

[Global Grants for Gut Health](#)

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Guidelines for applicants

Introduction

The Global Grants for Gut Health is a competitive programme for investigator-initiated research into the human gut microbiota, supported by Yakult and Nature Research.

In 2020, the programme will consider proposals for research projects that advance understanding of the impact of the small intestine microbiome on human health. In all cases the focus should be on uncovering and understanding the mechanisms through which the microbiota exert an influence on human health.

The fund is open to eligible researchers from across the world. The programme will make a maximum of three awards per funding cycle, each of up to US\$100,000. Research projects should be one year in duration.

Eligibility

Applicants should be employed by a university, research institute or any other not-for-profit organisation. Applicants must hold a doctorate or medical degree (e.g., PhD, MD, PharmD) and have at least five years' postdoctoral research experience.

The awards are global, so applicants can be of any nationality and projects can be hosted at eligible organisations in any country apart from Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Syria or where otherwise prohibited or restricted by law or where otherwise prohibited or restricted by law as updated from time to time.

The programme is open to applicants from all scientific disciplines.

Assessment process & criteria

All proposals will first be evaluated by scientific peer reviewers on the basis of the originality and scientific quality of the project. A shortlist of proposals will then be assessed by [independent, expert panel](#) on the basis of all four of the criteria below. The panel is made up of internationally renowned researchers in human microbiota from across the world. Panel members will review shortlisted proposals individually ahead of a meeting of the full panel to discuss the merits of proposals in detail. The panel will then decide which proposals to fund. Yakult and Nature Research employees will have no influence over funding decisions. Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

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1

Quality and originality of the science

Research funded under the programme must contribute to knowledge of the human microbiota. Research Proposals should explain the originality of the proposed research. This may include novel insights into the human microbiota or the development of novel techniques. Research Proposals must set out well-designed, robust studies using the most appropriate methodologies, equipment, data and analytical techniques to reach the stated objectives.

2

Potential scientific and social impact

Research Proposals should set out the importance of the contribution they will make. For example, the research may directly answer key questions, develop techniques to further probe crucial aspects of the human microbiota or address unmet challenges or opportunities. The ultimate aim of the scheme is to benefit society and patients through improved knowledge, tools and techniques to understand and address gut health.

3

Quality of the applicant/team and value for money

The applicant (and other team members) must have the necessary skills and experience to carry out the research, both in terms of the science and the leadership of a research grant. This will be judged on the track record of the applicant(s) and the appropriateness of the host universities and

institutes. The project budget must be clearly explained and will be judged on the appropriateness to deliver the proposed programme of research. The panel may also consider how the project will be managed to ensure the resources are deployed effectively.

4

Emphasis on mechanisms of action

The research proposal should have an emphasis on elucidating the mechanism or mechanisms of action through which the small intestine microbiota exerts an influence on human health, rather than simply describing and characterising composition and function of the microbiome and linking it to diseases, risk and symptoms.

Costs

Funds can be used to cover the following eligible costs:

1. Direct costs of research

- Salaries of the principal investigator and other team members. It is expected that awards will cover a percentage of investigators' time. Awards are not intended to buy out 100% of investigators' time. Research assistants may be employed on a full-time basis.
- The costs of consumables, materials, supplies, software and small, non-capital equipment (up to US\$10,000) required to deliver the project and associated activities.
- Travel and subsistence for team members as required to deliver the project and associated dissemination activities. This is not intended to cover normal living expenses.
- Publication costs.
- Ethical approval and other licence fees.
- Consultancy and subcontracting fees.

2. Indirect costs or institutional overheads

- In addition, applicants may apply for a further amount, equivalent to 10% of the requested direct costs of research, to cover indirect costs if such a contribution is required by their institution.

The following costs are not eligible:

- Capital equipment over US \$10,000.
- Education costs.
- Accommodation and normal living costs.

How to apply

[Print this guide](#)

Applicants need to complete their application via the Nature Research portal on the Submittable platform. Submittable is a user-friendly electronic submission management system used for all of Nature Research's grants and awards programmes.

