Excellence Network project grants scheme 2024:

Application guidance and scheme processes

Parkinson's UK is the largest member-led charitable funder of Parkinson's research and service improvement in Europe. Over three decades up to the end of 2023, we have invested £11m into service improvement initiatives and new nurse and other specialist NHS posts.

Contents

1. Introduction

The Parkinson's Excellence Network is working to transform health and care services for people with Parkinson's across the UK.

We bring together and support health and social care professionals to better care for people with Parkinson's. We share best practice, resources, education and support improvements to services for people with Parkinson's and their families.

This document provides an overview of the Excellence Network Project Grants Scheme (the Scheme). It will explain the scope of the Scheme, the application and review process, and the implementation and monitoring process.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Excellence Network Project Grants Scheme Terms and Conditions here.

If you have any queries about the Excellence Network project grants scheme or the application process, please contact us at excellencenetworkgrants@parkinsons.org.uk.

2. Definitions

- **Application:** The application, pre-application and full application submitted to the Charity by the applicants to apply for funding to carry out the Project.
- **Lead applicant or Grantholder:** The principal applicant who has responsibility for the intellectual leadership and overall management of the project.
- **Host organisation:** The organisation that is the Lead applicant or Grantholder's employer**.**
- **Project:** The project and its plans and activities, processes, investigations and roll out which are the subject of the Grant, as described in the application.
- **Award Letter:** The letter from the Charity to the Grantholder specifying the Project title, amount awarded, duration of the Grant and any additional terms and conditions. It is only sent to successful applicants and forms a part of the final contract.
- **Grant:** The award made to the Grantholder by the Charity and described in the Award Letter, to enable the Grantholder to undertake the Project.
- **Grant Acceptance Form:** The form that is available to the Grantholder via email when the Grant is awarded. Signing of the Acceptance Form by the relevant person denotes acceptance of the contract by the Grantholder, host organisation (and co-applicant(s) and collaborator(s), if any).

3. Purpose and scope

- The Scheme funds projects that will improve statutory health or care services for people with Parkinson's and their loved ones living anywhere in the UK.

- We fund projects that are likely to have significant, sustained impact at a local, regional or national level, including projects that bridge the gap between policy and practice to help create the right conditions for change in the NHS.
- The maximum duration of grants is two years.
- We prioritise projects that reduce health inequalities, build the evidence base for best practice care, and have the potential to be replicable in other settings or geographies. Applicants must demonstrate how the outcomes from their projects will be sustained following the funding period and how the results will be shared across Parkinson's and professional communities.
- We also prioritise projects that are aligned to our National Priority Programmes, as these areas were identified as priority areas for improvement in the 2019 UK Parkinson's Audit. Currently, these are:
  - Better bone health
  - Parkinson's nurses: your future
  - Integrated multidisciplinary care
  - Time critical medications

However, we welcome projects relating to other themes.

Examples of projects we have funded in previous years can be found here.

Out of scope:

This Scheme is **not** for:

a) Grants for pump priming specialist Parkinson's nurse posts. Details for these grants are available here.
b) Grants for pump priming specialist Parkinson's allied health or mental health professional posts. Details for these grants are available here.
c) Grants for early stage clinical research, or clinical trials, or non-drug research trials (including research into deviations from current accepted standards of treatments or care, such as testing the efficacy of a new form of exercise or a new technology). Details for these grants are available here. To help you distinguish between research and service improvement, please refer to the UKRI-MRC (HRA) - Defining Research document and decision tool. Please see the 'generalisability of outcomes and community impact' section below before using this tool.
d) Grants for projects that offer people with Parkinson's the opportunity to participate in physical activity **outside of** statutory health or care services. Details for these grants are available here.

Generalisability of outcomes and community impact

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between research projects and service improvement projects. A key difference is that research should always be generalisable: the knowledge generated can be applied to a wider population. This may be the case for knowledge generated through service improvement projects but generalisability isn't necessarily fundamental to the project.

When using the HRA tool, please select 'no' to the question about generalisability and transferability of findings unless generalisability is fundamental to the project.

Grant Value:

Grants are available for:
- small projects up to £12,000. There is no minimum value for these grants.
- large projects between £12,001 and £60,000.

