

# UofG MVLS Applying for Translational Research Funding Video Transcript

## Introduction (0:00)

We are very keen to try to look at how we maximize translation opportunities from research within the college and we have a specific translational research initiative team that deals with this and what we want to try to do through this video is to outline the sort of things that we try to achieve, the sort of projects we're looking for, the way in which we receive and evaluate the applications. I will also talk about some of the classic mistakes that are made but also importantly how we can help you to try to maximize your chances of getting translational research funding.

## What is translational research? (0:43)

So to take on from that, what we need to understand or what you need to understand is what translational research is and the funding mechanisms we have and it's very different than what we're used to in the general scenario. What we're [used to] thinking about is discovery research and how we're building on that research to understand, let's say for example, the mechanisms of disease but that's not what we're trying to do here. What we're trying to do is take ideas and not be dictated to by the pressures of publishing those, that's not the aim for it. What we want to do is take that idea and then drive it to the next level in terms of the translational pipeline and that's a very different scenario than what you would do if you were trying to actually understand your particular biology. You have to take a step back and think about what you need to deliver for the translational piece, not for understanding the process that you're looking into. So, you've got to try and think in a different way than you normally would. It's not about the mechanism that underpins all this. It's about how you go from A to B and actually deliver on something that, for instance, if we were trying to think about a small molecule that you've discovered and you wanted to see how that could actually be eventually clinically applied, you don't necessarily need to understand how that works. What you want to do is get it to a point where a company will take that on and go to the next stage, or you take it on and do a DPFS application. That requires a very different type of mindset and that's where the conversations with the team can really help you develop your program. It's not a skill set that we tend to have or tend to think about.

## What types of projects are eligible for support? (2:20)

So under this translational umbrella there are a whole range of different types of projects that we look at and would be very keen to fund. There's the classic one where you have some sort of target that you think is relevant in a particular pathology and you might want to do drug screening or you might want to do some animal experiments to take the project to the point of having proof of principle to go into either industry, or as Carl said to DPFS of funding or other funding sources. We also are interested, not just in the classic biological aspects of medicine but also in development of apps, development of devices that have medical or other types of potential but we also look at projects that are altruistic in nature and that are relevant to low and middle income countries. So essentially, as Carl said, we will not fund basic research, that's not the point. This is not a pump priming set of grants for basic research. What we will do is we'll look at anything within the translational portfolio; from medicinal chemistry; from trying to understand more about basic processes using mouse models or even using structural chemistry to help you get towards something that you can start to target therapeutically in collaboration with a company. It can be developing apps and software and hardware. What we also sometimes fund is market research if you have an idea that requires market research to give it some validity before you go for other funding or to

commercial partners. Then that's definitely something that we also look at as well. So essentially the broad portfolio of the sort of things that we look at and as we'll discuss later in the video. The crucial thing is, come and talk to us and let us advise you on whether what you're proposing sits within our transitional remit and if it doesn't, how can we help you to get it closer to that?

