

EPSRC

Engineering and Physical Sciences
Research Council



SPARC

Strategic Promotion of Ageing
Research Capacity: new blood, new
ideas and more benefit

Ageing Research

- Realising Our Potential, Technology Foresight, OST - early/mid 1990s
- Research Council Response
 - EQUAL - EPSRC - Four rounds 1998 - 2001
 - SAGE/ERA - BBSRC - Two rounds 1998 - 2001
 - GO - ESRC - One round 1999
 - ? - MRC
- Commons Select Committee on Ageing - 2000/1
- Coordination NCAR, XCAR, FF - 2001
- Lords Select Committee on Ageing - 2004/5

By 2002

- EQUAL & ERA
 - very successful and progressive programmes
- Pioneering research
 - Major implications for policy and practice and for QoL of older people
- Bubbly community
 - Excitement
 - Commitment
 - Quality
- Yet major concerns
- Need for:
 - Continuity
 - Capacity Building
- Coordination of ageing research at national level flawed:
 - Ignored fundamental principles of innovation & good organisation
 - Devoid of excitement, commitment, activity & achievement

First Steps

- ◆ January 2003 onwards :
 - ◆ joint meetings between ERA and EQUAL communities to explore productive joint working and with other Research Councils
- ◆ May 2003 :
 - ◆ encouragement from Lord Sainsbury and the Funders Forum
- ◆ June 2003 :
 - ◆ request for a proposal from Cross-council committee
- ◆ August 2003 :
 - ◆ rejection of all avenues of development outlined in proposal
- ◆ September 2003 :
 - ◆ invitation from EPSRC to extend and develop EQUAL Network
- ◆ January 2004 :
 - ◆ involvement of BBSRC.

SPARC

- May 2004 : Proposal submitted
- August 2004 : Awards Panel
- November 2004 : Final revisions agreed
- December 2004 : Letter of Intent
- January 2005 : SPARC - a reality

What is SPARC?

Three Themes - Four Activities

- Bottom-up Development of Ageing Research and its application
 - By the research community and its supporters
 - in health, social and housing services, charities, voluntary agencies, local and central government, older and disabled people.....
 - For the research community, its supporters and older people
- Networking through:
 - Workshops
 - International activities
 - Advocacy
- Capacity Building through:
 - Small Awards

Networking Activities

- workshops
- international activities
- advocacy

The Workshops

- Network Meetings
 - ◆ Regular thematic workshops
 - ◆ 6 - 8 a year for 3 years
 - ◆ Up and down the country
 - ◆ Hosted by the community
 - ◆ Three types
 - Design & Engineering
 - Biology
 - At the Interfaces
 - ◆ A platform for:
 - ◆ Work of Leading Researchers
 - ◆ Research of Newcomers
 - ◆ Perspectives of Policy Makers, Practitioners and Intermediaries
 - ◆ Experiences of End Users - Older People

24th February 2005 - Brunel U. - Maintaining Independence in Later Life

- **Leading Scientists**
 - Biology, gerontology, medical physics, architecture, assistive technology, nursing, psychology, IT
- **Significant Themes**
 - The Ageing Brain
 - Cognitive Decline
 - Recovery from Stroke
 - Reconstructing Young and Aged Skin
 - Continence Technology and Management
 - Public Facilities for Older People
 - New Tools for Independent Living
 - New Opportunities for New Researchers
- **Register now** as most places have been taken

16th March 2005 - Strathclyde U. -

Integrating Research on Ageing:

bridging the gap between biology, engineering, design
and older people

- Significant Themes & Leading Scientists
 - Cognitive Functioning and The Ageing Brain
 - New Technologies to Support Independence
 - Molecules, Tissues and Wound Repair
 - The Challenge of Going Out of Doors
 - The Biomechanics of Growing Older
 - Oxidant Stress, Cell Senescence and Growing Older
 - Vision and Ageing
 - New Opportunities for New Researchers
- Register now

