The Kennedy Trust for Rheumatology Research

Transition Fellowship

Background

The Kennedy Trust's mission is to provide financial and other support for basic and translational research into rheumatic and related musculoskeletal, immunological and inflammatory diseases. The Trust focuses on unmet needs, with the longer-term objective of its resources helping to achieve a meaningful impact in the development of cures and preventative treatment.

The Trust's approach to research funding is through two distinct channels: providing long term strategic funding for the Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology at the University of Oxford which the Trust has supported since its formation, and more recently through independent funding schemes for researchers across the UK with the primary aim of supporting strong individuals, particularly early-stage researchers, working in the fields of musculoskeletal and related inflammatory diseases.

The Transition Fellowship

The Transition Fellowship scheme is designed to support postdoctoral researchers and provide them with the opportunity to develop an independent research career and progress towards higher-level appointments. Fellowships of £500k for up to 5 years will be awarded in any basic or clinical scientific discipline with a clear relevance to rheumatic or related musculoskeletal, immunological or inflammatory diseases.

Candidates will be postdoctoral researchers who do not currently hold a permanent academic position or tenured post. Applications will not be accepted from candidates already holding an Associate Professorship or an equivalent or more senior position.

Host institutions will be expected to demonstrate a commitment to supporting the successful candidate in terms of access to facilities, mentorship and indirect or direct support for their research. The provision of support for staff and studentships on the award will be considered particularly favorably. Institutions should also allow Fellows to apply for additional external funding over the course of their Fellowship.

While host institutions can submit more than one application per institution to the call, please note that the award panel will carefully consider the spread of awards across institutions with the aim of developing research talent across the UK.

Application process

Applications are invited from all eligible postdoctoral researchers with clearly demonstrated support from a recognised host UK research institution.

Candidates are asked to submit an Expression of Interest via this online form by **18th December 2026.**

The deadline for applications is **5pm on Thursday 28th January 2027.**

The application must consist of:

1. The application form
2. The applicant's CV
3. A supporting statement by the Host Head of Department

Funding will cover salary (in line with the host institution's career structure for a researcher with equivalent experience) together with support staff costs, consumable and facilities expenses, travel and publications. A start up allowance for equipment may also be included.

The Trust recognises the importance of developing broader skills and expertise beyond, but integral to, research. As such, proposals to strengthen training in complementary areas such as leadership, entrepreneurship, and bioinformatics will be accepted and encouraged. Funding may also be used to facilitate movement between institutes and countries to establish networks and increase exposure to other areas.

A 2.5% allowance for inflation may be included in the budget as the Trust will not supplement the grant once awarded. The Trust does not pay indirect costs.

Review process

All eligible applications will be subject to a 2-stage review process. An independent, expert award panel will be convened to review the applications in depth and shortlist applicants to be invited to interview with the panel. The interview will comprise a presentation from the applicant, followed by questions from the panel. Interview dates are to be confirmed but expected to be held in the first half of May 2027.

Candidates who are unsuccessful in progressing to interview will be informed by end of April 2027 and provided with brief written feedback.

All reviews will be carried out in accordance with the Trust's confidentiality policy, a copy of which is available on request.

The key criteria for assessment will include:

- Standing of the applicant
- Quality, feasibility, importance and relevance of the research project
- Justification of resources
- Involvement of patients and the public
- Expected impact
- Support from the host institution and independent mentors.

Written feedback will be provided to all applicants by end of July 2027.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Kennedy Trust recognises that diversity is essential for excellence and increases the capacity to develop, innovate and grow. We are committed to ensuring that our funding mechanisms and

processes do not present any potential barriers or bias to funding.

We welcome applications from disabled applicants and we will provide reasonable adjustments throughout the application process. Please contact submissions@kennedytrust.org for further information and support.

We recognise the importance of providing flexible working opportunities to accommodate personal circumstances. Applications for part-time Fellowships will be considered where the time allocation for the Fellowship is at least 0.6 FTE and the viability of the proposal is well justified.

We also recognise that applicants may have taken substantive periods of time outside research. Any career breaks will be taken into consideration by the review panel.

We welcome applications from both UK and non-UK domiciled researchers who wish to conduct their research at an eligible UK institution. Fellowship award holders requiring a visa to work in the UK may be eligible to apply for a Global Talent Visa under the fast-track process of endorsement.

Guidance notes

1. The application form

A. Project description (maximum 3,000 words, excluding graphs and figures)

i. Background to the proposal

Please set out the context to the proposal together with a summary of your research over the last five years and the work which has led to this proposal. Also include a description of your most important scientific contributions to date.

ii. Aims and objectives

Set out the research questions you plan to address and explain why these are important. Also set out your short and long-term objectives and describe how these will advance the field.

iii. Plan of investigation

Provide a detailed plan of investigation, including a description of the approach to be taken and details of any milestones. Discuss any potential risks to the project and highlight your mitigation strategies. Graphs and figures may be embedded in the text as appropriate.

B. Scientific references

Please give citations in full, including the title of the paper and all authors (unless more than 10, in which case use 'et al', ensuring that your position as author, if applicable, remains clear). Citations to preprints should state "Preprint", the repository name and the article's persistent identifier (e.g. DOI).