Grant utilisation:

The kinds of costs that are allowable and can be included in the budget application include project management costs, tools and equipment to support patient care (except communication equipment such as laptops, phones etc), and consultancy fees. See section 6 for further details on cost guidance.

4. Eligibility criteria

- Applications must be directly relevant to people currently living with Parkinson's.
- Direct applications are welcome from:
    - Any statutory health care or social care organisation in the UK including NHS trusts, NHS health boards, NHS health and social care trusts
    - Other statutory health care related organisations or authorities (for example Integrated Care Systems)
    - Statutory social care providers
    - Social enterprises (such as Community Interest Companies, CICs) contracted to provide statutory health or care services.
- UK Universities, UK research institutions, voluntary organisations, and social enterprises that are not contracted to provide statutory health or care services are also eligible to apply, and are **advised to meaningfully partner** with at least one organisation that is eligible for a direct application. This is to ensure a clear pathway to improving statutory services for people with Parkinson's that are free at the point of access. If these types of organisations wish to apply without an eligible partnering organisation, their expressions of interest will be assessed on a case by case basis and they will only be permitted to apply at the Funding Panel's discretion. The Panel will make this decision

based on the overall objectives of the project and the likelihood of it influencing national health or care policy or practice.

- Private enterprises, for example, technology companies are eligible to apply. They **must partner meaningfully** with at least one organisation that is eligible for a direct application. Parkinson's UK closely monitors applications from private enterprises across its various funding streams to counteract duplication of funding requests.
- The lead applicant should hold an employment contract (or honorary contract if a clinical academic) with the UK host organisation that extends beyond the period of the grant.
- Co-applicants and collaborators may be based at institutions outside the UK or at pharmaceutical or biotech companies. Members of the Parkinson's community are also eligible to be co-applicants. There is no upper limit to the number of co-applicants or collaborators.

5. Application process

- The call for grant applications and deadlines for submissions will be announced on [the Scheme webpage](#) and through the [Excellence Network e-newsletter](#). Submission of the final application form must be done by the stipulated deadline(s). Only completed applications will be reviewed.
- Deadlines are subject to change and will be announced through the same channels. Please note that we reserve the right to close grant rounds early in the event of high demand for the Scheme. We therefore encourage early applications.
- There is a different application process for each scheme. To receive the relevant application forms, please fill in the correct online 'Expression of Interest form'.

  - Excellence Network small project grants: This is a rolling scheme with a one-stage application process. You must fill in an application form [(see preview of the 2023 form here.](#) You can refer to this form as an example).

To submit your Expression of Interest for the **Small** Project Grants please [complete this online form](#).

  - Excellence Network large project grants: This scheme runs once a year and has a two-stage application process. First you must submit a pre-application form [(see preview of the 2023 form here](#) You can refer to this form as an example). If this is successful, you will be invited to the full application stage [(see preview of the 2023 full application form here.](#) You can refer to this form as an example).

To submit your Expression of Interest for the **Large** Project Grants, please [complete this online form.](#)

- All applications must be made in the English language.
- Details of any and all collaborations should be included in your application and a letter confirming agreement or a data sharing agreement with each collaborator should be submitted along with the final application (only during the full application stage in case of the large project grants).
- Any relevant "in press" articles should be attached as appendices.
- You will receive a confirmation email at the time of submitting your application form. No changes can be made to the application once it has been submitted and the confirmation message has been received.
- Please note, each application form at each stage for each scheme is accepted based on the understanding that you consent to the Excellence Network sharing its contents with others for the review and decision-making process. Due processes are in place to ensure confidentiality of your application.
- Unless the Charity requires further information, no correspondence will be entered into until the results are notified. Applicants are requested not to initiate contact with the Excellence Network grants team during the review process.

