected by breast cancer

## Eligibility

Applicants should read our research [grant conditions and research policies](#) before completing their application and ensure the following:

- Applicants and PhD studentships must be based at a recognised university, research institution, or NHS trust in the UK or Ireland
- If researchers require a visa to work in the UK, they may qualify for the accelerated [Global Talent visa route](#). This is open for promising and talented individuals in specific sectors wishing to work in the UK
- Lead applicants should hold employment or honorary (if a clinical academic) contracts that extend beyond the period of the grant

- Lead applicants with a fixed-term position may apply, but they cannot request costs for their salary; they must include a letter from the head of department to indicate that their salary will be covered for the duration of the project/PhD
- We welcome applications from lead applicants who have conducted independent research in the field of breast cancer or are experienced researchers in a related field
- Applicants may be new to breast cancer research, but the proposed team must include people with relevant breast cancer expertise
- We are committed to supporting young investigators and encourage applications from talented early career researchers
- Collaborative applications are particularly encouraged from within the UK and Ireland; although the contracted grant (and associated funding arrangements) will be with the lead applicant's institution. Named academic/clinical co-applicants and collaborators are permitted from outside the UK and Ireland
- Applicants may not apply for more than 1 grant in the same funding round as lead applicant but may apply as co-applicant or collaborator on more than 1 application
- Applicants may have spent time away from research (for example, a career break, maternity leave, long-term sick leave); our reviewers will allow for this when the application is considered
- Co-applicants and collaborators may be based at institutions outside the UK/Ireland and/or at pharmaceutical or biotech companies
- We will consider applications for research that will take place within the NHS; however we will not act as the sponsor for clinical trials

Applications which include PhD students are also welcome. Please see additional guidance below:

- PhD grants are available to established researchers working in an institution in the UK or Ireland, and are designed to capture new and highly qualified science graduates into a career of breast cancer research
- PhD studentships can last for 3 or 4 years
- The total amount requested for this part of the grant must not exceed **£170,000**
- Applicants incorporating PhDs within their projects should have a track record of identifying and maximising potential in others (for example through managing and mentoring their own staff and early career researchers, as primary supervisor of PhD students)
- We will consider applications for students undertaking a part-time PhD to facilitate flexible working arrangements
- The primary PhD supervisor will be required to provide the following information with the application:
  - Details of a second supervisor who will take the place of the lead applicant/supervisor if you are absent
  - A list of current and past students, including names, positions, start date and funding body (for past students, list how many achieved their degree)
  - Information about any planned sabbaticals and who will supervise the student in your absence
  - Information about the training environment, including details about the training offered specific to this project and general research training offered by the host institution

- Suitability of the project for a PhD
- Information about the institution, including what the institution provides (in terms of supervision and assessment) and expects (such as attendance of lectures) from its PhD students

The following will not be accepted:

- Applications from commercial entities
- Research proposals into conditions other than breast cancer
- Applications for equipment only; we will accept requests for small pieces of equipment (up to £5000) as part of your proposal, but you must include a clear justification for this request.
- Applications which request funding for consumables or running costs only
- Applications from an individual who is not employed by an eligible institution
- Requests to cover salary costs of tenured lead applicants and/or co-applicants. We will allow costs to cover the salary of named post-doctorate researchers who are listed co-applicants on the application, as long as they don't have their salary covered by other sources
- Projects part-funded with other organisations
- Applications from prospective PhD students themselves
- Applications from clinicians taking time out of programme to undertake a PhD

If you are unsure about the eligibility and remit of your project, please contact the research funding team at [grants\\_admin@breastcancer.org](mailto:grants_admin@breastcancer.org) before you submit your application. Once the deadline has passed there will be no opportunity to consider individual circumstances and applications not meeting the requirements will be rejected without peer review.

## Lead applicant

Applications should be made using our online [Grant Tracker system](#). You must complete all sections of the application form. For more detailed information, please click the 'Help' buttons next to each section.