Application process

1. General Information

- **Title of Research Project** - enter the title of your research project.
- **Applicant Details** - enter the applicant's name, position, affiliation and contact information.
- **Intended Project Start Date** - enter the date when the 12-month research project can begin. Grants will be approved and issued by March 2021.

2. Research Project Summary

The research project summary should introduce: the Context; Objectives; Research Design and Methodology; Project Team; and a Dissemination and Impact Plan. Limit: 600 words.

3. Research Project in Detail

This is the main part of the proposal and is structured using the following headings:

- **Research Question** - state clearly the objectives, questions or hypotheses the research will address, referring clearly to the mechanism of action you are investigating. Limit: 250 words.
- **Context** - explain the background to the research, the challenges it seeks to address and show the originality and potential impact of the research, in both academic and non-academic contexts. Limit: 600 words.

- **Objectives** - add up to three project objectives. Limit: 300 words in total.
- **Research Design and Methodology** - explain the programme of research to be undertaken to address each of the above objectives. Describe the methodologies, approaches, equipment and data to be employed and show that these are appropriate to the objectives of the study. Limit: 750 words per objective.
- **Project Management Summary** - describe plans for managing the project, monitoring progress and mitigating risks. Limit: 250 words. Outline up to three risks, and explain how you will mitigate against them. You should provide a timeline or upload a simple Gantt chart to show the stages of the project.
- **Project Team** - introduce the members of the team stating their role on the project and how their expertise and experience relates to the proposed research. The lead applicant should explain their previous leadership experience (note this will be judged as appropriate to the career stage of the lead applicant). Limit: 500 words.
- **Research Environment** - explain how the lead institution provides an appropriate setting in which to undertake and coordinate the project. This may include reference to the institution's track record in this research area, current projects and activities and access to appropriate equipment and facilities. Limit: 400 words.
- **Dissemination and Impact Plan** - explain how the resulting knowledge, data, tools and techniques will be communicated to academic and non-academic audiences bearing in mind the ultimate aim of the scheme is to benefit society and patients through improved understanding of gut health. Where there is real potential to further develop and implement findings, be specific about who you will engage with to maximise impact. Limit: 600 words
- **References** - include up to 20 key references.

4. Budget

Enter the budgeted costs for your Research Project in the fields provided. All costs must be in US dollars. Total direct cost budgets must not exceed \$100,000 for the 12 month period of research. Applicants may include a request for indirect costs to support institutional overheads. Indirect costs must not exceed 10% of the total budgeted direct costs.

Please also upload your full budget as a separate file.

- **Budget Justification** - justify each element of the project budget to show that the requested resources are necessary to conduct the research and deliver on the objectives. Limit: 400 words.

5. Team CVs

Upload the CVs of the applicant, and up to three additional team members. Each CV should be no longer than three pages in length.

6. Signing Official

Enter the name, position and contact information of your institution's authorised signing official within the research grant management office.

The nominated Signing Official will receive an email with a request and a link to upload a letter of assurance. Please be sure to have them whitelist submittable.com or check their spam folder to ensure they receive your request. Please ensure the official is provided with a copy of your proposal for reference.

7. Summary Statement

Include a short summary of the overarching purpose and underlying importance of your proposed project, and why it should be funded. Limit: 250 words.

8. Declarations

Please check the box to confirm you have read and agree to the [Terms & Conditions](#) and that you have provided a copy of the Funding Agreement to the appropriate office of your institution, which has given in-principle approval to it, excluding minor legal amendments. Certify that the statements in your application are true, complete and accurate.

9. Submit

Once all mandatory fields have been completed, click submit. You will receive confirmation of your submission by email.

Terms and conditions for applicants

Download terms and conditions

Applicants and their institutions must read and agree to the terms and conditions of the scheme.

[Download](#)

Funding agreement

Funding agreement will be available shortly, for any inquiries please contact: gufgrants@springernature.com

Download funding agreement

Applicants must submit a copy of the funding agreement to the contracts office or other authorised office of their institution for approval before submitting their application. Successful grantees will be required to sign the funding agreement prior to receiving funds.

