VALIDATE Training Grant Application Guidance

Summary

The VALIDATE Network aims to accelerate vaccine research and development for complex intracellular pathogens that cause diseases significant to low and middle-income countries (LMIC), with an initial focus on *Mycobacterium tuberculosis, Leishmania spp, Burkholderia pseudomallei* and *Mycobacterium leprae.* VALIDATE also aims to facilitate Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and career progression amongst its members.

VALIDATE is proud to partner with the Collaboration for Tuberculosis Vaccine Discovery (CTVD). CTVD is an international network of scientists and experts dedicated to fostering innovation, cooperation, and collaboration in the up-stream TB vaccine discovery, translational research and development space. CTVD serves as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's major mechanism for enhancing collaboration in the field.

To support these aims, Early Career Researcher training grants are available of up to £3500 via competitive application to the VALIDATE Network Management Board (NMB) to help researchers take advantage of training opportunities that will contribute to their CPD. This can include (but is not limited to): attendance at courses or workshops, laboratory exchanges, and work shadowing. Attendance at an international conference to present a talk or poster is also eligible for LMIC members only (general travel to attend conferences is not supported in this fund; travel to the VALIDATE Network Annual Meeting is funded elsewhere). For laboratory exchanges, we encourage you to maximise the outputs of your visit to that laboratory, for example by visiting other relevant VALIDATE researchers in that country (to increase your network of contacts and discuss future collaboration opportunities), or by giving a talk to your host laboratory about your research during your visit.

The proposed training opportunity must fall within the VALIDATE remit. **Please note that for the VALIDATE-CTVD joint calls, only research focused on tuberculosis vaccine development is eligible. Any aspect of research that will accelerate development of an efficacious TB vaccine is eligible, including biological, physical and social sciences, and humanities.**

Applicants must be an Associate member of VALIDATE, and/or a post-doctoral scientist working on research directly related to TB vaccine development nominated by a CTVD member. We particularly welcome applications from researchers based in LMICs.

All awardees will be expected to join VALIDATE (which is free), and to provide a short report following the completion of their training, for inclusion in VALIDATE/CTVD outcomes and publicity.

Please see the further details below about this award and how to apply.

Please submit your application form and associated documents, as one pdf, by 4pm (UK time) on the closing date to the Network Management Team at VALIDATE@ndm.ox.ac.uk. Do contact Network Manager, Samantha Vermaak, at the same address with any queries about the form or the application process.

Details

Funding eligibility

Applicants: Funding is for early career post-doctoral researchers who are Associate members of the VALIDATE Network, and/or a post-doctoral scientist working on research directly related to TB vaccine development nominated by a CTVD member.

Applications must be supported by your Research Group Leader and a VALIDATE/CTVD Investigator (who may be the same person). *If you are a stand-alone Associate without a supporting VALIDATE Investigator, please contact Sam Vermaak to discuss your application ahead of submission.*

Activities supported: CPD within the scope of the VALIDATE Network remit. Examples include attendance at courses or workshops, laboratory exchanges, and work shadowing. Attendance at an international conference to present a talk or poster is supported for LMIC members only.

Course fees, consumables for training purposes, travel and accommodation costs etc are eligible. Please note accommodation costs should be up to £100 per night only (£150 in large EU/US cities such as London, Paris or New York). For laboratory exchanges, the host lab may receive bench fees of £16 per working day the Associate visits their lab (this is equivalent to UKRI rates, and can be listed as a separate cost item, or included in the consumables line; whichever is preferred by the host institute).

Activities not supported: conference attendance by non-LMIC members; conference attendance where the applicant is not presenting a talk or poster; attendance at the VALIDATE annual meeting; staff time.

Please note we cannot cover any costs during your trip that are not related to your training (e.g. travel to visit friends while on a lab exchange visit; sight-seeing travel/costs; meals/drinks for friends); these must <u>not</u> be included in your expense claim.

Value of grant: up to £3500 of actual costs (VALIDATE funding can be used in conjunction with other funding to cover training that is more expensive than this – if this is the case please explain where the additional funds required will come from in your application).

LMIC: to be considered 'LMIC' you must be based for your work at an organisation in an LMIC country. A list of LMIC countries can be found [here](#); all listed countries (in any column) are eligible.

Application process
Call deadlines will be advertised on the VALIDATE website.

Complete the application form as directed on the form itself, sticking to the word limit where stated. Ensure you complete all sections, and make clear a) what the training opportunity is, b) how this opportunity will help your career, c) how you are maximising the outcomes of this opportunity, and d) how much the opportunity will cost (in detail). Make sure you attach the necessary supporting documents (stated in section 8 of the application form), which should all be in English. Extra documents/appendices will not be accepted.

The application form and associated documents must be submitted **as one pdf** by email by 4pm (UK time) on the closing date to the Network Management Team at validate@ndm.ox.ac.uk. You will receive acknowledgement of your application within 48 working hours of submission. All applications received in the funding round will go to the VALIDATE NMB for competitive assessment; [NMB members](#) will not input into discussions about an application where they have a conflict of interest (see below for details on conflicts of interest). The VALIDATE Scientific Advisory Board ([SAB](#)) have oversight of the NMB and the NMB review of funding applications to ensure transparency, fairness and consistency.

Assessment will be made based on the track record of the applicant, their (and the training's) fit with VALIDATE strategic priorities, the value of the training opportunity to their career, and the value-for-money of the training opportunity. You will be notified by email of your application outcome within two weeks of the NMB decision.

Reporting and Payment of Awards
Payment is made in arrears, and can be made in two ways:
1. **If your/your host Institution paid the costs:** a detailed invoice listing costs incurred and the Institute's bank details should be submitted, and costs will be reimbursed to the Institute.
2. **If you personally paid the costs:** a detailed expense claim of costs incurred *with receipts* should be submitted, and costs will be reimbursed to the bank account stated on the form. UK Members will need to send hard copies of the expense form and receipts in the post to the Network Manager. Non-UK Members will need to email copies of the expense form and receipts.

In exceptional circumstances, for LMIC members where these options are not financially viable, we may be able to book the training on your behalf. Please contact the VALIDATE Network Manager (VALIDATE@ndm.ox.ac.uk) ahead of submitting your application if this is likely to be the case for your application (this is for logistical reasons and will not impact the assessment of your application).

The payment claim should be sent to the Network Manager once the cost is incurred. Payment will be for actual expenditure up to the value of your grant awarded (as stated in your award letter).

On completion of their training, recipients of awards are required to provide a simple report about the benefits to their career development. This report must be submitted to the Network Manager within one month of the training taking place.

Publicity and Data Protection
Copies of applications will be made available to the VALIDATE NMB and SAB who will use information provided for reviewing the proposal and post-award administration. Observers from CTVD and our funder, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), may sit in on the review process and see applications. All NMB and SAB have signed confidentiality agreements. VALIDATE, CTVD and BMGF may choose to publish details of awards, awardees, and information of training provided.

Conflict of Interest
Examples of a conflict of interest include:
- Employed by the same department in the same institution as the applicant/host
- Close active collaboration impacting on the application being reviewed
- Holding a current position on the governing body of the applicant organisation
- Personal/family relationship with the applicant