6. Cost guidance

- Applications for funding must be in British pounds sterling and should include VAT where relevant.
- All applications must clearly justify the funding requested.
- The proposed budgets should provide a high level breakdown of the expected costs along with supporting justification. The kinds of costs that are permissible and can be included in the application include project management costs, tools and equipment to support patient care, and consultancy fees.
- Each proposed cost or budget line item will be thoroughly reviewed and scrutinised by the reviewers.
- If any non-permissible costs are reasonably justifiable and omitting them is likely to affect the success of the project, a request with justification can be submitted with the budget.
- Applicants should seek the advice of their institution's finance office on costing the application well in advance of the final application deadline.
- Parkinson's UK will only reimburse directly incurred costs for awarded grants as per the application submitted and sanctioned.
- Inflation will not be paid in year one; inflation in year two, if applicable will be allowable up to 3%.
- Applications that exceed the maximum grant value are strongly discouraged. In exceptional circumstances, the Funding Panel may approve projects that exceed the maximum grant value by a minimal amount. In this event, please contact us to discuss

the options. The Funding Panel reserves the right to reject any applications that exceed the maximum value for the Scheme.

- The Funding Panel reserves the right to recommend part-funding of a project. For example the Panel may ask for any proposed costs that are deemed excessive or inappropriate to be removed. Applicants may also be asked to explore alternative sources of funding for particular costs.

Permissible and non-permissible costs:

a) **Staff costs**: Basic fixed term salary should be stated for each individual. Provision for London weighting, superannuation and National Insurance should be shown separately. An appropriate grading and salary must be quoted even where a named assistant cannot be specified; both grading and salary should have the approval of the appropriate administrative officer of the institution where the assistant would be employed. Parkinson's UK will not pay salaries for lead applicants, co-applicants or collaborators named on the funding applications unless their salaries are dependent on grant funding. In these cases, the charity would require a letter from the Institute confirming this.

b) **Equipment, tools, technology, and software:** Costs of clinical equipment, clinical tools or specialised technology and software that support patient care may be included if they directly relate to the application. For equipment that does not directly relate to the application such as testing equipment or psychometric tests, a case-by-case funding decision will be taken. The equipment and tools cost cannot include communications and IT equipment (such as laptops, computer accessories and phones) or furniture.

c) **Administrative expenses:** As a general rule, the Scheme does not cover administrative expenses (such as Internet and call costs, and general postage and courier costs), sundries (such as cost of stationery and batteries). Costs that directly relate to the project, for example, printing of resources may be included.

d) **Travel and accommodation:** As a general rule, the Scheme does not cover travel and accommodation costs (except in relation to patient and public involvement (PPI) activities; see below)

e) **Conferences:** As a general rule, the Scheme does not cover costs of conference registration or attendance.

f) **Open access publications:** Costs related to open access publishing may be included.

g) **Patient and public involvement:** Costs for any planned PPI activities may be included in your application, for example reasonable travel costs for face to face meetings. Gifts to participants are not permissible.

Additional considerations for the Excellence Network large project grants:

- The budget in the pre-application should be realistic and within ±10% of the budget that will be provided in the full application.

- Costings at the pre-application stage for the large project grants do not need institutional approval.
- Applicants who are successful at the pre-application stage will be asked to submit a detailed annual budget in the full application spanning the entire proposed duration of the project.

7. Patient and public involvement (PPI)

- It is highly recommended that all applicants work with people with Parkinson's and family and carers in the development of an application and, if successful, throughout each stage of the grant process.
- You might find our [PPI guidance for researchers](#) helpful (note that this is written for research audiences).
- Remember to include costs for any planned PPI activities in your application, for example travel expenses for a face-to-face meeting. For further guidance, see [INVOLVE's Budgeting for involvement document and cost calculator](#).
- If your application is successful, Parkinson's UK can help you to find people from the Parkinson's community to get involved in your project. For more information about how we might be able to help, please contact us at excellencenetworkgrants@parkinsons.org.uk.

8. Application review process and announcement of results

- The Excellence Network has no responsibility for decisions concerning the size of the budget available for grants. This is agreed annually by the Parkinson's UK Board of Trustees, which has ultimate responsibility for the allocation of funds.
- Experts and lay reviewers are involved in reviewing applications for both schemes. Lay reviewers are members of the Parkinson's community. The expert reviewers are selected by the Grants team depending on the theme of the application.
- For large project grants, two expert reviewers will be invited to review each application, along with two lay reviewers.
- For small project grants, at least one expert reviewer from the Panel will be invited to review each application, along with one lay reviewer from the Panel/wider Parkinson's community.
- The panel is committed to distributing grants across all parts of the UK and across diverse communities. To support this, we will invite additional representatives (for example, representing specific nations or communities) to comment on applications and observe the panel meetings as required.
- All applications (at all stages, if applicable) will be evaluated using a ten point rating scale (0=Unfundable to 10=Highly fundable) against the ten assessment criteria listed below.