[Available shortly](#)

Key Dates

Applications for the next round of funding open at 11:59 pm Eastern Standard Time on 1st August 2020 and close at 11:59 pm EST on 30th September 2020.

The grants will be announced by April 2021.

Financial management

All grant winners and lead institutions will be required to enter into a separate grant agreement with the grant funder.

Awards will be paid in two instalments. The first payment of 50% will be made at the start of the project period. The remaining 50% will be paid after acceptance of a mid-term report (see Reporting below).

The institution and grant holder must use the award to deliver the proposed research. Any significant variance from the proposed research and associated activities must be approved by the funder.

At the end of the award the institution will return any unspent funds to the funder.

Reporting and monitoring

The grant holder must submit a mid-term report by the end of month six. Mid-term reports will be submitted to the grant administrator by email, be equivalent to no more than three sides of A4, and should include:

- Grant number and title.
- Summary of project progress with reference to original aims and timelines.
- Findings and outputs to date.
- Summary of any challenges.
- Work still to be done including any revised timelines.
- Planned publications and outputs.

The grant holder must submit a final report within two months of the end of the Award unless otherwise agreed by the Funder. Final reports will be submitted to the grant administrator by email, be equivalent to 6 pages A4, and should include:

- Grant number and title
- Details of project progress with reference to original aims and timelines.
- Details of resulting data, analysis and findings
- Details of outputs to date.
- Further planned publications and outputs.
- Details of challenges.
- Opportunities to continue the current project or for future follow-on work
- A statement of expenditure.

Ethics and integrity

The grant holder and the lead institution must meet all relevant ethical, legal and regulatory requirements to undertake the research, be they local, national or international. Approvals must be granted before research begins.

Where research involves the use of human participants, tissue or data the Institution and the Award Holder must comply with the Declaration of Helsinki.

Where research involves the use of animals the Institution and the Award Holder must work to the NC3Rs “Animal Research: Reporting In Vivo Experiments” (ARRIVE) guidelines.

The Institution and the Award Holder must make every effort to comply with the NC3Rs ambitions to “replace, refine and reduce” the use of live animals in research.

The grant holder and the lead institution must have in place and follow formal procedures governing good research practice. This should cover issues including fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, misrepresentation, conflicts of interest and breach of ethical guidelines or duty of care.

Publication

The grant holder and lead institution should make results generated through the grant available to the broader scientific community through publication in journals, reports, at scientific meetings and through other appropriate routes.

The grant holder and lead institution must acknowledge support received from the Funder in publications and other forms of communication including media appearances and press releases.

Grant holders are free to publish results arising from the grant in the most appropriate journals. There is no expectation or requirement that research will be published in journals owned or managed by Springer Nature. Where manuscripts are submitted to Springer Nature journals, they will be subjected to the same editorial and review processes and standards as any other submission.

Applicants can request Article Processing Charges for open access publications as part of the direct costs on their research proposal.

The grant holder should follow good publication practice as set out by, for example, the Committee on Publication Ethics and the Council of Science Editors.

Grant holders will be interviewed by Nature Research as part of a series of Q&A articles about funded projects.

Yakult and Nature Research will periodically hold symposia, usually aligned with a relevant conference, to bring grant holders together and to showcase research funded under the programme. Grant holders should make every effort to attend these meetings in order to present their findings.

Intellectual property

The grant holder and lead institution should make every reasonable effort to ensure that the results of the research contribute to academic advancement and, where possible, to the benefit of wider society and the economy. Results should be communicated to academic and non-academic audiences as required to maximise potential benefits.

The funder claims no rights to the ownership or use of results generated through the grant. Ownership of the results, and any associated intellectual property rights, rests with the organisation generating them.

Arrangements for exploitation must not hinder further academic research and dissemination.

Contact

gutgrants@springernature.com

[Frequently asked questions](#)

Global Grants for Gut Health

Funds for research into the human gut microbiota.

Applications close 11:59pm EST on 30th September 2020.

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