
How to apply

Innovator Awards

These awards support researchers who are transforming great ideas into healthcare innovations that could have a significant impact on human health.

Scheme at a glance

Level of funding: Up to £500,000, or up to £750,000 for multidisciplinary collaborations

Duration of funding: Usually up to 24 months, or up to 36 months for multidisciplinary collaborations

Eligibility and suitability

Who can apply

Innovator Awards are open to researchers who are developing healthcare innovations that could have a major and measurable impact on human health.

Individuals and teams from not-for-profit and commercial organisations can apply.

Organisations can be of any size, based anywhere in the world (apart from mainland China).

Funded organisations must sign up to our grant conditions (see the template award letters in the 'How to apply' section on this page).

You can work in any scientific discipline, including a discipline outside life sciences. You can work on any type of technology. Examples of technologies include:

- therapeutics (small molecules or biologics)
- vaccines
- devices
- diagnostics
- digital technologies
- regenerative medicine.

The work that you propose must be essential for developing your healthcare innovation.

Multidisciplinary collaborations and partnerships

We particularly encourage proposals from multidisciplinary collaborations within or between organisations. These collaborations do not need to include life sciences researchers.

In your proposal, you must:

- include researchers from at least two different scientific disciplines
- include at least one researcher from a discipline outside life sciences, such as (but not limited to) engineering, physical science or data science
- describe the added value of the collaboration, and tell us why the outcome(s) of your work will be unique and only achievable through this approach.

We also encourage partnerships between not-for-profit and commercial organisations. We expect most commercial organisations that partner not-for-profit organisations to provide in-kind contributions in addition to Wellcome's funding.

If your proposal is successful and involves collaborators or partnerships, you must all enter into an agreement stating:

- who will own any IP that arises from this award
- the necessary background IP licences

- how you plan to protect, maintain and commercialise Wellcome-funded IP.

This agreement has to be in place before we will provide funding.

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This agreement must be consistent with the template award letter for your organisation (see the 'How to apply' section on this page).

For guidance, read the [university and business collaboration agreements: model heads of terms agreements](#) on GOV.UK.

Your proposal

In your proposal, you should describe:

- the global burden of the disease or condition that you want to address
- the unmet healthcare need
- the patient population that you want to reach and the impact that your healthcare innovation could have on their health
- why your healthcare innovation will be significantly better than anything that's already available or being developed
- the evidence supporting your proof of concept
- what you will do with our funding (eg key experiments and project deliverables) to move your project on to the next stage of development
- your team's expertise and the resources available to you
- your long-term aims beyond this award.

Past and current innovations award holders

If you're one of our past or current innovations award holders, you can apply for an Innovator Award if you propose to develop a healthcare innovation that we haven't funded.

Who can't apply

You're not eligible for an Innovator Award if your company is not established and/or doesn't have working capital.

We won't consider proposals for:

- incremental improvements in healthcare
- 'blue skies' or curiosity-driven research
- back-up or me-too drugs
- research about the distribution and uptake of healthcare innovations
- delivering health services
- public health interventions
- one-off costs that don't include key experiments, such as manufacturing a drug substance.

We don't usually consider proposals for phase III or IV clinical trials for therapeutics or vaccines. If you're proposing this kind of trial, please [contact us](#). We'll tell you if we want you to apply.

If you've previously been unsuccessful in getting Wellcome funding for your healthcare innovation, you must [contact us](#) before you apply again. You can't usually apply again unless your proposal has changed significantly.

What we offer

An Innovator Award provides up to £500,000 of funding and usually lasts up to 24 months. For multidisciplinary collaborations, awards are up to £750,000 and have a duration of up to 36 months.

You should ask for a level and duration of funding that's justifiable for your proposed activities.

Our support includes:

- **staff**

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We will cover the salary costs of all staff, full or part time, who will work on your project. Staff members typical include research assistants or technicians employed on your grant. If you're doing fieldwork or clinical studies in a low- or middle-income country, we'll consider requests for more research staff.

