IMPRINT Pump-Priming Grant Application Guidance

Summary

The ***vision*** of the IMPRINT Network is the widespread implementation and uptake of safe and effective pregnancy and neonatal vaccination programmes that lead to improved long-term neonatal and maternal health, in all relevant settings.

The IMPRINT network ***aims*** to advance of our understanding of fundamental scientific questions about vaccination in pregnancy and the neonatal period and to identify the best methods for assessing the efficacy, safety and acceptability of vaccines given in pregnancy and the neonatal period.

Pump-priming grants are available for projects of 12 months in duration, funded at a maximum of £70,000 via competitive application to the IMPRINT Network Management Board. Projects should lead to relevant and useful data for this field or produce pilot data that will lead to larger grant applications.

Pump-priming grants are open to all IMPRINT network members. The project Lead Applicant must be an IMPRINT member and co-applicants are encouraged to apply to be IMPRINT members if not currently part of the network. Projects must include IMPRINT members from at least two different institutions. We welcome applications that include collaborators who are Early Career Researchers and/or projects with a focus on LMICs.

Funded Lead Applicants will be required to submit a brief progress report at 6 months (1-page report) and narrative and financial reports at 12 months. Awarded projects, with non-confidential abstracts, will be included in IMPRINT network reports, website and other publicity. All awardees must agree to present their work at an IMPRINT meeting. All successful applicants must commit to the MRC data sharing policy:

https://www.mrc.ac.uk/research/policies-and-guidance-for-researchers/data-sharing/.

Please contact the Network Manager Claudia Schacht at IMPRINT@LINQ-management.com with any queries relating to the application process. All applications must be submitted to **applications@imprint-network.co.uk** by 4pm CET on the deadline for submission indicated on the IMPRINT website.

Details

Funding eligibility

Applicants: Funding is for IMPRINT network members. All projects must be led by an IMPRINT network member; collaborators are encouraged to apply to become an IMPRINT network member if not already one. Details of the process to apply to become an IMPRINT network member can be found here: http://imprint-network.co.uk. Projects should include IMPRINT network members from a **minimum of 2 institutions**. Applications including Early Career Researchers are welcomed and must include a letter of support from their Research Group Leader. Members based at academic institutes, governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations and industry (see details below regarding restrictions on funding for industrial partners) are all eligible to apply. Projects including LMIC partners are particularly welcomed; all projects are expected to be of relevance to LMICs.

Activities supported: All projects must be within the scope of the IMPRINT network and its remit. The IMPRINT network seeks to address six scientific challenges:

Challenges 1-3 focus on immunobiology of vaccination in pregnancy and early life.

Challenge 1: Mechanism of production and transfer of maternal antibody via the placenta and breast milk.

Challenge 2: Effects of maternal immunisation on the subsequent development of immunity in the infant - beyond short-term serological outcomes.

Challenge 3: Impact of globally important co-factors on maternal and neonatal immunity such as prematurity and intrauterine growth restriction, malnutrition and co-infections, e.g. HIV and malaria.

It is anticipated that projects focussing on challenges 1-3 will utilise datasets and sample collections that are available to IMPRINT investigators and collaborators, due to the short timescales of the pump-priming grants.

Challenges 4-6 focus on implementation: on safety, efficacy and acceptability of vaccination in pregnancy and early life.

Challenge 4: Vaccine acceptancy and preparedness for maternal immunisation, including in emergencies.

Challenge 5: Vaccine safety monitoring in LMIC, given the absence of high-quality baseline data regarding pregnancy outcomes and perinatal complications and absence of globally applicable standards for assessment of safety.

Challenge 6: Development of comparable methodologies for assessing efficacy in clinical trials: standard definitions for correlates of protection and methodology for the development of assays to develop such correlates; agreeing clinical end-points for key vaccine preventable diseases.

It is anticipated that projects focused on challenges 4-6 will focus on standards and methods for assessment of vaccine safety in HIC and LMIC settings and on evaluating these outcomes. Projects may focus on vaccine preparedness and risk and rumour management, while other projects are anticipated to address potential correlates of protection for vaccine–preventable infections, for example critically evaluating the literature and data from within the IMPRINT network to aid decision-making and licensure for current and future studies of maternal and infant vaccines.

Activities not supported: research outside the IMPRINT objectives and remit, projects not led by IMPRINT network members, PhD fees, purchase of high value equipment (>£10,000), projects including only one institute, investigator personnel costs (support for research staff only), costs incurred by industrial partners (such costs are expected to be borne by the industrial partners).

