

SBRI success stories

Supporting innovators to apply for Small
Business Research Initiative funding

March 2023

Working to support innovators

Kent Surrey Sussex Academic Health Science Network (KSS AHSN) and Unity Insights have a great track record of working together to assist innovators to apply for funding from the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI).

AHSNs work to spread innovation to help improve health and social care, while Unity Insights offers bespoke analytics and evaluation services that can evidence the impact of those innovations. Both organisations bring together partners in the NHS, academia, innovators, and industry.

Of the grants most recently awarded during 2022/23, KSS AHSN, often in partnership with the Unity Insights team, has been involved in seven of them. Therefore, between 2013-2022, KSS AHSN is associated with 17 successful bids granted over £7.5m in funding for the innovators and winning partnerships¹.

Introduction

SBRI grants can provide a vital boost to innovators, with the potential of significant investment and support to take their innovation to the next level. However, being awarded a grant is a highly competitive process, and takes a considerable amount of effort, together with specific and detailed information to demonstrate that the innovation is viable, and will benefit substantially, should the grant be awarded.

Dr Charlotte Roberts is Associate Director for Innovation Adoption at KSS AHSN, and part of the 'Industry & Technology Navigation' team that supports innovators who have ideas to improve health and care. She is also a non-executive director of Unity Insights.

Charlotte explains, *'Many innovating companies, individuals and organisations come to us for support around evaluation and evidence. This is both KSS AHSN's and Unity Insight's area of expertise, providing robust evaluations, visualising complex data, and offering advice on procurement routes within the NHS. The combined breadth of knowledge of the healthcare sector, and the strength of each team means they are unmatched in this field.'*

In addition, KSS AHSN's support for innovators takes many forms, from providing initial guidance for innovators at an early stage, to more active support and advice for those who are ready to apply. Sometimes, the team link innovators up with professional bid-writer Gary Ward, who shared his [top tips for writing bids](#) in a recent workshop hosted by KSS AHSN.

Other innovators may require; guidance on gaps in a value proposition or evidence base, help to create a proof-of-concept prototype, advice on the complexities of the health and care sector, guidance on how innovations can best weave into the system, impact modelling, brokering

¹ <https://sbrihealthcare.co.uk/ahsn-locations/>

connections with health and care experts, roll-out and adoption, and signposting to relevant funding opportunities stakeholders and resources.

SBRI Healthcare is an initiative funded through NHS England's Accelerated Access Collaborative that supports the development of new innovations which meet known NHS challenges. The programme has now run over 20 competitions for innovations identified as an unmet need. It is supported by the AHSN Network and managed by LGC Group.

Dr Raffaella Roncone is LGC Group's Assistant Director and Head of Innovation and Enterprises. She says, *'The partnership between SBRI Healthcare and the Academic Health Science Networks continues to go from strength to strength. From contributing to articulating the pain points the NHS is facing, to assessing innovations, AHSNs are key to the success of SBRI Healthcare.'*

'Awarded companies can benefit from the AHSNs extensive network and support to develop, test, and spread innovation. The AHSNs are instrumental in bringing together experts and establishing local partnerships, connecting innovators with Integrated Care Systems, regional medical directors and procurement. Kent Surrey Sussex AHSN and Unity's collaboration is an example of the exceptional ways the AHSNs are supporting innovators to conduct real world testing to accelerate innovation for patient benefit.'

Unity Insights was formerly the analytics and evaluation function of KSS AHSN and formed as a separate organisation in 2021 – a recognition of the need and growing demand for real-world evidence that can show the potential impact of innovations for improve people's health and wellbeing.

David Clayton-Smith chairs both Unity Insights and KSS AHSN. He says, *'I have been delighted to watch the collaboration between the organisations since Unity's separation from KSS AHSN. Our aim from the outset was to increase our impact and transform more lives as a result, and the collaborative work that our teams carry out supporting innovators to bid for and deliver SBRI grants is an important part of that journey.'*

'We are delighted to have played a part in so many successful bids, and aware that unsuccessful bids also serve to bring significant development and insights to the innovators involved. Driving social good, through analytics and evaluation plus real-world evidence and experience, is a core principle of both organisations.'

Testimonials

Definition Health

Awarded £387,294 in April 2022, round 19, phase 3 funding

Definition Health is using its SBRI funds to launch the first digital tool that covers the entire patient journey for all patients undergoing surgery. It will enable clinicians to deliver prehabilitation care, perioperative assessments, and outcome scores as well as monitoring patients whilst integrating with a major Electronic Medical Records (EMR) provider to allow remote delivery of information. KSS

AHSN and Unity Insights supported the bid, and Unity Insights are conducting the real-world evaluation.

