



MRC/DFID/NIHR Call for research to improve adolescent health in an LMIC setting

APPLICATION GUIDANCE: Outline proposals for Adolescent Health Research Grants

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1. Important Outline Grant application information

Research Grants are focused projects usually up to 3 years' duration with a maximum of 5 years' duration. There are no set budget limits; small and larger-scale projects are invited. As a guide, applicants should note that approximately £10m is available for Research Grants under this call and the funders would envisage funding 15 projects. It is expected that the awards funded will be of varying sizes.

MRC administers the call for proposals on behalf of the funders and so all applications should be submitted to the MRC and will be awarded according to MRC Terms and Conditions. Funding for projects awarded under this call for proposals is jointly provided by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), and the Medical Research Council (MRC).

General information about how to apply to the MRC can be found in the MRC Guidance for Applicants and Award Holders

<https://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/>

Where guidance in the present document differs from that in the MRC Guidance for Applicants and Award Holders, you should follow the directions in this scheme specific document.

The submission deadline for applications is:

16:00 BST Thursday 15th June 2017.

All projects must have a Principal Investigator based at either a UK Research Organisation (RO) or an RO in a Low/Middle Income Country. It will be the ROs hosting the successful PIs that receive the funding and manage distribution of the funding to any Co-Investigator RO. PIs from High Income Countries outside the UK are not eligible to apply for this scheme.

The application/review process in summary:

1. Outline Grant application deadline: **16:00 BST 15th June 2017**
2. Panel meeting of academic experts **July 2017**
3. Successful applications will be notified and given Panel feedback in **July 2017** to be incorporated into full applications with a deadline for September
4. Applications will be sent out for external peer review and the applicants will be given the opportunity to respond to those comments before a final Panel meeting in early **December 2017**
5. Decisions to be relayed in **mid-December 2017** and successful projects will be required to start in **April 2018**

2. Who can apply?

This programme allows academics from developing and developed countries to work together in partnerships that build on existing relationships or represent the development of a new collaborative relationship.

The intellectual challenge should be the determining factor when configuring appropriate partnerships and collaborations. Proposals must demonstrate meaningful quality collaborations or partnerships, demonstrated through clear leadership roles across the proposed partnership, and balance and proportionality in partners' roles, responsibilities and costs.

Principal Investigators (PIs)

This call differs from the standard MRC rules as for this call Principal Investigators can be based either in the UK (as per usual MRC rules) or in a low- or middle-income country (LMIC).

The Principal Investigators are responsible for the intellectual leadership of the research project and for the overall management of the research. The PI will be the funding agencies' main contact for the proposal.

Projects with Principal Investigators (PIs) from LMICs are strongly encouraged and all proposals must include Co-Investigators (Co-Is) from the LMIC in which the research is taking place. Funding is not dependent on the involvement of a UK-based research organisation.

Applicants without experience of UK funding are encouraged to seek mentorship or guidance on grant writing from colleagues with experience of winning UK funding.

For administrative purposes when completing the Je-S form you will only be able to list one Principal Investigator. While there is formally only one PI, you can make it clear in your Case for Support that the scientific leadership is shared and that in this respect, the applicants listed are co-principle investigators.

It is not permitted for the same person to be Principal Investigator on any more than two proposals submitted to this call.

Co-Investigators (Co-Is)

The PIs may be supported by a number of Co-Investigators named on the application. A Co-I assists the PI in the management and leadership of the research project.

All UK and International PIs and Co-Is must have verified Je-S Accounts and must be added to the Je-S form under “Co-Investigator”. Please see section 5 [Creating a Je-S Account](#) for information on how to add an organisation on Je-S.

Other support

For information on other parties involved in research e.g. Project Partners, please see section 1 in the [Guidance for Applicants and Award Holders](#).

Research Organisation Eligibility

Principal Investigator’s **must** be based at one of the following:

- Higher Education Institutions
- Independent Research Organisations (IRO)
- UK Government Funded Organisations (other than MRC funded Units and Institutes)
- MRC Units/Institutes
- University Units (former MRC Units)

For researchers based in [low- or middle-income countries](#), eligible institutions include higher education institutions and non-profit research institutions.