We don't usually provide a salary for the lead applicant for this scheme. But if you, or any applicants, hold a permanent, open-ended or long-term rolling contract and have to get your salary from external grant funding, you can ask us for this in your application. See the 'Eligibility and suitability' section above for more information.

We don't provide studentship stipends.

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How to cost salaries for research staff

Staff salaries should be appropriate to skills, responsibilities and expertise. You should ask your host organisation to use their salary scales to calculate these costs, which should include:

- basic salary
- employer's contributions, including any statutory obligations (eg National Insurance contributions if you're based in the UK) and pension scheme costs
- Apprentice Levy charges for UK-based salaries
- any incremental progression up the salary scale
- locally recognised allowances such as London allowance.

You should allow for salary pay awards during Year 1. These should be based on pay awards already agreed: if you don't know what the pay award is yet then use our inflation rate.

From Year 2 onwards, you should use your organisation's current pay rates. We'll provide a separate inflation allowance for salary inflation costs.

Find out more about [people working on a Wellcome grant](#).

We may make a contribution towards the salary of departmental technicians funded by Research England and its equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. You will need to provide a full audit record of their time on your project.

Visa and work permit costs

If you have named people on your grant whose salaries will be funded by Wellcome, you can ask for visa or work permit costs to help them take up their posts at the host organisation. You can also ask for:

- visa costs for the person's partner and dependent children
 - essential associated costs, such as travel to attend appointments at a visa application centre or embassy if you can justify these
 - Immigration Health Surcharge costs for the person, their partner and dependent children if they will be in the UK for six months or more.
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materials and consumables

We will pay for the materials and consumables you need to carry out your proposed research, including:

- laboratory chemicals and materials (eg reagents, isotopes, peptides, enzymes, antibodies, gases, proteins, cell/tissue/bacterial culture, plasticware and glassware)
 - associated charges for shipping, delivery and freight.
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animals

You can ask for funds to buy animals if they are essential to your project. We will also fund the charge-out rates for animal house facilities if your organisation uses full economic costing methodology. These costs include:

- running costs (including animal maintenance, any experimental procedures, licences and relevant staff training)

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- appropriate estates costs

How to apply

- cage and equipment depreciation costs, but not building depreciation costs.
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We may not pay the full charge-out rate for an animal house facility if we've provided significant funding towards the infrastructure and/or core support of the facility.

If your organisation doesn't use full economic costing methodology to establish charge-out rates for animal house facilities, you can ask for funds to cover:

- the cost of buying animals
- running costs (including animal maintenance, any experimental procedures, licences and relevant staff training)
- staff costs, eg contributions towards the salaries of animal house technicians.

We won't provide estates or depreciation costs.

- **access charges**

You can ask for the cost of access to shared equipment or facilities if they're essential to your research project. These may include materials and consumables, plus a proportion of:

- maintenance and service contracts
- staff time costs for dedicated technical staff employed to operate the equipment or facility.

We don't cover the costs of:

- estates and utilities
- depreciation or insurance
- other staff eg contributions towards departmental technical, administrative and management staff time.

If the facilities or equipment were paid for by a Wellcome grant, you can only ask for access charges if:

- the grant has ended
- any support for running costs and maintenance contracts has ended.

- **research management and support costs (overheads)**

We've changed our overheads policy for grant applications submitted from 1 October 2019. Read our [updated policy](#) and the 'How to ask for these costs' section below.

How to ask for these costs

This process applies if you're now eligible to ask for overhead costs.

In your application you must:

- give a full breakdown of costs (you can't ask for a percentage of the research costs)
- explain why these costs are necessary for your research
- include a letter from the finance director of your host organisation, confirming that the breakdown is a true representation of the costs incurred.

Our previous policy

This information applies to grant applications submitted up to 30 September 2019.

We cover research management and support costs if:

- your host organisation is in a low- or middle-income country and your grant will be directly awarded to that organisation,

or

- part of your grant will be sub-contracted to an organisation in a low- or middle-income country.

