

RBHC Research Fund
Seed Grants Application Round
Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals Charity

1 Introduction

In response to a request from Heart, Lung and Critical Care Clinical Group (HLCC CG) leadership, Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals Charity (RBHC) launched the annual RBHC Research Fund Seed Grants scheme. The first application round of the scheme was held in January 2025 with over £400,000 being awarded to 11 seed funding projects across HLCC CG. RBHC are opening the Research Fund Seed Grants scheme for applications to the second round in October 2025. As for the first round there will be £400,000 available to provide seed funding of up to **£40,000** to research projects within the heart and lung care fields led by colleagues employed by the Guy's and St Thomas's NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT) for a **12-month period** with awards due to be made in **March 2026** and projects to start in **April 2026**. Flexibility on starting dates will be given on case-by-case basis but as part of the application process applicants will be asked to give timelines around both regulatory approvals and recruitment of key project staff. The purpose of this funding is to build research capacity by supporting applicants to produce data that will lead to substantial externally funded research projects. When fully funded, projects should strive to tackle heart and lung disease and to create lasting positive impact on the care and experience of patients and/or communities affected by these conditions.

This guidance has been produced to support applicants in developing their applications for the RBHC Research Fund Seed Grants Application Round. Queries about the application process can be forwarded to grants@rbhcharity.org. Applications close at **23:59pm on 19th December 2025**.

We expect to fund between 10-15 projects again this application round, and the Charity is planning to release further annual application rounds, based on different priorities and themes, over the next three years.

2 Funding Priorities

Following consultation with colleagues at the Trust, this application round will focus on seed/pump priming funding for research projects. These initial projects will be pilot studies aimed at gathering evidence for larger grant application opportunities to major funders, such as British Heart Foundation, Asthma+ Lung UK, NIHR, MRC, among others.

While working in partnership with colleagues within the Trust is not a mandatory requirement for this application round, applications will be scored on partnership, and projects working across different areas of the Trust, as well as external partners, will receive funding priority.

3 Eligibility Criteria

3.1 Person specification

3.1.1 Lead applicant

The lead applicant will lead the project if the application is successful. They will submit the application form and be the main point of contact with RBHC during the application and review process, project delivery and reporting stages.

For this round of funding, applications from all professions are welcomed. Lead applicants will be restricted to individuals who are employed by the Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT). This includes staff on Trust honorary contracts, provided the individual's role at the Trust includes delivering or supporting services to Trust patients (e.g. running clinics at one of the Trust's hospitals, delivering operational functions such as ICT). Individuals will not be eligible to apply if they have any other type of Trust contract outside of those mentioned above.

Multiple applications from the same lead applicant are eligible for submission, but only one grant award per lead applicant will be made in this application round.

3.1.2 Collaborators

An application may include up to four collaborators. These individuals can be external to GSTT, if their expertise is needed for the success of the project, and you will need to explain why in the application. However, it is expected that a significant proportion of the award will be used to cover Trust-incurred costs.

Collaborators could support different projects submitted in the application round, but if more than one project receives an award, the collaborator will need line manager confirmation that there is capacity to be involved in multiple projects at the same time.

3.1.3 Line Manager or Senior Colleague Approval

In your application you will be asked to provide contact information for a line manager or senior colleague who approves the project taking place. This person

must not be a collaborator on your project, and should your application be successful they will be asked to co-sign the project grant.

If you are requesting PA allocation or time ring-fenced to deliver the project, this needs to be signed off by your line manager or the Deputy Manager Director, whoever is responsible for your job planning.

3.1.4 HLCC Research Office Approval

It is important that the lead applicant has got approval from the Research Office at the HLCC CG for their project with sign off from Nana Theodorou Associate Director of Research and Development. Applications without this approval will not be considered.

3.1.5 Grant Adminstrating Organisation Confirmation

Where projects are being sponsored through GSTT or an academic institution this organisation will need to provide written confirmation that they agree to be Grant Adminstrating organisation (GAO) for the project. Any Grant Awards will be made jointly to the lead applicant and the GAO with the GAO needing to agree and sign the Grant Award and accompanying Terms and Conditions as well as the lead applicant.