Many non-UK institutions and some UK organisations will not currently be recognised to hold UK Research Council grants. Lead institutions which are not recognised to hold UK Research Council grants will have to obtain Research Council recognition before any grant can be confirmed. In order to minimise administrative burdens and costs to both applicants and RCS staff, formal recognition will only be pursued if the grant is successful.

For further information on eligibility for research funding see:

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/>

If you are unsure about your organisation’s eligibility, please consult the programme contact: aaron.holliday@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk

3. Essential documents for Outline Grant applications

Only applications submitted through Je-S will be recognised: <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>

Applications must be submitted by the Principal Investigation on behalf of the Research team. Outline Applications must include the following:

- A completed application form on Je-S: All investigators **must** be included. This form reflects the project costs so please include **all** costs, UK or otherwise. See 'Costs' section for clarification
- A jointly prepared Outline Case for Support (see additional guidance below) must be uploaded as a Word or PDF attachment
- CV's and publication lists must be uploaded individually for all named investigators

Important information regarding the JeS form

In order to reduce the size of outline applications and reduce the duplication of information we have decided to ignore certain fields in the JeS form. These are sections where information should instead be covered by the case for support (please see the case for support guidance below).

Please **DO NOT** complete the following sections of the JeS form:

- Objectives
- Impact Summary
- Summary

The outline panel will be asked to disregard these sections of the application and any information provided in these sections will not be assessed.

Please note it is not possible to leave these sections blank; please instead enter the following text "please see case for support" or something similar.

There is scheme specific guidance for the Case for Support that is outlined below. Further guidance and details for all of the other above content can be found in the [Guidance for Applicants and Award Holders](#).

All attachments should be completed in 11 point Arial typeface, with a minimum of 2cm margins. Applications will not be accepted where smaller or narrow typefaces have been used. If you exceed the maximum page length or attach extraneous documents we may reject your application or return your application to you for amendment.

Page lengths (A4 size):

Joint Health Systems research Initiative Outline applications for	Maximum No of Pages
Case for Support	4 (plus 2 page for references)
CV's	2 (pages per investigator)
Publications	1 (page per investigator)
Letters of Support	2
References	2

At the outline stage you do not need to submit a Justification for Resources, a Pathways to Impact statement or a Data Management Plan, these will only be required to be completed by successful outline applicants, when they submit to stage two of the call.

The online Je-S form requests information such as administrative details of the investigators, financial information and summaries of your research. We recommend that applicants access the Je-S form well in advance of the deadline so that they can see the specific information that they will need to enter and can ensure that they and their co-investigators are registered on the system. It is fine to copy information between your pdf attachments and the Je-S form where there is overlap in information requested.

Outline Case for Support: Scheme specific guidance

Your Case for Support is a document including your scientific proposal, details of the research environment, people involved and references. Your Case for Support should indicate how your proposal fits the call specification for this scheme.

The outline Case for Support **should not exceed four sides of A4** plus one additional page of references (five pages in total). Additional annexes are not permitted.

Please use the following headings when preparing your outline Case for Support:

1. Research Project summary information

- Full title of the project (no more than 150 characters)
- In which country(ies) will the project take place?
- Duration in months
- Total amount requested from this funding scheme
- Goals & principal research question to be addressed; please identify a concise and clearly articulated ultimate aim of the project. Describe how achieving this goal will address the key problems or needs stated in the call for proposals.

2. Project description

Please describe your proposed research project, ensuring that you cover the following points:

- Where will the research take place?
- Who will the research participants be and why?
- What questions will be addressed?
- What are your research-plans to address those questions?
- Give details of the methodological approaches, study design and techniques that will be used.
- Enough detail must be given to show why the research is likely to be competitive in its field.
- Particular care should be taken to explain any innovation in the methodology or where you intend to develop new methods.
- What pilot or preliminary information do you have available to help the panel assess the feasibility of the proposed study?
- If you are testing delivery of an intervention, please be clear about what that intervention will consist of and why.
- If the research involves data collection or acquisition you must demonstrate that you have carried out a datasets review, and explicitly state why currently available datasets are inadequate for the proposed research.
- What is the proposed timeline?
- How will you evaluate the outcomes of the study?

