Background and Introduction

The Reta Lila Weston Trust (the “Trust”) is a private family trust that operates in the UK. The Trust was established in the 1970’s by Willard Garfield Weston, who set up the Reta Lila Weston Trust for Medical Research in memoriam to respond to funding needs in neurological research.

The Trust’s initial bequest funded the Reta Lila Weston Institute of Neurological Studies. The Institute, which is based at University College London, was founded in 1977 with the aim of furthering knowledge about stroke and neurodegenerative disorders. Current research at the Institute includes movement disorders such as Parkinson’s disease and parkinsonian disorders, progressive supranuclear palsy and corticobasal degeneration, as well as ongoing research into stroke. Each year, the Trust also allocates a number of unsolicited, Trustee Initiated Grants, which cover a broad range of interests including the impact of the microbiota in the neonate and the effect of childhood trauma on brain development in vulnerable adolescents.

Research funding from the Trust is restricted to UK institutions, research groups and charities.

The newly launched Reta Lila Weston Trust 2016 Microbiome Funding programme continues the remit of the Trust to fund world-class research with a neurological focus. The goal of the current programme is to fund research into the microbiome with respect to neurological conditions in the aging population. Research may include: basic research to enhance the understanding of the microbiome in neurocognitive decline/neurodegenerative disease; studies of interventions or new therapies that support the microbiome with respect to neurocognitive decline/neurodegenerative disease (or their prevention); and research to understand resilience against such decline in elderly individuals as a result of microbiome activity.

Research should look beyond the listing of microbiome bacteria present in individuals with neurocognitive decline or neurodegenerative disease. Rather research should look to enhance the understanding of the microbiome in cognitive decline and disease with a view to the development of future interventions or therapeutics.

Neurocognitive conditions the Trust will consider include (but are not limited to):

- Alzheimer’s disease
- dementia (Lewy body dementia, frontotemporal dementia, vascular dementia, etc.)
- motor neurone disease/ amyotrophic lateral sclerosis
- multiple system atrophy
- Parkinson’s disease
- progressive supranuclear palsy
Programme Details

Institutions and individuals affiliated with and applying through or on behalf of institutions (collectively, “Applicants”) should carefully discuss the Programme announcement and the terms of this document with the appropriate office at their institution before submitting an application. The submission of a Letter of Intent or a Proposal does not bind either the Trust or the Applicants to any commitment to provide or receive funding, respectively. Successful Applicants will be required to agree to terms substantially similar to those contained in this document, and the Trust reserves the right to alter, delete or add additional terms in the grant agreement between the successful Applicants and the Trust.

The Trust reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications at its discretion and to negotiate the terms of the specific grant agreement with Applicants.

Section 1 Eligibility of Applicants

The Trust is only able to accept Letters of Intent (“LOIs” and each an “LOI”) and Detailed Proposals (“Proposals” and each a “Proposal”) from institutions (or individuals affiliated with and applying through or on behalf of institutions) that are based and operate within the UK.

Eligible Applicants are researchers or Postdoctoral Fellows (“PDFs”). PDFs who are applying as the Principal Applicant need to apply with a research supervisor or an Administrative Applicant who is appointed at the institution from which they are applying. The Administrative Applicant will be responsible for the successful execution of the research and administration of the funds as per the institution’s policy.

An LOI submitted pursuant to this Programme does not need to be approved by the relevant institution on whose behalf or through which the LOI is being submitted. However, any Proposal submitted pursuant to this Programme must be approved by the institution on whose behalf or through which the Proposal is being submitted.
Section 2 Funding Specifications

Overall funds
The Trust will commit up to £1.2 million over 3 years to fund projects selected through this Programme and application process. Grants are contingent on the receipt of sufficiently high quality applications.

Funds available per project
- Up to £200,000 per project per annum to be used over 3 years.
- Funds will be granted only for direct costs that are appropriate and justifiable for the work proposed.
- Each item and its cost must be clearly described in the budget.
- Funds cannot be used for equipment purchases exclusively, computer purchases, travel expenses to scientific conferences/meetings, administrative costs or indirect costs, unless with prior written approval from the Trust.
- The grant amount may not be for the full amount requested.
- Up to 35% of the funds can be used to bring unique international resources into UK-led work.

