Letter of Intent Application Guide

Neurotechnology Clinical Pilot Study
Request for Applications

Spinal Research has been dedicated to investing in clinical neuromodulation projects over the past eight years, through our Special Emphasis Networks. We are now looking to take the next step in more broadly supporting advancements in neurotechnology research, to move closer to meaningful improvements in the lives of people affected by spinal cord injury (SCI).

Overview

We invite proposals for UK capacity building research projects that seek to advance neurotechnologies for spinal cord injury.

We particularly encourage proposals from multidisciplinary teams spanning academic, clinical, industry, and engineering sectors, fostering collaboration that bridges the gap between neurotechnology development and clinical impact.

Deadlines

- RFA open: 28 January, 2026
- Letters of intent due: 13 March, 2026
- Full grant application invitations: April 2026
- Full grant applications due: June 2026
- Anticipated award announcement: August 2026
- Anticipated funding: End of August 2026

Eligibility and Requirements

- Primary Investigator (PI) must have a doctoral degree or equivalent terminal professional degree (e.g. MD, DVM) and must be beyond the postdoctoral level.
- Investigators may only submit one application for which they serve as Primary Investigator.
- Lead applicant must be a UK-based academician/clinician.
- International collaborations are encouraged (not lead).
- At least one clinical trial site must be located in the UK.
- Industry collaborations are welcome (not lead).
- UK based research/clinical partnerships are encouraged.

- Applicants are required to demonstrate clear intent and approach for engagement with the PLEX (people with lived experience of spinal cord injury) community for the design, conduct, and dissemination of the proposed project
- If appropriate, Spinal Research should be able to consider co-funding projects funded by other agencies.

Funding

- Duration: 18-30 months
- Amount: Up to **£250,000** total per project
- Overhead/indirect costs are not allowed
- All budgets must be in GBP
- **Equipment:** Although equipment purchases are not encouraged, they may be allowed if necessary/sufficiently justified for this project. Per capita infrastructure costs are not allowed.
- **Publication costs:** Costs for open access publications are allowed.
- **Travel:** Limited to £2500 per year.
- Funds are to be allocated for data management and data curation.

Data Sharing and Publication

Spinal Research requires all data resulting from the project to be publicly available following 'FAIR data principles'. This includes but not limited to the Open Data Commons for Spinal Cord Injury (http://odc-sci.org). Data must be made publicly available within one year of grant completion or following publication of relevant manuscripts, whichever comes first.

RFA Description

The purpose of this RFA is to support neurotechnologies designed to restore, modulate, or enhance neural activity and network function following spinal cord injury.

Invasive and non-invasive spinal cord and/or brain modulating or interfacing technologies are expected to serve as the primary interventions.

This includes but is not limited to:

- **Neuromodulation** (examples include peripheral nerve stimulation, transcutaneous stimulation, transcranial stimulation, vagus nerve stimulation, and epidural stimulation)
- **Brain-computer interfaces** (BCI systems enabling direct neural control)
- **Neuroprosthetics** (devices that restore or enhance neural-controlled function)

Proposals for neuromuscular electrical stimulation may be submitted but must include highly novel and innovative advancements.
We welcome proposals addressing function restoration across all body systems affected by spinal cord injury, including but not limited to motor, sensory, pain, bowel and bladder, spasticity and autonomic functions.

All proposed studies are expected to involve human participants. Pre-clinical research is not encompassed in this RFA.

Potential areas of focus:

- **Responder Profiling**: investigation of biomarkers, predictors, or mechanisms underlying individual variability in therapeutic response, to guide personalised or adaptive neurotechnological interventions.
- **Therapeutic Efficacy and Optimisation:** approaches to measure, enhance, and optimise therapeutic effects of neurotechnologies, including refinement of stimulation parameters to maximise efficacy
- **Innovative Trial Design:** Development of adaptive protocols, novel clinical trial methodologies, or assessment frameworks that address the unique challenges of neurotechnology evaluation.
- **Device Prototyping, and Usability Testing**: Developing a new device, or adapting an existing technology for a new use, to achieve proof of concept and identifying any design, performance, or user-interaction issues.

  Investigation of multi-modal approaches, combining multiple neurotechnologies or integrating neurotechnologies with other therapeutic modalities (e.g. acute intermittent hypoxia (AIH), chemical neuromodulators, rehabilitative approaches) will be considered if the primary approach is neurotechnology based. Given the complexity of evaluating and understanding combination approaches, a strong rationale (including biological) will be required at the full grant application stage (if invited) as well as an understanding of how the combination approach will be regulated. The rationale should be briefly addressed at the letter of intent (LOI) stage.

Letter of Intent (LOI) Submission Process

This RFA will be a two-stage process with an initial LOI submission and review, followed by an invitation only full grant application process.

All LOIs must be submitted through our online grant application portal, **Smart Simple.**

We strongly encourage you to view all the screens in the online portal system before beginning to write your LOI. All communications and correspondence will be sent to the identified applicant.

All submissions undergo an administrative and scientific review by individuals under a confidentiality agreement.

Given the length of the LOI (approximately two pages) it is not possible to provide the full scope of the methodological details but sufficient detail to assess strategy should be provided.

For questions about the letter of intent application process, online system and scope of application, please email research@spinal-research.org

The following sections are included in the online LOI:

1. **Administrative Section (Required):**
   Applicant details, high level information on intervention protocol, project team and budget summary.

2. **Letter of Intent Summary (Required):**

   This should be max 2 A4 pages.

- Hypothesis / Specific Aims (milestones may be used to support Specific Aims for device prototype and usability testing, if more relevant/appropriate).
- Overview of experimental design/methods (including target population)
- What will be learned that will advance the field of neurotechnology?
- If there is a component to UK capacity building, please explain
- Inclusion of engagement with persons with lived experience (PLEX)

Review criteria for Letters of Intent include the following:

Suggest the following:

Relevance to the RFA

Is the proposed work relevant to the RFA and does it/the PI meet the stated criteria?

Importance/Impact

- Will the project substantively contribute to the body of knowledge in neurotechnology?

- Does the project build UK research capacity to develop and evaluate neurotechnology approaches? And/or is the project innovative or of critical importance in the advancement of neurotechnology?
- Does the proposed work have the potential to impact a broad population of persons with SCI?

Research Plans

- Are the Aim(s) and hypothesis(es) (or device prototype/ usability testing milestones) clear and aligned but not dependant on one another?
- Will the proposed outcomes and methods address the Aim(s) and hypothesis(es)?
- Is the project feasible within the time frame and budget?

Presentation

- Is the LOI understandable and free from errors?

Budget

- Is the preliminary budget reasonable for the proposed work?
- Does it meet the stated budget criteria?
- Have you included justification for budget proposed if necessary?

PLEX Engagement

- Does the application include clear intent and approach for engagement of PLEX in the design, conduct, and dissemination of the project?