3.2 Project Specification - Grant Duration, Amount and Sponsorship

The RHBC Research Fund is an opportunity to receive funding for pilot projects to a maximum of £40,000 and that are to last no longer than one year. A detailed budget breakdown and justification of costs will be asked in the application form. To be eligible for funding, all projects must seek to develop medical knowledge or key biomedical sciences in relation to cardiology and/or respiratory healthcare.

This does not need to be achieved directly through this funding, but rather, projects **must** lead to a larger funding request to another funder. This will be asked for in the application form, and if a clear fundraising plan is not submitted, applications won't be considered.

Applicants will need to make clear on the application who will be the single sponsoring organisation for the project, either GSTT or an academic institution. Applicants should keep in mind that a further grant is expected to be sought after the delivery of the seed grant, and therefore the most appropriate sponsor should be selected with this in mind. We expect that most costs would be incurred by the sponsoring organisation. We will consider providing funds to other collaborating organisations on a case-by-case basis. Where agreed by the Charity, this collaboration will need to be managed by the sponsor as a sub-contract. Award

funding will be made in March 2026 with projects envisaged to be starting in April 2026. It is important that a clear timeline is provided in the application for necessary regulatory and ethical approvals and hiring of key project staff so that projects are ready to start in April 2026. During the Grant Award stage in March 2026 the Charity will arrange meetings with awardees to review project timelines and discuss any changes to project start dates.

Projects involving animals are eligible for consideration. However, they must meet the criteria laid out in ' 7.1 Use of Animals in your project' below, and will be required to submit additional information to meet this requirement. Providing the use of animals meets these criteria this additional information will not be used to comparatively assess the projects.

Eligible Expenditure	
Item	Restrictions
Basic and translational research	
Research consumables directly attributable to the project	
Research equipment essential for the project	Only small items under £5,000
Ring-fenced time to deliver the research project	Budget allowing and with line manager approval
Publication fees	Exclusively for the findings of the funded project
Specialised research software licences	
Specialist computer equipment	up to £5,000
Conference attendance costs to present project findings at conferences or scientific meetings relevant to the grant	up to £1,000
Patient and public involvement (PPI) costs	
Ineligible Expenditure	
Clinical trials	
Salaries/PA time that are not directly associated with the delivery of the project	
Extensions of PhD projects, fellowships bridge-funding, or short-term fellowships	
Supplement to a fellowship or active research, Co-funding of projects that are part-funded by other funders.	
Equipment that is essential to core patient safety and/or care, and that should receive core funding from Trust departmental budgets, including medical equipment.	
Essential medical training course fees	
Subscription to professional membership bodies	

This list is not exhaustive. If you have any queries, please contact the Charity's Grants Team at grants@rbhcharity.org.

5 Application Process

5.1 Making an application

This round of funding will be a single stage application, opening on the **Monday 20 October**, running until **23.59pm on Friday 19 December**. To apply, you will need to fill out an application via google forms which can be found [here](#).

In order to make an application, google forms will ask you to sign into a google account. For this application we ask that you sign up for a google account using your Trust email address and **not** a personal email address. RBHC is committed to protecting your personal data and the use of a trust email acts as an extra protection in this effort.

The areas of information that will be required for in your application are as follows:

- Lead Applicant Details
- Line Manager or Senior Colleague Contact information
- Collaborator(s) Detail
- Research Proposal
 - o Project Title
 - o Lay Research Summary
 - o Background and Context
 - o Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement
 - o Research Question/Hypothesis
 - o Aims and Objective for *this Funding*
 - o Study Design for *this Funding*
 - o Equality, Diversity and Inclusion on Data Use and Patient Recruitment
 - o Future Funding Plans
 - o People and Partnerships
 - o Ethics & Research Governance
 - o Benefits to Patients
- Costs & Deliverability
 - o Project Budget and Milestones (Template provided)
 - o Delivery Risks and Contingency Plans
- Approvals and Project Sponsorship
- The Use of Animals
- RBH Charity Data Collection and Feedback
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

