GUIDANCE FOR NEW GRANT APPLICANTS: RESEARCH PROJECTS

The Kirkhouse Trust is a small charity that works with local breeders in sub-Saharan Africa and India to develop improved legume crops using conventional breeding, enhanced by modern molecular techniques. Within the breeding programmes, we establish laboratories and train scientists and technicians to enable them to use molecular markers in their breeding work. One of the benefits of working with a small charity is that the Trust can take a 'hands-on' approach with the projects it supports with the aim of improving the chances of successful outcomes. The intention is for project teams and the Trust to work in partnership.

Introduction

The Trust uses its three stage process of applying for a research grant to help applicants shape their projects to maximise the chance of successful outcomes. The Trust will want to be reassured that you have provided sufficient details about the scale of the work you plan to undertake and the costs this will entail to enable it to critically assess your proposal. Eventually, you will be asked to generate: (i) a time line of the planned activities, and (ii) a detailed budget. Most research projects join a consortium – as the Trust is keen to foster exchanges and collaborations between the PIs of the projects within a consortium.

This hands-on approach will continue once a project is approved and a grant agreement has been signed by the Trust and the institution hosting your research. You will be expected to attend annual meetings to give presentations on the progress with your research, while your grant agreement will stipulate dates when reports should be submitted during the life of the project. If the Trust and its consultants judge that presentations and reports lack detail or focus, you will be asked to provide more information, and suggestions may be made to amend your research plans to give them more focus or to ensure the laboratory and fieldwork can be managed within the agreed budget and resources.

The role of the Trust's Administrators and Consultants

The Trust's group of four Project Administrators is based in the UK. In addition there are consultants who help shape and lead the consortia. The administrative team members are available to provide help and advice Monday to Friday. Email is the preferred method of communication.

To understand the process of applying for a grant, study the page on the Trust website you will find here (www.kirkhousetrust.org/researchg). This page outlines the Trust's three stage process to follow when applying for a grant. The aim of this document is to provide more details about how the Trust operates so you can decide whether you want to apply for funding from the Kirkhouse Trust. Will our hands on approach suit you?

Once you contact the Trust, a Project Administrator will be assigned to you with whom you will normally communicate, but if they are unavailable any of the other Project Administrators may be able to provide guidance. All administrative staff at the Trust have a science background and are able to guide you through the process of applying for a Trust grant. The Trust's Consultants are on hand to provide more specialist advice about the design of a proposed project whenever it is needed.

Maintaining good communications between the Trust and the Projects
The PI and the project team should aim to keep the research on target and in line with the agreed Project Summary and Project Timeline. Interim progress reports will be requested either quarterly or biannually, depending on project type, and annual report forms in which you should report in more detail what you have achieved throughout the previous year. There are examples of various completed reports on the Trust's website to help you gauge the level of details usually included – see www.kirkhousetrust.org/reports.

In your reports the Trust wants to hear how your projects are progressing, both the successes and the failures. If you are struggling with an aspect of the project or unavoidable delays are likely to occur it is important that the Trust know as soon as possible so that we can try and help, whether by providing information, guidance, equipment or training. Problems reported at a late stage can be more difficult to fix.

Conversely, the Trust wants to know about aspects of the project which are going particularly well. For example, perhaps areas of research are providing more positive results than were previously anticipated and therefore the research plan should be amended to more thoroughly investigate in this area. It should be clear that grantees can freely communicate with the administrative staff at times other than when progress reports are due. If there are any concerns about the project or interests that you feel should be raised, please feel free to get in contact.

Most of the PIs supported by the Trust will be invited, along with technicians and any students attached to the project, to annual meetings of one of the two consortia programmes held in Africa.

In their turn, the Project Administrators and Consultants will endeavour to provide their feedback on your reports and to any ad hoc queries in a timely manner.

Drawing up and Keeping to the agreed budget
The Trust has an outline and a detailed budget template you will be asked to use to develop your project budget. We use these because the project budget should be as accurate as possible, but the Trust knows that over time both plans and costs may fluctuate.