Any grant provided by the Trust pursuant to this Programme shall be directed to the institution and not to the individual affiliated with and applying through the institution. Responsibility for the planning, direction and execution of the proposed project will rest solely with the Applicants.

Multiple institutions
In the event of collaboration between multiple institutions, it is the responsibility of the Principal Applicant to distribute/manage funds appropriately.

Full or partial support of projects
The Trust can support a full or parts of any project, e.g., the cost of a clinical trial may exceed the per project budget of this Programme but Applicants may seek partial support for that trial.

Conditional funding and milestones
Grants are conditional on grantees meeting pre-determined milestones and providing deliverables, including submission of progress reports and participation in Trust-sponsored assessment meetings. Continued support is not automatic and is contingent upon the progress reports being favourably reviewed by the Trust.
Supplemental funding
The Trust encourages grantees to seek additional funds to further their work once the term of the initial grant has expired. The Trust has no guaranteed policy for renewal or continuation of grants. The Trust may, at its discretion, seek to further support clearly successful projects.

Section 3 Application Process

The application process consists of two stages: Letters of Intent and Proposals. Applicants must submit an LOI to the Trust to be considered for Proposal submission to the Programme.

Each LOI will be peer reviewed by a Scientific Review Committee. Applicants whose LOIs meet the review criteria and are favourably reviewed will be invited to submit a Proposal (it is anticipated that approximately 10 proposals across the process will be considered). Proposal instructions and feedback from our scientific review committee will be forwarded along with the invitation. Complete Proposals will be peer reviewed by the Scientific Review Committee. From the 10 Proposals reviewed, it is anticipated that up to 3 Proposals will be funded.

The Trust is unable to provide feedback to Applicants not invited to submit a Proposal. Unsuccessful Proposals will receive written feedback from the Scientific Review Committee. No appeal process is currently available.

Contracting must be completed within 6 weeks of notification of selection as a grantee. If contracting is not completed at this point, the Trust reserves the right to cancel the grant.

The Trust, at its sole discretion, may change the timeline of the application process.

Section 4 Review Criteria

Criteria considered when reviewing LOIs:

• **Innovation:** Does the project challenge or advance current paradigms? Will the work refine, improve or be a new application of theoretical concepts, approaches, methodologies, instrumentation or intervention?

• **Experimental approach:** Are the overall strategy, methodology and analyses well reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project?

• **Likelihood of success:** How likely is the hypothesis to be proven?

• **Impact:** If successful, will the project accelerate the development of therapeutics for neurodegenerative diseases of aging in a significant and sustained way?

• Other as needed.

Additional criteria considered when reviewing Proposals:

• **Experimental approach:** Are potential problem areas adequately considered and addressed?
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PROGRAMME DETAILS

• **Development plan for the therapeutic or tool:** What steps will be taken after this project to continue development, if successful? If unsuccessful?
• **Team and environment:** How suited are the team and environment for this work? Does the work take advantage of unique features of either?
• **Budget and timeline:** Are the proposed budget, milestones and length realistic for the research proposed? These are secondary considerations after the other criteria have been weighed.
• Other as needed.

Section 5 Reports and Assessments

Grantees must complete the following items if a grant is awarded.

**Milestone reports**
Pre-determined milestones for the proposed project, as agreed upon by the Applicants and the Trust, will be used to determine the reporting dates for milestone reports. A milestone report is due prior to each scheduled payment being made. Templates for the milestone report will be provided by the Trust once funding has been approved.

**Progress reports**
A progress report including a written report with budget, telephone discussion with the Principal Applicant and, if requested by the Trust, data underlying the research (solely for use in assessing progress), is due every 6 months unless otherwise notified by the Trust. Unsatisfactory progress could lead to funding cessation or curtailment.

**Assessment meeting**
At least one Applicant on the grant must attend an assessment meeting to report on the progress of the project and have the opportunity to meet other funded researchers. Assessment meetings will be held twice a year and the Principal Applicant will be required to attend one (winter or summer) unless otherwise notified by the Trust. Additional key personnel may also attend if approved by the Trust.