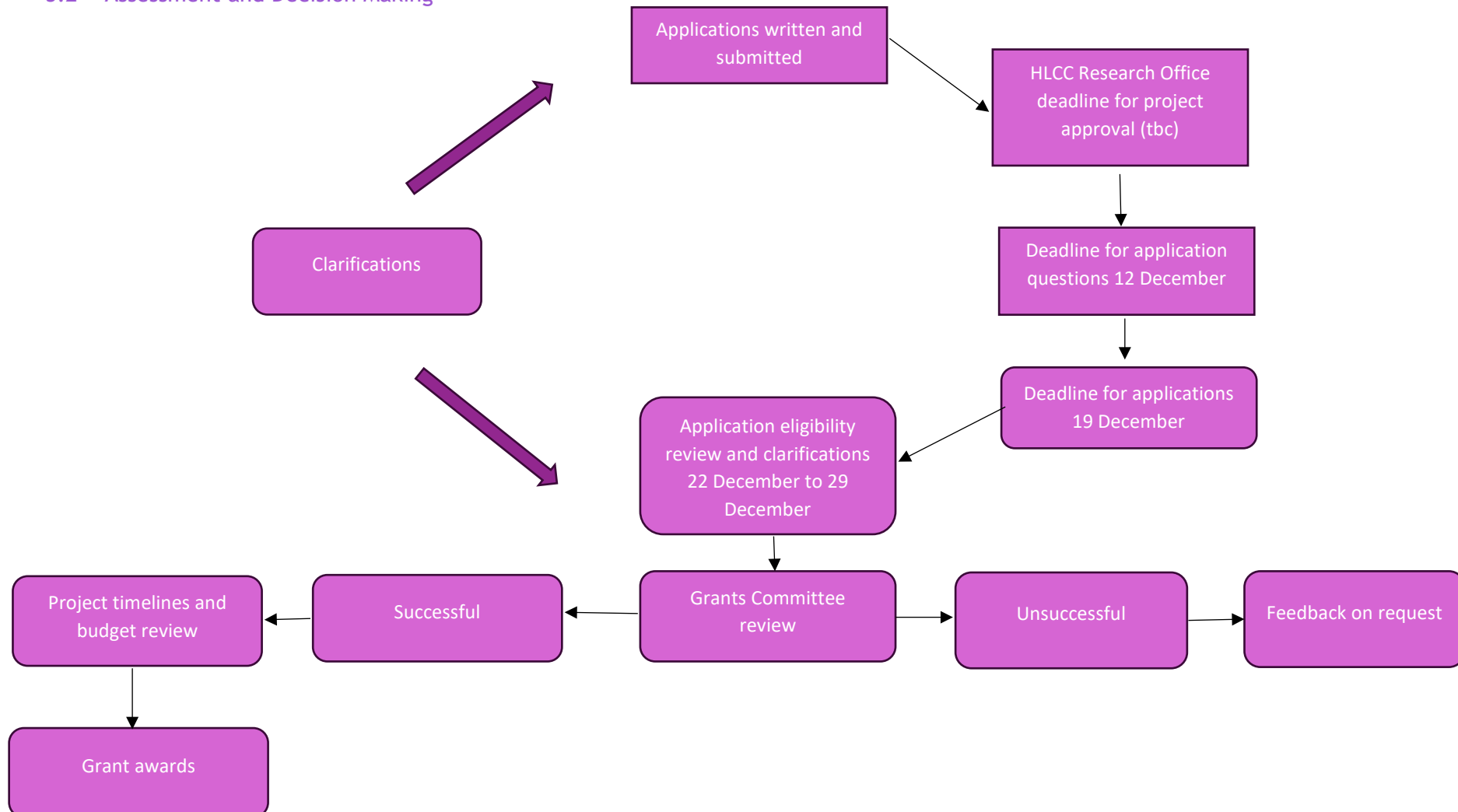
Project budgets will need to be **approved by the sponsoring organisation** in the first instance. In support of your project's application, budgets must be reviewed by the HLCC CG research development team before submission to the Charity. Please note, the final date to submit your budget for review is Friday 5 December. Please submit to research.grants@rbht.nhs.uk.

A copy of the Budget and Milestones template can be [downloaded here](#).

And a copy of the full application, for reference only, can be [downloaded here](#).

During the application window you will be able to ask questions directly to the RBHC Grants team (Grants@rbhcharity.org) until the 12 December. These questions will be amalgamated into a FAQ document that we will update regularly and can be found on the RBH website on the [Research Fund page](#).

5.2 Assessment and Decision Making



Upon the closure of the application window on 19 December applications will be checked for eligibility, and applicants will be contacted if key information is missing from their applications. Applicants will have **until 29 December** to provide this information. If this information is not provided within this timeframe, the application may be considered ineligible for funding at the discretion of the Charity.