- Applicants will be informed if they are required to provide clarifications or amendments to their project based on the review or the decision of the funding panel. This 'Right to reply' choice will be an opportunity to refine the project, and to address concerns raised by the reviewers, so as to maximise the potential impact of the funding.
- The final decision on each application will be made by the respective funding panel and will be full and final.
- Funding will be awarded on the condition that particular areas of the application are developed as suggested by the funding panel.
- Successful applicants will be informed of the results via email or call.
- Unsuccessful applicants or applications that lack merit and or lack potential impact for people with Parkinson's or those that are generally assessed as unfundable at the time of review, will receive an email stating the results with brief feedback on their application based on the review.

Additional considerations for the Excellence Network large project grants:
- Applicants submitting pre-applications with substantive merit and deemed likely to have a meaningful impact on the lives of people affected by Parkinson's will receive an email notification inviting them to submit a full application.
- Applicants submitting pre-applications that lack merit and or lack potential impact for people with Parkinson's, will receive an email stating they are not being invited to submit a full application with a brief statement why they have been unsuccessful.

Assessment criteria
- All applications will be judged by external peer reviewers, lay reviewers and/or panel members against the following criteria:
  a. Importance and relevance of the proposed project to people living with Parkinson's
  b. Potential impact of the project for people currently living with Parkinson's
  c. Potential to support gaps in service provision and clinical practice.
  d. Clear demonstration of the involvement of the Parkinson's community
  e. Potential to reduce health inequalities, and inclusion of diversity considerations
  f. Likelihood of being rolled out on a wider scale if successful
  g. Quality of the applicants and team
  h. Value for money
  i. Budget and infrastructure
  j. Sustainability of project outcomes
- A good plain English project overview is essential for evaluation by lay grant reviewers who will judge applications against the following criteria (a), (b) and (d) above.
- Further details on how we evaluate each application and the review process are

available on [How we fund and track the progress of Excellence Network Project grants](#) section of our website.

9. Acceptance of awards and monitoring for grantholders

- The lead applicant of each successful application will be sent a contract email and an Award Letter inviting them to accept the award and listing the contents of the contract after the announcement of the results. All formalities and agreements that need to be completed will be duly communicated via this or following emails.
- The lead applicant will be expected to indicate their acceptance to this award by signing the 'Grant Acceptance Form' within 8 weeks of receiving the invitation via email.
- A start date to the project, no later than three months from the receipt of the contract email, must be communicated to excellencenetworkgrants@parkinsons.org.uk.
- Awarded grants are subject to ongoing monitoring by the charity.
- Grantholders for both schemes will be required to submit periodic and annual progress and budget and variance reports.
- The Excellence Network grants team will review the reports and if required, share them with appropriate members of the relevant reviewing committee, who may request further information. In this instance, the grantholder will be required to respond in a timely manner and if necessary, make amendments to the project as appropriate.
- If monitoring and evaluation procedures and reports do not demonstrate sufficient progress against the aims of the project, the Charity (in accordance with its grant terms and conditions) reserves the right to terminate the grant.
- Grantholders may be required to engage in periodic virtual review meetings with the Excellence Network grants team. Pre-scheduled monitoring visits may also be undertaken by the Excellence Network grants team.
- Any challenges faced with the project or with timescales, must be communicated in a timely manner to the Excellence Network grants team.
- Grantholders may be asked to participate in the charity's Project Engagement Volunteer programme, which involves engaging with people affected by Parkinson's throughout the duration of the project.