**Trust member visits**
With prior consent of Applicants, Trust members may wish to visit researchers to see project work under way. These visits are not mandatory, and the Trust hopes that grantees will welcome this opportunity.

**Financial accountability**
Grantees are expected to account for the monies expended under any Trust grant; any monies spent either not in accordance with the approved research project or prior to pre-approval of any material change in the project are both (i) recoverable by, and subject to restitution by the grantees, to the Trust and (ii) may be cause for immediate termination of funding by the Trust. Any funding provided beyond what is needed for the agreed-upon research must be returned to the Trust at the completion of the research funded by the Trust.

Section 6 Confidentiality

The Trust treats all LOIs, Proposals, research projects and associated research information (collectively, the “Confidential Information”) in confidence using reasonable care in protecting such Confidential Information from disclosure to third parties who do not participate in the grant review process and Trust assessments. All Confidential Information will be used by the Trust and its Scientific Review Committee for the purposes of reviews and assessments, and will be shared only in accordance with the sharing policy as set out herein. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Confidential Information shall not include any information that:

- was generally known to the public prior to the effective date of this Programme announcement;
- becomes generally known to the public through no unlawful or unauthorized act by any recipient of Confidential Information;
- was independently developed by the Trust or its Scientific Review Committee without reference to the Confidential Information.

If the Trust or any of its Scientific Review Committee members is requested to disclose Confidential Information pursuant to a legal or governmental proceeding, the Trust shall give the Applicant or other owner(s) of such Confidential Information notice of such disclosure request as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Section 7 Other

Liability and indemnity

Each Applicant pursuant to this Programme acknowledges and agrees in responding to the Programme announcement that the Applicant shall have no claim against the Trust, and its respective representatives or affiliates, should such Programme response be unsuccessful for any reason. Each Applicant hereby remises and releases the Trust, its representatives and affiliates, from any cause of action, complaint, or claim in connection with the Request for Proposal (RFP) process and its outcome.

The Trust’s role in grants awarded pursuant to this Programme is that of a funder. The Trust is not the sponsor of funded projects. As such, the Trust will not assume any liability associated with funded projects, and each Applicant who is ultimately awarded a grant pursuant to this Programme releases the Trust from any and all liability with respect thereto and further indemnifies the Trust,
and its respective representatives and affiliates, from any claim or loss whatsoever associated with the applicable grant.

**Intellectual property policy and intellectual property agreements among collaborators**

The Trust acknowledges that any intellectual property ("IP") that arises from research funded through this Programme, including discoveries, is not the property of the Trust.

The Trust does require that researchers and collaborators agree on any material IP issues prior to submission of a Proposal.

**Publication and sharing policy**

The Trust expects results of funded research to be published as rapidly as possible in the open access scientific literature or other forms of publication that are readily available to the research community, unless such publication will jeopardize the Applicant's right to secure patents or copyrights necessary to protect the Applicant's ownership. Such publication should be consistent with high standards of scientific excellence and rigor, and provide sufficient detail to enable the research community to benefit from the findings from or in connection with the funded project.

A lay person abstract of the research proposal must be submitted prior to funding. A lay person abstract of the research results must also be submitted no later than 2 months from the date of grant expiration, and at every Trust meeting as required (i.e. at least annually). These abstracts may be made available to the public by the Trust.

Any presentation, releases, papers, interviews, publication or other forms of communication dealing with the awarded project or the results from the awarded project must acknowledge the funding provided by the Trust, in a manner proportionate to the contribution of the Trust. Any other use of the Trust’s IP, including its name, logo or trademark requires prior written permission of the Trust.

The Trust expects all tools or reagents (i) funded by and (ii) that result from funded projects will be made readily available to the community for research purposes either freely or at reasonable prices. The Trust may let the public know of these tools or reagents so that other researchers are aware of their availability.

The Trust requires any clinical trial awarded under any of its funding programmes be registered with clinicaltrials.gov, PDTrials.org, or other appropriate public registry.