12th April 2005 - RPS, London - Pharmacology and Ageing

Significant Themes & Leading Scientists

- Age-related changes in Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics
 - Drug Metabolism and Ageing
 - Replicative Senescence
 - Oxidative Stress and Ageing
 - Effect of Ageing on the Sinoatrial Node
 - Ageing, Glucocorticoids and Bones
 - Calcium and Neuronal Ageing
 - Ageing of Sarcolemmal KATP Channels in the Heart
 - New Opportunities for New Researchers
- **Register now**

Possible Workshop Themes -1

• Interfaces

- ◆ Ergonomics/ muscular-skeleto systems/ bio-mechanics
- ◆ Bio-materials/ bio-compatible implants
- ◆ Neurobiology / dementia stimulation / stroke recovery
- ◆ Chemical probes
- ◆ Healthy eating
 - » kitchen & gadget design
 - » food packaging
 - » diet
- ◆ The old immune system and the clinic
 - » Falls - biology and mechanics
 - » Vision

Possible Workshop Themes - 2

- **Biology**
 - Do senescent cells matter?
 - Chemistry of ageing
 - Prospects for immune improvement in older people
- **Design and Engineering**
 - Ergonomics of consumer product design
 - The workplace
 - Care home design and management
 - Smart technologies
 - Transport and urban design
 - The business case for ageing research

International

- ◆ Can bid for support of International Workshops, Meetings etc
 - International workshops where showcase UK work (e.g. AAA meeting)
 - EPSRC n+n meetings
 - BBSRC ISIS
 - Bilaterals
- SPARC community members lead each activity
 - Members bid for funding with SPARC secretariat assistance where needed
 - Funding secured by member (often can only obtain T&S not organising costs) who hosts event
 - SPARC secretariat and infrastructure plays major role with organisation and administration
 - Considerable spin-offs for hosts

Already have funding for two International Activities

- Showcasing the work of young biological gerontologists at AAA conference in US
- Symposium on Werner's syndrome in UK
- Volunteers please!

Advocacy

- Making the case that ageing research can and is
 - contributing significant benefits and improving the quality of life of older people
 - benefiting the work of professionals who care for and provide services to older people
 - Helping the public purse
- Lobbying
 - The media
 - Policy makers
 - User representatives & intermediaries
 - Internationally
- Can build on a good track record

Capacity Building Grants

a small awards scheme for newcomers to ageing research

What is Available?

1. Funding up to 30 awards
 - £25k but £60k exceptionally
 - Research Staff and Consumables
 - Equipment
 - Travel (also access to ISIS etc)
 - Specified overheads (special rules)
2. Prestigious Platform and Network
3. Dissemination and Editorial Assistance
4. International Involvement
5. Mentoring

To do What?

- o Any BBSRC-EP SRC ageing area and anything in-between

Proposals may take the Form of, for Example:

- o empirical, theoretical, feasibility and speculative studies
- o the elaboration of recently completed doctoral or post-doctoral research
- o the development and testing of prototype products or systems
- o preliminary analyses of secondary data sets relevant to design, engineering, technology, biological and biotechnology issues.
- o etc

Proposals could explore the World Between EPSRC & BBSRC

- The perspectives of ergonomics and bio-mechanics
- The biology and the mechanics of falls,
- Biomaterials science and bio-compatible implants
- Linking neurobiology and stroke recovery.
- A user perspective of old age,
 - healthy eating = kitchen design, food packaging and diet;
 - managing incontinence = biology of muscle function, new materials and assistive technologies.
- Tools required by biological gerontologists have a genesis in chemistry or physics as readily as in pure biology.
- Etc etc

Ideally Suited?