- Ensure your application is submitted by **4pm on Tuesday 4 June 2024**
- Lead applicants must update their publication record by visiting the 'My Publications' section
  - Navigate to 'Import' in the left-hand menu
  - Click 'Select Records'
  - Enter the title of publication
  - Tick the box next to the publication you wish to import and click 'Complete Import'
  - Click 'Import'
  - All imported publications will then appear in the 'Search' section of 'My Publications'
- The lead applicant, co-applicants, head of department and institution's research grants (or finance) office must complete the declarations at the end of the application form in order to submit the application; please give everyone enough notice to avoid missing the deadline
- Applicants will receive confirmation by email from the online applications system once a grant application is submitted
- For the main proposal, you can submit up to 4 pages of figures/preliminary data

- Applicants should indicate how their proposal meets one or more of Breast Cancer Now’s key strategic objectives as outlined in our [strategy](#):
  - Improving treatments, care and services for those affected by secondary breast cancer
  - Improving support for the physical and mental health, and the emotional wellbeing of people affected by breast cancer
  - Developing kinder, smarter treatments for people with breast cancer and improving access to treatments for those affected
  - Improving detection and diagnosis of breast cancer
  - Furthering our understanding of why breast cancer occurs and spreads and using our knowledge to help prevent breast cancer developing
- Provide a succinct abstract of the proposal; abstracts will be used to approach potential reviewers so they can judge whether they can review the application
- Provide 5 or 6 key words that best describe this project; these will be used by the research team to select the most relevant peer reviewers
- If successful, projects must start within 10 months of the award letter being received; please include the most accurate start date when completing your application form
- If the application was rejected without an invitation to resubmit, we will not consider a resubmission of the same application. However, applications which are significantly different in terms of objectives and scope, and that go beyond addressing the reviewers’ concerns of the previous application, will be considered in competition with other applications

In this case, you must declare your application as a revised application, and must submit a covering letter along with the application detailing the modifications which merit its reconsideration. Please select ‘Resubmission’ in the ‘Details’ section of the online application form and upload a covering letter. The final decision on whether the application will continue in the process is at the discretion of the chair and deputy chair of the Grants Committee. We advise all applicants considering a resubmission to contact us at [grants\\_admin@breastcancer.org](mailto:grants_admin@breastcancer.org) in advance of submission to check your eligibility.

## Co-applicants

Co-applicants will have intellectual input into, and part ownership of, the research if the application is successful; they are expected to be actively involved in the project.

Each co-applicant must do the following before the submission deadline:

- Register with our online [Grant Tracker system](#)
- Update their CV by visiting the ‘Manage My Details’ section
- Update their publication record by visiting the ‘My Publications’ section.
  - Navigate to ‘Import’ in the left-hand menu
  - Click ‘Select Records’
  - Enter the title of publication
  - Tick the box next to the publication you wish to import and click ‘Complete Import’
  - Click ‘Import’
  - All imported publications will then appear in the ‘Search’ section of ‘My Publications’
- Confirm participation as co-applicant to be allowed to view the application

- Approve the content of the application; this must be done before the application can be submitted

## Collaborators

Collaborators do not have access to grant funds. They will be expected to contribute to the overall intellectual direction of the research project and bring their own resources to the collaboration. They will not be involved in the day-to-day execution of the project.

Each collaborator **must** do the following before the submission deadline:

- Confirm participation as collaborator to be allowed to view the application
- Approve the content of the application; this must be done before the application can be submitted
- The lead applicant will fill in the reasons for collaboration and obtain a letter of collaboration (no longer than 1 page) from each collaborator to attach to the application

Please note, co-applicants and collaborators can view, but cannot edit, your application.

## NHS co-applicants and collaborators

Co-applicants and collaborators based in the NHS may experience difficulties receiving invitation emails from our database due to the introduction of stricter GDPR rules. We advise that you follow up with co-applicants and collaborators that you've added to the application to ensure they've received the email with instructions on how to enter their details. If an email has not been received, please contact the office and we will help to rectify the issue.

## Letters of support from industry partners

If your application includes any collaboration with an industry partner (for example, the provision of free drugs, equipment, an educational grant), we strongly recommend that you provide a letter demonstrating support for the proposed study and confirming any contribution made.

## Head of department

If you are adding a head of department as a co-applicant or collaborator, please add the dean of your school or faculty as a head of department instead and ask them to approve the application.

Before submission, the head of department must confirm the participation of the host institution. The head of department will receive an automated email requesting confirmation of participation and approval of the application.

