HRB-HRCI Joint Funding Scheme 2023/2024

Fighting Blindness Call Expression of Interest Guidelines

1. Background

Fighting Blindness are now accepting Expression of Interest (EOI) applications for the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme.

A HRCI video presentation for researchers interested in the scheme is available can be found here- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yWEGhNvhbk.

All proposals to Fighting Blindness must address our research priorities outlined below (Section 1.1).

All information on the scheme can be found in the HRCI-HRB Instructions to Applicants document. It is of vital importance that you read the HRCI-HRB Instructions to Applicants document as it contains all eligibility information.

The information in this Fighting Blindness document is to provide additional Fighting Blindness specific information for the call.

1.1 Fighting Blindness Research Priorities

Fighting Blindness is committed to the development of therapies that are accessible to all patients affected by inherited retinal degenerative disease and age-related macular disease (AMD) through the pursuit and enablement of scientific medical research.

For this co-funding scheme, we are inviting original, internationally-competitive proposals that are relevant to the research priorities of Fighting Blindness and align with one or more of the following research areas (within IRDs and/or AMD*):

- Gene-agnostic therapeutics
- Elucidating common pathogenic pathways that drive retinal degeneration

Please contact research@fightingblindness.ie if you have questions around these research priorities.

*Applications in diabetic retinopathy will also be considered.

2. Funding available

The maximum funding available is €300,000 for 36 month project duration. However, projects of 12 months duration will also be considered.

3. Applicant Criteria

Further information on the eligibility criteria of applicants, co-applicants etc can be found in the HRCI-HRB Instructions to Applicants document.

3.1 International applications

Please note that applications from researchers based in international research institutes will be considered, however, it must be clear in the application that there is no research capacity for the project in the Republic of Ireland.

Therefore, for international applications it is strongly recommended that there are co-applicants or collaborators in Republic of Ireland where possible. This is of key importance to an application.

4. Public and Patient Involvement Plan

Ensuring Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) in research is a key priority for Fighting Blindness. PPI is a hugely important aspect of the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme.

As part of the review process applications will be reviewed by a Fighting Blindness PPI review panel. Applications submitted to the HRB will also undergo review by another PPI review panel who have a decision in what applications are funded.

Therefore, it is of critical importance that applications have a strong PPI plan.

4.1 Resources for developing a PPI plan

We recommend using the below resources to make a PPI plan for your EOI application. There are also many other resources available online.

- HRCI has produced three case studies of PPI excellence in Joint Funding Scheme applications- https://hrci.ie/ppi-in-the-joint-funding-scheme/ under the tab 'PPI in the Joint Funding Scheme'. These are great examples of PPI in research projects.

- Fighting Blindness also have information and resources on PPI and how to include PPI contributors in research. https://www.fightingblindness.ie/how-we-can-help/research/patient-and-public-involvement-in-research-and-development/ppi-for-researchers/ppi-toolkit/

- The PPI Ignite Network promotes excellence and inspires innovation in public and patient involvement (PPI) in health and social care research in Ireland. At the centre of the PPI Ignite Network are seven Universities, providing the training, support and guidance to help researchers involve public and patients, right from the start of a research idea. We recommend contacting the PPI Ignite programme office in your university. Information on the programme offices can be found here- https://ppinetwork.ie/about-us/lead-sites/

5. Making an application

Application must be made using the **Expression of Interest Application Form** which can be found on the Fighting Blindness website**.** Completed application forms (including CVs) must be sent to research@fightingblindness.ie by **5pm Monday 21st August 2023**.

6. Next steps

Applications will be reviewed by the Fighting Blindness Research team to ensure eligibility.

After this, eligible applications will be reviewed by the Medical and Science Advisory Board for scientific quality. The PPI plan in the EOI will be reviewed by the Fighting Blindness team and feedback will be provided to applicants.

Shortlisted EOI applications will be invited to submit a Full Application.

An indicative timeline is outlined below-

Expression of Interest applications open	Thursday 06 July 2023
Deadline for submission of EOI to Fighting Blindness	**5pm Monday 21st August 2023**
Notification of outcome of EOI review and invite to submit Full Application	Late September 2023
Submission of Full Application to Fighting Blindness (if shortlisted)	Early November 2023
Right to reply phase	Mid-Dec-Late Jan 2024
Submission of shortlisted applications to HRB	March 2024