

Excellence Network project grants funding panel and Large grants review process 2024

Excellence Network project grants funding panel ('the Panel')

Membership

- Associate Director Policy and Health Strategy (Chair)
- Members of the Clinical Leadership Team (CLT), which includes representatives from the Parkinson's Community
- Grants Manager
- Head of Service Improvement and Grants
- Health Policy and Improvement Lead
- Strategic Intelligence Lead
- Grants Administrator (business support)

If specific expertise is required for a particular decision or in the case of a predetermined lack of quorum during a funding panel meeting, the Panel will co-opt additional members onto the panel to support decision-making. Any member with a conflict of interest relating to a particular application will recuse themselves from those discussions.

Responsibilities

- Take decisions on how the project grants process is set up and managed.
- Independently reviewing and rating small project grant applications, as required.
- Joining a monthly panel meeting to make final funding decisions for the Small project grant applications.
- In the scenario of an inadequate number of reviewers, review the

Large Grants project applications.

- Take the final yes or no funding decisions (post the full application review period) on Large grant applications. This will be through a half day virtual meeting where all full applications, and the reviewed ratings and feedback, will be discussed.
- A sub-group of this panel comprising the Associate Director Policy and Health Strategy, one of the Co-Clinical Directors and one of the Parkinson’s community representatives from the panel (the ‘Panel Subgroup’) will be responsible for deciding which pre-applications to invite to the full application stage and for taking final decisions in the event that a consensus can’t be reached.
- The Grants Administrator will provide business support to the end to end process.

Quoracy

- For meetings to be quorate, there must be at least six members present, including three members of the CLT. This must include at least one representative from the Parkinson’s Community. Each member present must have evaluated the application form(s) scheduled to be discussed.
- In case of a pre-identified lack of quoracy for a meeting the Panel will co-opt additional members onto the panel to support decision-making.

Annual cycle

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Small Grants	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲
Large Grants						▲					▲	

- ▲ Panel meeting - small grants. Occurs after monthly PEN - Steering Group meeting and is cancelled if there are no applications to discuss
- ▲ Subgroup meeting - large grants pre-applications
- ▲ Panel meeting - large grants full applications

Large grants process

Stage 1: Pre-application

1. Recruitment of reviewers

- Two independent clinical or scientific reviewers will be nominated to review each application, along with two lay reviewers from the Parkinson's community. The **selection of the reviewers** will depend upon the theme of the application and conflicts of interest.
- If the Excellence Network grants team is unable to recruit an adequate number of independent reviewers, members of the Clinical Leadership Team will be nominated to become reviewers.

2. Independent evaluation of pre-application

- Each reviewer will be responsible for independently evaluating each large grant pre-application.
- All reviews must be completed during a **four week pre-application review period**, which will be scheduled in advance.
- Each application is scored using a **10-point rating scale** (*loosely based on the [NIHR Applied Research Application Rating Scale](#)*). Each reviewer will also provide qualitative feedback using the **Excellence Network Large Project Grants pre-application expert reviewer form or lay reviewer form**. The ratings provided will allow each project to be ranked into **three funding categories**: A-Fund, B-Potentially Fund, C-Do not Fund.
- The **following criteria** will be used to evaluate and rate each project:
 - 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, and/or their care partners, the NHS/social care and the wider health economy
 - C. Potential to support gaps in service provision and knowledge and evidence around best practice care
 - 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 and influencing wider practice
- G. Quality of the applicants and team
- H. Value for money
- I. Budget and infrastructure
- J. Sustainability of project outcomes
- The Excellence Network grants team will collate the review feedback and compute a mean rating score.
- The Panel subgroup will be responsible for taking the decision about which projects will be invited to submit a full application.
 - The pre-applications that have a mean rating of 8 and above (ranked 'Fund') will automatically be invited to submit a full application.
 - The pre-applications with a mean rating of 4 and below (ranked 'Do not fund') will not be invited to submit a full application.
 - The pre-applications with a mean rating between 5 and 7 (ranked 'potentially fund'), will be discussed within the subgroup.
- The subgroup meeting will be recorded and minuted. This will be the responsibility of the Excellence Network Grants Administrator.
- The Excellence Network grants team will inform applicant(s) of the decision and will share the reviewer evaluations and panel feedback. All applications, whether successful or not, will receive feedback.

