



**Connecting  
communities**  
VIVENSA ACADEMY

## **Ignition Fund**

**Guidelines for applicants**



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If you require this document in any alternative accessible formats, please contact us at [academy@vivensafoundation.org.uk](mailto:academy@vivensafoundation.org.uk). We will do our very best to assist you.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. OVERVIEW

As outlined in our [2025-2030 strategic framework](#), we're committed to applying our resources to inspire and enable academic researchers (from across the disciplinary range) and health and social care professionals to apply their knowledge and skills to:

- improve the quality of life, functional capacity and well-being for older people now, or
- create the context for change in the future to prevent, delay or reduce future health and social care requirements.

The framework also recognised that funding alone was not sufficient. Specifically, it sought to explore and deliver ways of bringing the research and third sector communities closer together to foster collaboration and create positive systemic change. One of the key initiatives to support this endeavour was the creation of the Vivensa Academy, which aims to:

- Seed, support and celebrate success, achievement and ambition in ageing-related research.
- Create a supportive place to find new collaborators, mentors and advisors.
- Facilitate better understanding and foster relationships between academic and clinical researchers and community organisations working with older people.
- Sustain existing and nascent networks for the longer term.

#### 1.1 THE OPPORTUNITY

The available fund for financial year 2025/26 is £200k. UK members of the [Academy](#) are able to apply for up to £5k for a clearly defined activity or series of activities which:

- are linked to the aims of the Vivensa Academy and/or one or more of our key priorities for research, as set out in our strategic framework;
- considers relevant aspects of our key principles for research which are:
  - involvement, engagement and creating real impact;
  - capacity building and career/professional development;
  - equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

**Community Organisations** - We welcome applications from community organisation working with older people. The Ignition Fund in conjunction with the Academy Capability Development resources for community organisations can be used to help you with the development of your organisation. These resources help community organisations to develop capacity, resilience, effectiveness and strategy.

The funds can be combined with other sources of funding and examples of ways in which the fund could be used can be found in Section 2.2.

If you are successful in receiving an Ignition Fund award, then we will ask that you contribute to the development of the Academy by providing a short article or other resource which will be helpful to other Academy members.

## 2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

### 2.1 WHO CAN APPLY?

To be eligible to apply, you must meet the following criteria:

- You must be a member of the [Academy](#).

AND

- You must be based at a UK university or other [eligible research organisation](#). The Foundation has no specific geographical link and will consider applications from anywhere within the UK.

OR

- Represent a Community Organisation working with older people.

**Only one application for an Ignition Fund award can be made per financial year<sup>1</sup>**, regardless of the outcome of that application.

**If you are an existing award holder please speak to your grants officer prior to starting an application.**

### 2.2 WHAT THE IGNITION FUND CAN BE USED FOR

Applicants are asked to define the proposed activity / activities and briefly outline the costs with appropriate justification. The award is intended to be flexible, and some examples of how the funds could be used include, but are not limited to, the following:

Clinical and Academic Researchers:

- Developing initiatives that connect researchers and community organisations, such as pre-funding relationship development.
- Carrying out patient, carer and/or public involvement and engagement (PPIE)-related activities in advance of developing a research funding application (i.e. to test a research question has validity in the community, gain feedback from relevant stakeholders etc.).
- Seed funding to foster industry collaborations.
- Bringing a range of stakeholders together through initiatives such as the development of communities of practice or place-based hubs to drive evidence-based good practice and/or policy change.
- Establishing local networks to develop leaders in ageing research through capacity building.
- A short secondment of a researcher to a community organisation or company to work on a question with them/learn more about the sector/share skills and knowledge etc.
- Developing hubs to promote community cohesiveness to tackle an issue such as health inequalities in coastal, rural or other under-served communities.

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<sup>1</sup> April to March each year

- Facilitating visits to other laboratories or institutions to learn new techniques or to host visiting researchers from other institutions.
- Developing new skills and knowledge to support career advancement through courses, workshops and conferences.
- Developing transferable skills such as writing, presentations, social media, leadership or management skills.

Once awarded, the grant will be paid in full in advance. We will, however, require you to contribute to the development of the Academy by providing a short article or other resource which is useful to other members of the Academy to show how the funds have been used.

This fund will not cover the cost of Open Access fees. If you are a current or previous grant holder and need help with Open Access fees for publications directly related to your award, please contact [grants@vivensafoundation.org.uk](mailto:grants@vivensafoundation.org.uk) as we have an alternative arrangement for meeting this expenditure.

The fund cannot be used to fund or subsidise the costs of Masters or PhD degrees/projects/studentships.

Requests for conference costs will only be considered where you are presenting or contributing a poster. If you are a PhD student, you may apply to cover such costs if you are in your final year of study.

If you are applying for seed funding for a piece of research, please do not include conference fees. There is a separate mechanism to support awardees with such costs, details of which will be provided to you at the appropriate time.

If you are applying for funds for a secondment or similar activity that requires accommodation costs, please consult your host institution travel policy prior to applying.

**If you are an existing award holder please speak to your grants officer prior to starting an application.**

Community Organisations:

- Meeting with your local authority, commissioner or researchers to explain more about the work of your organisation;
- Stakeholder engagement to demonstrate your impact or share best practice;
- Focus groups with your beneficiaries to co-produce the services you offer;
- Meetings to bring together other local organisations to collectively address a problem affecting older people.

Academy Capability Development resources for community organisations can be used to help you with the development of your organisation. These resources help community organisations to develop capacity, resilience, effectiveness and strategy.

### 3. APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The application process will consist of the submission of an application form and review by the Foundations’s Staff Team.