10. Disbursal and utilisation of funds

- Costs will **only** be paid to the host organisation.
- Funds must be utilised in an orderly manner and in accordance with the approved budget.
- Adjustments between approved budget line items are not permitted beyond ±10%. If larger adjustments need to be made, an appeal letter detailing the nature, reasons and justification for budgetary adjustments must be submitted to excellencenetworkgrants@parkinsons.org.uk. These adjustments must only be made upon approval for the appeal

- Grant payments are made quarterly in arrears or as per a pre-decided financial schedule, but never of the entire amount.
- Grant payments are made only against the production of an invoice.
- If invoices are not submitted within the financial year they are due, they will not be paid.
- Invoice payments will be withheld if the project is not up to date with the periodic progress and budget reports for the grant, until such a time as the reports of a satisfactory quality are received.

11. Grant completion

- An 'end of project' report detailing the outcomes of the project will need to be submitted no later than three months after the project end date or as per the reporting schedule laid out in the Award Letter.
- Once a grant has ended and the 'end of project' report has been submitted, grant holders and the finance officer must sign a Grant completion form. The grant completion form confirms that the final report has been submitted and the final invoice has been paid.
- The grant completion form must be completed within three months of the end of the project. Failure to do so will result in the final payment being withheld.

12. Publications, coverage, promotions

- We expect grantholders to share the outcomes of their project with members of the Parkinson's and professional communities, for example, through publications, trade press and presentations at conferences.
- Information about funded grants will appear on [the Scheme webpage](#), and in other materials produced by the Charity.
- Grantholders may be asked to become involved in publicity for Parkinson's UK or any external trust that has supported the grants programme. Grant holders are required to recognise the contribution of Parkinson's UK and our supporters in publications and presentations relating to the funded project.
- As part of the agreement to fund the grant, you will also agree to allow Parkinson's UK to share the outcomes of your work externally.
- Grantholders will be expected to work in partnership with Parkinson's UK and the Excellence Network to submit articles for publication.
- We also encourage grantfolders to inform their own press offices about the project. Please put them in touch with us so we can collaborate on publicity.

13. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

- The [Parkinson's UK Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy](#) sets out our overarching goal, ambitions and EDI promise.

- Parkinson's affects all sections of the community, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic group, religion or belief. To develop better health and care services for everyone with Parkinson's, we need to include and consider everyone in service improvement projects. There are also a broad range of factors that can impact the uptake and experience of healthcare and thus the final care experience and health outcomes. These differences in health outcomes can be related to factors such as socio-economic background, protected characteristics, social exclusion, geography or in simple terms race, ethnicity and gender. The social aspects of diversity also need to be considered, especially in relation to how these impact on the way individuals are diagnosed and treated.

- The Parkinson's Excellence Network is committed to supporting projects that are inclusive, in both design and practice, and give appropriate consideration to equality, diversity and inclusion issues. Applicants are therefore asked to consider and explain how they have taken these factors into account in all relevant aspects of their work. This could include:

  - Patient and public involvement (PPI): Applicants must consider how they will involve the Parkinson's community in all stages of their project. When planning involvement activities, applicants should consider diversity and take steps to ensure they are as inclusive and representative as possible.

  - Project team: Applicants should consider the expertise required to carry out inclusive projects and the diversity of their team, including a balance of gender, ethnicity and career stage. Applicants and collaborators from under-served groups are more likely to be familiar with, and motivated to develop solutions for, health issues facing the demographic groups to which they belong. When forming your project team, you should consider diversity and follow best practice as advised by your organisation's HR department, including mitigating the impact of unconscious bias. It can also be helpful to consider how you will build an inclusive team environment where all feel valued and supported, with equal access to development opportunities.

- Equality, diversity and inclusion data will be collected for all staff and students named in the project team as part of the charity's monitoring processes.

14. Writing a good application

We only fund the best quality projects so that every penny donated towards service improvement will benefit people with Parkinson's. Below are some tips to consider when preparing your application and also pitfalls to avoid to give your application the best chance of success.

Consider the assessment criteria before making an application

- We will only fund projects for which the outcomes are likely to be sustained in the long term. So, ask yourself - Is this project viable in the long run? What happens to the service or project after the funding period? Will this new or modified offer have to be discontinued for service users at any point due to lack of resources and how would this impact people with Parkinson's? Have I or we considered how to forge relationships with other health services or commissioning bodies during the course of the project to best utilise the available resources at hand and thus ensure sustainability of outcomes? You may find the use of quality improvement tools such as the NHS Improvement's 'Sustainability model' helpful in guiding the development of a sustainable project design.

