

Edinburgh Stanford Link: Second Round Call for Proposals

1 Introduction

The Human Communication Research Centre (HCRC) at the University of Edinburgh has secured funding from the Scottish Economic Development Agency, known as Scottish Enterprise, to fund collaborative activities with the Center for the Study of Language and Information (CSLI) at Stanford University. The funding is for five years from approximately the start of 2002. The activities will encompass basic and strategic research, training and technology transfer in speech and language processing.

This call seeks proposals for a second round of funding, following a successful first round from which 9 projects are now in progress (see the portfolio at <http://www.hcrc.ed.ac.uk/stanford/> for details of these). Funding is allocated via grant applications from members of HCRC and CSLI.¹ These applications will be assessed by an academic panel (see Section 7). The first round of funding was approximately £2.4 million in total. Individual projects will not exceed £700,000, including all attributable and indirect costs; and proposals of much smaller grant value than this will be very welcome. There will be a 2-stage proposal process, with initial outline proposals on the basis of which full proposals may be invited. The deadline for outline proposals is **Friday 27th June, 2003**. The deadline for full proposals will be **Friday 19th September 2003**. In addition, there continues to be a small proposals track, for grant applications not exceeding £5,000. This has a more streamlined applications procedure. Approximately £2 million of funding will be allocated in this round.

This document sets out important information for those who wish to apply for funding. **Details specific to the present Call can be found in section 5.1.** Additional important information for proposers is available from <http://www.hcrc.ed.ac.uk/stanford/fullspec/>.

2 Aims of the Link

The aim of Scottish Enterprise in funding this link is to produce a sustainable research pipeline, feeding from pure research through research prototypes to eventual commercial exploitation upon which long term, stable, economic development in Scotland can be based.

The collaborative activities in the area of speech and language processing that Scottish Enterprise aim to fund include the following:

- Edinburgh and Stanford undertaking projects in terms of which they will *inter alia* carry out research in speech and language processing, seek to develop research prototypes, evaluate the prototypes and other outcomes of the research and take appropriate measures to protect and exploit arising Intellectual Property Rights which are reasonably capable of commercial exploitation;
- Edinburgh and Stanford developing a purpose-built programme to support their respective MSc degrees and more generally providing students with leading edge training in the field of speech and language processing;
- Edinburgh and Stanford supporting the mobility of faculty and academic staff and students through extended research visits and industrial placements related to speech and language processing with a view to creating greater mobility between academia and industry;

¹Definitions of membership of HCRC and CSLI are available at <http://www.hcrc.ed.ac.uk/stanford/fullspec/>.

- Technology transfer activities on the part of both Universities whereby Intellectual Property Rights arising from funded activities will be made available for commercial exploitation with Scottish companies being given the first opportunity to carry out the exploitation;
- The creation of an entrepreneurial culture amongst Edinburgh’s students, graduates and staff, by Edinburgh learning about and seeking to replicate Stanford’s successful activities in this area;
- Each of Edinburgh’s and Stanford’s technology transfer offices assisting the other in marketing the other’s technology in their country and working together to transfer best practice in the area of technology transfer and industrial liaison between each University.

3 Applications For Funding

Applications for funding are invited from CSLI and HCRC faculty and researchers working on topics in speech and language processing. This includes, but is not limited to:

- natural language understanding and generation (symbolic, statistical and hybrid models); grammar development; computational semantics and pragmatics; dialogue modelling; and spoken language processing.

and its applications to, for example:

- spoken dialogue systems; tutorial dialogue systems; conversational agents; human computer interaction; multimedia presentation; information extraction and retrieval; question answering systems; customer relations management; machine translation.

Project specifications may cover periods of a few months to three years, and can include any combination of the following activities:

- basic or strategic research; training (for example, design and execution of the MSc degree programmes);² staff and student visits to the partner site; studentships; and pump-priming for bidding to other funding sources and for seeking out new industrial collaborations.

4 Eligibility of the Applicants

All proposals must involve at least one named person from HCRC and CSLI (see definitions at <http://www.hcrc.ed.ac.uk/stanford/fullspec/>) and a detailed description of their proposed joint activity. The proposals must indicate how the proposed project meets the priorities set out in section 2.

Each application should include a named PI at both sites. Any member of faculty or research staff at HCRC is eligible to be a PI. Due to financial and administrative constraints imposed by Stanford University, only Stanford faculty members are eligible to be PIs. If you want to apply for funds to do a project that does not involve a faculty member at CSLI, then contact the director of CSLI to obtain a ‘courtesy’ PI.

If you have not identified a collaborator from the other site, your outline proposal may seek the assessment panel’s advice on collaborators, as noted below.

²In particular, applications for new courses that are designed to facilitate closer links between MSc programmes across the sites are welcome.

5 Guidelines for Applications

Applications for funding must be submitted to the Proposal Review and Project Monitoring Panel (PRPMP). Proposals may be either *Outline* proposals or *Small* proposals. In the case of outline proposals, the PRPMP will decide whether to request that they be taken forward to develop a full proposal. The PRPMP may offer applicants advice and information to help them identify potential academic collaborators at the partner site. The proposal may include a request for funding for activities required to develop a full proposal.

5.1 Information specific to the present Call

The Link Programme is progressively increasing its commercialisation activity. A full-time Commercialisation Manager, to be an integral part of the Link management in HCRC is currently being recruited. Meanwhile, substantial relationships with industry are being pursued and developed with ongoing support from Scottish Enterprise. The PRPMP will in this round especially favour proposals that combine excellent research with an element of industrial collaboration. Proposals for relatively near-market activities with evidence of real industrial interest are encouraged.