Applications are open year-round and can be submitted at any time; however, completed and submitted applications will be considered by the assessment panel on the following dates:

Deadline	Panel assessment
5pm 28 March 2025	Week commencing 14 April 2025
5pm 6 June 2025	Week commencing 23 June 2025
5pm 19 September 2025	Week commencing 6 October 2025
5pm 5 December 2025	Week commencing 15 December 2025
5pm 27 March 2026	Week commencing 13 April 2026

We aim to advise you of the outcome within three weeks of the assessment panel meeting.

### 4. ONLINE APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT

#### 4.1 OVERVIEW

Applications are open year-round and can be submitted at any time; however, do note the deadline dates listed in Section 3 for when applications are downloaded for assessment.

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#### BEFORE STARTING AN APPLICATION FORM

Please ensure that you have read these guidelines in full and have checked the eligibility criteria for the award.

If you are not currently a member of the Academy, you can [apply to join](#) on our website.

**If you are an existing award holder please speak to your grants officer prior to starting an application.**

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#### THE APPLICATION FORM

The application form needs to be submitted via our [online Grants Management Portal](#). You can download a [PDF template](#) of the application form from our website. Please note, however, that this PDF version is only provided for planning purposes.

Detailed information on navigating and using the Grants Management Portal is provided in our [“how to” guide](#).

## 4.2 ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Once submitted, the Foundation will review the application to confirm that it meets the following criteria:

- Eligibility for the award.
- Satisfactory completion of the application form, including any required uploaded documents.
- That the work proposed is not duplicative when checked against other awards previously / currently funded.

Applications will then be further reviewed by Foundation staff according to the following criteria:

- The description of the proposed activity – the application provides enough detail describing the activity and who will be involved/impacted (e.g. which groups/organisations are involved? Where will the activity take place? Why is this activity important right now? etc.).
- The credibility of the plan to assess the outcome of the proposed activity – has enough detail has been provided including supporting documents? (e.g. what data will be collected/analysed/shared? According to what timeline? etc.).
- How the proposed activity will support the aims of the Academy.
- Where relevant, there is a clear and compelling consideration of:
  - Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
  - Patient, carer and/or public involvement and engagement (PPIE).
  - Capacity building in ageing-related research. How will the work help your career development plans or those of others?
- The details of the costs provided – the budget requested is necessary and sufficient for the activities proposed (e.g. have the requested costs been adequately justified? etc.).

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## PARTIAL RANDOMISATION APPROACH

Should the number of fundable applications exceed the funding available, then a partial randomisation (lottery) system will be implemented for all eligible applications.

This will be the first Vivensa Foundation funding call that will use this approach to decide awards. We have chosen to trial this method in an attempt to reduce bureaucracy: formal peer review or panel interviews are not appropriate for this type of award.

All eligible applications will be scored as per the above criteria. If the sum of the fundable applications is within the overall budget they will all be funded. If the number of fundable applications exceeds the budget then they will be entered into the lottery. Partial randomisation aims to remove bias and to reduce administrative burden in the selection process, while maintaining the core mechanism for the necessary quality control: panel review. We will be adopting Wellcome's randomisation (lottery) process which uses a Python script to decide which applications to fund. For transparency in this process, the code used for the randomisation has been shared by Wellcome [here](#).

We recognise that this is a very different approach to awarding funding, and would welcome applicants' feedback to inform future assessment processes.

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## FEEDBACK ON APPLICATIONS

We will not be providing individual feedback, but will provide information on how the funds were distributed after each round.

We aim to inform applicants of the outcome within three weeks of the assessment panel meeting. However, please note this timeline may vary depending on the number of applications received and workload at the time of submission.

### 4.3 CHECKLIST

Make sure you have completed all the relevant tasks on this list before submitting your application:

- Have you read these guidelines fully and checked the eligibility criteria for the award?
- Are you a member of the Academy with a profile on the [member directory](#)?
- Are you representing a Community Organisation and has a member attended one of the Capability Development Programme Webinars?
- Have you provided detailed and relevant answers to all mandatory questions in the application form?

## 5. SUPPORT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

### 5.1 SUPPORT FROM THE FOUNDATION

- For guidance on navigating and using the Grants Management Portal, please see our [“how to” guide](#).
- You can download the [PDF template application form](#) from our website if you wish to review it before making your application via the portal.
- [Visit our website](#) for information on how to join the Academy.
- Read our [2025-30 Strategic Framework](#), which highlights our funding principles and research priorities.
- Read our [Funder Action Plan](#) for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.
- Read our [feedback post](#) on the second round of Ignition Fund applications.



## 5.2 EXTERNAL GUIDANCE

- For information regarding Patient, Carer and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) in research, please do visit the [National Institute for Health and Care Research website for various PPIE resources](#). You may also wish to look at the [UK Standards for Public Involvement](#), a framework for what good public involvement in research looks like. There is also this [practical guide to PPIE in lab-based research](#).
- For more information on including under-served groups in research, you might be interested in a website hosted by the [INCLUDE initiative from the National Institute for Health and Care Research](#) which provides guidance for ensuring health research is inclusive, as well as instructions on how to [register for a free online course](#) run by INCLUDE. NHS England has also created [a document that provides practical insights for researchers on how to engage more diverse participants in health research](#).
- The Royal Society has a [section of its website dedicated to research culture](#), which may be of interest.

## 5.3 CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any queries related to the Academy, please contact [academy@vivensafoundation.org.uk](mailto:academy@vivensafoundation.org.uk).

For any queries regarding the application process and awards, including if you need any alternative accessible formats, please contact [academy@vivensafoundation.org.uk](mailto:academy@vivensafoundation.org.uk). We will do our very best to assist you.