**Tuberous Sclerosis Association**

**Research Grants 2025/26: Seedcorn Award**

**Guidance for Applicants**

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**Guidance for Applicants**

## 1. Introduction

Our goal is to ensure that everyone affected by TSC gets the support, care, and research advancements they need and should expect – now and also in the future. The Tuberous Sclerosis Association (TSA) is proud of our long-standing history of being a world-leader in funding important research into causes, diagnosis, management and treatment for Tuberous Sclerosis Complex (TSC).

The TSA’s Research Strategy focuses on accelerating progress towards providing help for today and a cure for tomorrow. We are committed to maximising the impact of our research by investing more in areas where it can achieve the greatest outcomes. Our updated strategy outlines three priority areas: Lifetime impact, Treatments and Optimising care.

**We strongly recommend familiarising yourself with the TSA Research Strategy:** [**http://tuberous-sclerosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/TSA-Research-Strategy-2025-2028.pdf**](http://tuberous-sclerosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/TSA-Research-Strategy-2025-2028.pdf)

## 2. Type of funding: Seedcorn Awards

### 2.1. Who can apply

Applications can be submitted by individual researchers or teams based at universities, research institutions, or similar research environments. Applicants should demonstrate relevant expertise and experience, and where applicable, a track record of research in the TSC field. Applications will be assessed on the quality and feasibility of the research proposal, the potential impact of the project, and the appropriateness of the budget and timeline.

### 2.2. Value and length of award

Awards can provide funding of up to £10,000 per project. Funds may be used for research expenses, consumables, small-scale equipment, and other justified project-related costs. Funding is intended to support short-term, focused research and is available for a maximum project duration of 12 months.

### 2.3. Remit

The remit of the Seedcorn Awards is to support early-stage, exploratory, or pilot research that is clearly aligned with the TSA’s Research Strategy 2025-2028 priorities for TSC. Projects may address any relevant aspect of TSC in relation to these priorities, including, but not limited to, basic mechanisms, translational science, clinical research, psychosocial impact, or improvements in care, support, or quality of life. Proposals should aim to generate preliminary data, test an emerging idea, develop or refine methods, or establish collaborations that can form the basis of future, larger-scale funding bids. The scheme is designed to stimulate innovation and feasibility work that would benefit from short-term, targeted investment. Projects must be realistic in scope for the funding available and show a clear trajectory beyond the award, whether through follow-on studies, partnerships, or subsequent competitive applications. Interdisciplinary, collaborative, and patient-informed approaches are encouraged where they reflect the organisation’s strategic aims and research priorities.

## 3. Timeline

Call opens: **Wednesday 1 October 2025**

Application submission deadline: **Monday 1 December, 13:00 GMT**

Funding decision: **January 2026**

Anticipated start date: **February 2026**

## 4. Assessment process

### 4.1. Triage

All applications will first undergo an initial triage by TSA staff to ensure:

* Completeness of documentation
* Compliance with application guidance, terms and conditions, and funding thresholds
* Adherence to formatting and submission requirements

Where minor issues are identified, applicants will be contacted and given an opportunity to make the necessary amendments within an agreed timeframe. TSA reserves the right to reject applications that cannot or will not be corrected within this period.

For applications that significantly deviate from the requirements or raise scientific concerns, TSA staff will consult with two scientific members of the Research Committee. Applicants may again be asked to amend their submission, but the TSA reserves the right to reject the application if advised by the scientific reviewers.

This triage stage ensures that all applications progressing to external peer review are complete, compliant, and ready for fair scientific assessment.

### 4.2. Research Committee Assessment and Funding Decision

All applications will be considered by the TSA Research Committee, which includes both scientific and lay members. The committee will review the overall proposal to assess:

* The overall potential for impact that will improve the lives of people living with TSC; those affected directly, along with their family members and carers
* Impact leading to wider research, including social, economic and health sector benefits
* The quality of the application and study protocol
* The level of innovation in the study
* The strength and track record of the researchers; in the case of emerging researchers evidence of promise of the candidate’s research trajectory
* Value for money
* Plans to ensure that people living with TSC; those affected directly including their family members and carers are at the centre of the study, throughout the duration of the study
* The strength of plans to communicate and disseminate the findings of research to other research professionals, as well as the lay TSC community

Where the number of high-quality applications exceeds available funding, the committee will prioritise projects based on these criteria to ensure the greatest potential impact.

The Research Committee will then make funding recommendations to the TSA Board of Trustees, who have final authority for awarding grants. All applicants will be notified of the outcome following the Board’s decision.