Once a project is approved and a grant agreement issued, you should aim to keep your spending as close as possible to what you projected in the agreed budget. PIs who have clearly thought about how their projects are likely to develop and have anticipated costs they may encounter in later years, will be better placed to overcome difficulties that may occur. However if over time you discover that changes need to be made to the budget, please submit the adjustments to the Trust, explaining clearly why they are required. We will always aim to work with you where possible, but if extra costs cannot be justified we will not be able to agree to them.

Overheads
The policy of the Kirkhouse Trust is to allow overhead costs only to a maximum of 10% of direct costs (excluding large items of equipment costing over £1,000). If the costs for an MSc or PhD student are included in your project budget these will also be paid without any overhead surcharge.

Intellectual Property (IP) issues
The Kirkhouse Trust has an on-line IP statement which can be viewed here (www.kirkhousetrust.org/ipstatement). Universities and other organisations are expected to

adhere to this policy in relation to work funded by the Trust. A more detailed version of the on-line statement will form part of any eventual grant agreement. If you or others in your institution wish to review this document at an earlier stage in the approval process, please ask your designated Project Administrator for a copy.

Requests for equipment and consumables
Some but not all new breeding research projects include the equipping of a lab in the host institution. Before agreeing to provide laboratory equipment and consumables, the Trust will want to be a reassured that (i) a suitable space will be made available, and (ii) the host institution will ensure that the infrastructure provided is of a reasonable quality and will continue to be maintained during the lifetime of the project. The issues which may need to be addressed include: ensuring reliable electricity and water are available, that buildings have no evidence of water damage, making changes to minimise dust and ensuring that laboratory surfaces are hardwearing and can easily be cleaned.

Depending on the type of project which you are running, you may have a relatively low or high requirement for equipment and consumables to be procured for you in the UK and transported to your project location.

Equipment and Consumable Auditing: If the Trust supplies equipment and consumables to a project, the PI should establish clear procedures so a report on: (i) the state of equipment and (ii) the remaining stocks of consumables can quickly be provided if the Trust requests it. We refer to this as the "equipment and consumables auditing process". Established projects are typically asked to provide such auditing reports prior to restocking, which may occur once a year.

Restocking for an on-going project: The Trust has a very small Procurement and Dispatch team, and if many projects request items at the same time, some may encounter delays in the receipt of their goods. Ideally, you should submit any requests six months before the items are required so that the Trust's team has sufficient time to procure the items and get them to you before they are desperately needed. A request form for equipment and consumables is available here (www.kirkhousetrust.org/labresources).

Staff changes or absences
The Trust knows that the PI who negotiates the project details will be central to the success of its implementation. Therefore the grant agreement addresses situations which might occur if (for any reason) the PI is unable to guide it. If the PI (or other key staff) will be absent from the project for any significant length of time the Trust should be notified, and given details of whoever will take on that role. If the Trust feels that the person nominated does not have the required skill, experience or time to act in that role it may request that the host institute proposes an alternative candidate. We will always be willing to negotiate about any replacements.

Keeping workers safe
It is important to provide a safe working environment. Anyone working on a project must be trained in the correct use and maintenance of any equipment they use. It is the responsibility of the PI to establish procedures to ensure that all workers are properly trained to use the equipment necessary to perform their required tasks, whether lab- or field-based. It is also important that any new workers who join the project are inducted

thoroughly before they begin using any equipment. The Trust provides an assortment of resources to help with this training, such as protocols, videos and lab notices which can be found here (www.kirkhousetrust.org/protocols).

The safety of project staff, students and associated participants is of the utmost importance to the Trust. If at any point individuals feel that they are endangering themselves or others by continuing to participate in project work, the unsafe tasks should be immediately halted until safety can be ensured.

Publication of research findings
As a UK charity, Kirkhouse Trust has to demonstrate that its grants result in 'public good'. Therefore it encourages grantees to publish their research findings.

Collaborative projects
If the Trust is involved in a collaboration between two separate institutions it will usually require a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be agreed and signed by all parties. This ensures that there is a clear and agreed statement of what each institution expects to provide, and what they expect will be contributed by another party. This provides clarity and helps to ensure smooth relations between all parties involved.

Kirkhouse Trust
September 2016
version: 1