~~We don't cover these costs if your host organisation will include the sub-contracted funding in its annual report to the UK Charity Research Support Fund.~~

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They can include:

- training costs, eg transferable skills and personal development training for you and any other people employed on your grant
- costs for short-term professional training for administrative, technical and support staff
- administration, eg grant management, technical and administrative services
- other costs which are necessary for your research, eg computing and internet access costs, access to electronic resources, facility and running costs such as utilities, furniture, waste disposal and incineration, and building maintenance.

The total research management and support costs should not be more than 20% of the direct research costs you're requesting.

See a list of [low- and middle-income countries](#).

• travel and subsistence

You can ask for these costs if you are applying from a university, a not-for-profit organisation or a small company.

You should use the most suitable and economical form of travel. Please include a breakdown for each part of your trip, eg air fares and number of journeys.

Travel costs

Conference attendance

You can ask for a contribution towards the costs of attending scientific and academic meetings and conferences, including registration fees. The limits are:

- Lead applicant – £2,000 a year
- Applicants who are asking for a salary on the grant – £2,000 a year
- Staff employed on your grant – £1,000 each a year

You'll need to specify the amount you're requesting for each person.

You can also ask for costs to cover caring responsibilities if any staff employed on your grant attend a conference. This includes childcare and any other caring responsibility they have, provided:

- Wellcome is paying their salary
- the conference is directly related to the research
- the caring costs are over and above what they'd normally pay for care
- the conference organiser and their employing organisation are unable to cover the costs.

You can ask for up to £1,000 per person for each conference.

Collaborative travel

You can ask for travel and subsistence costs for collaborative visits for you and any staff employed on your grant. You'll need to justify each visit and its duration.

Other travel

We will pay for other essential visits, eg to facilities, for sample collection and for fieldwork. You can include subsistence costs.

Subsistence costs

If you're away for **up to one month** you can ask for subsistence costs. These include accommodation, meals and incidentals (eg refreshments or newspapers).

If your administering organisation doesn't have a subsistence policy, please use the [HMRC rates](#).

How to apply away for **more than one month and up to 12 months**, we will pay reasonable rental costs only, including ~~aparthotels. You should discuss appropriate rates with your administering and host organisations, or~~ Wellcome, as appropriate. We expect you to choose the most economical options, booked in advance where possible.

If you're from a low- or middle- income country and will be working in a high-income country for **more than one month and up to 12 months**, you can also ask for up to £10 a day to cover extra costs, such as transport and incidentals.

If you're away for **more than 12 months**, we will pay the costs of your housing. You should discuss your needs with your administering and host organisations.

The allowance we provide will be based on family and business need. We will set the maximum allowance we pay for each location. This will be based on current market data or, where data is unavailable, in consultation with your administering organisation, using equivalent market rates. Please [contact us](#) if you need help calculating the costs.

We will cover the direct expenses you have to pay to find and rent a home. We will not cover the cost of utilities or any refurbishment.

Overseas research

If you or any research staff employed on your grant will be doing research away from your home laboratory, we'll help with the additional costs of working on the project overseas. Please see the 'Overseas allowances' section for details.

• overseas allowances

We'll help you with the additional costs of working on the project overseas if you are:

- applying from a university, a not-for-profit organisation or a small company
- you or any staff employed on your grant will be spending time in another country.

Our overseas allowances are:

- a contribution towards the personal cost of carrying out research overseas, to ensure that you are not disadvantaged
- provided on the assumption that you'll be paying income tax, either in your home country, or the country you will be working in (your personal tax is your responsibility).
- provided on the understanding that you or your partner will not receive equivalent allowances from elsewhere
- determined by the amount of time you will spend away from your home country.

• Partners and dependants travelling with you

If you will be away **more than 12 months**, we will provide overseas allowances for your partner and any dependants if they are travelling with you.

If you will be away for **12 months or less** and can justify why your partner and dependants must travel with you, we may provide overseas allowances for them.

We define your partner as the person:

- you're married to
- you're not married to but with whom you've been in a relationship for at least a year

and

- you live with at the same permanent address and share some form of joint financial commitment with (eg a mortgage).

You can ask for the following allowances. You need to provide estimated costs as accurately as possible.