The head of department **must** do the following before the submission deadline:

- Confirm participation as head of department to be allowed to view the application
- Approve the content of the application; this must be done before the application can be submitted

The head of department can view but cannot edit your application.

## Finance officer

The finance officer will act as the **final signatory** of the application. Once the lead applicant has pressed 'submit', the finance officer will receive a request for final approval. Due to high volumes of traffic on our system on deadline days, we occasionally experience a time lag in our system. Please allow your finance office at least 2 days to approve the application after you have submitted it.

The finance officer **must** do the following before the submission deadline:

- Confirm participation as finance officer to be allowed to view and edit the application; this step is required to validate the application form, and to submit the application for final approval from the finance officer
- Approve the application so it can be fully submitted; the finance officer will receive a request for final approval by email once the lead applicant has pressed 'submit'

The finance officer can view and edit your application.

## Application review process

Our Grants Committee will assess your application based on importance and relevance of the research question, originality, methodology, preliminary data, justification for animal use and severity of procedures, and applicant track record. Our reviewers are not allowed to input application contents into, or use, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT or Bard to write their reviews.

- Each application will be reviewed by 2 members of our dormancy and late recurrence committee
- Applications are scored using a 10-point system; a score of 0 = not fundable, and a score of 10 = highly fundable
- The dormancy and late recurrence committee identify applications that they agree will not be competitive in the process and these applications will be triaged; we refer to this as the first triage
- Triage applications will not be sent out for external peer review and will not be considered for funding
- If your application has been triaged, we will let you know within 12 weeks from when you submitted your proposal, and we will send you feedback from the Grants Committee
- Applications that pass the first triage will be sent for external peer review
- Once all external peer reviews are received, a second triage meeting will take place prior to the main dormancy and late recurrence committee meeting
- Applications that have not been viewed favourably by the peer reviewers will be triaged
- Applications that pass the second triage will be discussed by the dormancy and late recurrence committee
- The dormancy and late recurrence committee will make recommendations for funding to Breast Cancer Now's Board of Trustees
- Successful and unsuccessful applicants will receive an outcome letter and feedback from the dormancy and late recurrence committee and external reviewers



## Costing your application

For PhD components of proposals:

We will provide funding for one PhD stipend, consumables, and fees but the total amount for each student must not exceed £170,000. If applicable, consumables for year 4 cover 6 months of research, with the expectation that the final 6 months are used for write-up of the thesis. You will be asked to upload documentation to show that the stipend and fees requested match your institution's standards. Stipends should not be below £19,000. £2,500 from the consumables budget is ringfenced for researcher development activities to attend conferences, external training courses, and workshops over the course of the studentship.

Applicants should note the following:

- Applicants must apply for funding in British pounds sterling (GBP)
- Applicants should seek the advice of their institution's finance or research office on costing the application well in advance of the application deadline
- If awarded, invoices will be paid quarterly in arrears in GBP (£) and converted to the currency of request by the bank at their exchange rate on the day the transfer or draft is actioned. We are not responsible for losses incurred through fluctuations in exchange rates
- In line with the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) guidelines, we will only fund directly incurred costs and not the full economic costs of research (FECs) or a proportion of these
- Grants will be funded on the understanding that the host institution meets the overhead and infrastructure costs (infrastructure costs can include lighting, heating, telephones, use of library facilities, general laboratory equipment, general office expenses, core laboratory services such as wash up and waste disposal, maintenance and running costs of laboratory equipment, estates costs)
- International student fees cannot be supported in full. If an overseas student is appointed, we will pay the UK studentship fees. The remaining cost of the international fees must be sourced elsewhere
- Applications requesting funding of the second or subsequent years of an existing PhD studentship will not be accepted

### Salary costs

At least 1 salary must be added for a grant. We will cover the salary for a research support post to directly work on the project. This may be a co-applicant. Salaries should be based on the scales in operation at the institution in which the research will take place. Applicants should consult the appropriate administrative authority at their institution to determine the salaries to be requested. We will pay for named staff with specific expertise (for example, statisticians, health economists, nurses) for their time on the project.

A proportion of lead applicant or co-applicant salary for supervision/consultancy time is not allowed. We will not fund on a cost recovery basis or meet the salary costs of staff currently funded by the Higher Education Funding Council, NHS or equivalent. If you are unsure whether a specific salary is allowable, please contact us to clarify.

