

Research Grants Review Committee

Terms of Reference

13/05/2021

Version: 1.5

Terms of Reference should be reviewed once per annum

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1. Background/Context

The Cystic Fibrosis Trust is the UK's only national charity dealing with all aspects of cystic fibrosis (CF). Through the research it funds, the Trust supports and enables delivery of a broad and dynamic portfolio of world-class innovative research to help ensure that every person with CF in the UK can live a long and full life.

The Board of Trustees of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust is the body accountable for all aspects of the work of the Trust. The Board of Trustees are also the Members of the company as constituted in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The Research Grants Review Committee, previously the Strategy Implementation Board, is an independent committee that reports to the Board of Trustees, making recommendations regarding the funding of research through the Trust's core research funding mechanisms: the Strategic Research Centre (SRC) programme and the Venture Innovation Award (VIA) scheme.

2. Scope

These Terms of Reference (ToR) set out the membership, structure, accountability, work-plan, confidentiality, and arrangements for conduct of the business of the Research Grants Review Committee.

3. Structure of partnerships

The Research Grants Review Committee reports directly to the Board of Trustees on an annual basis. All minutes of the Committee meetings will be made available to the Board of Trustees once reviewed by the Committee Chair.

4. Decision making and accountability

A consensus recommendation should be reached wherever possible in the event of a disagreement occurring within the Research Grants Review Committee. The Chair will sum-up and explain why a decision has been reached. Decision-making will be inclusive, and timescales will be considered.

Where necessary there will be an out-of-meeting process for urgent decisions.

The Research Grants Review Committee may set up working groups, drawing in other expertise, as required. These working groups should be time limited and have clear terms of reference.

5. Confidentiality

The business of the Research Grants Review Committee is confidential, unless otherwise stated by the Chair.

6. Conflicts of interest

It is the responsibility of each member to be aware of and to register any potential conflicts of interest between themselves and the Research Grants Review Committee. A conflict of interest is:

- A personal interest or interest in any other organisation which might clash with their role on the Research Grants Review Committee.
- Where the Research Grants Review Committee member finds themselves in a position where they or their family might personally benefit, financially or otherwise, or be perceived as personally benefiting, from their role as a committee member.
- Where the Research Grants Review Committee member allows their personal interests to influence or be seen to influence their recommendations or decisions taken as part of the committee's work.

Further details regarding conflict of interest, can be found in the separate 'Conflict of Interest Policy' document [here](#).

Each member should declare and make the Chair aware of any relevant interest at the start of a meeting or as soon as such conflict becomes evident to them.

Where an interest is declared that conflicts with, or may be perceived to conflict with, the interest of the Research Grants Review Committee, the member concerned may be asked to withdraw from the discussion any decisions on the relevant item on the agenda.

7. Role of the Research Grants Review Committee

The role of the Research Grant Review Committee is:

- To make recommendations to the Executive and the Board of Trustees as to which organisations and individuals should receive Cystic Fibrosis Trust SRC grants and/ or VIA awards, working to ensure the successful delivery of the Trust's Research Strategy
- To make funding recommendations through the use of agreed processes for the fair, open and transparent assessment of grant applications
- To receive and assess reports on the progress and outcome of the grant awards
- To support the development of the annual research impact report, demonstrating the value of the research funded by the Trust
- To support the Executive and the Board of Trustees in the development of a broad and dynamic portfolio of world-class, innovative research benefiting all people with cystic fibrosis
- To support the ongoing review and continuous improvement of processes and guidelines used by the Cystic Fibrosis Trust for grant making

The Research Grants Review Committee will work within the Research Strategy agreed by the Cystic Fibrosis Trust Board of Trustees and will report on its work annually to them, including providing an overview of the grant awards made and how these support the aims set out in the Research Strategy as part of the research annual report.

The role of the Research Grants Review Committee is to advise the Executive Team and the Board of Trustees of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust in respect of the matters contained within these terms of reference. The Executive Team and the Board of Trustees seldom reject the advice and recommendations of advisory committees, although they have the right so to do and circumstances may exist when such action would be appropriate.

8. Review and Management of SRC Applications

Two members of the Research Grants Review Committee will be appointed to lead on each application (Introducing Members). A member of the Review Committee cannot lead on any application on which they have a declared conflict of interest. The Research Grants Review Committee in session will look at all relevant documentation, including peer reviews and applicant rebuttal, led by the introducing members. Scoring of the applications will use a defined scoring criteria framework. The Review Committee will generate a rank-ordered list of the applications in order of merit and use this to make recommendations to the Cystic Fibrosis Trust Executive Team and the Board of Trustees on which SRC grant applications meet the criteria to be awarded.

See Appendix 1 of this document for overview of SRC review process.