Value of grant: Projects will be funded to a maximum of £70,000. Please note, LMIC applicants will be awarded 100% of Full Economic Costs (FEC); non-LMIC applicants will be awarded 80% of FEC. Non-LMIC organisations must agree to find the balance of this costing from their other resources. For details on cost coverage of MRC institutions, please refer to point 3.8 of the MRC guidance for applicants document.

LMIC funding: To be considered for the LMIC funding level you must be resident in an LMIC country at the time of application. A list of LMIC countries can be found here:

http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm.

Application process

There will be at least three pump-priming grant calls within the three years of IMPRINT. Deadlines will be advertised on the IMPRINT website: http://imprint-network.co.uk.

The application form should be completed in full. Additional documents required include a Gantt chart detailing key milestones of the project. It is important that deliverables by 6 months are specified in the Gantt chart and the 6 months interim report details progress against these deliverables. A brief CV and publication lists is required for all investigators along with a letter of support from the head of department. Lead applicants who are Early Career Researchers are encouraged to apply and will be expected to also provide a letter of support from the Research Group Lead.

The application form and associated documents must be submitted by email by 4pm CET on the closing date to **applications@imprint-network.co.uk**. You will receive acknowledgement of your application within three working days.

Review

All submitted applications that have passed a formal eligibility check are presented to evaluators from the IMPRINT Boards and potential external reviewers, for competitive assessment. IMPRINT evaluators review and score applications using a standard template. Applications will be assessed as follows: Scientific merit (50%), facilitating cross-network collaborations (25%) and strategic impact for the network (25%).

Evaluators will not review an application where they have a conflict of interest (see below for details on conflicts of interest). Applicants are encouraged to identify any persons on the IMPRINT Boards with whom there is a conflict of interest. In such a case, applicants should suggest two external reviewers.

Following review of all applications, a ranked list will be used to select applications for funding.

Notification of Review Results

Successful Lead Applicants will be sent award letters confirming the funds available and will be supported by the Network Manager in finalizing their grant documents. Projects are expected to start within 2-3 months after receipt of the award letter, so it is advised that any contractual issues between partners are discussed prior to grant submission and resolved promptly upon award.

Unsuccessful Lead Applicants will be informed of the evaluation outcomes promptly, and the Network Manager may pass on specific feedback if available.

Post-award Administration

Imperial College London will issue a simple sub-grant to the Lead Applicant's institution. Projects may not start until this contract has been fully executed. Projects must start within 3 months of the date on the award letter and the actual start date must be confirmed to the Network Manager.

Before a project can start, partners must consider whether a collaboration agreement is required for the project. If required, collaboration agreements must be in place before funding is released.

It is expected that ethical approvals, if required, will be in progress at the time of application and should be complete before funding is released (note: projects should be commenced within 3 months of award).

Funds should be spent as detailed on the application. Awardees are required to submit a brief progress report at 6 months (1-page report) and narrative and financial reports at 12 months.

On commencement of the project, 50% of the funds will be made available, 30% at 6 months (following receipt of the 1-page report) and the final 20% after receipt and approval of the final report. Funds will be paid to the lead institution, who will then be responsible for distributing funds as agreed to other partners.

LMIC applicants will be awarded 100% of Full Economic Costs (FEC); non-LMIC applicants will be awarded 80% of FEC. Non-LMIC organisations must agree to find the balance of this costing from their other resources. For details on cost coverage of MRC institutions, please refer to point 3.8 of the MRC guidance for applicants document.

IMPRINT does not require receipts to be submitted but these must be kept by the host institution as they may be required for possible future audits. The grantee's host institution must follow their standard procedures for financial accounts.

Any unspent funding will be retained by IMPRINT.

Awardees are encouraged to submit their project's results for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, or as a case-study. Final reports should be submitted a maximum of 2 months following completion of the project period. A non-confidential brief summary of the project's outcomes, taken from the final report, will be published on the IMPRINT website and in other publicity material.

All work arising from this grant must acknowledge the funding source as follows:

"This work was supported by the IMmunising PRegnant women and INfants neTwork (IMPRINT) funded by the GCRF Networks in Vaccines Research and Development which was co-funded by the MRC and BBSRC."

Publicity and Data Protection

Awarded pump-priming projects will be listed on the IMPRINT website and in other publicity material, with a non-confidential abstract outlining the work proposed. Copies of applications will be made available to the IMPRINT Board members and potential external reviewers as well as other Imperial College staff who will use information provided for reviewing the proposal and post-award administration. IMPRINT may choose to publish details of awards, awardees, and information about successful projects.

