

# SPARC

A new adventure for ageing  
researchers

The logo for the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). It features the acronym "EPSRC" in a bold, dark red, sans-serif font. The letters are framed by two horizontal lines: a thin blue line above and a thin red line below.

Engineering and Physical Sciences  
Research Council



# The Origins of SPARC

- Positive Experience of:
  - ◆ EPSRC EQUAL
  - ◆ BBSRC SAGE/ERA
- Disappointment with:  
NCAR, XCAR, Funders Forum
- Pressure from community for activity
- Extensive discussion with Research Councils about the way forward over 18 months

# Promoting ageing research

- EPSRC and BBSRC
  - ◆ understand what is needed, committed
- Small research community in relation to national need
- Absence of capacity building initiatives and lack of continuity
- Need to:
  - ◆ attract newcomers
  - ◆ provide opportunities for younger workers in the field
  - ◆ allow adventure, translation and 'sideways movement' by existing gerontologists

# SPARC combines several activities

- Integrated Networking
- Advocacy
- **Capacity Building awards**

Result of detailed consultation within the ageing research community

# SPARC Awards

## Capacity building

- ◆ Pump priming
- ◆ Providing support for trained PDRAs
- ◆ Interdisciplinary areas
- ◆ Closer links between ageing researchers and potential researchers within design, engineering and biology
- ◆ Development of UK science base

# Application Process: Overview

- First call deadline 1st June 2005. Decision in September 2005
- Application to SPARC
- **Initial Triage for Remit**
- Applications which fail remit will be returned to applicants with RC recommendation of route to proceed
- Applications passing remit will be judged on combined scientific merit & capacity building
- Applications are peer-reviewed and evaluated by an advisory panel which includes EPSRC & BBSRC representatives.

# Application Process: Eligibility

- Especially (but not exclusively) suitable for:
- Newly appointed academic staff
- Research assistants with prior experience of ageing research either in receipt of a personal fellowship or for whom such support has been offered contingent upon a SPARC award
- Academics with an established reputation in ageing research wishing undertake novel interdisciplinary or translational research
- Established academic staff who have not yet moved into ageing research

# Application Process: The form I

- Looks scarier than it is!
- Two sides of **Administrative** information.
- Two sides (maximum) for the **project** work.
- One side for **Triage** and **Capacity Building**.
- One side for **Referees, Non-referees** and your **signature**.

# Application Process: The form II

- Downloadable from the SPARC web site
- **FILL IT IN PROPERLY!**
- Then upload it to the SPARC web site as a PDF by the deadline
- Sign one hard copy & put it in the post
- Wait

# Application Process: Triage

- Explain why SPARC support, rather than standard BBSRC or EPSRC funding instruments, is the most suitable vehicle.
- The area falls between the core strategic areas of the two councils.
- The application has a high capacity building element relative to its value (for example through contingent departmental support).
- Previous communication with EPSRC or BBSRC has indicated that SPARC is an appropriate vehicle.

# Application Process: Capacity I

- SPARC aims to increase the ability of the UK to conduct ageing research. **It is trying to build capacity.**
- Markers of capacity building might be:
  - relief from other duties
  - the provision of equipment or other facilities
  - travel funds
  - allocation of matching funds
  - a contingent fellowship (to current post doctoral researchers)

# Application Process: Capacity II

- Is the researcher likely to become an independent Principal Investigator either as a new appointment or through discipline bridging?
- Will the applicant be able to use the outcomes/results of their work to obtain further funding (*i.e.* will it lead to peer-reviewed publications or the availability of tools that would strengthen the applicants credibility)?

# Application Process: Peer Review

- SPARC will attempt to obtain at least three independent sets of referees comments.
- Applicants can nominate referees and we **WILL** use at least one of them.
- SPARC will **NOT** use anyone **YOU** identify as unsuitable (conflict of interest etc)

# Application Process: SPARC Advisory Committee

- Suitable Advisory Committee members will be appointed as IMs on your application.
- IMs pick referees and collate their comments.
- IMs score applications on **Scientific Excellence & Capacity Building** (both are scored out of 10 with 7+ indicating 'fund').
- If scores 'tie' then the highest capacity building score wins. No independent ranking.

# Application Process: Award

- Successful applicants will be expected to submit detailed budgets
- And attend SPARC workshops
- And produce very short interim reports
- And produce an Executive Summary which we will edit

# Application Process: Final

- Full details of what can be requested
- How referees will review your application
- How the SPARC advisory panel will judge your application
- Who is on the advisory panel

Can be found on [www.sparc.ac.uk](http://www.sparc.ac.uk)

# How will we know if SPARC has worked?

- Programme will be judged on the success of its applicants
- Do they publish papers?
- Do they gain esteem?
- Do they obtain responsive mode funding?
- At higher rates than those who do not obtain SPARC funding



Any Questions?