## How are projects assessed and who review them? (4:16)

To give you some idea about how these will be assessed and who will be evaluating them; there is an academic element, for instance Gerry and myself. We'll be looking at these applications and evaluate them but it's not just an academic input. We have lots of people who are experienced across the team who will be looking at, not only the IP aspects of this, for instance, in terms of tech transfer but operational teams to understand about the logistics of the projects and how they can be delivered. So, it really is a quite a broad-spectrum team who look at this evaluate it and see if it really does fit the remit. It's not an academic exercise, it's really trying to understand whether this truly aligns with these actual funding streams we have, that can deliver on this translational piece. What I would add to that is that sometimes we come across projects that we're not really sure about but we always err on the side of caution and what we would tend to do in those situations is we'd ask individuals to come and talk to us directly and go through a sort of brief interview so we can get a clear idea of what is going on so we take every opportunity to try to look at ways of helping support what you're submitting to us and I think that to add to that as well, it's not just at the end stage, when the applications come in and has been evaluated that we want the dialogue. The dialogue should happen before then. You could actually just mock-up an application, send it in and we can arrange a meeting where we can talk to you. We can go through the element of the application and give you insight and help you develop it. We want you to succeed and therefore are more than happy to provide input so that when you actually submit it to the final committee and it does get assessed, you've got more of a chance of it getting through the process. Even if it comes to that process, it's not a yes or no necessarily, it's a let's develop this. So, either whether it happened before during or after, it's all about getting your project to the best place it can be for this translational aspect. We also help all the way through the process so once you get the funding we continue to help and to assess and to give all the support that we can. The important thing for each of your projects is that it can have a very different destination and still provide substantial impact and when I talk about impact, what we're thinking about with these projects is it has to deliver for you, for the translational piece but it also has to deliver for the university. The university has to be able to show that we are delivering something, through you, that can really emphasize how the university is driving this type of research forward. Now that is so broad, that we can't give you all the examples. DPFS would be one of them but other examples would be an impact case or a type of knowledge exchange or that you've created a network of individuals that can lead to the development of that project so you're bringing in industry partners. Having those up front is good because it can help the application but you don't necessarily need them to be successful but you can see how there are a number of different ways that you can truly show that your project has been successful and led to the next level and then you want to show and articulate that you can build on that to get to the eventual end game, which is the best success you can have with that project, as you see it, in terms of your vision. So, I think that's the really important piece and where people really fall down. If they can't see where they're going, just to discover new mechanisms is not enough. You've really got to think about long term and it doesn't have to be the right answer. You could end up somewhere else but you at least have to have that initial vision of where you're going to go and just expand slightly. We don't expect you to have something that's patentable no or that you have ownership of. What we do expect is that, and this is a slightly crass thing to say, there's something in it for Glasgow. There has to be and whether that be impacting the broadest sense causes, whether it be a patent position or a possible spin-out company, we need that also articulated in the vision. Again, in our TRI team we've got all expertise to advise you and all these things it's not just Carl and I waffling on about academic things. We can advise you on spin-out companies, patent applications, what the

likely impact potential of what you're doing is. So, the take-home message is there's got to be something for Glasgow. If there's not, we won't fund it. Just to pick up on the expertise that was in the team; if there is certain expertise that we don't have, there is also the potential to bring in outside advisors and we have brought consultants in before and again it's about giving you as much exposure as possible to the people that can help you deliver your project. So, don't be afraid to ask if you think you need a particular thing that's going to help you deliver. I mean we'll try and think of that as well when the applications come in but it's a two-way dialogue. You can provide as much into this and suggest things and we'll give you ways that we think that you would actually deliver that. For you, it's also a useful point to remind you of the Opportunity Audit we've run. We're about halfway through the college just now and the opportunity audit involves getting the sort of consultants that Carl mentioned. We've got some outstanding consultants that we use and some of you will have been through this. They come and they visit and they listen to what your research program is and they advise on it in terms of whether it's something that's translatable or that can be developed to give some sort of industrial or commercial output. Sometimes what they say is 'there's nothing here, that your basic science is great, don't waste your time but sometimes they'll pick up on something. So, we have some people who apply to us who have been through that process and that's almost pre-filtered, if you like, because we know there's something there. So we'll eventually go around the whole college with that but another important point to make is that if you've not been through this or if you have been through it and they've not seen anything, it doesn't preclude you from applying.

