**Discretionary Fund: Proposal to raise the limit for applications**

**Document prepared by:** Nick Royle, CEO, The Cochrane Collaboration

**Submitted to Steering Group (date):** Copenhagen Steering Group Meeting, 24th April 2009

**Purpose of paper**

1. This paper proposes changing the limit for Discretionary Fund applications, from the current GBP £3,000 up to GBP £5,000.

**Urgency**

1. Routine.

**Access**

1. Open.

**Background**

1. The Discretionary Fund limit was set at £3,000 when the Fund was first established, and remained at that level when the total Fund size was increased from £10,000 to £15,000 a few years ago. The number and total financial amount of applications to the Fund has rarely reached the Fund limit (see paper ‘Table of expenditure to date’). In the past year, the value of the pound has fallen considerably against most major currencies, for instance by over 30% against the US Dollar, further reducing the actual amount available. The criteria for awards is attached as an Appendix for reference.

**Proposals and discussion**

1. There are no doubt many factors influencing the uptake of the Fund. Communications and knowledge may be a factor. But undoubtedly the amount available has fallen considerably in real terms, and increasing the amount available may make it more attractive to potential applicants. It is therefore proposed that the funding available per application be raised from £3,000 to £5,000.
2. The total fund amount available was raised to £15,000 in October 2003, from £10,000. Increasing the maximum award size potentially reduces the maximum number of successful awards from five down to three. Given the limited number of applications or successful awards in recent years, it is not proposed to raise the total Fund available at this time, but to keep the amount under review.
3. Awards from the Fund are reported to CCSG at each meeting, and no change is proposed.

**Summary of recommendations**

1. That the funding amount available per application be raised from GBP £3,000 to £5,000 for financial year 2009-10 and subsequent years.

That the total amount available annually in the Fund be maintained at GBP £15,000, and kept under annual review.

**Resource implications**

1. Nil.

**Impact statement**

1. It may be hoped that there will be an increase in the number of applications to this Fund.

**Decision required of the Steering Group**

1. To approve the recommendations of this paper.

**Nick Royle**

CEO, The Cochrane Collaboration

Oxford, 4th March 2009

### Extracted from The Cochrane Policy Manual, 23rd March 2009

### 1.5.3  Discretionary Fund

In October 2000 the Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group decided to allocate monies to set up a small discretionary fund. This was initially limited to a total expenditure of £10,000 per year, with a ceiling of £2000 to any one applicant; the total expenditure was raised to £15,000 per year, with a ceiling of £3000 to any one applicant, in October 2003. Members of The Cochrane Collaboration are eligible to apply for small amounts of funds to facilitate important activities within the organisation. Applications will only be accepted from the person or people responsible for a particular registered entity, and Convenors of the Steering Group’s Advisory Groups. The following criteria will guide the Steering Group Executive’s decision as to whether or not to approve an application:

 1.             Focus on ‘core’ functions - The proposal should: (a) focus on core functions of Collaboration activity, particularly the production, maintenance and dissemination of high quality reviews, and (b) be made by a Cochrane entity. (Advisory Groups to the Steering Group may also apply to this Fund.)

2.             Gain to the Collaboration - The proposal should promise significant gain to all or part of the Collaboration.

3.             Collective benefit - The potential benefit of the proposal should not focus on a single entity but apply across a number of entities (for example, by co-ordinating activities).

4.             Likelihood of success - The proposal should have a high likelihood of meeting its aims within the agreed budget.

5.             Alternative sources of funding - The proposal should not have an obvious and readily accessible alternative source of funding available.

6.             Cost of not funding - There should be judged to be a significant loss of advantage to the Collaboration if the proposal is not funded.

7.             Long-term continuity - Because discretionary funds will not be available on a recurrent basis, there should be some plan for continuity of funding and support if this will be necessary.

 It is accepted that applications will rarely meet all these criteria; however, applicants are asked to consider all seven criteria when applying, and to use the criteria as the paragraph headings in their application.

**Applications**

1.             A brief application for funding should be sent to the Cochrane Collaboration Secretariat ([secretariat@cochrane.org](mailto:secretariat@cochrane.org)), using the seven criteria listed above as the paragraph headings, to ensure completeness and consistency across all applications. The application should include details of the timeline and a description of the deliverables. The Secretariat is responsible for forwarding applications to the Executive of the Steering Group.

2.             Applications should state clearly the amount of money being requested.

3.             The Executive will take the final decision, requesting additional information from the applicant(s) as necessary.

4.             Successful applicant(s) will be required to provide a report of a maximum of 500 words to The Cochrane Collaboration Secretariat ([secretariat@cochrane.org](mailto:secretariat@cochrane.org)) within three months of spending their award. This report will be shared with the Steering Group and might be made available to other people if judged appropriate by the Steering Group.

5.             Patterns of application and expenditure will be reported to the Steering Group every six months.