C. Budget details

Provide a full breakdown of costs being applied for. An allowance of up to 2.5% pa for inflation may be included as the Trust will not supplement the grant once awarded. All equipment and animal costs should be separately identified. Eligible costs include:

- Salary costs for the Fellow and support staff
- Consumables
- Animals
- Equipment
- Facility access charges
- Professional development and training
- Travel and conferences
- Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement activities
- Publications

The Trust does not pay indirect costs or the apprenticeship levy.

Fellows are expected to apply for additional external funding during their Fellowship.

D. Justification for resources requested (maximum 1,000 words)

Explain how the proposed Fellowship salary has been arrived at. Also provide details of the roles and responsibilities of any support staff being applied for and justification for non-staff costs. Where animal costs are being applied for, please explain why these are necessary. Explain why any equipment is needed and why it cannot be provided by the host institution.

E. Expected impact (maximum 500 words)

Briefly summarise the expected impact of your Fellowship, both within academia and across wider society. Explain how you will measure and maximise this impact.

F. Intellectual property (maximum 500 words)

Is your proposal likely to produce new IP? If yes, provide information on the IP potential of your research and explain your IP management plan. Also provide details of any existing IP associated with the proposal (if applicable).

G. Patient and public involvement and engagement (maximum 500 words)

Provide details of how you will involve and engage with patients and the public. This could include, for example, consultations on your application form and proposed area or methods of research and your plans to disseminate your research outputs to a wide and diverse audience.

H. Proposed collaborators and mentors (maximum 500 words)

Provide details of collaborations you expect with either academia or industry, including names and a brief outline of how that collaboration will work and its benefits. Also provide the names of any individuals who have agreed to mentor you during your Fellowship and a brief summary of the support that would be available.

I. Host institution support (maximum 500 words)

Provide details of how your host institution will demonstrate its commitment towards supporting the Fellowship and your future career trajectory. This could include:

a. A financial contribution towards the Fellow's salary costs or other project expenses
b. The provision of additional research staff, e.g. a PhD student or research technician
c. Other support, such as access to facilities, integration within the department, supervision, training opportunities and the protection of your time to allocate to the Fellowship
d. A defined plan of support from the university department for the applicant's career pathway, which may include the provision of an appointment

J. Career development (maximum 500 words)

Briefly explain how this Fellowship will provide a feasible and appropriate trajectory for your personal development. Include details of any training opportunities you will utilise to develop broader skills and expertise beyond, but integral to, research.

K. Personal statement (maximum 500 words)

Set out your reasons for applying for this Fellowship and how you expect to benefit from it at this stage in your career. If applicable, please use this section to note any substantive periods of time you have taken outside research, major achievements you wish to highlight or any other information you feel relevant to your application.

L. Use of animals

We expect our funded researchers to adhere to the cross-funder guidance on Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research produced by the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) and in line with the Trust's Policy on Use of Animals in Research. This section is mandatory for all applications for funding.

Research that takes place outside the UK must be carried out to welfare standards consistent with those in the UK, therefore an additional checklist must be completed if this is the case. Please contact us (submissions@kennedytrust.org), informing us of the animal species you intend to use outside the UK, and we will provide you with the relevant form. For more guidance see the NC3Rs website. The Trust will obtain independent review from the NC3Rs peer review and advice service for grant applications proposing the use of cats, dogs, equines or non-human primates, and any other animal use proposals that raise concern.

We recommend the use of the Experimental Design Assistant (EDA), a free online tool to help with the design of experiments.

M. Research involving humans

Only complete this section if it is applicable to your application. On 16 April 2018, Health Research Authority (HRA) Approval became HRA and Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) Approval and now applies to all project-based research taking place in the NHS in England and Wales. HCRW approval applies where the NHS organisation has a duty of care to participants, either as patients/service users or NHS staff/volunteers. References to participants include people whose data or tissue is involved in a research project. If your project is led from Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales and involves NHS/HSC sites then you will not apply to the HCRW. You should apply through the appropriate NHS/HSC permission process for that lead nation.

2. Applicant's CV (maximum 4 pages A4)

Please include tertiary qualifications, location of study, past roles held and a list of all publications from the last three years, plus up to five key prior publications with citations in full (including all authors unless more than 10, in which case use 'et al', ensuring that your position as author remains clear.) Also list all grants held in the last five years (including name of awarding body, title of project, start and end dates, and value of award).

3. Host Head of Department supporting statement (maximum 1,000 words)

This should include an assessment of the calibre of the applicant, a description of how the Fellowship would fit into the host institution, and the support and resources which will be made available to the holder.

The Head of Department for the host institution may be asked to meet with the Review Panel as part of the application review process.

Timescales

Applicants are asked to give notification of their intention to apply for a Transition Fellowship by submitting this short Expression of Interest Form by **Friday 18th December 2026.**

Full applications, including the completed application form, CV and supporting statement should be sent by email to submissions@kennedytrust.org to arrive by **5pm on Thursday 28th January 2027.**

Candidates who are unsuccessful in progressing to interview will be informed by the end of April 2027 and provided with brief written feedback.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview with the panel in London (appropriate travel expenses will be met).

Interviews are likely to be held in the first half of May 2027 (date TBC). Virtual interviews will be considered where a candidate is unable to travel to London.

The outcome of the call will be announced in June 2027. Successful Fellowships are expected to start by 1st January 2028 unless otherwise agreed by the Trust.

All applications will be handled in the strictest confidence by the Trust. Any questions should be addressed to submissions@kennedytrust.org.