



## Fellowship Round 5 FAQs

### Eligibility

#### **How do I know if I am an Associate VALIDATE member?**

Your membership level is stated in your VALIDATE membership approval email. You can also check your membership level via your VALIDATE website members' biography webpage at [www.validate-network.org/validate-network-members](http://www.validate-network.org/validate-network-members), as it is stated there.

#### **Can I upgrade my membership level from Affiliate to Associate to be eligible for this call?**

If you have now passed your PhD (fully completed) then you can apply to upgrade your VALIDATE membership from Affiliate to Associate level. To do so you will need to re-complete the VALIDATE membership application form with your new information (stating your current membership level as 'Affiliate' and ticking the box to apply for Associate membership) and submit it to [VALIDATE@ndm.ox.ac.uk](mailto:VALIDATE@ndm.ox.ac.uk) along with your updated CV and publications list. Your upgrade application will then be reviewed by the Management Team against the criteria for Associate membership.

#### **Can affiliate members apply for fellowships, such as in tuberculosis research?**

The guidance does not specifically exclude affiliate members, but applicants should refer to the eligibility criteria in the call guidance document.

#### **Can I apply for a Fellowship if I have already received other funding from VALIDATE?**

You cannot apply for a Fellowship if you have already been awarded a VALIDATE Fellowship, but you can apply for a VALIDATE Fellowship if you have received other funding from VALIDATE (e.g. travel grant, pump-priming grant, training grant).

Obviously, though, you cannot claim more than 100% of your salary for any given year and you must have enough time to complete both pieces of work if you are already part of a Pump-priming grant and are now applying for a Fellowship.

#### **Can I apply for a Fellowship if I have already had a Fellowship elsewhere?**

If you have held, or are currently holding, a Fellowship from another organisation/institute that was longer than one-year long then you cannot apply for a VALIDATE Fellowship.

#### **Can bioinformaticians apply for the VALIDATE Fellowship?**

Yes (and it is fine that you will need to collaborate with some experimental researchers).

#### **Can I submit one than one application?**

You can only submit one Fellowship application as the lead applicant, due to the amount of time you are expected to spend on your Fellowship project. You could, however, also be part of a second application where you are a collaborator on someone else's Fellowship application. If you are part of two applications it is important to realistically assess your capacity to participate appropriately in both projects if funded, and to only submit projects that are achievable if this happened.

#### **Can applicants be based in Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMICs)?**

Applicants can be based in any Low or Middle-Income Country (LMIC) on the UK's ODA list, with some exceptions listed in the guidance document.

#### **Are researchers in High-Income Countries (HICs) eligible for fellowships?**

In the last Fellowship round, HIC applicants were accepted, but the funding was fully allocated. This current call is only for LMIC candidates. Future calls for HICs may be possible if additional funding is secured.

**I have two positions, one at a HIC institute and one at an LMIC institute – do I count as HIC or LMIC for this application?**

Which institute pays your salary? That institute will count as your host institute for your application – so if this institute is in a HIC then you are HIC; if it is in a LMIC then you are LMIC.

**Can I switch institutes during my Fellowship?**

This would be unusual – your initial host institute should be agreeing to host you for the two years as part of your Fellowship application. However, this is allowable in extenuating circumstances are we understand that you may need to move for external reasons, such as a spouse/partner changing job location.

**Is there an age limit for applicants, or a restriction on number of years post-PhD?**

If an eligibility criterion is not mentioned in the ‘funding eligibility’ section of the Fellowship guidance form (e.g. age), then we do not have criteria/limits for that characteristic.

## **Science**

For all questions about whether your research idea fits VALIDATE’s funding remit, please read our Fellowship call guidance document where the remit for this call’s science is explained.

**Does the research need to be directly related to vaccine development, or can epidemiological studies be included?**

Any research that contributes to vaccine development falls within VALIDATE’s remit. Immunology and epidemiology studies are both eligible, but epidemiology projects must clearly demonstrate their relevance to vaccine development.

**Are proposals related to diagnostic validation eligible?**

Applicants should check the guidance document, but priority is given to projects supporting vaccine development.

## **Budget**

**How much of my salary do I have to include on this grant?**

You must be able to spend at least 80% of your time throughout the two-year Fellowship period focussed on your Fellowship project. You may prefer to focus 100%, or to use some of your time (up to 20%) on other ongoing research projects, clinical duties, teaching etc.

If your salary can be paid elsewhere (i.e. by your institute) then you do not need to include costs for your salary in your VALIDATE Fellowship budget, but you must state who is paying your salary as an in-kind contribution to the project in the Resource Justification of your application form – and whoever is paying your salary must be happy for you to be spending at least 80% of your time focussed on your Fellowship project if you are successful in your application.

