MRC Confidence in Concept guidance

Expected governance standards
Institutions are expected to allocate funds transparently and:

• manage all real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest with integrity, impartiality, honesty and openness (see more information on how the MRC manages conflicts of interest)
• make available details of the assessment criteria, decision-making process and governance structure to internal applicants
• make available the list of awardees internally.

Institutions should be able to explain the rationale behind the funding decisions. Awards should be used to support transition between fundamental and translational research to a point where the project is competitive for more substantive funding. Awards must not be used for other purposes.

Assessment criteria
Applications will be assessed using the following criteria:

• Background scientific environment: Does the institution have a significant amount of on-going high-quality discovery research where translation could be accelerated? Does the institution’s science offer opportunities in distinct areas not addressed elsewhere?
• Translational environment and expertise: Does the institution provide a suitable environment to support progression from preliminary into full scale translational projects? Will they provide expertise (including through links with industry) to help projects to develop appropriately? Do they have a convincing strategy for translation? Has translational performance so far been impressive?
• Use, impact and governance: Is the proposed use likely to make a significant difference beyond what the institution already achieves? Will the institute contribute additional funding or specialist advice/expertise? Does the proposed governance give confidence that the funding will be selectively allocated and managed to best effect? Are decision-making mechanisms based on high-quality expertise and experience, and are they transparent?
• Project vignettes: Are these well thought through, and is it clear what additional work is needed to progress each project? Are endpoints clearly described? Is it clear why the vignettes were chosen?
• Use of previous awards and evidence of need for additional funding, if relevant
• Plans for appropriate industrial engagement.
Expectations and reporting requirements
The provision of a Confidence in Concept award is expected to lead to:
• successful applications for more substantive funding from public funders, such as DPFS or equivalent schemes, or industry
• increased interactions with and understanding of industry as demonstrated by research collaborations, joint funding applications, licencing of IP and successful knowledge exchange.

Institutions will be required to report to the MRC on the projects awarded and their outcomes. Any potential renewals will be dependent on performance.

Contact
If you have any queries about this scheme, please contact: DPFSandDCS@mrc.ukri.org