

FRAME Grant Funding Strategy



The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of current FRAME research funding priorities and strategy, for the benefit of FRAME supporters, donors, and potential grant beneficiaries.

BACKGROUND

FRAME exists to promote better science and a more humane and compassionate society by the replacement of animals in medical experiments, drug development and testing.

FRAME believes that the accepted practice of using animals for researching human drugs and diseases is fundamentally flawed; however viable human-focussed methods do not yet exist in all areas.

We accept that the path to animal-free medical research, drug development and testing will be long. It requires both the existence of suitable alternative methods, and culture change by scientists, regulators, funders, and journals.

On the 1st of September 1969, the Trust Deed authorising the foundation of FRAME explained that Dorothy Hegarty and Dr Charles Foister had ‘for some time past conducted a fund for the advancement of medical research and for the development of new technologies and propose to launch appeals from time to time for donations to establish and maintain a fund to promote and encourage research into ways of conducting medical research without making use of animals.’ In the early days of the charity, whilst seeking to establish government recognition, the FRAME trustees emphasised ‘that they did not seek funds to carry out their own research, but to focus attention on, and to support, work being done elsewhere...’ This is a philosophy that still fits very much with FRAME’s current position and is why providing research grants is a core element of our work today.

FRAME has provided funding to the FAL (FRAME Alternatives Laboratory) at the University of Nottingham since 1991 to support the research projects happening there. In the early years the laboratory carried out projects focussing on developing and validating in vitro toxicity tests in scientific collaborations with companies such as AVON, Boots, Tesco, and L’Oréal. These collaborations resulted in the production of many scientific papers during this time and supported the development and validation of non-animal toxicity test that could replace animal tests.

A change in direction for the FAL came in 2006 with the appointment of a new director, this was accompanied by a shift in direction for the lab from in vitro tests for regulatory purposes to the development of more complex 3D cell culture methods for basic and applied biomedical research. The research being conducted in the FAL today uses human tissue obtained from the Nottingham University Hospitals Trust. The cells are used to develop biologically relevant 3D models of human organs that can be used in drug development and human disease research.

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Strategic Goals

As a charity it is our responsibility to be as transparent as possible about where we spend charitable funds, and how this contributes to our charitable purposes.

Funding research has always been a core activity for FRAME and now forms one of the three strategic goals that underpin our work. These are:

- Funding research
- Sharing information
- Creating change

Funding research also contributes to our other strategic goals by supporting research projects that can or have the potential to, *create change*. This may be through developing models, methods or techniques that can contribute to the replacement of current animal research methods, or research that reviews systems, procedures, policy, or research practices.

Funding research also provides new *information* that can be *shared* with the scientific community, general public, and policy makers, through the dissemination of research outcomes.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

External Factors:

There are multiple external factors that influence where and how we decide what research areas to prioritise and the strategies for doing this. The FRAME funding strategy is reviewed regularly and will change over time and evolve in line with these factors and the overarching strategic goals of the charity.

Factors that we might consider include pressure and changes that have a social, environmental, technological, or political impact. When considering the current research landscape for example, we may consider where animal research is still required; where animal research is no longer necessary or is having little impact; the availability of viable alternative methods; barriers to the uptake of non-animal methods; new changes in legislation or regulations, the availability of funding from other sources; gaps in knowledge, funding or training; and global biomedical priorities.

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Scope of FRAME funding:

Our current grant funding programmes incorporate the following key principles:

- FRAME will not fund any projects involving live animals or invertebrates.
- Any project applying for FRAME funds that intends to use animal tissue or animal derived products must include a justification for this. This will be judged against the potential impact of the project to lead to methods/outcomes that can directly replace animal use, the relevance to developing human-based methods and the availability of alternatives that do not require animal products.
- All applications for a FRAME grant programme will be judged against the following key criteria:
 - Fit with FRAME's mission and charitable purpose
 - Scientific innovation and advancement
 - Human-relevance of the outcomes of the proposal
 - Scale of likely impact on replacing animal use

FUNDING SCHEMES

➤ **The FRAME Alternatives Laboratory**

An annual grant is provided to the University of Nottingham to support the projects being carried out in the FAL.

