Discovery Research Grants
Call and guidelines – 2024 scheme

RNID funds research into hearing loss and tinnitus to speed up the discovery and development of medical treatments to protect and restore hearing and silence tinnitus.

Our Discovery Research Grants support projects that will generate knowledge to underpin the discovery of treatments for hearing loss or tinnitus or improve how treatments are developed and tested.

We would like to particularly encourage applications this year in the areas of tinnitus, and medical devices to treat hearing loss.

Why encouraging research to improve treatments for hearing loss, including medical devices, and tinnitus, is important

Hearing loss is a major public health issue, affecting over 12 million people in the UK – around one out of every five people. Globally, around 466 million people have disabling hearing loss, requiring rehabilitation to be able to hear well. Tinnitus affects over 7 million adults in the UK – or one out of every seven people.

Current medical interventions for hearing loss are largely limited to hearing aids and cochlear implants. While these devices benefit many, they do not reproduce the clarity and richness of natural hearing and can perform poorly when there is a high level of background noise, or when listening to music. There are currently no cures for tinnitus, only ways to manage the condition, which don't work for everyone affected.

There is therefore an urgent need to improve existing technologies, and to develop new interventions to prevent hearing loss, restore natural hearing, and silence tinnitus.

There is also a need to improve the way in which new and existing treatments are developed and tested, whether biological- or device-based. The field needs better diagnostics that can identify the site of damage in the auditory system more precisely to ensure that treatments are tested on and administered to the people most likely to

benefit from them; it also needs better ways to measure if a treatment is working to improve hearing or prevent hearing loss. There is also a need for improved experimental models that are more relevant to human hearing disorders to allow new treatment approaches to be developed more quickly and efficiently.

Call for Proposals

We request research projects in the following areas:

1) **Research to underpin the development of treatments for hearing disorders, including tinnitus**

   Any research that underpins the development of treatments, including but not limited to medical devices, pharmacological treatments, genetic or cellular therapies, will be considered under this category.

   Treatments should aim to prevent hearing loss, restore auditory function or silence tinnitus.

   Examples of research topics included in this category:
   - identifying the causes of hearing loss, including central auditory processing disorders
   - improving understanding of the molecular and/or cellular changes associated with different types of hearing disorders
   - improving the interface between a cochlear implant and the auditory nerve
   - catalysing the development of novel medical devices to aid or restore auditory function
   - contributing towards the development of therapies to prevent loss of auditory function
   - identifying biological pathways that could be targeted to trigger the regeneration of damaged cell types in the auditory system
   - advancing drug or gene-based approaches to restore hearing function or trigger cell regeneration
   - advancing cell-based therapies to repair damage to the auditory system
   - identifying the causes of tinnitus
   - improving understanding of the biological basis of tinnitus
   - contributing towards the development of treatments to silence or alleviate tinnitus
   - identifying common biological mechanisms that underlie dementia and hearing loss, and how they lead to both conditions
   - advancing our knowledge of any causal link between hearing loss and dementia

- leading to the development of interventions that can delay or prevent the progression of hearing loss and/or dementia, or prevent one condition from exacerbating the other

2) **Research to improve how new treatments for hearing loss and tinnitus are developed and tested**

Any research that improves how new treatments are developed or tested is encouraged under this category.

Improving measurement of auditory function or tinnitus

Research to improve how hearing or tinnitus is measured or monitored:

- to improve diagnosis or prognosis
- to identify the type and location of damage underlying a person's hearing difficulty or tinnitus
- to provide new and robust measures for use as clinical trial endpoints to evaluate interventions
- to allow for patient stratification into clinical trials
- to help select the most appropriate treatment

Such measures include, but are not limited to, genetic, physiological, or behavioural approaches.