The following table of allowed and disallowed costs indicates what is permissible on a grant application but should not be considered exhaustive. The research funding team may query and ask you to remove costs that are deemed to be

outside of our funding remit. If you are unsure about anything, please contact us at [grants\\_admin@breastcancer.org](mailto:grants_admin@breastcancer.org).

<b>Allowed costs</b>	<b>Disallowed costs</b>
Laboratory materials and consumables directly attributable to the project	A proportion of central support staff salaries (e.g. secretarial support)
Home office licenses	Apprenticeship levies
Pathology service costs	Purchase of books
Travel related to the research proposal (e.g. participant expenses to travel to focus groups, interviews) if justified. This must be added in the 'Other Expenses' section. Please refer to our <a href="#">conference travel guidelines</a> for more information.	General office expenses (e.g. photocopying, postage); an exception may be made for secretarial assistance and printing costs for epidemiological/questionnaire-based studies.
Animal costs. You can include purchase, housing, husbandry, animal licence costs. You will be asked for the species, number and unit cost of all animals. Please also refer to our policy on the <a href="#">use of animals in scientific research</a> .	Open access charges. Please do not include requests for open access publication charges in your application. For more information on Breast Cancer Now's position on open access, please see our <a href="#">open access policy</a> .
Small pieces of equipment (e.g. computers) if essential for the project. If above £5000, please discuss with the office.	Equipment maintenance and running costs
Computer software license, if required specifically for the project (e.g. image analysis)	Staff recruitment costs
Access charges for shared equipment (e.g. hourly charge to use microscopy or mass spectrometry equipment)	Publication or printing costs
Statistician advice/consultancy costs	Training courses (e.g. Home Office animal license courses)
Costs associated with authentication and validation of cell lines	A proportion of general technician support/services (e.g. wash up, waste disposal)
Conference and travel costs*. We will cover costs for travel and registration for conferences up to the value of £2,500, where work funded by Breast Cancer Now is being presented.	
Microarray or sequencing costs	

\*Please click 'Add conference costs' and then click 'Save' in order to validate the form and allow you to submit. These costs cannot be edited and are entered in year 1 for technical reasons but can be used across all years as required. These costs must be included within the overall total funding requested for the project. No other conference and related travel costs above this are permitted.

You will be asked to attach the salary scales for your institution in PDF format and to complete the following information: staff member details, level of qualification,

role, grade and scale, annual inflation rate and date, basic salary, employer contributions and justification of the position being requested. For more detailed information, please click the 'Help' buttons next to each section.

### **NHS costs**

We accept applications for research taking place within the NHS. If applying for NHS support costs or treatment costs, applicants should complete a schedule of events costs attribution template (SoECAT) form. Guidance on how to complete a SoECAT form is available on the National Institute of Health Research's (NIHR) [website](#).

The costs of non-commercial research are met by different funders depending on the type of cost. Guidance from the Department of Health and Social Care for the Attribution of Costs for Research and Development ([AcoRD](#)) sets out the principles for determining who pays for the different costs. Please refer to this guidance before completing the costs section of your application.

As a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), Breast Cancer Now will only fund the costs for activities attributed to the Research Part A costs category, in line with the [AcoRD guidelines](#).

The following costs should **not** be included in your budget:

- Research Part B costs (the NHS pays these costs where the funder is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities)
- Service support costs
- Treatment costs
- Excess treatment costs (ETCs)

NHS service support costs should be funded via the clinical research networks. NHS treatment costs, including any ETCs/savings, will be met by the NHS through normal patient care commissioning arrangements. Further background information and links to resources are provided below.

### **Excess treatment costs (ETCs)**

ETCs occur when treatment costs (the patient care costs) in a research study are greater than in routine care. For example, a patient taking part in research may be given a new drug to see how it performs in comparison with the standard drug given to non-research patients. If the cost of the new drug being tested in the study is more than the one usually prescribed, then it is an Excess Treatment Cost, as it would not occur in standard care. For non-commercial research studies, these costs are the responsibility of the NHS.