Successfully awarded SRCs are required to submit annual progress reports and final reports at the end of the funding period. Members of the Review Committee will review these reports and provide feedback to the Cystic Fibrosis Trust's Research (Awards) Team. The mid-term report is given both as a written report and also as a presentation at one of the Research Grants Review Committee meetings, giving the Committee an opportunity to ask questions. These reviews will support the ongoing management of the awards, as well the monitoring and reporting of impact of Trust funded research.

9. Review and Management of VIA Applications

Four VIA application deadlines will be set each year. The Research Grants Review Committee will review applications and make recommendations for funding prioritisation using a defined scoring criteria framework. Funding outcome decisions will be provided to applicants within 4 weeks of application deadline. An extended timeline for those applications requiring peer review by the Research Grants Review Committee will also be provided, with a response to the applicant within 8 weeks of the application deadline. Funding recommendations by the Research Grants Review Committee will be made to the Executive Team, and decisions communicated to the applicants by the Research (Awards) Team. This process will support the prioritisation and strategic allocation of VIA funding by the Trust.

See Appendix 2 of this document for an overview of VIA application review process.

Successfully awarded VIAs are required to submit annual progress reports and final reports if applicable on completion of the project. Where appropriate (ie. where review and feedback is not provided by the external funding partner responsible for the management of this award), members

of the Research Grants Review Committee will review these reports and provide feedback to the Cystic Fibrosis Trust's Research (Awards) Team. These reviews will support the ongoing management of the awards, as well the monitoring and reporting of impact of Trust funded research.

10. Role of Individual Research Grants Review Committee Members

The role of the individual members of Research Grants Review Committee includes:

- Contributing to the successful delivery of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust's research strategy by ensuring that research funded by the Trust aligns with the strategy and defined research priorities of all people with cystic fibrosis
- Ensuring that a broad portfolio of high-quality research is supported and enabled through recommendation and allocation of funding in a transparent and open manner
- Ensuring the impact of Trust-funded research is recognised and appropriately communicated
- Being a champion of the Trust and the research that it funds
- Having a broad understanding of the wider cystic fibrosis research landscape and environment
- Being committed to, and actively contributing to the delivery of the aims of Research Grants Review Committee
- Checking adherence to relevant standards of best practice, both within the organisation and in a wider context and driving the continuous improvement of the research governance processes within the Trust

11. Membership

Ten to twelve members from fields related to the charity's research strategy, will be drawn from academia, clinicians, scientists, funding agencies, including at least 2 members from the CF community. Members will not be representatives of any sector but will contribute their own experience and strategic thinking to the Research Grants Review Committee. Only one member from any organisation will be permitted. Additional expertise may be brought into the review process if required to support the review of specific applications.

Members of the Committee may apply for grants but must absent themselves from any meeting or process making decisions about that application. At all times the Committee should endeavour to avoid a situation where most of the Committee are in receipt of grants awarded by the same Committee. The Committee should aim to have a significant number of non-beneficiaries, recognising that due to its nature, CF has a relatively small pool of CF expertise to draw upon.

The Director of Research of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust will be member of the Research Grants Review Committee, and the CEO of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust will be invited to attend all meetings. The Chair of Trustees and the Chief Executive shall receive notice of each meeting and may attend and speak on relevant issues.

11.1. Chair

The Chair of the Research Grants Review Committee will be a well-respected expert who has a clear understanding of the charity's mission and research strategy. The Chair and Vice-Chair may be suggested by existing members of the Committee. Nominations will then be voted on by the Committee and this selection will be approved by the Cystic Fibrosis Trust's Board of Trustees.

In the absence of the Committee Chair at any meeting, the position will be filled by the Vice-Chair. Should both Chair and Vice-Chair be absent, the Research Grants Review Committee shall choose one of their number to be Chair for that meeting. The Chair will have fixed, 3-year term of office, with the possibility of renewing for a second 3-year term.

The Chair may apply for grants but must absent themselves from any meeting or process making decisions about that application in line with our conflict of interest policy.

The Chair will be invited to attend appropriate Board of Trustees meeting to discuss recommendations for SRC funding.

The accountable officer shall ensure that minutes of all meetings are circulated to each member of the Research Grant Review Committee and CEO; these minutes shall also be open to inspection by any Trustee on request to the Chair of the Research Grant Review Committee, as shall be the agenda papers, except where there is a conflict of interest.