### What are the common mistakes when applying? (10:11)

So, having spoken about how we evaluate the grants, it's fair to say that some grants are easy to evaluate in that we can't fund them and there are various reasons for that. There are various classic mistakes, one that we brought up previously. It's just too basic and it does not fit within our remit so please come and talk to us about it. Second reason that it might fail is, you've not properly articulated the vision, so you need to really let us know what you've got, why you think it's important and really crucially, where's it going to go. So, we don't like applications that say 'I've got this as a target, let's go and look at it why is it important.' What's your next step? Is it DPFS funding? That's a wee bit lazy frankly. Where do you think it's going to go in five years' time? What's your roadmap for making this a reality? Poorly costed applications are things that we would send back as well. It wouldn't be a definite no, we'd certainly send it back and as we said before, the key thing is, come and talk to us. Make sure that we get it absolutely right. Well, I just want to touch back on Gerry's point about where it's going and give the example of the DPFS, to put in the box that you're filling out 'This will lead to a DPFS' is not appropriate. We all say that, it's very easy to write that in the box and actually, for some projects, that's not the appropriate place to go either. Gerry was right in the sense that you know this is not basic research but it's also not discovery of that particular compound. So one of the problems that some people come across is, they'll put forward an idea that actually is translational research but they've not done is the work beforehand. What they're proposing in their project is actually to get to the stage that we need them to already be at. So, you can't come out at us with a project that says 'I've got this incredible idea, I have an assay. I'm now going to go and try and find the target' you know or 'I'm going to find the compound because I'm going to do a high throughput screen because I've got the assay.' That's discovery, that isn't translation. So, it's about trying to understand where the distinction is between defining the entity you need to develop and actually having it that would go into something to develop. Another reason why projects fail, and we completely understand why people do this, is that it looks pretty obvious that what the PI is trying to do is to get extra money for a Postdoc or PhD student coming to the end of his or her contract. That's fairly transparent and we will not fund that and that's part of the reason that, as Carl will talk about in the next section, we're moving to enterprise fellows to do this. So, this is not an opportunity to keep staff on, it's a completely different sort of funding. So please try not to use it for that purpose.

## How are translational projects managed? (13:05)

So to give you some insight into the management structure around these projects; if you're successful and the project does get funded, there are a few different ways that we can help you deliver this and it is about us helping you deliver this. We are putting in place enterprise associates who will actually have a broad skill set in the lab and that's partly so that we have oversight on your projects to help you deliver the milestones that need to be achieved to show that this is progressing and this is part of sort of the remit with the MRC, the BBSRC, the Wellcome, we have to show that we're delivering sort of the right projects along the right timelines so they will have a particular skill set and they might align with some of the projects that come in and they help you deliver those projects. So they'll be a funded position. With you, they'll help to deliver that project, doing the science for you and delivering the results. So that's one way it might work but you might have a project that actually doesn't fit within the skill set that we have available with the enterprise associates that we have and that's where the flexibility comes in. We have to be extremely flexible within this program to help you deliver and therefore if you require someone who has very specific expertise to generate the results that are going to translate this from your initial concept to the one that's going to lead you to the to the eventual outcome, there is the flexibility there that you can actually bring in the individual that has that skill set and deliver it. It's all about getting the right results at the right time but there has to be a management structure in there so we will have constant oversight and meetings for how this project is developing and these might be essentially, depending on each project, we could have monthly meetings, just to see how things are progressing, it could be bi-monthly, etcetera. We will work it out so it's specific for the project. We're not going to say one size fits all, it's going to be bespoke for your project in terms of delivering exactly what you need.

## Summary (15:09)

So we hope that was of some value to you. There are two or three key things to point out; it's not basic science, we will not fund basic discovery science. It's not pump priming for basic discovery, it's something quite different that we hope we've articulated in this video. Second crucial point is, we are here to help, please engage with us. As Carl pointed out earlier, we've got a broad range of expertise in the management group, we can help with all aspects of it. So please engage with us all the way through the process. It doesn't guarantee success but will certainly enhance the chances of success and a final point that's worth mentioning is that, in links that you'll find below this video and on our translational research initial website, you'll find links to projects that we have funded to give you the sort of idea of the sort of things that we fund and the breadth of things that we fund and if any of them are of particular interest, you could perhaps contact the PI to get some information or indeed contact us. So, as I say, we hope that was useful, we're here to help and good luck with your applications.