The ETC process is managed by the NIHR local clinical research networks (LCRNs), on behalf of their local clinical commissioning groups, and in collaboration with NHS England's specialised commissioning function. Researchers will be required to complete a SoECAT form for clinical research. To ensure approval from the Health Research Authority (HRA) and NIHR portfolio adoption, a completed SoECAT form must first be approved and signed by an AcoRD specialist.

See the NIHR [guidance](#) on ETCs for further information about how they are paid. For queries and assistance with ETC payments, please contact the NIHR's helpdesk at [etc.helpdesk@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:etc.helpdesk@nihr.ac.uk).

### Schedule of events costs attribution template

Researchers applying for clinical research grants need to complete a SoECAT to be eligible for the NIHR clinical research network portfolio and to access the appropriate funding support for the study. The SoECAT is an online tool that helps to keep track and calculate the different activities and costs associated with clinical research in a standardised way. Please follow the NIHR [SoECAT guidance](#).

You must submit a completed SoECAT form with your grant application:

- If you are applying for funding for clinical research
- If you will carry out your research in England
- If your research requires HRA approval.
- If your research will use NHS England resources
- Even if you think your clinical research does not involve ETCs
- If it is eligible for NHS support cost (or their equivalent in a social care setting) or ETC support in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, even where there are no sites in England

NIHR AcoRD specialists work with researchers, R&D support and/or CTUs, to confirm that the attribution of costs is accurate before submission to the HRA and funding bodies. They can also signpost to resources and training to understand the principles of AcoRD, provide tailored advice, help to resolve queries, and validate the attribution of costs. Please note that the AcoRD specialists **cannot** be held accountable for any delays for late submissions to funding bodies. If you need support from an AcoRD specialist in your region on how to correctly identify and attribute relevant activities, please contact your LCRN representative at the **early stage** of developing your application. Other sources of assistance and support are the NIHR early contact and engagement [team](#) or the NIHR study support helpdesk at [supportmystudy@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:supportmystudy@nihr.ac.uk).

Please convert the completed SoECAT form to a PDF and upload it to the cost section of your application form. Please label the file 'NHS support and treatment costs'. To convert the SoECAT form to PDF and include all tabs in the spreadsheet, do the following:

- Click 'file' and then 'export'
- Create PDF/XPS
- Click 'options' in the dialogue box
- Select 'entire workbook' in the 'publish what' section
- Click 'OK'
- Select the file you want to save it in and click 'publish'
- Upload it by selecting 'attach' and searching for the folder you saved the SoECAT form in

A letter of support must also be included with the application from the lead NHS provider acknowledging the amount requested and confirming that these are the likely costs. Please upload the letter of support using the NHS letter of support function. Useful information when applying for funding for a clinical study can be found in the table below.

Institution	Useful Information
UK Clinical Research Collaboration	<a href="#">Registered Clinical Trial Units</a>
Breast Cancer Now	<a href="#">Tissue Bank</a>

National Institute for Health Research	<a href="#">Clinical Trials Toolkit</a>
UK Clinical Research Collaboration	<a href="#">Tissue Directory and Coordination Centre</a>
Medical Research Council	<a href="#">Guidelines on Human Tissue and Biological Samples for Use in Research</a>

## Research proposal

We receive a high volume of applications in each funding round so it's vital that you make your application stand out from the crowd. Please note, the 'Research Proposal' section of the application form has a 5000-word limit. It is not a requirement to meet the word limit; it is there to provide flexibility for those who need it.

Below are some tips and pitfalls to avoid when preparing your grant application to give yourself the best chance of success:

- Read our [grant conditions and research policies](#) and make sure what you're requesting is allowable
- Give all the information required in the correct format
- Ask someone to proofread your application; reviewers will be put off by typographical and grammatical errors
- Ensure figures are correctly labelled and referenced
- Read the Academy of Medical Sciences' [10 top tips for grant applicants](#)

## Power calculations

Many grant applications are declined because they fail to provide clear power calculations. Please provide an outline of your experimental design and power calculations where relevant. It will be reviewed by a statistician on the dormancy and late recurrence committee. Where details of specific experiments are not known, you may provide an illustrative example. Please see the information provided in the additional details section of your application form.

