

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH SEED FUNDING

PROJECT BRIEF

Background

2026 sees the launch of our eighth round of seed funding with a focus on making grants for projects in Africa. We cannot fund large-scale research, but we are very keen to help international groups in these countries get started on new and clinically relevant studies. Our proposal is to provide seed funding for a small or “pilot” project which, if successful, can help secure further funding for potential larger-scale work. This project should be novel to the country/region taking place and can involve external collaborations within that or neighbouring countries/regions.

Despite the relatively small amount of money that we can provide for each successful project, this can be the first step to becoming a well-established researcher. We, therefore, see this funding as being highly relevant to our mission of improving the recognition, treatment and quality of life for all people affected by encephalitis, either infectious or autoimmune.

Types of projects

Seed funding gives researchers the opportunity to carry out a broad range of activities, not previously available at their centre, such as:

1. Pilot and scoping studies.
2. Preliminary data gathering.
3. Proof-of-principle studies.

And always undertaken with patient engagement and consultation.

Themes of Interest

Applications are encouraged, but not restricted to, the following areas.

Examples of suitable pilot or low-cost projects:

- Epidemiological research on incidence of various causes of encephalitis.
- The development or improvements in routine surveillance systems to facilitate assessment of accurate incidence statistics of encephalitis.
- Standardisation of case definitions, diagnostic testing, and methods of case ascertainment to enable better comparison of incidences between studies and regions.
- More accurate assessment and better recording of mortality in encephalitis.
- Standardised surveillance systems to enable more accurate assessment and comparison of mortality in encephalitis.
- Data on acute outcomes of encephalitis.
- Data on long term outcomes of encephalitis.
- Interventions that will reduce caregiver burden.
- Data on direct and indirect costs of encephalitis.
- Introduction of vaccination programmes in areas where vaccine-preventable encephalitides exist.
- Understanding of and methods for reduction in vaccine hesitancy in the population with evaluation of changing attitudes/greater uptake of immunisation.

- Evaluation of clinical benefits of greater availability of basic diagnostic tests and equipment (i.e., lumbar punctures, CSF analysis, MRI scanning, antibody testing) to help justify their costs.
- Greater availability and use of acyclovir in suspected encephalitis.
- Increasing numbers of neurologists and/or neurology training.
- Development of, and access to, neuro-rehabilitation.

Level of Funding Available

Up to £10,000.

Duration of Funding

12 to 18 months.

Time extensions (maximum 6 months) will be awarded only under exceptional circumstances.

Eligibility

- The project needs to be based in Africa.
- All levels from medical students, junior doctors, early researchers, returning to research to post-doctoral research or equivalent professional experience; however, priority will be given to those early on in their academic career.
- All applicants need to be affiliated to a recognised academic institution and provide two letters of support from their project/study supervisors or institution heads.
- Applicants may apply if they already have funding from their Institute or from an external source.
- Please note that according to our Research Strategy, we do not fund projects outside UK which involve the use of animals.

We Cannot Fund

- An existing research project.
- A standalone project, with no follow-on plans.
- Bridge funding.

Eligible Costs

- Flexible; however, funding should not be used for hardware, equipment or overheads.
- Travel costs will need to be justified and not exceeding 33% of the full grant.

Application Review Criteria

- How the research question addresses an encephalitis theme.
- The potential for the proposed research to make a significant advance in this field.
- The researcher's track record.
- The feasibility of the approach and its likely outcomes.
- The suitability of the research environment.

Implementation

- Invitation to submit a proposal (deadline 30th September 2026).
- Review of the applications by Encephalitis International Research Subcommittee based on the selection criteria.
- Decision made by Encephalitis International's Chief Executive on recommendations from the Research Subcommittee – End of October 2026).

Requirements from Awardees

- Awardees will prepare a report detailing how funds were used, outcomes and future plans within three months of completion of the seed funding.

- awardees are to respond to periodic requests for updates on further funding, publications and promotions.
- Awardees will be required to present their findings at our annual Encephalitis Conference either in person or remotely.
- Awardees are to ensure all publications acknowledge support from Encephalitis International and are made open access if possible.
- Awardees are required to acknowledge the Encephalitis International as a funder in any publicity created by the award.
- Awardees are required to consider including involvement of the Encephalitis International in any grant applications submitted as a direct result of this seed funding grant.

Application Form Submission

You MUST include the following documents in your complete application:

- Application form.
- The applicant and the co-applicants CV (no more than 2 pages each).
- Budget breakdown.
- Two letters of support from project/study supervisors and/or your institution's head of department.

You must be a professional member of Encephalitis International. Membership is free and can be completed online here www.encephalitis.info/professional-membership

If you have any questions while preparing your application, and/or to send your completed application form together with the documents mentioned above to research@encephalitis.info by 30th September 2026.