Applications will then be anonymised and reviewed/scored by members of the Charity's independent Grants Committee. The Grants Committee will then meet in February 2026. The committee consists of representatives of clinicians and researchers specialised in respiratory medicine and cardiology, as well as patients/family members representatives. Committee members who have a conflict of interest with a specific project will exclude themselves from both discussions and voting relating to this proposal.

The Grants Committee will award grants, prioritising the highest scoring projects, until either the full £400,000 is allocated or every project that meets the RBHC Research Fund's minimum requirements has received funding.

5.3 Assessment scoring

The assessment of your project will focus on the criteria below:

- **Lay summary:** how well the project is described, including overall aims and objectives and how it will benefit heart and lung patient, in plain English.
- **Need and benefit for patients:** expected research outcomes aim to enhance our understanding of health and illness and/or have the potential to lead to improved lives for heart and lung patients.
- **Research quality/ feasibility:** preliminary or published data that supports the research question or hypothesis and expected research outcomes. The proposed approaches are realistic, well developed and likely to achieve the aims.
- **Future funding plan:** the proposal includes appropriate plans and commitment to use the expected research outcomes in the future, including dissemination plans, and how they will lead to further funding.
- **People credentials:** the applicants and wider team have the necessary experience, skills and knowledge to undertake the proposed research, relative to career stage and career path.
- **Finance/ value for money:** budgets are accurate, costs are realistic and provide good value for money. All costs are justified.
- **Deliverability (timing and risks):** All project milestones are accounted for, and risks for the project delivery have been considered and mitigated for.

- **Partnership:** Higher scores will be given to teams delivering the project composed by staff members from different departments/clinical groups within the Trust.
- **Patient and Public Engagement, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:** level of patient involvement on project planning, development, design and dissemination of outcomes. Different demographics and protected characteristics (including gender, age, ethnicity, etc) will be taken into account in terms of research samples/ data and patient recruitment used/planned for the project, so the research results are reflective of the wider population demographics.

In addition to the above scored criteria, the above eligibility criteria (Section 3) will be applied to all applications.

6 Post assessment period

6.1 Successful Grants

Should your project be successful in obtaining funding, RBHC will contact you in February 2026 to set up a call to confirm the project timelines and budget. RBHC will then provide you and the Grant Adminstrating Organisation (GAO) for your project with a grant agreement and grant terms and conditions. The funding of your project is not considered confirmed until you and the GAO have signed and returned the associated agreement and terms and conditions.

Grant agreements will be for a period of 12 months from April 2026, unless a later start date is required. While this is an absolute cap on the length of projects, necessary variations on the date of commencement may be considered on a case-by-case basis at the award stage.

6.2 Reporting

The dates of this funding will be limited to a single year from the point of the commencement of the grant. Over the life of this project we will require two formal reports, an interim report at six months and an end of project report set at one month after the end of the funding period.

RBHC also reserves the right to request information and informal updates on an ad hoc basis, including after the end of grant report, to analyse the long-term impact of the grant. We will endeavour to make these requests as light touch as possible, but may be necessary for our fundraising efforts, in support of further research and the wider Trust.

6.3 Feedback and unsuccessful bids

RBHC will endeavour to provide feedback to all unsuccessful projects automatically. However, dependent on the volume of these projects we may only be able to provide this upon request. Successful applications will also be eligible for feedback upon request, although these will not be prioritised during the post-award set up period.

Should your project be unsuccessful, you will not be barred from resubmitting the proposal in a future round of funding. However, this will be dependent on the project fitting any potential themes of this future funding round and we would request that you consider our feedback before doing so.

Further rounds of the RBHC Research Fund are planned to follow this application round. At this stage no themes for further funding have been decided upon.

7 General guidance to applicants

7.1 Use of Animals in your project

As a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities, RBHC is committed to upholding the [principles of the 3Rs](#) (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) where animals are to be involved in research that we fund.

The applicant must ensure that any part of the Research involving the use of animals complies at all times with the relevant laws and regulation.

Where possible, the applicant must adopt procedures and techniques that avoid the use of animals. Where this is not possible, the project must be designed so that:

- The least sentient species with the appropriate physiology for the work are used.
- The number of animals used in an experiment must be the minimum sufficient to create adequate statistical power to answer the question posed.
- The severity of the procedures performed upon animals is kept to a minimum. The experiment should be kept as short as possible, and anaesthesia/analgesia used to minimise pain where possible.