## Confidential unpublished data

If you wish to include confidential unpublished data in your application which you do not wish to be seen by external reviewers, this should be emailed to [grants\\_admin@breastcancer.org](mailto:grants_admin@breastcancer.org) in a separate document from the application form. This information will be treated as confidential; it will be held in the office and will only be seen by 2 members of our grants committee.

## Use of generative AI tools in funding applications and assessment

We recognise generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT or Bard, present opportunities and bring benefits in the context of research such as supporting content generation for computer code or assisting neurodivergent researchers or reducing potential language barriers.

However, the use of generative AI tools in the funding application and assessment process also presents potential risks for research in areas such as rigour, transparency, originality, reliability, data protection, confidentiality, intellectual property, copyright, and bias. We want to protect against potential ethical, legal and integrity issues in the use of generative AI tools to maintain the high standards of the research and innovation we fund.

When developing funding proposals, researchers must ensure generative AI tools are used responsibly and in accordance with relevant legal and ethical standards where these exist or as they develop. As best practice, any outputs from generative AI tools in funding applications should be acknowledged. Where individual funders wish to apply further specific restrictions, this will be explicitly stated.

Maintaining confidentiality is essential for safeguarding the exchange of scientific opinions and assessments. As such, our peer reviewers must not input content from our confidential funding applications or reviews into, or use, generative AI tools to develop their peer review critiques or applicant responses to critiques. Our peer reviewers are selected for their expertise and experience in their field and we value their unique perspectives.

## **Additional information**

### **Patients**

Where projects involve patients, we require that patients are treated according to the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice.

### **Using stem cells**

Indicate whether the research involves the use of human stem cells and provide further justification if embryonic stem cells are to be used. As a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities, we support the use of human embryonic stem cells when the research has the potential to make significant medical advances.

### **Using human clinical material and the Breast Cancer Now Tissue Bank**

For information about what is available in our Tissue Bank, please visit our website or contact the Tissue Bank at tissue.bank@breastcancer.org.

If your grant application is successful, you may apply to the Tissue Bank for the materials you require. This will not include a repeat of the peer review already undertaken on your grant application, but it will involve our Tissue Access Committee checking that the material you require is suitable for your aims.

Breast Cancer Now funded researchers can access standard samples and data from the Tissue Bank for free. Details of the samples available can be found on the website.

If you are interested in material or data that is not listed above, please contact us as we would be happy to discuss further whether the Breast Cancer Now Tissue Bank can help you with your sample requirements. Bespoke requests will incur a cost.

When working with human tissue, you should consider if you need expert input from a pathologist. If this is the case, a named pathologist is required as a collaborator. The Tissue Bank may be able to provide pathology support on a collaborative basis; please indicate in your grant application if you plan to ask for this when you apply to the Tissue Bank for material.

If the research will involve the use of cell lines provide information about the types of cells to be used. If you plan to obtain new cell lines, please give details of where they will be sourced from and how they will be authenticated on receipt.

All researchers using cell culture must incorporate a specific cell line authentication protocol into their experimental framework, following the general principles of [Good Research Practice \(MRC, 2014\)](#) as well as best practice for cell culture procedures ([UKCCCR Guidelines for the Use of Cell Lines in Cancer Research](#)).

Details on what procedures will be undertaken to validate/authenticate the cell lines, to ensure they are free from cross contamination, microbial contamination and phenotypic drift must be given. Plans to validate cell lines at the start of the project and throughout the research must be given.

## **Lay overview**

We rely on the generosity of our supporters and have a responsibility of reporting back to them, as well as to the public on what research projects we are funding and how they are progressing. For this reason, the lay overview section of a research project in a grant application is extremely important. A good lay overview helps the wider public to understand what you are doing as a researcher and helps us to raise funds and ensure we continue funding research into causes, prevention, and treatment of breast cancer. We ask researchers to write these sections in plain English to be understandable to a non-scientific audience, such as lay reviewers, patient representatives, Breast Cancer Now supporters and members of the public.

It is worthwhile asking someone without a scientific background to read your lay summary before you submit the application. Please refer to the tips below on writing a lay overview and see our [website](#) for good examples of lay summaries of the research we fund. The lay overview should be able to demonstrate the relevance and importance of your research to people with, or at risk of developing, breast cancer, as well as its potential impact. It is useful to include a timescale on how long until the results from your work could reach breast cancer patients, or people at risk of developing the disease.