How to apply

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outward and return travel

We will pay your travel costs at the beginning and end of your overseas work. Costs can be for air, ferry, train or coach fares.

All fares should be:

- economy class
- the most suitable and economical form of travel
- booked in advance where possible.

-

baggage and freight shipping allowance

If you are away for **up to 12 months**, you can ask for up to 80kg of additional baggage or unaccompanied airline freight for your outward and return journeys.

If you are away for **more than 12 months**, you can ask for the costs of shipping your personal items at the beginning and end of your overseas work.

We will pay the full cost of transporting:

- half a standard shipping container if you're travelling alone
- a whole standard shipping container (20ft) if you're travelling with a partner and/or dependants.

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medical and travel insurance

We will pay the cost of your medical insurance and travel insurance.

If you will be working in a [low- or middle-income country](#), we will also cover the cost of emergency evacuation cover.

We won't pay for medical insurance if you will be based in the UK or Republic of Ireland.

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visas and vaccinations

We will pay the costs of visas, vaccinations and anti-malaria treatment.

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housing security

You can ask for this if you'll be based in a [low- or middle-income country](#) and it is necessary.

Costs can include guards, panic buttons and alarms. You should ask your employing organisation for advice on the level of security you need.

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accommodation and subsistence

If you're away for **up to one month** you can ask for subsistence costs. These include accommodation, meals and incidentals (eg refreshments or newspapers).

If your administering organisation has a subsistence policy, use their rates.

If your administering organisation doesn't have a subsistence policy, please use the [HMRC rates](#).

If you're away for **more than one month and up to 12 months**, we will pay reasonable rental costs only, including aparthotels. You should discuss appropriate rates with your administering and host organisations, or Wellcome, as appropriate. We expect you to choose the most economical options, booked in advance where possible.

If you're from a [low- or middle- income country](#) and will be working in a high-income country for **more than one month and up to 12 months**, you can also ask for up to £10 a day to cover extra costs, such as transport and incidentals.

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How to apply If you're away for **more than 12 months**, we will pay the costs of your housing. You should discuss your needs with your administering and host organisations.

The allowance we provide will be based on family and business need. We will set the maximum allowance we pay for each location. This will be based on current market data or, where data is unavailable, in consultation with your administering organisation, using equivalent market rates. If you need help calculating the costs please contact [Grants Management](#).

We will cover the direct expenses you have to pay to find and rent a home. We will not cover the cost of utilities or any refurbishment.

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education

If you're away for **more than 12 months** we will pay:

Local nursery or school fees

You can ask for these costs if you are in a location where there isn't free local education of the same standard as in your home country.

Costs include:

- local nursery school fees up to a maximum of 30 hours a week for 3 to 4 year olds
- local junior or secondary school fees, up to the end of secondary school education.

Local international school fees

You can ask for these costs if local schools do not provide the same standard of education as in your home country. We will only pay the published termly school fees.

We will not cover the costs of:

- extracurricular activities, including field trips
- other extras including, but not limited to, uniforms, sports kit and equipment, transport, meals, books and electronic equipment.

Boarding school fees

We will consider paying the cost of boarding school fees in your home country if:

- a local international school is not available
- both parents, guardians or the sole care giver live outside the home country.

The allowance covers:

- up to a maximum of £30,000 a year for each child for the published termly fees only
- the cost of economy class return airfares at the start and end of each school term.

We will not cover the costs of:

- additional annual leave airfares
- extracurricular activities, including field trips
- other extras including, but not limited to, uniforms, sports kit and equipment, transport, meals, books and electronic equipment.

We will cover the cost of providing special needs education as far as possible. Please contact us to discuss your needs.

We would not usually expect to provide an education allowance if you will be working in a high-income country.

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annual leave travel costs

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If you will be away for **more than 12 months**, we'll pay for you to travel back to your home country for annual leave. This is in addition to your outward and return travel costs and depends on how long you will

be away:

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- 12-24 months – 1 annual leave trip
- 25-36 months – 2 annual leave trips
- 37-48 months – 3 annual leave trips
- 49-60 months – 4 annual leave trips
- 61-72 months – 5 annual leave trips.