## 5. Eligibility

### 5.1. Submission and review

* Each applicant must submit no more than one application for project funding as lead applicant
* Applicants may seek advice on the application process from the TSA before applications are submitted
* Once the application has been submitted, no additional unsolicited information intended to support the application will be accepted unless related to new legislative or regulatory change that will have a significant impact on the work undertaken
* Please complete and return your application form in Word format so that the information can be easily analysed
* Supporting documents can be returned in either Word or PDF format
* All applications should be emailed to: [research@tuberous-sclerosis.org](mailto:research@tuberous-sclerosis.org)

### 5.2. Lead applicant

* Senior researchers should be able to demonstrate evidence of a strong research record and should display evidence of leadership
* Emerging/early career researchers are encouraged to apply as lead applicants, and should outline how their research career to date shows promise and sufficient evidence of being able to lead a project to completion
* All lead applicants must be willing and able to agree to the Terms and Conditions if their application is successful

### 5.3. Staff members/employees

* If the staff member who will be supported by the grant has not yet been recruited or is unknown at this stage, please provide the title of the position to be filled. Further information must be provided as soon as possible after the award letter is issued
* There is no limit to the number of staff members that can be involved in the application, provided their salary costs can be covered by associated grants

### 5.4. Collaborators

There is no limit to the number of collaborators that can be involved in an application, but for each collaborator there must be a signed declaration letter on official letter headed paper which confirms they have consented to co-operate in the programme of research. It should also outline the reasons for collaborating and explain their role in the project.

### 5.5. Ethics

All appropriate regulatory approvals must either be in place before the work on the research commences or after the award has been granted.

If you are unsure whether your application meets the above eligibility criteria, please contact the TSA’s Research Team by emailing [research@tuberous-sclerosis.org](mailto:research@tuberous-sclerosis.org) or by calling the main switchboard on 0300 222 5737.

## 6. Application guidance

The following table explains the structure of the 2025 Seedcorn Award application form and offers guidance on the information to include in each section.

**Please submit your application form as a Word document – this is required for correct processing of the application. Applications sent as PDF documents will not be processed.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Section | Guidance |
| Application summary | Please provide the requested information |
| 1. Abstract  Word count: <300 words | Please provide a short scientific abstract of the research proposal.  The abstract should include:   * Background – please detail brief background information that is needed to understand the wider context of your application and accompanying documents. * Hypothesis and objectives * Methodology |
| 2. Lay summary  Word count: <300 words | Please provide a plain language summary of the research proposed. This section may be shared publicly if the grant is awarded. We strongly encourage PPI in the production of this section which can be through the TSC Research Volunteer Network or otherwise.  You may wish to include:   * The aims and objectives of the project: the problem you are trying to address and how relevant it is to TSC and its associated conditions * What you are going to do without using scientific jargon * What you expect to come from the project * Details of how your project will involve people living with TSC and their families |
| 3. Value to TSC research  Word count: <300 words | Please explain why you are proposing this research in plain language. Write with passion about the importance of your project, how it could help advance understanding of TSC or contribute towards new treatments, and how it connects to the mission of the TSA. This section may be shared publicly if the grant is awarded. We strongly encourage PPI in the production of this section which can be through the TSC Research Volunteer Network or otherwise.  You may wish to:   * Explain how the findings of your research will be of benefit to people living with TSC and their families and carers * The timescale to impact and reasons why |
| 4. PPIE  Word count: <300 words | Please detail if and how people affected by TSC have been involved in shaping this research proposal and/or whether you have plans to engage or involve people affected by TSC, or members of the public, in your research? Please mention if you have involved a patient or member of the public in writing sections 2 and 3 of this application. For more information on PPIE, please see NIHR guidance here: <https://www.learningforinvolvement.org.uk> |
| 5. Project staffing  Word count: no limit | Please provide the requested details of any co-applicants. There is no limit to the number of co-applicants.  You must submit the lead applicants and each co-applicants CV at the point of submission. We recommend these are no longer than 2 A4 sides.  Please note, the lead applicant will be the main point of contact throughout the grant evaluation process and the project, should it be funded |
| 6. Regulatory approvals  Word count: no limit | Please provide the requested information. If relevant, please include a copy of any approval letters. If animals are to be used as part of the project, you should submit the ‘Proposed use of animals’ questionnaire at point of submission.  Please note that funds may not be released without all necessary approval in place. |
| 7. Breakdown of costs  Word count: no limit | Please provide an estimated breakdown of the costs requested, including justification of how the funds will be used.  Please note the following:   * Grants will be awarded in GBP only * VAT is not payable on any part of the grant * In accordance with AMRC policy, the Tuberous Sclerosis Association only funds the direct costs of the research * Further information, including quotations where necessary, may be requested as part of the review process |
| 8. Full project description  Word count: <1500 words, excluding references | Please provide a description of your proposed research below. You must include:   * A summary of relevant background research * The aims and objectives of your project * An experimental plan and methods * Why this research is novel and innovative * What the outcome/impact of this grant will be in both the short and long term * How people living with TSC and their families will ultimately benefit     Figures and tables can be included in this section if you wish – you may find it easier to insert them at the end of the section or include them as separate files. |
| 9. Declaration | Please read and initial each statement. Please provide a signature and print your name and the date below. |
| 10. Application checklist | Please initial the boxes to confirm that the stated criteria have been met. |
| 11. Electronic submission | Details regarding submission: please ensure these are read thoroughly ahead of submitting your application. |

**If you have any questions regarding the Research Grants 2025/26, please contact research@tuberous-sclerosis.org.**