This does not mean that proposals for fundamental or basic research are excluded. However, even in such proposals, a clear indication of the eventual commercial relevance of the work should be emphasised.

Full support will be offered to proposers in developing a case for commercial relevance and a strategy for eventual interactions with industry, including help with identifying potential industrial or commercial collaborators. In particular, in this round, the development of full proposals requested on the basis of submitted outlines will be expected to involve a process of consultation with commercialisation managers at the University of Edinburgh, and/or representatives of Scottish Enterprise.

Topic areas that appear ripe for research at present include, for example:

- Machine learning to acquire linguistic resources for rapid application development;
- Information extraction techniques for specific applications;
- Language generation for interactive entertainment;
- Dialogue for customer relations management applications.

These are merely suggestive. Prospective proposers are welcome to contact the Link Coordinator (John Lee, J.Lee@ed.ac.uk) for informal discussion of proposal ideas.

This will be the last full round of grant applications in the Edinburgh-Stanford Link programme. Any further opportunities to apply for such funding will be notified if and when they arise. Small grant proposals will continue to be welcomed until further notice.

5.2 Outline proposals

An outline proposal should not exceed 2 pages (1000 words) not counting graphics and references, and should include the following:

- A clear statement of the research area and intended nature of the full proposal to be developed. This should be detailed enough to allow initial assessment of the plausibility and likely scientific value of the project.
- If collaborator(s) are already known, they should be described, otherwise a request for assistance in finding collaborators should be explicitly included. Any other known personnel to be involved or employed should also be mentioned.

- A preliminary indication of expected exploitation routes, and ideally some identification of areas in which commercialisation advice could most usefully be targeted.
- An outline budget envelope for the final proposal, showing clearly the maximum expected resource to be requested.
- A budget for any activities intended to assist in development of the full proposal (such as visits etc.), including identification of any additional benefits these would have to the Link programme, e.g. contribution to the training element or strengthening of industrial contacts.

5.3 Budget guidelines

Outline financial costing can include indicative figures in the following categories:

- salary costs;
- equipment and software;
- travel and subsistence, either for visits to the partner site or to conferences and workshops;
- funds to host conferences or workshops;
- other costs, including, for example, pay for corpus annotators and experimental subjects, pay for consultants in software development, and so on;
- Attributable/indirect costs, to cover expenses such as support staff, phone, consumables (paper and toner etc.), and so on.³

Full details of these items will be needed in subsequent Full proposals, and also in Small proposals. A precise specification of how these details must be provided is available from <http://www.hcrc.ed.ac.uk/stanford/fullspec/>.

5.4 Small proposals

The case for support for small project grants (total value not to exceed £5,000) should not exceed two pages. It should include a brief summary of the proposed activity, the people involved (at both sites), and a detailed description of how the activity contributes to the overall aims of the link (see Section 2). If appropriate, details of how the work on this application relates to other activities that are already funded by the link should also be given.

The budget should be constructed according to the instructions available via <http://www.hcrc.ed.ac.uk/stanford/fullspec/>.

The budget and case for support should be emailed, both in pdf format, to link-proposals@informatics.ed.ac.uk.

6 Deadlines and Instructions for Submission

6.1 Small Proposals

Applications for small proposals are welcome at any time. The panel expects to make a decision at most four weeks after the application is submitted. Projects can start from the date the decision is made.

³These costs are chargeable on the basis of an agreed funding formula with Scottish Enterprise. The financial administrator in your department will have the details.

Applications should be emailed in pdf format to link-proposals@informatics.ed.ac.uk. Applications which fail to meet the specifications described above may be returned without review.

6.2 Outline Proposals

The deadline for provisional proposals is **Friday 27th June, 2003**. PRPMP will provide feedback on these applications no later than Friday 25th July, 2003.

Applications should be emailed in pdf format (preferably of screen-readable quality) to link-proposals@informatics.ed.ac.uk by the deadline. Applications which fail to meet the specifications described above will be returned without review.

6.3 Full Proposals

The deadline for full proposals, where these are requested by PRPMP, will be **Friday 19th September, 2003**. Decisions will be made by Friday 5th December, 2003. Projects can start from the date the decision is made.

Applications—including the budget and case for support—should be emailed in pdf format (preferably of screen-readable quality) to link-proposals@informatics.ed.ac.uk by the deadline.

Applications which fail to meet the specifications described above or, where appropriate, at <http://www.hcrc.ed.ac.uk/stanford/fullspec/> will be returned without review.

7 Assessment of Applications

The Proposal Review and Project Monitoring Panel (PRPMP) will make all funding decisions connected with the link. PRPMP is a committee composed of the director of CSLI, the director of HCRC, four further academics, and one further member who will be appointed by the directors to monitor and assess the projects' potential for technology transfer. The four academics, who will also be appointed by the directors of CSLI and HCRC, will consist of two CSLI faculty and/or researchers and two HCRC faculty and/or researchers.

PRPMP will send applications for peer review to academics from both sites who have relevant scientific expertise. PRPMP's decisions about funding will be based on the outcome of peer review, and in particular on the basis of the extent to which the applications meet the following desiderata:

1. The contribution of the activities towards meeting the aims that are outlined in Section 2;
2. Scientific merit and feasibility;
3. The novelty and timeliness of the proposed project;
4. The extent to which the activities are collaborative across sites;
5. Where appropriate, the extent to which activities in research, training and technology transfer are integrated;

8 Responsibilities of Funded Projects

Details of the responsibilities of funded projects are outlined at <http://www.hcrc.ed.ac.uk/stanford/fullspec/>, and more fully described in other programme documentation.