SPARC
A new adventure for ageing researchers
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
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?