Developing models of human hearing disorders, including tinnitus

Research to develop models of human hearing disorders, including tinnitus, to allow for robust pre-clinical validation of treatments:

- *in vivo* animal models
- *in vitro* animal or human cellular models
- computer models of human hearing loss or tinnitus

Additional notes for applicants

- Please note that you may only submit **one** preliminary application as the lead applicant. You may be named as a co-applicant or collaborator on other applications.
- **We particularly encourage applications in the areas of tinnitus and medical devices for hearing loss (eg hearing aids and cochlear implants), as they are currently under-represented in our portfolio.**

- Projects must be defined pieces of research with clearly stated objectives, experimental plan and expected outcomes. Applications to cover solely, or mainly, equipment costs, will **not** be accepted.
- Projects should be able to demonstrate a route by which outcomes could be exploited for the benefit of people with hearing loss or tinnitus.
- **Resubmissions:** we accept resubmissions of previously unfunded projects through this scheme – no invitation to resubmit is required. The resubmission must be updated to take into account any feedback given (or to provide any additional data). **You may only resubmit a substantially similar application up to two times i.e. three submissions total**.
- **Please note that we do not fund social research, or research focussed on the design or evaluation of healthcare services.**

Summary of grant

Duration:	Up to 3 years.
Eligibility:	Applicants can be from any university or research institute in any country
Value:	Up to £225K in total, funding will not exceed £75K in any one year

Application procedure

There is a two-stage application process for the Discovery Research Grant (an overview of the process, and timings, is shown at the end):

1. **Preliminary application –** All applicants are required to submit a preliminary application. Preliminary applications will be considered by our Discovery Research Grant review panel[1], who will rank them, and identify the best proposals to take forward to the full application stage.

2. **Full application -** Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full application. This application will be subject to external peer review, and final consideration by our Discovery Research Grant review panel. Applicants will be given the opportunity to respond to external peer review feedback in advance of the final review panel meeting.

The process of selecting preliminary applications to move forward to the full application stage is very competitive, and we therefore ask that you do not submit

[1] The Discovery Research Grant review panel is comprised of Professor René Gifford (Vanderbilt University) (chair), Professor Graham Naylor (University of Nottingham), Dr Gwenaelle Géléoc (Boston Children's Hospital), Dr Sally Dawson (University College London), Dr Conny Kopp-Scheinpflug (Ludwig-Maximilians University, Munich), Dr Zoe Mann (King's College London), Professor Berthold Langguth (University Hospital of Regensburg), Dr Mahmood Bhutta (Brighton and Sussex Medical School), Dr Alexander Galazyuk (Northeast Ohio Medical University) and 2 additional members to be recruited.

speculative applications. It is important for this process to work and to be fair to other applicants that preliminary outlines accurately reflect any later invited applications. As such, all full applications will be checked against preliminary applications. **Please note that full applications will have to be approved by an authorised representative from your institution, on Flexi-Grant, before you can submit – ensure you allow enough time for this before the deadline**.

Submitting an application:

Preliminary and full applications must be submitted through our online grants management system, Flexi-Grant, before the deadline. There is further guidance on Flexi-Grant about how to complete your application.

All preliminary applications must be received on or before Monday 25 March 2024.

For further details:

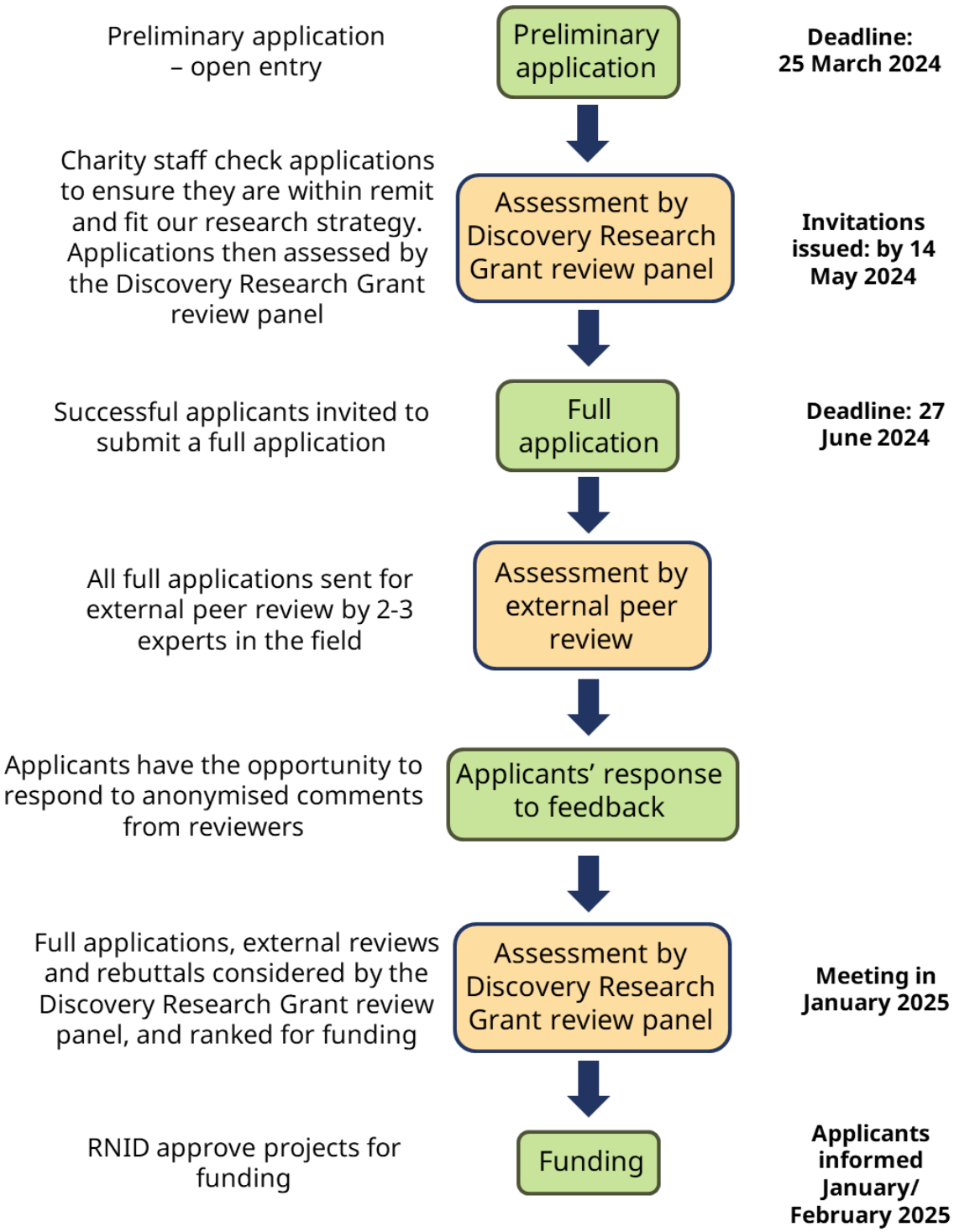
Telephone: +44(0) 20 3227 6158
Email: **research@rnid.org.uk**
Web: www.rnid.org.uk/discovery

Deadlines

Preliminary applications:	25 March 2024
Full applications:	27 June 2024
Final decision:	January/February 2025

A summary of our current terms and conditions is included on our website for your reference – please note that these are subject to change.

2024 round


Preliminary application – open entry
Preliminary application
Deadline: 25 March 2024
Charity staff check applications to ensure they are within remit and fit our research strategy. Applications then assessed by the Discovery Research Grant review panel
Assessment by Discovery Research Grant review panel
Invitations issued: by 14 May 2024
Successful applicants invited to submit a full application
Full application
Deadline: 27 June 2024
All full applications sent for external peer review by 2-3 experts in the field
Assessment by external peer review
Applicants have the opportunity to respond to anonymised comments from reviewers
Applicants' response to feedback
Full applications, external reviews and rebuttals considered by the Discovery Research Grant review panel, and ranked for funding
Assessment by Discovery Research Grant review panel
Meeting in January 2025
RNID approve projects for funding
Funding
Applicants informed January/ February 2025