11.2. Accountable Officer

The Accountable Officer is the senior representative of the Cystic Fibrosis Trust who acts as the permanent secretary to Research Grants Review Committee. The Trust's Director of Research will act as Accountable Officer, and their responsibilities, which may be delegated to the Head of Research, include:

- Liaison with the Chair to agree and arrange meeting calendar and agendas.
- Management of communications on behalf of the Chair to Research Grants Review Committee members
- Management of all other support to Research Grants Review Committee as required

11.3. End of membership

Group members will cease to be a member of the group if they:

- Resign from the group
- Resign from their employment or role (Trust employees only)
- Fail to attend three consecutive meetings without providing apologies to the Chair
- Fail to respond to three consecutive requests for application reviews from Cystic Fibrosis Trust's Research (Awards) team
- Knowingly fail to declare a conflict of interest
- Breach confidentiality
- Reach the maximum membership term as set out below

Each member can be appointed for up to 3 years, with the possibility of renewal for a further three years. In exceptional circumstances, a further renewal for an additional 3 years, up to a maximum of nine years' total service may be permitted. Three years must elapse before a person is approached for re-appointment to membership of the Committee.

To become a member of the Research Grants Review Committee when any opportunities arises, interested individuals will nominate themselves in response to advertisement of the opportunity. All applications will be reviewed by existing Research Grants Review Committee members, and the most suited nominees selected subject to approval by the Board of Trustees.

11.4. Quorum

A quorum shall consist of four members of Research Grants Review Committee, not including Cystic Fibrosis Trust employees.

12. Administration

12.1. Agenda Items

An agenda, with attached meeting papers, will be distributed at least one week prior to the next scheduled meeting.

The Chair has the right to refuse to list an item on the formal agenda, but members may raise an item under 'Other Business' if necessary and as time permits.

12.2. Frequency of Meetings

The Research Grants Review Committee will meet as needed to assess applications in a timely fashion following specific calls. It is anticipated that this will be about twice a year. Additional meetings may be held with the agreement of the Chair of the Committee.

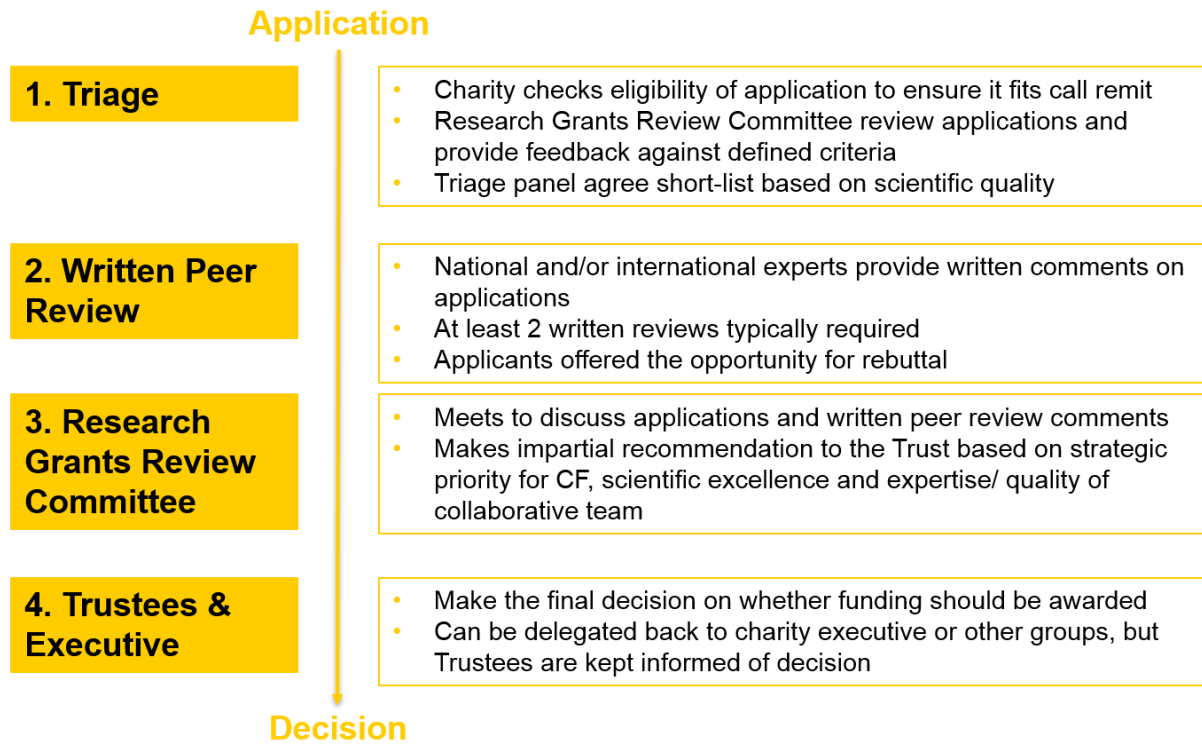
12.3. Meeting location

Where possible, meetings will be held at the Cystic Fibrosis Trust offices at One Aldgate, London, EC3N 1RE, or remotely via videoconferencing if appropriate.

In order to facilitate the engagement of people with cystic fibrosis, tele or videoconferencing facilities will be made available at all meetings.

- Approval date: 13 May 2021
- Review date: May 2022

Appendix 1: SRC Application Review Process



Appendix 2: VIA Application Review Process