You should use simple and clear language, short sentences with a clear structure, active phrases rather than passive voice, and language that is mindful of people affected by breast cancer. You should avoid unnecessary jargon, abbreviations, and technical terms wherever possible. If you must use them, please provide a clear explanation. You should also avoid using the scientific abstract or other parts of the application intended for scientific audience with a few word changes.

Some useful resources are the [NIHR guidance how to write a research summary](#) in clear and concise plain English, and the [readability calculator](#), which highlights language features, such as long sentences or hard words, and calculates a readability score. You will need to enter your email address to use the tool for free. Please also click the 'Help' buttons next to each section for more detailed information.

## **Patient and public involvement**

Complete this section to explain how patient and public involvement (PPI) has informed and/or influenced the development of your application, and how patients

and/or members of the public will be involved in the research. The term involvement refers to an active partnership between patients, members of the public, and researchers in the research process. PPI does not refer to the recruitment of patients or members of the public as participants in a clinical trial or study.

Many resources for involving patients or members of the public in research are available:

- [INVOLVE](#) is a national advisory body funded by the NIHR to support public involvement in NHS, public health and social care research
- [People in Research](#) is a resource to help members of the public find opportunities to get involved in research, and for research organisations and researchers to advertise involvement opportunities
- [Cancer Research UK](#) patient involvement toolkit for researchers
- [Breast Cancer Voices](#) invites people whose lives have been changed by breast cancer to share their experiences and thoughts on Breast Cancer Now's services, research, campaigns, and funding

Involvement activities might include:

- Helping to ensure that the research is a valuable and respectful use of people's time, and the results are likely to be useful to patients/the public
- For clinical studies, advising on the process of informed consent, making it easier for prospective participants to understand the research and potential risks
- Checking that the practical arrangements for participants are appropriate and not overly burdensome, thereby improving the patient experience
- Assisting in oversight and management of the research (for example, serving on a steering committee)
- Improving the communication of findings to people taking part and the wider public (for example helping in the drafting of a plain English summary of findings)

### **Letters of support**

Where relevant, please upload a letter of support from patient involvement groups.

### **Training and support to those actively involved in your research**

Describe any training and support you have offered, or will offer, to people involved in your research. Refer to the INVOLVE guidelines for developing training and support for public involvement in research.

### **Expenses and payment**

Provide details of any reimbursement of expenses and/or involvement payments you have offered, or will offer, to people involved in your research. For further guidance, refer to the NIHR INVOLVE [policy](#) on payments and expenses for members of the public.

### **If there are no plans for active research involvement, please explain why**

If you have not involved people affected by breast cancer in your research to date and/or have no future plans to do so, please explain why research involvement is not considered to be appropriate or feasible.



## Data sharing plan

Please complete this section with details of your data sharing plans. In some disciplines, for example bioinformatics and proteomics it is common practice to make large data sets available in public access databases. Applications in other areas should describe any mechanisms or databases currently used to share data or indicate any issues and barriers that exist which hinder them from data sharing.

## Our position on data sharing and open access

We ask that researchers share the data generated from publicly funded research to maximise value to the research community and ultimately for patient benefit. We encourage applicants to detail their data sharing plans in their application form.

For information on Breast Cancer Now's position on open access, please see our [open access policy](#). Please do not include requests for open access publication charges in your application.

## Attachments

This section lists all the documents that have been uploaded/attached to your application. Please check that each document has been clearly labelled for reviewers as all attachments will be at the end of your application.

## Validation

This section lists any incomplete fields that require completion before you can validate your application form and submit it. If none of the application form sections are listed, this means your application form has passed all the validation checks and can be submitted for final approval to your finance office.

## Submitting your application

Once your application form has passed the validation stage (including approvals from co-applicants, collaborators, and head of department), you may submit using the 'submit application' button on the right-hand side of the page. At this stage, an automated email will be sent to your finance officer to approve your application. Your application will not be fully submitted to Breast Cancer Now until your finance office has approved it. This **must** be completed before the deadline.

If you have any queries regarding your application or have any difficulties submitting your application, please contact the research team at [grants\\_admin@breastcancer.org](mailto:grants_admin@breastcancer.org)