Development Award Guidelines for both Early Career Researchers and Established Investigators

Career level – Early Career researchers	UK-based. Less than eight years post PhD award, or equivalent professional training.
Career level – Established Investigators	UK-based. An independent investigator with over 8 years post PhD award, or equivalent professional training.
Research area	All areas of CF research. Applications that address the JLA refreshed CF research priorities including those that focus on supporting people growing older with CF, CF diabetes and the effects of modulators on systems outside the lungs are particularly welcome.
Preliminary submission (Expressions of Interest) Final submission Committee review	29th April 2024 September 2024 February 2025
Funding period	1 - 3 years
Funding amount	£150,000 - £300,000

What are they?

Development Awards – for established investigators.
These are awards for UK based established Independent Investigators to undertake preparatory work (e.g. generating preliminary data, strengthening collaborations, developing partnerships etc) to develop future applications for further funding, for example to our Strategic Research Centre (SRC) programme.

Development Awards – for early career researchers
Early carer researchers are defined as someone who is within eight years of their PhD award, or equivalent professional training, to undertake preparatory work (e.g. generating preliminary data, strengthening collaborations, developing partnerships etc) to develop future applications for further funding and help career development. Applications from basic scientists are particularly welcome. Applicants must be UK based.

We strongly encourage applicants to contact staff in the Research Awards team at Cystic Fibrosis Trust ahead of applying to this scheme: researchgrants@cysticfibrosis.org.uk

Who can apply?

Early Career Researcher Development Award

You must be UK-based, have less than eight years post PhD award, or equivalent professional training*.

Graduated PhD students and post docs from our existing SRCs, are also welcome to apply for our Early Career Researcher Development Award. Applications from basic scientists are particularly welcome

Early Career Researchers must name their mentor as a co-applicant on the grant and submit a letter of support from their host institution alongside their application. The letter should confirm that the institution will host the project, if awarded and confirm that the researcher is capable of running the project and will get support to do so.

Established investigators Development Award:

You must be a UK based independent investigator with over 8 years post PhD award, or equivalent professional training

Additional funding notes:

1. Applicants from outside the field of CF are welcome but must demonstrate support from an established CF researcher. The centre where the work is to be pursued must be an established research institution in the UK. The applicant must have space and facilities to run the project.

2. For established investigators if you applied for a DA in the previous funding round and were unsuccessful **you cannot reapply** for this year's funding round. New applications may be considered if differing significantly from any original proposal previously submitted. If you have previously applied for a DA award and are looking to submit a completely new proposal please contact the Research Awards Team to discuss eligibility before applying. Please note that this does not apply to early career researchers. **Early career researchers are permitted to reapply**.

What funding is available and for how long?

Funding is available for short-term research projects lasting 1 to 3 years and costing between £150,000 - £300,000. The amount of funding awarded will be determined by the scale and nature of the research or development activity to be conducted.

What will we fund?

All areas of CF research. Projects that address the JLA refreshed CF research priorities including those that focus on supporting people growing older with CF, CF diabetes and the effects of modulators on systems outside the lungs are particularly welcome.

Funding support is provided for:

- Salaries (post-doc, PhD students and technicians only). The award can cover the salary costs of post-doctoral applicants.
- Research consumables directly attributable to the project

- Research equipment, non-capital expenditure, essential for the project (up to £20k across the period of the grant)
- Travel funding of up to £1,000 per year to facilitate travel relevant to the grant, such as attendance at scientific meetings

The following rates are the minimum levels for PhD stipends:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Within London	£25,954	£26,572	£27,190	£27,808
Outside London	£23,955	£24,525	£25,096	£25,666

What will we not fund

Indirect costs and overheads, apprenticeship levies, salary costs of permanent staff, capital expenditure

How to apply?

Applicants should complete the appropriate Expression of Interest application form initially. These should be submitted by 5pm on Monday 29 April 2024. Following review, successful applicants will be invited in July 2024 to submit a full application by September 2024. Successful applicants from this stage will be notified in March 2025, for projects starting in or before October 2025.

How will applications be assessed?