**Is it mandatory to include 100% of salary for 24 months in the budget?**

No, but applicants must explain how their salary will be covered. The organization funding their salary must be comfortable with them dedicating at least 80% of their time to the Fellowship project.

**Can the salary be allocated as a stipend?**

Applicants should check the guidance document for salary and stipend rules.

**Can salary costs be included for mentors?**

No, salary costs for mentors cannot be included, but salary costs for collaborators can be.

**Is it possible to include salary for a Research Assistant or student?**

Yes. RA support is allowed, if you can fit it within your budget. However, we would expect the Fellow to largely be performing the lab work themselves as they should be dedicating their time and focus to the Fellowship project.

**Is the budget for one year or two years?**

The Fellowship runs for 24 months, and budgets should reflect this duration.

**Are narrative and financial reports required?**

Yes, progress reports are required at 6, 12, 18, and 24 months.

**What is the Full Economic Costing (FEC) item in the budget section of the application form?**

Full Economic Costing only applies to applicants from the United Kingdom. This current call is only for LMIC candidates.

**Does VALIDATE allow buy-out / top ups for local nurses or physicians in clinical studies?**

Yes, as long as you can fit this within your budget. However, we would expect the Fellow to have significant parts of the project they would be actively performing themselves, as that is the point of a Fellowship.

**Can a bioinformatician applicant use the Fellowship budget to pay for a Research Assistant?**

Yes, as long as you can fit this within your budget. For bioinformaticians who are not lab scientists, hiring an RA to do the lab work would be like a scientist getting a nurse/clinician to do the medical part of a project, so this is fine. However, similar to them, you'd be expected to still be actively performing significant parts of the project yourself, and to be committing 80% of your time to the Fellowship project.

**In the project budget is there a minimum/maximum amount per line?**

No. Your total budget must come in under the overall maximum budget but, other than indirects/overheads, there is no set limit for cost categories (there is a limit on the percentage of overheads you can charge – please see the call guidance document for details).

**Travel / Training****How long can applicants stay or get training at another lab within their Fellowship?**

A visit of up to six months would be allowed (all at once, or spread across the two-year Fellowship period).

**Collaborators****Do I have to have a collaborator on my Fellowship project?**

No. Fellowship applications do not need a collaborator. You can, however, include a collaborator if it is relevant and beneficial to your project.

**Is it possible to collaborate with a non-VALIDATE member?**

No, all collaborators must be VALIDATE members. However, membership is free, so potential collaborators can apply to join.

**Can you include a collaborator who is not getting direct funding from the project?**

Yes, as long as they are relevant to your project.

**Can a group of researchers from Middle Eastern countries collaborate with non-VALIDATE members?**

No, all collaborators must be VALIDATE members.

**Can I include industry collaborations?**

Yes, absolutely.

## **Additional Grant Writing Support**

**Must a draft proposal be submitted by next Friday for writing support, or is an email indication of interest sufficient?**

The application guidance should clarify whether a full draft or just an expression of interest is needed.

## **The Application Form – General Questions**

**Do you need references in the project description?**

Ideally yes; references do not count towards the word count.

**How much post-PhD work experience, first-author publications, or PI roles exclude someone from being considered an Early Career Researcher (ECR)?**

There may be specific criteria for what qualifies as an ECR; applicants should check the guidance document.

## **Supporting Documents**

**What font/size of font should I use for my CV and publications?**

Anything legible; not smaller than size 10.

**Do I need a consent letter from VALIDATE mentors?**

You should have discussed your application and got agreement from your ‘Senior Scientist mentor/sponsor’ (usually based at your institute) named in section 1 of the form.

You do not need to have discussed your application/mentorship with the VALIDATE Investigators you nominate as potential mentors in section 12 of the form – simply list up to three people you think would be a good mentor for your Fellowship, and VALIDATE will approach them on your behalf, if you are successful.

## **Grant Award Process**

**Will the complete budget be allocated to the host institute after contract, or will this be done in parts?**

Please see p7 of the Fellowship guidance document: *“Payment is usually made in arrears to the awardee’s Institute in four 25% tranches, on approval of each project report (NB for some LMIC institutes, we may be able to arrange payment in advance for some of the tranches, to help with cashflow). Payment will be for actual expenditure up to the value agreed in the original award letter.”*

**Is it possible to postpone the Fellowship start date?**

We would expect Fellowships to start within one month of the award letter being sent to successful applicants, subject to contracts being signed. We will expect Fellows to push their contracts teams to ensure this happens as quickly as possible. However, we understand that sometimes contracts take a bit longer or there may be extenuating circumstances. The latest you could start a Fellowship would be August 2025 (due to restrictions on our own VALIDATE grant).

## **Other Questions**

**Is it possible to share past successful Fellowship applications and their title?**

You can see all our previous and current Fellows and their project titles and details on our website at [www.validate-network.org/fellows](http://www.validate-network.org/fellows).