- Projects with shareable outcomes and results are more desirable from a funding perspective as the potential impact is greater. So, ask yourself - Have I or we explored all possibilities for influencing local, regional, or national practice? How will my outcomes and results be shared among members of the Parkinson's and professional communities? Can I incorporate the production of resources that could be used by the wider community with minimal to little adaptation? Can I develop a framework that could be used by others to deliver similar outcomes?

- The most impactful projects are grounded in quality improvement methodology. So, ask yourself - How can I or we incorporate quality improvement methodology into the project design? Would it be worth engaging the local Quality Improvement (QI) or Service Improvement (SI) team at my or our organisation or other QI or SI experts? You may find the Health Foundation's 'Quality Improvement made simple' or the Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership's (HQIP) 'A guide to Quality improvement tools' resources helpful in guiding how to incorporate QI methodology into project design.

- Consider the voice of people with Parkinson's and their family, friends and carers right at the outset and involve them in the project design. Questions you might ask them include: What are the problems with the service from your perspective? What ideas do you have for resolving them? How can you help shape the project design or what we propose to offer? What is the best way of involving you in the project if the application is successful? You may find the HQIP's 'Patient and Public Involvement in Quality Improvement' resource helpful in developing the PPI design for your project.

    Support is available from the Excellence Network's Service Improvement Team towards developing your project / application. If you would like to speak with your local Service Improvement Advisor, please contact us at excellencenetworkgrants@parkinsons.org.uk .

Make a good first impression

- Ensure that you are fully familiar with all sections of the application guidance.
- Read the Excellence Network project grants scheme: terms and conditions and cost guidance – make sure your requests are allowable.

- Give all the information and attachments required in the correct format as stated in the application form(s). Attachments emailed separately as part of the applications may be missed by reviewers for consideration during the review process.
- Ask at least one independent person to proofread your application. Reviewers dislike typographical and grammatical errors.
- Ensure figures make sense and are correctly referenced in the text.
- Include references where applicable.
- Even if your ideas are excellent, a badly presented application may make reviewers wonder if this is an indication of how the project will be implemented.

Ensure your project overview is written in plain English

- It is important that you think carefully about your lay reader when writing your 'project overview'.
- Lay grant reviewers will have considerable personal experience of Parkinson's but may not have specialised clinical knowledge.
- Although the summary should be written in simple terms, please make sure that it contains enough detail for a lay grant reviewer to make an informed decision about the project.
- Applicants should be realistic about the potential outcomes of their projects and the likely timescales involved.
- Avoid using jargon, abbreviations and technical terms wherever possible – if you have to use them, explain them in the glossary.
- Avoid complicated English or uncommon words.
- Avoid elaborate explanations of "what is Parkinson's". Lay grant reviewers are very likely to know a lot about this already.
- Use active not passive phrases, for example say 'we will do it' rather than 'it will be done by us'.
- Keep sentences short; try not to use more than 15 to 20 words per sentence.
- Break up the text, for example by using bullet point lists.
- Ask someone without a clinical/academic background to read your draft and advise if anything is unclear.
- You can find more tips on writing a good plain English summary on the ['make it clear' campaign](#), though note that this is written for research audiences.

Ensure your project application is clear and logical

- Make sure your objectives are clear and are reflected clearly in the project plan.
- Give clear information on what the outcome measures will be and the timescales of practical improvements that could result from the project.
- Identify and address any potential risks, challenges or pitfalls – for example, what will you do if your first proposed phase doesn't result in the outcome you expected?

- Provide sufficient detail on the work plans and how they will be carried out to show your understanding of what you're doing.
- Ensure your application includes details of how the outcomes of your project will be made available to others.

Additional Resources to support you in writing a good application

Listed below are a few additional resources that you may find helpful when planning, designing and writing up your project.

- First steps towards improvement: A simple guide to improving services
- Prevalence Data of Parkinson's in the UK
- Excellence Network Data Dashboards, including Hospital Episode Statistics
- Excellence Network Audit Dashboard for data from the UK Parkinson's 2022 Audit