3. Importance: why is this study needed now and in this proposed location?

- Please consider issues such as burden of disease and priority for the relevant local, regional and national health services.
- What evidence is there that the answer to your research question is needed and wanted by relevant users, for instance, policy-makers?

4. How will the results of this study be used?

- What changes might be implemented as a result of the study?
- Who will make those changes happen and how?
- Might the results be generalizable beyond the immediate research setting?
- What is the social impact envisaged of the project?

5. Research Project Team

- Details of people involved
- How does the team of investigators incorporate the range of discipline and experience necessary to carry out the study?

6. Financial Information

- Are other funding partners involved? Who are the partners and what is the status of the discussions?
- In addition to the costing you have provided on Je-S, please provide a breakdown of the funding request per institution using the below table.

Organisation name	Total project costs (GBP)	Total cost requested from this scheme (GBP)

7. Proposal history

Has an application for funding for this project been submitted previously to DFID, MRC, DBT or another funding organisation? If so, please indicate the status of the previous application.

CVs (including publication lists) of investigators

Please submit a maximum of **3 pages per investigator in each country**: 2 pages CV and 1 page publication list.

Please compile all of the documents into one PDF file and include the documents in the same order as the investigators are listed on your Je-S application form. Each publication list should immediately follow its corresponding CV.

4. Assessment Criteria for outline full-scale research project grants

General information on the MRC's approach to peer review is provided in the MRC Guidance for peer reviewers:

<https://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/peer-review/guidance-for-peer-reviewers/>

The assessment panel for this scheme will consider whether outline applications are of world-class standard (being intellectually innovative, well-focused and methodologically sound), and whether the research has the potential to make a real improvement to health outcomes in low and middle income countries.

Peer reviewers will be asked to comment on the following criteria in assessing the outline proposals:

Research agenda

- Is there a real need for this study in the proposed location?
- Is the research question important and appropriate?
- Is an answer to the research question needed by policy-makers and other stakeholders beyond the academic community?

Project plans

- Is the proposed study feasible?
- Is the proposed study innovative, internationally competitive, and methodologically sound?

Project team

- Is there an appropriate balance of academic leadership from all partners?
- Are the credentials of the investigators and host institutions appropriate to deliver the project?
- Is there an understanding of and sufficient involvement of the local research context and decision-makers?
- Does the proposed team of investigators possess the necessary range of expertise and experience to successfully carry out the proposed study?

Research impact

- Does the project have real potential to improve health outcomes for adolescents?
- Is there clarity as to how, and by whom, the research findings will be used?
- Does the application demonstrate that there is demand for the research from policymakers and other stakeholders beyond the academic community?

Ethics

- Is the work ethically acceptable?

Value for money

- Is the budget appropriate and reasonable for the proposed programme of work?

5. Creating a Je-S account

All proposals submitted to this scheme are required to include investigators based in the low or middle income country where the research will take place.

All Overseas Research Organisations/Institutes and individual applicants (Principal and Co-Investigators), are required to be registered on the Je-S system.

Therefore, both UK organisations and overseas organisations are encouraged to contact the Je-S helpdesk at least two weeks before the call deadline of the 1st June 2017, so we can ensure that the overseas organisation, either Lead or Non-lead, has been correctly added to the Je-S System. Any delays could mean the proposal being rejected because of late submission.

Please login to your Je-S account using the username and password you have chosen (if you do not have a Je-S account, or have forgotten your password, please see the guidance provided further below).

<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>

- New Je-S Users: In order to gain access to the Je-S System, [Create an Account](#).
- Je-S users having problems successfully completing login to their Je-S account: [Retrieve User Name/Password](#).
- Select 'Documents' from left hand menu list from your Je-S account home page
- Select 'New Document' from within the Functions/create section of your documents page

Creating your Je-S application:

- Select Council: **MRC**
- Select Document Type: **Outline Proposal**
- Select Scheme: **Standard Outline**
- Select Call/Type/Mode (optional): **Adolescent Health Out Apr 2017**
- Select '**Create Document**' option

Please telephone Je-S Helpdesk +44(0) 1793 444164 should you require any assistance with the Je-S System.