Purpose:

(a) to provide continuity to develop long term solutions in difficult areas such as human models for basic research

(b) to support the next generation of researchers in alternatives by providing a supportive environment to train and opportunities to be involved with additional FRAME activities.

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➤ FRAME Grant Programmes

• **FRAME Summer Studentship Awards**

The current FRAME Summer Studentship grant programme started in 2019 and runs annually. The programme uses an application and judging process to award a minimum of two grants (of up to £3,500 per application) each summer to selected undergraduate/masters students.

Purpose:

(a) to support desk based and lab-based projects that support the development or uptake of alternative methods or review/increase the knowledge base of evidence supporting these aims.

(b) to inspire future researchers to embrace alternative methods, provide opportunities for them to develop their research and scientific communication skills and raise awareness of FRAME within the academic community.

• **Innovation Grants**

The annual Innovation grant scheme started in 2021 to address a gap for small funding pots for proof of principle research and pilot projects. The scheme offers small grants of around £5k but will consider applications asking for up to £15k.

Purpose:

(a) to provide funding to allow initial research and development of innovative and novel ideas, techniques and methods that may lead to the development or uptake of alternative methods.

➤ Individual Projects

FRAME from time to time will fund or commission projects that fit with the charity's strategic goals. These may be carried out and funded internally or externally. Current projects include:

- **The Impetus Project** – To identify research areas closest to replacement & those furthest away to drive future funding priorities and support structures.
- **GA Animals Project** – A high use of GA animals in research is reflected in the numbers reported in the Home Office Annual statistics of scientific procedures on living animals. This project will look at key drivers for researchers when choosing GA models for biomedical research, and the barriers and gaps that need addressing to help these research areas move to alternative, non-animal methods.

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GOOD PRACTICE

As part of this grant strategy FRAME are building solid, sustainable frameworks to ensure all funding is given ethically and fairly, has value to both FRAME and the grant holder, is given in line with FRAME's mission and values, and supports high quality research that has impact and opportunities for dissemination and sharing.

To this end all FRAME grant programmes will have:

- Signed contracts/agreements and T&C documents which are made readily available and have been checked by a legal professional.
- If relevant an open and fair application procedure including transparent assessment criteria.
- Agreed reporting criteria and an expectation of how outcomes will be shared both through FRAME channels and external publications.
- Alignment with FRAME's values.

Brave Thoughtful Collaborative Resourceful Supportive

Guidance available to FRAME to ensure 'good grant-making' is carried out include these DSC principles: [1604-Principles-of-Good-Grant-Making1.pdf \(dsc.org.uk\)](#)

Q&A

➤ *Why doesn't FRAME fund projects that use invertebrates?*

FRAME is committed to full replacement and the advancement of methods that focus on human biology. However, FRAME recognise the value of advances that make incremental progress including for example work on reduction, refinement and partial replacement, invertebrate work, or research that uses animal derived products. Whilst these areas of research are not a sufficient end to animal use in themselves, FRAME acknowledge that these are important steps on the path to changing the culture and replacing animal use. Whilst these projects may not be funded by FRAME the charity will continue to share and disseminate this research through education, training and writing platforms. We also identified that there are other 3Rs funding streams out there for this purpose, such as those available through NC3Rs.

➤ *Why does FRAME fund a laboratory rather than individual PhDs?*

The cost of funding a biosciences PhD with tuition fees, stipend and a Research Training and Support grant is over £25,000 per year.⁽¹⁾ Funding the FAL allows FRAME to support multiple PhD students and projects at one time, all working on different areas of research. It also enables us to maintain a close working relationship with the current FAL Director and students. All students benefiting from the grant are invested in the FRAME ethos, we can involve them with the charity and stay in contact with these researchers as they start their careers. It has proven to be an effective, efficient, and rewarding relationship.

1. [BBSRC PhD Funding - A Guide for 2021 | FindAPhD.com](#)