Expressions of interest are assessed on strategic fit and quality of the research programme by our Research Grants Review Committee (RGRC). Details of the RGRC membership can be found here: Research Grant Review Committee (cysticfibrosis.org.uk)

Importantly, please note that there are a number of lay members on the RGRC who represent the Cystic Fibrosis (CF) community, these are either people with cystic fibrosis or parents of children with cystic fibrosis. Therefore, it is in your best interests to ensure that your lay summary is jargon-free and explains the potential impact of your application for people with CF.

The RGRC will decide which applications will be invited to submit a full application. Full applications are reviewed following a rigorous peer review by external scientists and clinicians before being considered by our RGRC, whom will recommend applications for funding.

Recommendations for funding will be judged on how well applications meet the five principles that guide our approach – our 'SCORE' objectives:

- **Strategic:** demonstrate exceptional relevance to one or more strategic priority.

- **Collaborative:** demonstrate the clear added-value of bringing a group of researchers together to tackle a major concern in cystic fibrosis.

- **Outcome-focused:** demonstrate a clear understanding of the potential impact of the programme of work on cystic fibrosis outcomes.

- **Risk-based:** demonstrate innovative and diverse, low and high-risk research approaches to achieve benefits for everyone with cystic fibrosis.

- **Excellence-driven**: scientifically excellent and conducted by an internationally leading research team

The scoring criteria, used for the expression of interest and full application stage are contained in Annex 1.

How do we measure success?

Progress will be monitored through annual progress reports and submissions to the impact software Researchfish. All reports and data will be monitored by our RGRC and reported to Trustees, donors and the CF community in the Trust's impact reports. As a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) impact data from Trust-funded grants contributes their sector-wide reports.

The expectation of these awards is for the applicants to develop preliminary data/expertise/build partnerships and collaborations etc. for future funding e.g. our SRC programme etc. In the case of post-doctoral applicants, it is hoped that these awards will help to build the applicant's career in CF research.

Additional notes:

- If any generative AI tools (e.g. Chat GPT) have been used to assist in the preparation and development of a research proposal the lead applicant should ensure that the challenges and ethical considerations, such as the potential for social biases, that arise in using AI are mitigated for. Cystic Fibrosis Trust supports the Research Funders Joint Policy group statement on the use of generative AI tools in funding applications and assessment (AMRC agrees to joint approach on AI | Association of Medical Research Charities)

- Cystic Fibrosis Trust supports the MRC standards outlined in their embedding diversity in research design policy (MRC embedding diversity in research design – UKRI) For example if using animal cells it is expected that both sexes of animals, tissues or cells, will be used, unless a strong justification not to do so is given and consideration should be given regarding adequately addressing the characteristics of the population groups or subpopulations who could benefit from the research being proposed including any underserved groups in the community

Annex 1 :   Development Awards Scoring criteria:

1. Quality Of Research Programme

Have the applicants presented a well-identified, important and challenging problem strategically relevant to cystic fibrosis? Consider relevance to the identified Cystic Fibrosis research priorities: JLA refreshed CF research priorities
Is the proposed research innovative and at the cutting-edge of the research domain?

2. Impact And Value

Have the applicants presented a plausible description of the likely impact to benefit patients with cystic fibrosis?
Has Equity, Diversity and Inclusion been considered and address appropriately within the application
Is the proposed research likely to benefit cystic fibrosis at some point in the future?

3. Quality Of Investigators

Does the research team have the full skills/expertise necessary to achieve the research goals?
In the case of post-doctoral applicants, have they demonstrated support from mentors and institutions?
Does any proposed collaboration add value to the research and potential to deliver impact/ benefit for people with CF?

Each criterion is scored out of 9 using the following guidance:

High
1 - Exceptional - Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
2 - Outstanding - Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
3 - Excellent - Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
Medium
4 - Very Good - Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
5 - Good - Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
6 - Satisfactory - Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
Low
7 - Fair - Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
8 - Marginal - A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
9 - Poor - Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

Minor Weakness: An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen impact
Moderate Weakness: A weakness that lessens impact
Major Weakness: A weakness that severely limits impact