

# AUTISTICA

Building brighter futures through autism research

## **Call for proposals on under-represented populations in autism**

*Under-represented populations*

### **Improving Outcomes research grant scheme: GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS**

#### **Introduction**

Autistica is the UK's national autism research charity. Our vision is a world where all autistic people and their families live a long, healthy, happy life. We aim to achieve this mission by focusing on the research priorities of autistic people and their family members.

Autistica is inviting world-class research grant applications for a value of up to £150,000 over four years addressing under-represented populations. Under-represented populations are those within the autism community who have received limited research focus. Examples include: members of the LGBTQI+ community, women, older adults, individuals with co-occurring learning difficulties (or any other complex need) and members of BAME communities who have, thus far, experienced limited inclusion in research. Groups that have been well-studied will not be considered in this funding call. We encourage research applications that focus on improving outcomes for these under-represented groups.

We now request outlines of research projects (Letters of Intent).

#### **Factors and further considerations which increase/decrease likelihood of success**

- You must be clear in your application as to how your chosen population is under-represented, and where gaps in research may lie.
- Where appropriate, you should put this population into context. For example, don't formulate a study design which aims to make assumptions about a population; rather, show a clear understanding of the literature focusing on the sample, ensure that the sample is representative and that any comparisons planned are explicit, not implied, and if with a different sample explain how external and internal biases are addressed.
- Research studies must align with the principles set out in our [Research Strategy](#).
- Where necessary for your proposed study, demonstrate an understanding of appropriate research methods, establish how power will be addressed and show how the research project will generate reproducible results.
- Pathway to implementation: Autistica establishes evidence or produces data that will lead to interventions and delivery of supports in the real world. We would encourage you to think carefully about this. Have a clear plan and timeline which establishes a pathway that would lead to benefit for autistic people and their families.
- Given that policymakers value and consider costs prior to integrating research into practice, an economic evaluation would also be welcomed within your design, if appropriate.
- Feasibility: You must include a clear and realistic plan.
- Involvement of autistic adults, children and/or families in the design and production of research is viewed positively by Autistica.

- Please consider our research network, [Discover](#), as a resource which can facilitate involvement, communications, dissemination and policy outputs.

### **Eligibility**

Applications will only be accepted from investigators holding appointments at academic, research or clinical institutions within the United Kingdom. Investigators must be in receipt of salary funding for the duration of the grant requested. Investigators holding a permanent full- or part-time academic or research post (or equivalent) at accredited academic, medical or research institutions within the UK are eligible to apply. Eligibility must be demonstrated with a letter from your institution at the time of submitting the Letter of Intent (LOI).

- a) Applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria above (e.g., postdoctoral fellows) are eligible to apply only if clear documentation is provided by the host institution stating that a contract is in place throughout the duration of the proposed research.
- b) Proposals may be submitted in partnership with companies. In circumstances where the company receives funds from the grant a clear justification must be given for this at the full proposal stage, as well as a statement on what the company is contributing to the project directly.
- c) Applications will only be accepted from individuals or from companies to support the research and development of products for profit if Autistica are entitled to a share of any such profits to re-invest in our research programme.
- d) Applicants are restricted to one LOI/proposal per review cycle as Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-PI.
- e) The bulk of the proposed research must be conducted within the UK, although it is permissible for a proportion of the proposed research be conducted as part of an international collaboration.

### **Awards**

Autistica will make a minimum of two awards subject to scientific quality, and already have £300,000 held in reserve for this call. Each project can be for an amount up to £150,000 in total over a four year period. Autistica may fund more proposals if extra funds become available (for example, we have increased our budget to £600,000 in the past) and proposals are of outstanding quality.

Autistica only pays direct costs (directly charged to a project as money spent and supported by an audit record). Autistica does not pay indirect costs (costs for resources used by a project that are shared by other activities (e.g. proportion of lead investigator or shared technician's time) or directly allocated costs (non-specific costs charged across all projects for underpinning resources (e.g. estates, shared IT and administration)).

### **Application process**

#### *Letter of Intent stage*

The method of submission of LOI is through our grant management system: <https://autisticacommunity.force.com>

LOI are due no later than 15th May 2019. All deadlines are at 11:59 PM local UK time. Autistica reserves the right to return without review any LOI found to be not in compliance with the policies, procedures and research priorities outlined in the call for proposals.

#### *Information and Formatting*

The LOI should be detailed enough to be screened for scientific merit. It must contain two parts: (i) An outline of the research project (ii) A letter from the institution confirming the applicant's eligibility. Please refer to the Eligibility section above.

For the first part you will be expected to give the following information via the online application system:

- a) Project title.
- b) Up to 5 keywords.
- c) A concise description of the proposed project including the headings: background; specific aims; methods; expected results.
- d) A clear justification of the relevance and potential significance of the project to Autistica's objectives, individuals on the autism spectrum and families, and clinical practice.
- e) Names, titles and institutional affiliations of active collaborators/coinvestigators in addition to and including the PI (excluding consultants, postdoctoral fellows, students and technicians).
- f) Indicative duration and budget of the project (this can be revised at the full application stage).

The content of the first part should equate to two A4 pages (11 point Helvetica/Arial text, single spaced, with 1" margins) or less.

The second part, one page maximum, must be a letter from the institution confirming the applicant's eligibility. Please refer to the Eligibility section above. This letter should be uploaded to the online application system as a PDF file.

Applications with any sections that exceed the page limits will not be reviewed.

### **Applications process and success rates**

LOIs will be reviewed by Autistica staff in terms of their fidelity to the scope of the call for proposals above and Autistica's overall Research Strategy. The LOI will then be reviewed in terms of scientific quality by Autistica's Scientific Review Panel. Applicants will receive one of two responses from Autistica's research team with relevant scientific feedback from our Scientific Review Panel.

*Invitation to submit a full application:* The application is currently rated highly (in the top half or above of all applications, depending on the volume received). Such applications may still have limitations and require feedback.

*Please do not submit an application:* The applicant will not be invited to submit a full application on the basis of one or more of the following criteria: i) not eligible, ii) does not fit within the scope of our call for proposals, or iii) our Scientific Review Panel has concluded the LOI is not of sufficient scientific quality to have a realistic chance of success at full application stage.

For those who are invited to submit a full proposal, further submission guidelines will be sent at that time. We aim to notify applicants of the status of the LOI by 17th June 2019 and full applications must be submitted no later than 18th Aug 2019 (all deadlines are at 11:59 PM local UK time). We estimate that final decisions and feedback will be provided to applicants by 21st October 2019.

Questions regarding this call for proposals should be sent to our Research and Grants Officer, Dr Cat Hughes: [Cat.Hughes@autistica.org.uk](mailto:Cat.Hughes@autistica.org.uk).

Autistica's Research [strategy](#).

Autistica's policies on the use of [animals in research](#) and [Conflict of Interest](#).

Autistica's [Scientific Review Panel](#)