Newcomers:

- New academics eg recent PDRAs
- Those for whom an academic post is in prospect
- Experienced researchers moving into or possibly across ageing research
- (ie. must have the usual RC employment status and appointment must extend at least 6 months beyond period of award)
- Those academics who have not been a PI on an RC (or similar agency) ageing-related project
- But previously "Named Researchers" can apply if they haven't been a PI whilst in an academic post

Eligibility

SPARC will not support projects:

- which could be funded through existing EP/BB instruments
- that do not demonstrably build capacity
 - So, 'Real' support from host institution must also be provided during and after award
- for which there is no articulation of the potential benefits of the outcomes for older people

Attractively Eligible

- Proposals where some other funding is available
 - eg from small charities, university pump-priming schemes - double your money!
- Joint proposals
 - but limits are not increased
- Interdisciplinary, collaboration with intermediate organisations, involvement of older people
 - especially those which fit into established EQUAL areas - built environment, inclusive design, rehabilitation

Deadlines

- 1st Call deadline - 1st June 2005 - probably
- 2nd Call deadline - early 2006
- Projects up to 18 months duration
- All projects must be completed by mid 2007

Reporting

- Interim Reports

- ◆ 6 monthly intervals,

- ◆ Reports will be short, timely and intended to 'focus' grant holder
- ◆ Interim payment triggered on delivery of interim or final report.

- ◆ Final Report

- ◆ Broad range of what is acceptable as final report
- ◆ Executive summary

- ◆ Assistance given with editing this into high quality publication

- ◆ Involvement with the workshop programme is a condition of the award.

Mentors

- Experienced Colleague or Contact suggested by Applicant
- Or suggested by Advisory Committee
- Mentoring can be helpful for newcomers, but it can be a pain
- Mentors will never be forced on award holders but will be provided if asked for

The Assessment Process

- Directly modelled on RC practices
- SPARC scheme will be advertised
- Short application form requires PI to justify
 - (i) why SPARC?
 - (ii) how will the award build capacity
- Assessment - two stage process
 - initial check for whether in remit
 - Followed by refereeing and awards panel
- To increase speed of 'turn round' responses to referees comments will not normally be allowed
- See www.sparc.ac.uk for details and examples

Summary of Awards Scheme

- *What an Award Holder Will Receive*
 - *Money*
 - *Prestige Platform*
 - *Mentoring*
 - *Editorial Assistance*
 - *International Opportunities*

 - *Lifelong Network*
 - *Institutional Support*

Why should a Researcher Bother?

- Start-up funding in gerontology is difficult to secure
 - ◆ Can get support in emerging areas where RC ownership is shared or unclear
 - ◆ Lay ground for larger proposals
- Build individual credibility quickly
 - ◆ Funding, mentoring, opportunities for funded research and international collaboration
 - ◆ Access to prestigious platform and network
 - ◆ Dissemination and editorial assistance

Why should a HoD bother ?

- RAE 2007-8 is looming!
- All HoDs need a steady flow of
 - ◆ Money
 - ◆ Papers
 - ◆ Esteem
- Through SPARC they can back someone who the community thinks is a good bet and double their money into the bargain!

Management Structure

Organisation and Resources

- One team - two groups -
- EP and BB/Reading and Brighton
 - Richard Faragher (Brighton) + Sarah Flux (coordinator)
 - Peter Lansley (Reading) + Verity Smith (coordinator)
- Advisory Committee
 - Regular meetings
 - Researchers & Non-researchers
 - Charities, Government, Professional Bodies, Consultant, Research Council representatives

Transparency

- We will keep close to established RC practices
- We will publish our procedures
 - we want to be as open and welcoming as possible
 - we will spread opportunities around
 - we will not give special favours
 - we want and need to work with you to help you achieve your aspirations for ageing research and for improving the quality of life of older people.

Offers Please

- SPARC is a “bottom-up” community activity
- We need volunteers
 - for example, to referee proposals, to host workshops and lead international activities
- But SPARC secretariat will do much of the donkey work
 - and have all the worries
- Big rewards for hosts
 - showcase their work and their institution
 - enjoy media coverage etc
- Major benefits for the Community

Any Questions?