Please complete the administrative, summary and financial information as requested by the online Je-S form. The following information provides guidance on specific sections of the Je-S form which we note that applicants frequently required further assistance with.

Entering costs in Je-S

UK research will be funded at 80% of the Full Economic Cost (FEC). Research incurred by overseas ROs and investigators is eligible to be funded at 100% of FEC. Please see section 5. Resources – Full Economic Costing in the [Guidance for Applicants](#) for information on FEC.

Funding for non-UK research institutions that have not previously received funding from MRC will be dependent on further eligibility and financial checks, to be conducted if the proposal is selected for funding. For further advice on eligibility, please contact aaron.holliday@headoffice.co.uk

Funding available:

Costs	Funding available
Research costs:	
Staff – directly incurred post	Yes
Staff – directly allocated posts (PI and Co-I time)	Yes
Other research costs (including equipment, consumables)	Yes
Studentships (PhD)	No
Travel and subsistence for exchange/mobility activities	Yes
Cost of workshops, meetings etc.	Yes

Please note that research teams should consider the breakdown of budgets between UK/high income costs and LMIC project costs keeping in mind the aims of the call.

Direct (salary) Costs:

Lead/Principal Investigators (PI's) & Co-investigators (Co-I's), can be based in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC), as per usual MRC funding rules. LMIC PI's & Co-I's can claim 100% of their direct costs (direct costs = the total salary costs for each 'Investigator'). These costs should be entered as Exceptions and claimed at 100%.

Co-investigators (Co-Is):

Co-investigators can be based in the UK as per usual MRC funding rules or in low- and middle-income countries as per usual MRC funding rules. LMIC Co-I's can claim 100% of their direct costs and up to 20% of costs as indirect costs (for further guidance on these direct and indirect costs, please see the detailed guidance below).

Co-investigators can be based in high-income countries outside of the UK as per usual MRC funding rules. They can claim 100% of their direct costs but no indirect costs. However, as the scheme is intended to fund work in low- and middle-income countries, high-income country applicants are advised to keep their costs claimed to a minimum.

Indirect (infrastructure) Costs:

MRC will also allow overseas institutions to request indirect costs. Each LMIC research organisation participating in the project can request indirect costs to cover the cost of hosting researchers participating in the project. Each LMIC RO can request up to 20% of their direct costs as additional indirect costs.

Example (LMIC institution indirect costs):

Overseas Lead Investigator (PI), total salary costs for the project = £20,000
Overseas Co-Investigator (1), total salary costs for the project = £15,000
Overseas Co-Investigator Travel & Subsistence + Fieldwork costs = £15,000

With all these above overseas costs being requested as 'Exceptions' (100%), the total costs claimed would equal £50,000. 20% of these total costs would equal £10,000, therefore the RO is allowed to claim up to £10,000 in indirect costs.

MRC will expect these indirect costs to be requested as '**Exceptions**' (100%), and detailed within the '**Other Directly Incurred Costs**' section of the Je-S form.

Please note that if you are successful at the outline stage, all costs requested on the Je-S form will need to be broken down and fully justified within the Justification for Resources, which will be requested as part of your full submission.

Costing guidelines

For overseas PI's and Co-I's all travel and subsistence costs can be claimed at 100%. UK based researchers can only claim 80%, even if they are travelling to a LMIC for the project.

For overseas institutions all other exceptional costs associated with the overseas organisation should be claimed under the appropriate fund heading as "exceptions" and entered as "Other Directly Incurred Costs". These include consumables, consultancy fees, field work fees, equipment (under (£10,000) and subcontracting.

Indirect and Estates Costs cannot be claimed by investigators in a high income country based outside of the UK.

If any of the investigators want to enter time allocated to the grant that they will actually spend on the project which could be different from the actual costs worked, this should be specified as there is a separate section for hours worked and hours charged in the budget. This can be found on the investigator section in the main document menu in Je-S.

Project Partner/s

A Project Partner is an organisation or individual who is providing substantial contribution to the project and will not take any funds out of the project. Therefore any persons already named on the proposal (E.G. as PI, Co-I or Named Researcher), should NOT also be included as a Project Partner.

For further guidance regarding Project Partners, please see the [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#).