

## Invitation to tender: AMS Springboard and Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers Schemes Evaluation

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### Summary

The Academy of Medical Sciences is inviting tenders to evaluate the Springboard and Starters Grants for Clinical Lecturers schemes.

Commissioned by: Academy of Medical Sciences

**Aims:** To assess the impact of both the Springboard and Starters Grants for Clinical Lecturers schemes' objectives and activities, and gain insights to inform the future development of both schemes to fulfil the Academy's strategic priority to support the next generation of researchers to reach their full potential.

**Timescale and deliverables:**

Invitation to tender	20 May 2024
Tender submission deadline	14 June 2024
Appointment of contractor	1 July 2024
Kick off meeting	Week commencing 8-12 July 2024
Delivery of objectives and report	4 October 2024

**Working arrangements:** The contract will be managed by Seema Patel, Monitoring & Evaluation Manager. The successful contractor will work closely with Academy staff throughout the project; meetings will be held at key stages.

**Costs:** Tenders are invited for up to £60,000-80,000 (plus VAT).

### The Academy of Medical Sciences

Founded in 1998, the Academy of Medical Sciences is the independent, expert voice of biomedical and health research in the UK.

Our vision is good health for all supported by the best research and evidence.

Our mission is to help create an open and progressive research sector to improve the health of people everywhere.

- We support researchers with innovative funding and career development opportunities.
- We help create a more sustainable environment for delivering outstanding research.
- We help researchers to work with academia, the public, charities, policy makers, health and social care partners, and industry to make the greatest difference to health.

Our strategy for 2022-2032 focusses on the following strategic priorities.

1. Influence policy and practice to improve the lives of patients, the public and communities
2. Support UK biomedical and health research to strengthen its global competitiveness and reputation
3. Support the next generation of researchers to reach their full potential

4. Work with our partners to increase the Academy's impact on global health
5. Build our resources to ensure our long-term independence and effectiveness

[You can read more about our strategy 2022-2032 here](#)

## Developing talented researchers

One of the Academy's core strategic priorities is supporting the next generation of researchers to reach their full potential and we aim to achieve this by offering a range of research grant schemes, career development programmes, training and networking opportunities.

From its foundation, the Academy has put medical and health researchers at the centre of our work, partnering with organisations to design and deliver a number of grants programmes to support and develop the next generation of medical and health researchers.

Our portfolio of grants schemes complements other activities within the Biomedical Grants and Careers Policy department at the Academy, including the Mentoring and career development programmes for early career researchers, the INSPIRE scheme to support medical students to pursue an academic career, and the SUSTAIN programme for women researchers to enable them to thrive in their independent research careers. The Academy also continues to target and address unmet need, for example, our recent innovation in piloting FLIER, Future Leaders in Innovation, Enterprise and Research, a new programme that aims to develop leaders of the future who can create collaborations across academia, industry, the NHS and government to drive innovation.

The Academy continues to influence national policy on academic training and career structures for both basic biomedical and clinical scientists. The Academy's policy work can take many forms: reports, position papers, correspondence, representation on Governmental and external panels, evidence to Parliamentary committees, seminars and workshops. All policy statements are endorsed by the Academy's Council. Our careers policy work informs our activities and ensures that our schemes remain fit for purpose.

## Academy of Medical Sciences Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers and Springboard schemes

**Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers (SGCL)** and **Springboard** are established Academy funding schemes that are due for an independent evaluation in 2024. They support clinical active and non-clinical active researchers, respectively, at key stages early in their careers.

The **Springboard** grant scheme offers a bespoke package of support to biomedical and health researchers at the start of their first independent post to help launch their research careers. This includes funding of up to £125,000 over two years. The scheme is generously supported by Wellcome, British Heart Foundation, DSIT, and Diabetes UK. This scheme was launched in 2015, and in 2018 we commissioned an independent evaluation of cohorts 1-4 in this scheme. The evaluation report can be found [here](#). As of 1 April 2024, there have been 9 cohorts of award holders.

This scheme is aimed at non-clinical researchers who are within the first five years of research independence and who have not yet obtained substantial research funding support from other sources, such as a large research grant or personal fellowship. A Springboard award offers flexible funding for research costs and personal development, however award funds cannot be used to cover the applicant's personal salary. Applicants are supported by their host institution's

Springboard Champion to help them develop their grantsmanship skills during the application process. So far, we have delivered 354 Springboard awards across 9 cohorts of grant holders, with a total award value exceeding £36.1 million.

The **SGCL** scheme offers funding of up to £30,000 to cover the cost of research and allow research-active Clinical Lecturers to gather data to strengthen their bids for longer-term fellowships and funding. The scheme is currently generously supported by Wellcome, UKRI-Medical Research Council, British Heart Foundation, Versus Arthritis, Diabetes UK, Prostate Cancer UK, and the Association of Physicians of Great Britain & Ireland. The Royal College of Physicians (2014-2017) and the British Thoracic Society (2018-2022) were previous consortium funders. The scheme has been running since 2008 and was last fully evaluated in 2016. A more recent 10-year anniversary review can be found [here](#), and the latest annual report for 2020 can be found [here](#). Also, a study recently published by the National Institute for Health and Care Research which evaluated the impact of clinical lectureships in clinical academic careers (accessible [here](#)) included a section on these awards, highlighting their important role in career progression.