All fares should be:

- economy class
- the most suitable and economical form of travel
- booked in advance where possible.

language lessons

If you will be away for **more than 12 months**, you can ask for up to 100 hours of lessons in the local language for you and/or your partner during the first 12 months of your visit.

We will cover 100% of the costs for local language school classes or up to 50% of the costs of individual tuition.

We will not cover the cost of examinations or personal learning materials such as DVDs and books.

contract research organisations

We will provide funds if you need to outsource project work to:

- contract research organisations
- other fee-for-service providers.

inflation allowance

If you are applying from a university we will add an inflation allowance to your award.

How we calculate your inflation allowance

Your inflation allowance is based on your total eligible costs and the duration of the award. If the costs in your application are in pounds sterling, euros or US dollars, you'll receive the following allowance:

Award duration (in months)	Inflation allowance
0-12	0.0%
13-24	1.0%
25-36	2.0%
37-48	3.0%
49-60	4.1%
61-72	5.1%
73-84	6.2%

These rates are calculated using compound inflation at 2.0% a year from Year 2 onwards.

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What to include in your application

The costs in your application must be based on current known costs, excluding inflation.

You should allow for salary pay awards during Year 1. These should be based on pay awards already agreed; if you don't know what the pay award is yet then use our inflation rate.

Wellcome's studentship stipend scales for non-clinical/basic science PhD studentships include an annual increase for inflation.

- **open access charges**

If your organisation [receives block funding through the UK's Charity Open Access Fund \(COAF\)](#) you can ask them to cover your open access article processing charges.

If you're at an organisation that doesn't receive COAF funding, we'll [supplement your grant](#) when your paper has been accepted for publication.

You can't ask for these charges in your grant application.

- **project management costs**

We will cover the costs for an experienced project manager. They will be responsible for managing and coordinating the day-to-day project activities and communications within your organisation and between collaborators and sub-contractors.

- **clinical research costs**

If you need to carry out clinical trials or research using NHS patients or facilities, we will cover some of the research costs.

Annex A of the [guidelines for attributing the costs of health and social care research and development \(AcoRD\)](#) sets out the costs we cover, and which costs should be funded through the Department of Health in England, or its equivalent in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. If you're based in the Republic of Ireland, we would expect you to adhere to the spirit of these principles.

[Further information on our clinical trials policy.](#)

- **other costs**

Costs you may ask for (you will have to justify these costs in your application):

- fieldwork costs, including survey and data collection and statistical analysis
- specialist publications that are relevant to the research and not available in institutional libraries
- consultancy fees
- expenses for subjects and volunteers – includes recruitment of participants, their participatory fees and travel, as well as interviewee expenses
- reasonable research-associated costs related to the feedback of [health-related findings](#) but not any healthcare-associated costs
- costs associated with developing an [outputs management plan](#)
- questionnaires, recruitment material, newsletters etc for clinical, epidemiological and qualitative research studies
- public engagement materials where dissemination (including printing and publishing) is a key activity of the project
- recruitment, advertising and interviewee travel costs for staff to be employed on the grant
- purchase, hire and running costs of project-dedicated vehicles.

Costs we won't pay:

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- estates costs – such as building and premises costs, basic services and utilities. This also includes phone, postage, photocopying and stationery, unless you can justify these within a clinical or epidemiological study.*

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- page charges and the cost of colour prints
- research, technical and administrative staff whose time is shared across several projects and isn't supported by an audit record*
- charge-out costs for major facilities* – departmental technical and administrative services, and use of existing equipment
- cleaning, waste and other disposal costs*

*We will fund these costs in the case of animal-related research.

- indirect costs – this includes general administration costs such as personnel, finance, library, room hire and some departmental services
- office furniture, such as chairs, desks, filing cabinets, etc.
- clothing such as lab coats, shoes, protective clothing
- non-research related activities, eg catering, room and venue hire for staff parties, team-building events and social activities
- indemnity insurance (insurance cover against claims made by subjects or patients associated with a research programme)
- ethics reviews, unless you are in a low- or middle-income country
- radiation protection costs.