[Watch an interview with Fraser Coombes from Definition Health](#)

www.definitionhealth.co.uk

Pulse Cardiology

Unsuccessful in September 2022, round 21, phase 3 funding

Pulse Cardiology approached KSS AHSN to support a bid for SBRI funding, but were unsure of the role of evaluation in preparing a funding application.

Dr Victoria Parish, Consultant Cardiologist at University Hospitals Sussex and Director of Pulse Cardiology Group says, 'We were delighted to work with KSS AHSN and Unity Insights to formulate our bid for SBRI Phase 3 funding in September 2022. While we weren't awarded the grant, the experience of applying, and the data that was gathered, analysed and packaged in support of our bid will be invaluable for both future bids and our development work as we move forward.'

www.pulsecardiologypgroup.co.uk

Dr Julian Medical Group

Awarded £445,599 in April 2022, round 19, phase 3 funding

Dr Julian, a GP, set up his company to improve efficiency and access to mental health services. The funding will support further development and spread of his end-to-end platform for the booking, matching and choice of clinician, assessments, and having the appointment. The platform includes all case management, as well as tailored self-help tools and resources for patients integrated on their own dashboard, providing the right support where and when they need it.

Julian says, 'I've known KSS AHSN and worked with them for a long time, so I mentioned SBRI to them and asked if they thought I should apply. Because we'd already completed an evaluation previously, I was keen to work with Unity Insights again for the evaluation element of the bid. KSS AHSN agreed and also gave us support with a bid writer, who really helped me to hone the messaging. Without that I would have really struggled.'

www.dr-julian.com

Cyted

Awarded £49,780 in April 2022, round 19, phase 3 funding

Cyted has developed the Cytosponge test, a non-endoscopic test for the earlier detection of oesophageal conditions. The SBRI funding has enabled implementation of the Cytosponge test in primary and community care, to support recovery of endoscopy services across the North West Coast. Cyted has worked with various AHSNs. Unity Insights are currently conducting the real-world evaluation, having previously supported with the evaluation element of the bid.

Commenting on the partnership, Ian Mylon, Chief Operating Officer at Unity Insights said: 'Supporting Cyted throughout their SBRI journey as the evaluation partner has been incredibly rewarding, with some interesting findings to follow as to the impact an innovation such as the Cytosponge can have in a real-world setting. We look forward to seeing what the future holds for the team.'

cyted.ai/cytosponge

Further information

The SBRI publicises details of its upcoming grants to those on its mailing list. To join the mailing list, see details of past competitions, and follow the status of current competitions, visit the [SBRI Healthcare website](#).

You can also find out more about the most recently announced KSS AHSN supported successful SBRI bids which will help improve patient care and save money while also making the NHS greener [here](#).

To find out more about the support that KSS AHSN and Unity Insights can offer you, contact either organisation. They will work with you to determine who is best placed to meet your needs:

kssahsn.bridgingthegap@nhs.net

enquiries@unityinsights.co.uk

About us

Kent, Surrey, Sussex Academic Health Science Network

KSS Academic Health Science Network (KSS AHSN) is one of 15 AHSNs, established by NHS England in 2013 to improve health and generate economic growth by spreading innovation at pace and scale. Our aim is to connect citizens, NHS and academic organisations, local authorities, the third sector and industry, to facilitate change across whole health and social care economies. We have a clear focus on 'transforming lives through innovation'. Our geographical area covers Kent, Surrey and Sussex. www.kssahsn.net

Unity Insights

Unity Insights offers bespoke analytics and evaluation services to the NHS, academia, innovators, and industry, to facilitate evidence-based decision-making, driving improvements across health and social care. Formerly the analytics and evaluation function of KSS AHSN, Unity Insights was formed as a separate organisation in 2021. It continues to operate as a partner organisation to KSS AHSN, working together to ensure the spread and adoption of innovation is underpinned by evidence, real world evaluation and economic modelling. www.unityinsights.co.uk

SBRI Healthcare

SBRI Healthcare is an NHS England Accelerated Access Collaborative initiative, supported by the Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs) and managed by LGC Group. Their aim is to promote UK economic growth whilst addressing unmet health needs and enhancing the take up of known best practice.

One of the ways in which they do this is through regular, targeted, competitions, inviting innovators to bid for funding to develop solutions for specific health needs. Bids are assessed by a panel of technical, business and clinical experts and the most promising ideas are selected for funding. Different levels of funding are offered, according to the development stage of the innovation.

www.sbrihealthcare.co.uk