

Research Investment Strategy

Version: 5.0

Summary:	The intention of this Strategy is to express Big C's vision and governance framework for the charity's investment in scientific research.	
Target audience:	Trustees, Committee members, potential applicants for grant funding and other stakeholders	
Next review date:	To be reviewed bi annually	
Reviewed by:	Grants Committee	Date of meeting: 1 April 2019 15 November 2021
Approved by:	Board of Trustees	Date of meeting: 26 November 2008 Revised by the Board: 24 April 2019 Revised by the Grants Committee: 15 Nov 2021 Revised by the Board: 29 March 2023 Revised by the Board: 29 November 2023
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Version Control

Change Record

Date	Author	Version	Page	Reason for Change
1 April 2019	Grants Cttee	1		To remove out of date references and meet the Association of Medical Research Charities' membership requirements
15 Nov 2021	Grants Cttee	2		To reflect new Funding Conditions adopted by the Grants Committee on 15 November 2021
29 March 2023	Board	3		To reflect Trustees' revised parameters for 2023 investment in research grants
29 November 2023	Board	4		To reflect amended PhD grant proposition as agreed by the Board on 29 November 2023.

Reviewers/contributors

Name	Position	Version Reviewed & Date
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1. Introduction to Big C

Big C is a local, proudly independent, cancer charity formed in 1980 by two young Norfolk men, one of whom remains a Trustee. Having had to travel to London for their own cancer treatment they were determined that people in Norfolk & Waveney should have access to the very best treatment and care locally. With the help of the local community the charity has raised more than £40.5 million since its foundation. All the funds Big C spends are used to benefit local people; either by providing money for care and treatment; or by funding internationally acclaimed research through local investment in significant project and equipment grants.

2. Big C's objectives

Big C's vision is to enable Norfolk & Waveney to be a centre of excellence for the provision of cancer services, and to contribute to the international reputation for excellence in cancer research locally.

Big C's Memorandum of Association defines the charity's objects as:

"To conduct, support, promote or assist in the promotion of research into all matters connected with or bearing on causes, prevention, treatment and cure of cancer within the UK or in any other part of the world and in particular (but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing) by the support and development of research into the causes, prevention, treatment and cure of cancer in hospitals and institutions and to disseminate the useful results thereof."

More simply put, Big C's objective is to promote the development of world class cancer research locally. We do this by funding scientists working in Norfolk & Waveney. Since the Charity's inception we have funded research projects with a total amount in the region of £12.5 million.

3. The role of Big C in Norfolk & Waveney

The purpose of this Research Investment Strategy is to set out Big C's understanding of the contribution we strive to make to the overall fight against cancer through our funding of world class local research.

Big C is unique in that:

- We are the only charity dedicated to funding cancer research in Norfolk & Waveney.
- We do not employ scientists nor run labs. By not being encumbered by financial overheads we can maximise the funds going towards cancer research.
- As we are not tied to specific programmes, Big C has the freedom to support innovative research into less well funded areas of cancer.

We are dedicated to the fight against cancer and its effect on the individual and their family. To this end we aim to promote partnerships between the statutory, private and voluntary sectors, who together will develop first class cancer research.

4. What kind of research will Big C support?

Cancer research in Norfolk & Waveney is primarily undertaken by scientists and clinicians at the University of East Anglia and other institutions across the Norwich Research Park.

Big C's aim is to work in partnership with these institutions to ensure that our investment is targeted at the most appropriate projects within the overall context of the research being conducted locally. Big C will only fund institutions which have published standards of good research practice, and which apply the principles of the Association of Medical Research Charities' Guidelines on Good Research Practice.

Big C will support:

- PhD studentships: grants will cover a percentage of the PhD fees and the full stipend to a maximum of £50,000 per PhD, the remaining costs to be covered by the host institution. The training period is to be a maximum of 4 years.

We will consider funding the following types of research and welcome applications from all institutions across the Norwich Research Park, and the regional NHS trusts across all disciplines, including the social sciences:

- basic research
- translational research
- clinical research
- behavioural and population research
- psychosocial research

The investigator be local or based in the Norfolk & Waveney area.

All studies involving human participants, human tissue samples (or other human biological samples) and data must obtain the appropriate approval from the Health Research Authority (HRA). Approval must be obtained and confirmed by the grantholder prior to the start of the project.

Big C endorses the Association of Medical Research Charities' position statement on the use of animals in research (<https://www.amrc.org.uk/position-statement-on-the-use-of-animals-in-research>).

5. Shared vision and local priorities

Big C does not wish to be prescriptive in the field of cancer research that is supported and will work closely with local partners to ensure that there is strategic fit between Big C funding and other sources of funding to these institutions.

Big C will work towards a shared vision with local stakeholders by:-

- Being reactive to local need
- Identifying and developing local funding priorities over the longer term.

6. The research investment programme

Big C will operate one award "round" annually, with an application deadline of 31 August. Applications will be subject to an initial desk top review in order to establish that application criteria have been met and will then be submitted for peer review by up to three or more experts in the relevant field. Applicants are asked to suggest three independent reviewers to review their application and may also exclude up to three reviewers from this process. Big C's Research Advisory Panel reviews these suggestions for appropriateness and conflicts of interest and agrees a further minimum three individuals who will also be contacted.

Peer reviewers will use a standard form to assess each application and will be asked to give an overall rating.

Peer reviewers will also be asked to consider whether:

- Big C is the most appropriate funding body
- The duration of support and salaries/expenses are appropriate.
- The study has the appropriate statistical support.
- The application replicates other work being undertaken elsewhere.
- In relation to the application they have any conflicts of interest.

The Research Advisory Panel will consider the results of the peer reviews as well as the applicant's track-record in providing final reports to Big C and whether the project is one which donors would wish to see supported. The Panel will make recommendations to Big C's Grants Committee which then makes its final recommendations to the Board of Trustees at a meeting normally held in November/December. The decision of the Board is final.

Big C will provide written feedback to all applicants but will not enter into any discussion or debate on views expressed therein or the decision of the Trustees, which is final.

7. How much funding is available?

The amount available for investment in research grants is reviewed annually by the Trustees prior to the grants round who will take into account the need to balance Big C's research investment with the charity's other strategic objectives. The sum available will be published by Big C in advance of the grants round.

Details of past awards are contained in the charity's annual accounts and published on the website.

8. Openness and accountability

Big C can only continue to be successful with the generous support of the people of Norfolk & Waveney. We are committed to communicating the results of our investment to our supporters in order that they can share in our vital work. Big C intends to operate in an open and accountable way and will demonstrate this by:

- Publishing this strategy on our website
- Annual publication of results of grants programme
- Working with recipients of grants to ensure that the results of their projects are disseminated in an appropriate form.
- Adopting an Open Access policy for publications

9. Consultation and review

The strategy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and will be discussed as a standing order at each grant allocation round.

10. References

Developing a Research Funding Strategy - Association of Medical Research Charities