All funding comes from the BBSRC/MRC, so to meet the Research Councils' obligations for public accountability and the dissemination of information, non-confidential details of awards may also be made available on the Research Councils' websites and other publicly available databases, and in reports, documents and mailing lists. The BBSRC/MRC will use this information for research related activities, including but not limited to, statistical analysis in relation to the evaluation of MRC funding, study of trends and policy and strategy studies. Recipients of pump-priming awards may be required to attend and contribute to BBSRC/MRC events within relevant areas at the request of the BBSRC/MRC.

MRC data sharing
For information on good practice principles for sharing participant data from publicly funded clinical and trials and on how to manage your research data, please refer to:
https://www.mrc.ac.uk/research/policies-and-guidance-for-researchers/data-sharing/

MRC open access policy
For MRC open access policy, guidance and FAQ, please refer to:
https://www.mrc.ac.uk/research/policies-and-guidance-for-researchers/open-access-policy/

Use of Animals

IMPRINT supports the principles of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement). Awardees are expected to abide by the core principles set out in the cross-funder guidance 'Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research: Expectations of the major research councils and charitable funding bodies' and GC2 of the RCUK Terms and Conditions.

The provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 must be observed. All IMPRINT awards are made on the absolute condition that no work which is controlled by the act will begin until the necessary licences have been obtained from the Home Office (or equivalent body if work is outside the UK). Any recommendations arising from the MRC review process with regards to animal use must be followed. When animals are purchased from commercial suppliers, in-country suppliers should be used wherever possible, to minimise the risk of suffering during transport.

All research involving non-human primates must comply with the NC3Rs Guidelines: Primate accommodation, care and use.

For more details, please refer to:
https://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/4-proposals-involving-animal-use/

Use of Human Samples or Data

IMPRINT expects all research involving human participants to be undertaken in accordance with MRC policies and guidance available from http://www.mrc.ac.uk/research/policies-and-guidance-for-researchers/#ethics.These include:

- Good Research Practice (2012);
- Medical research involving adults who cannot consent (2007);
- Medical Research Involving Children (2004);
- Human Tissue and Biological Samples for Use in Research (2014);
- Personal Information in Medical Research (2000)

Independent Research Ethics Committee approval is required for research that involves human participants (whether patients or healthy volunteers) or records. Such approval is also required for certain studies of human tissues.

In the case of social science research, IMPRINT recommends that Awardees follow the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (revised 2015) which highlights the responsibility of the research organisation for ensuring that the research is subject to appropriate ethics review.

Research involving human participants in developing societies presents specific ethical challenges and the MRC guidelines Research Involving Human Participants in Developing Societies must be followed.

Awardees whose research involves the removal, use or storage of human tissue as specified in the relevant legislation must:

- comply with the appropriate legislation, i.e. the Human Tissue Act 2004 and/or the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006;
- follow the relevant standards and Codes of Practice issued by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) (the MRC Regulatory Support Centre has summarised these);
- follow the MRC guidance detailed in Human Tissue and Biological Samples for Use in medical Research (2014).

For research taking place outside the UK, local national guidelines and international best practice must be followed. All legal requirements for the import/export of biological materials must be adhered to.

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)

National regulations and international best practice must be followed. Researchers who carry out genetic modification should be familiar with the legislative requirements and with the Scientific Advisory Committee on Genetic Modification (Contained Use) guidance.

Dangerous Pathogens

Research organisations accommodating projects involving the use of dangerous pathogens must comply with the safeguards recommended by the UK Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens in their guidance 'Infection at work: controlling the risk', 'Biological Agents: the principles, design and operation of containment in a level 4 facility' and 'Biological agents: Managing the risks in laboratories and healthcare premises', as well as local national regulations.

Conflict of Interest

Members of the IMPRINT Boards will not review applications where this is a conflict of interest. Examples of a conflict of interest include:

- Actively involved in research collaborations with the applicant(s)
- Working closely with the applicant(s), for example as a co-author or PhD Supervisor, or has worked closely in the last 4 years
- Personal/family relationship with the applicant(s)

Useful Resources

UK Government information on ODA strategic objectives:
https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/official-development-assistance-oda--2

List of LMIC countries: http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact the Network Manager Claudia Schacht at IMPRINT@LINQ-management.com.