This grant scheme provides modest 'starter' funds to enable research active Clinical Lecturers to pursue their research work. Clinical Lecturer posts provide a salary but often do not come with the funding to support the costs of the research. This scheme was designed to help bridge this gap by providing Clinical Lecturers with access to modest research funds for up to two years. It gives them experience of preparing a research grant application and helps them establish their research portfolios by providing funding for research consumables. So far, we have supported 688 Clinical Lecturers through 30 rounds of funding, with grants totalling over £19.5 million.

The number of clinical academics has been declining in the UK due to a variety of reasons, from exposure to research at undergraduate level, to pay parity with clinical counterparts. The Academy continues to address these challenges by engaging various stakeholders, convening advisory groups on clinical academic training, as well as partnering with the Royal Society on written materials and events. The Academy is also an active member of the Clinical Academic Training Forum (CATF) and the UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC).

For both schemes, applicants, regardless of the outcome of their application, can access the Academy's mentoring scheme and receive detailed feedback on their proposal. All awardees can also participate in the Academy's career development opportunities, the online PILLAR and HIVE communities, and ad hoc Policy consultations and activities.

## **Aims of the Springboard and Starters Grants for Clinical Lecturers evaluation**

We would like to commission independent evaluations of both schemes to identify their impact, compare any cross-cutting themes that run across both schemes, and suggest recommendations for the future development and evaluation of the schemes, to ensure that they will be fit for purpose in addressing the challenges to careers and training over the next five years.

Suggested aims of this evaluation:

- Determine whether the schemes are still addressing their original aims, are fit for purpose and suitably resourced and designed?
- Capture the broad range of outputs, outcomes and impacts of the funding provided to both the schemes and the individual awardees.
- Identify the added value of the career support opportunities available to the awardees, including mentoring, career development events and access to SUSTAIN, as well as access to the community networks PILLAR (for current awardees) and HIVE (for alumni). How well are the awardees aware of what is available to them and of opportunities to interact with the Academy? Who is and is not accessing them, and understanding their experiences and any barriers to taking part.

- Provide an overview of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) information and trends in demographics, highlighting which groups we are reaching and not reaching, and why and whether there are any variations in success rates.
- Review the assessment and selection processes to determine if these are appropriate for the scale and scope of the schemes and awards.
- Prepare case studies to demonstrate the impact of the schemes on individual award holders, their career development and research.

The Academy is also interested to explore the possibility of including information from unsuccessful applicants, which would provide a small control group at the same career stage. We would like to compare outputs, outcomes and impacts, in an unbiased way with a representative controls group of with individuals who were unsuccessful with these awards. Please include a proposal for how to do this.

### **Evaluation methodology**

In order to meet the aims of the evaluation, the contractor is expected to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods as set out below:

- To gather quantitative data relating to the outputs, outcomes and impacts of both schemes.
- To gather qualitative information from the Springboard, Starters Grants for Clinical Lecturers awardees and their stakeholders to enable a deeper understanding of how the overarching packages of the schemes have achieved any additional impacts, including on the careers of awardees. Awardees and stakeholders should be asked to highlight any challenges and how these might be addressed through amendments to the scheme or other means of support.

The Academy is open to considering a range of methodologies, however justification must be given.

Key deliverables:

- Final, full detailed evaluation report for each scheme.
- Final summaries of the evaluation reports with key learnings (for public dissemination).
- PowerPoint presentation of the report findings, including a summary, data presented as tables, charts and conclusions, to be given by the external evaluation team.

The contractor will be required to agree a final list of evaluation questions as well as a detailed process plan with members of the Academy staff once the contract has been awarded. The contractor will be expected to be in regular communication with Academy staff. The contractor will also be expected to attend one or more meetings with the Academy staff and evaluation advisory group. A schedule of update meetings/phone calls and delivery milestones will be agreed post appointment. Finally, the contractor will be expected to be available for 3 months following the release of the evaluation reports for any follow-on questions or clarifications.

The contractor must undertake all aspects of the evaluation, including data collection, collation and analysis. The contractor can use the expertise of a third party to help provide a comprehensive evaluation, but all third parties must be agreed in advance, and the contractor will be responsible for the payment and management of any third-party agreements. Any support required from Academy staff should be explicitly stated in the tender document.

The Academy will be responsible for all the communication activities relating to the evaluations and their findings.

## **Application submission**

A budget of up to £60,000–80,000 (plus VAT) is available. We envisage that the cost of the evaluation will be commensurate with the scale of this project and the tender document will include details of staff time and costs, direct costs and VAT. Value for money must be demonstrated.

Applications should include:

- A detailed proposal, which includes narrative text on how the aims will be met, the named personnel required, and the key milestones and meetings with the Academy required.

In addition:

- Fee structure, proposed budget and justification notes.
- CV and biographies (including any examples of related or relevant work undertaken) of the designated personnel who will work with us for the project.
- Names of three referees (previous/existing client contacts from relevant projects) and links to relevant reports published by the applicant.

Applications should be submitted to Seema Patel ([Seema.Patel@acmedsci.ac.uk](mailto:Seema.Patel@acmedsci.ac.uk)) by 17.00 BST 14 June 2024. Please contact Seema if you would like to discuss the proposal further.