Stage 2: Full application

1. Independent evaluation of pre-application

- The same **four reviewers who had previously reviewed the application during the Pre-application stage** will be nominated to evaluate the full application.
- In the scenario that the **same reviewers are not available** to review the full application, new reviewers will be nominated or members from the Panel will be nominated to review the full application, *with all details of the previous review being provided to them.*
- Each application is scored using a [10-point rating scale](#) (loosely based on the NIHR Applied Research Application Rating Scale). Each reviewer will also provide qualitative feedback using the Excellence

Network Large Project Grants full-application expert reviewer form or lay reviewer form. The ratings provided will allow each project to be ranked into three funding categories: A-Fund, B-Potentially Fund, C-Do not Fund.

- The review must be completed and sent to excellenceNetworkGrants@parkinsons.org.uk at least 10 working days prior to the Stage 2 Panel meeting.
- The Excellence Network grants team will collate the review feedback and compute a mean rating score for each application in preparation for the Stage 2 meeting.
- The Excellence Network grants team will share the mean ratings, the reviewed feedback and the pre-application forms with the members of the panel at least 7 days in advance of the Panel meeting. **Note that members of the Panel will not be required to do a full evaluation of each application.**
- The reviewing and computing process will take place during a **six week period** following the Large project grants full-application deadline.

2. Decision meeting

- The Panel will come together during a *half day pre-scheduled virtual Stage 2 Panel meeting (Excellence Network Project Grants Funding Panel meeting)* to discuss the reviewers' ratings and feedback.
- **The expert and lay reviewers who reviewed the application will be invited to join this meeting to discuss their evaluations with the panel members and their co-reviewers. Each application will be allotted pre-scheduled 15 minute slots for this discussion.** Their attendance is preferred, but not mandatory.
- The panel and reviewers (if present) will discuss each application during their respective slots, **with the reviewers being provided with the opportunity to change their scores** based on this discussion.
- The *final aggregate rating* will be computed during the meeting based on the modified scores.
- The **agenda of the last hour of the meeting** will be to make the final funding recommendations/decisions. During this slot, the final aggregate rating of each application will be provided to the Panel and will be used to **identify a shortlist of the highest ranked applications. These applications will be considered for the final**

awarding decision (yes or no). The independent reviewers will be strongly encouraged to observe this decision making process.

- The number of applications that are considered for a 'Yes' awarding decision will **depend on the funding available each year** for the Excellence Network Project Grants Scheme and the overall quality and potential of each project:
 - If the combined cost of the short-listed projects is within the allocated annual grant budget, a decision will be made to fund all these projects.
 - If the combined cost of the short-listed projects is over the allocated annual grant budget, the Panel will discuss which short-listed project(s) should be funded.
- The Panel may decide to recommend that a project is only partially funded.
- Funding may be awarded on the condition that particular areas of the application are developed as suggested by the Panel.
- If a **consensus cannot be reached** by the Panel, the Panel subgroup will be responsible for making the final decision.
- If a consensus cannot be reached by the Panel subgroup on any particular project, the applicant will be offered a 'Right to Reply' period to respond to the review process concerns. Following this period, the Panel will reconvene to rescore the project and make a funding recommendation.
- All meetings will be **recorded or minuted**. This will be the responsibility of the Excellence Network Grants Administrator.

3. Funding sign off

- Decision making is delegated from the Board of Trustees to the Panel.
- The Associate Director Policy and Health Strategy will be responsible for signing off funding on behalf of the panel.
- The Associate Director Policy and Health Strategy will be responsible for sharing the Panel's decisions with the Board of Trustees.

4. Informing the applicant

- The Excellence Network Grants team will inform lead applicant(s) of the decision and will provide feedback, which will include the reviewer evaluations and panel discussions . All the applications, whether successful or not, will receive feedback.