Applications should include an appropriately detailed and justified experimental plan, with statistical analyses and preliminary data to support the proposed research when possible. This includes incorporation of the [principles of the 3Rs](#) (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) where animals are to be involved. In particular, the Grants Committee members are asked to consider and comment on whether:

- the research question can be addressed without the use of animals
- the species is justified
- the experimental design is appropriate

- the number of animals requested are appropriate

Any recommendations arising from the Grant Committee review of the application with regards to animal use and communicated to the applicant (whether in the Award Letter or other form or written or electronic communication) must be followed by the the project.

Please refer to the [NC3Rs APPIVE](#) guidelines and responsibility in the use of [animals in bioscience research](#) for further guidance.

When animals are purchased from commercial suppliers for use in the project taking place in the UK, UK suppliers should be used wherever possible to minimise the risk of suffering during transport.

Please be aware that GSTT does not sponsor projects that involve animal research. These projects will require a separate sponsoring organisation.

7.2 Lay description of your project

Lay summaries are descriptions of your work written in plain English. These are important as they explain your research to people outside of your field of expertise. This includes lay members of our Grants Committee (including patients and their family members or carers) who help to decide which project applications are awarded funding.

Your writing should be simple and direct. Keep sentences short and to the point. Avoid technical or scientific terms (where possible, where not define them in simple language). Don't use acronyms or jargon and try not to use normalisations - 'utilisation' could be better written as 'using'. Essentially, try to write as you would speak.

A good lay summary will include:

- A lay title
- Brief background or context to your research, including a description of the unmet need(s) that your research will address
- The aim of your project
- How you'll do your research
- The impact of your project on patients

Further guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Research here: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/plain-english-summaries/27363>

7.3 Commercial and Intellectual Property

The Charity requires that the Grant Administering Organisation (GAO) will use all reasonable endeavours to protect and exploit the Intellectual Property arising from work done pursuant to a Grant and has in place strategies and procedures for the identification, protection and management of Intellectual Property, full details of which have been provided to the Charity and with which the GAO must comply. If the applicant is successful both they and the GAO will need to confirm agreement with the Charity's Commercial and Intellectual Property terms and conditions before funding is confirmed.

The GAO shall notify the Charity in writing (which may be in one of the reports referred to above), providing details of the steps which the GAO will take to protect the Intellectual Property and shall keep the Charity regularly updated on the progress of such protection.

7.4 Further considerations for applicants

- Ensure that your project addresses a problem that is concise, defined and measurable and explain how your project will be more effective than current practices or approaches.
- Ensure you can fully describe the evidence underpinning the problem.
- Ensure you have identified and can describe the most appropriate methodology for delivery and include a robust evaluation plan.
- Ensure you have a plan for disseminating results.
- Ensure you have a fundraising plan for the project going forward.
- Application budgets must be prepared/approved by the project's sponsoring organisation.
- All applications budgets from the HLCC CG must be reviewed and approved by the research development team before submission to the Charity. Please note, the final date to submit your budget for review to the HLCC CG Research Team. Please submit to research.grants@rbht.nhs.uk.
- Discuss your proposal with senior members of your department, as appropriate.
- If your project utilises ring-fenced research time, you will be required to confirm you have received permission to use your time in this manner.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guidance document for the RBHC Research Fund - Seed Grants Application Round. We look forward to receiving your application. If you have any questions, please refer to the FAQ document at the RBHC website, which will be regularly updated during the grant application window. If you have any further questions, please get in touch with the Grants team (grants@rbhcharity.org).

7.5 RBHC Research Fund Schedule

- **14 October:** Fund briefing from Charity Programmes and Funding team on GSTT staff forum
- **15 October:** Charity Programmes and Funding team info stall at Harefield Hospital.
- **16 October:** Charity Programmes and Funding info stall at Royal Brompton Hospital.
- **TBC:** Charity Programmes and Funding team info stall at St Thomas Hospital
- **20 October:** Fund opens
- **12 December:** Deadline for acceptance of questions
- **19 December:** Deadline for applications
- **End of February 2026:** Application decisions communicated
- **March 2026:** Grant awards