You can also apply for [Research Enrichment funding](#) to increase the impact of your work through activities in public engagement, open research, and diversity and inclusion.

What we don't offer

- Salary recovery costs for staff funded full-time by the employing organisation.
- Indirect costs.
- Working capital costs of commercial organisations.
- Fees for academic courses such as Master's degrees or PhDs, and other tuition fees.
- Costs for large equipment.
- Costs for capital build or refurbishment.

We don't fund [overheads](#) unless they're included on this page (for example research management and support costs).

You must submit your application through the Wellcome Trust Grant Tracker (WTGT).

Start your application

Stages of application

Innovator Awards: convertible loan agreement [DOCX 123KB]

1. Read our application guidance

We encourage you to read the following before you apply:

Sample full application form for Innovator Awards [PDF 309KB]

Not-for-profit organisations:

Innovator Awards: template award letter for not-for-profit organisations [DOCX 219KB] – including grant condition details

Commercial organisations:

Innovator Awards: template convertible loan agreement [DOCX 123KB]

Innovator Awards: template revenue sharing agreement [DOCX 414KB]

2. Submit your full application to your host organisation for approval

Complete the full application form on [Grant Tracker](#). Submit it to the 'authorised organisational approver' at your host organisation for approval. Make sure you leave enough time for the approver to review and submit your application before the deadline. The approver may ask you to make changes to your application.

If your proposal involves clinical research using NHS resources, [check if you need to upload a SoECAT form](#) with your full application.

3. Host organisation reviews your application and submits it to us**4. Shortlisting**

Wellcome staff will assess your proposal's suitability and competitiveness for the scheme. You should hear if you've been shortlisted within three months of submitting your application.

5. Review

If your application is shortlisted, it will be further assessed by independent experts from our Innovator Awards Advisory Group.

We may also seek advice or written reviews from external experts.

6. Decision

There are no interviews. We'll aim to give you a decision within six months of submitting your application.

In general, we don't usually provide specific written feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

Terms and conditions

Organisations that are successful in obtaining an Innovator Award must sign up to the grant conditions outlined in the template award letters (see stage 1 – 'Read our application guidance') before they can receive it.

We reserve the right to ask for an alternative or amended contract.

We require a proportional share of any financial benefits arising from any commercial exploitation of a Wellcome-funded project, as outlined in the Innovator Awards template revenue sharing agreement (see stage 1 – 'Read our application guidance'). We waive our right (under Wellcome's policy on [consent and revenue and equity sharing](#)) to share in the first £500,000 of net income.

We can offer companies a convertible loan agreement instead of a revenue share. If you are a company and would prefer a loan agreement, please email innovations@wellcome.ac.uk.

As a charitable trust, we fund companies where this furthers our aims. Awards to commercial entities are therefore subject to our **Programme-related investments policy** [PDF 102KB].

Disabled applicants

If you are disabled or have a chronic health condition, [we can support you with the application process](#).

Dates

You can apply online at any time.

Shortlisting meetings happen every three months.

You can apply online at any time.

How to apply

How to apply meetings happen every three months.

Grants awarded

Find out about some of the people and projects we've funded for this scheme.

[View grants awarded](#)

Apply for this grant

Log in to our online grants system (Grant Tracker). You can save your application and return to it any time.

[Start your application](#)

Contact us

Contact our information officers if you have a question about this scheme (eg eligibility or the application process).

[Send a message](#)

+44 (0)20 7611 5757

If you have a question about the scope and content of your proposal, contact:

innovations@wellcome.ac.uk

Useful documents

[Sample full application form for Innovator Awards \[PDF 309KB\]](#)

[Innovator Awards: frequently asked questions \[DOCX 74KB\]](#)

[Innovator Awards: template award letter for not-for-profit organisations \[DOCX 219KB\]](#)

[Innovator Awards: template convertible loan agreement \[DOCX 123KB\]](#)

[Innovator Awards: template revenue sharing agreement \[DOCX 414KB\]](#)

[Programme-related investments policy \[PDF 102KB\]](#)