



# Research Development Fellowships funded by the Medical Research Foundation's Africa Research Excellence Fund

## Fellowship Information for Applicants

Fellowship Competition – May 2015

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*The purpose of this guidance is to help you find out about the aims of the Fellowship Programme, how the competition is being managed, and to judge whether you are likely to meet the Programme requirements. You should also read the application form and the accompanying guidance notes.*

## 1. Fellowship Information

The Medical Research Foundation has recently established the Africa Research Excellence Fund to nurture excellent health research by Africans, in Africa with impact for Africa. The AREF is pleased to offer its first programme of **AREF Research Development Fellowships**.

This is a new opportunity intended to benefit outstanding early-career African researchers. **The Programme is designed to enable talented, African researchers who have been awarded their PhD in the last four years to develop their own research ideas and funding proposals. Each AREF Fellowship will support a placement of up to nine months in a leading research organisation in Europe or South Africa.**

The deadline for receipt of applications for the AREF Research Development Fellowships Programme is **8 July 2015**. Our first awards will be announced in November 2015.

### 1.1. Objectives

We intend these Fellowships to be the first of a set of stepping-stones for early-career African scientists trying to advance along the challenging routes to becoming scientific leaders. The Fellowships aim to provide you with the following opportunities:

- to develop your own research ideas and researchable questions
  - to develop your skills - advanced research methods or technologies - to advance those ideas
  - to extend your network of research collaborators and mentors
  - to lay the foundations for an application for a highly competitive grant or fellowship award.
- If you apply for an award, you will need to describe how you would make these four opportunities happen – and how the fellowship would advance your development.

### 1.2. Scope

The scope of this competition will include infectious diseases and non-communicable diseases that are significant and/or identified as “neglected” in sub-Saharan Africa.

The priority research methodologies and technologies applied to health research problems for the 2015/16 competition are as follows:

- advanced medical statistics
- medical bioinformatics
- biomedical computational modelling
- molecular biology and omics technologies
- other advanced, laboratory-based sciences
- quantitative and qualitative social sciences
- economics

### 1.3. Duration of fellowship

An AREF Research Development Fellowship will provide an early career researcher with funding to support a placement of **at least three months and up to nine months** in a leading

research organisation outside the Fellow's own institution (see Section 2.2. on Host Organisation). Applicants may request for **up to £43k** for a nine-month award (pro-rata for shorter awards).

You will need to state in your application how long you propose the placement to be. The duration must be justified by the specific activities you propose, and be supported by a named senior scientist with appropriate expertise and commitment in the host organisation, your employer (known as employing organisation) and the organisation hosting the placement (known as the host organisation).

A termination date will be specified for each award, after which the Fellow must return to their employing organisation.

## 1.4. Fellowship placement

Each Fellowship is designed to support a placement at a centre of excellence other than the Fellow's current place of employment. Applications for research, training and funding within your current employing organisation will not be eligible for this Programme.

The application must be submitted with an accompanying statement from a named senior scientist with appropriate knowledge, skills and capacity to support the Fellow, and take full responsibility for the role of advisor in the host organisation.

## 2. Eligibility

### 2.1. Applicant eligibility

To hold an AREF Research Development Fellowship, you will need to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- **Nationality and employment**<sup>1</sup> - be a national of a country in sub-Saharan Africa excluding South Africa;
  1. be working in an active research role<sup>2</sup>;
  2. have guarantee of employment with a legally established research organisation or a University in sub-Saharan Africa for the duration of your fellowship; and
  3. have a declaration from your current director on how they will support your development as a researcher, if you receive an award.
- **PhD qualification within the last four years** - awarded a PhD or equivalent postgraduate degree from a recognised institution of higher education **after 30 June 2011 and before 1 July 2015**.

Equality and diversity are core values of the Africa Research Excellence Fund and we encourage applications by African scientists irrespective of gender, marital status, colour, race, creed, ethnic or national origin.

We will welcome eligible applicants from francophone, lusophone and anglophone countries. However, all applications must be written in good English.

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<sup>1</sup> You may apply even if you do not meet these criteria as long as you expect to meet them by 1 October 2015 and can tell us convincingly how you will meet the criteria on time. An award is contingent on the nationality and employment criteria being met by 1 October 2015.

<sup>2</sup> We will welcome applicants who are already employed within a sub-Saharan African research organisation (excluding South Africa), or who would be returning to a position in such an organisation by the time they take up the AREF Fellowship having worked in a research active role abroad.

Awardees will need to meet the standards of language competency required by the host organisation.

## 2.2. Host organisation

### Eligibility

To host an AREF Research Development Fellow, the host organisation must:

- Be in **South Africa, United Kingdom or continental Europe**<sup>3</sup>;
- Be an **academic institution or a research oriented industry or a policy-making organisation**<sup>4</sup>;
- Be a **legal entity** constituted under the national law of the country it is based;
- Be engaged in **world-class research** and/or its translation into products, policies or practices to the benefit of the public;
- Have the **financial capacity** to carry out the research tasks set out in the proposal;
- Possess an existing **in-house capacity to carry out the research** in the field or discipline in which it wishes to be funded;
- Be able to **sign up to the terms and conditions** of the fellowship.

### Role and responsibilities

Host organisations are expected to value the intellectual contribution that the Fellow makes during the placement and the possibility of raising collaborative funding as a consequence of the AREF award.

Host organisations will be required to:

1. Ensure that the Fellow is able to participate fully in the intellectual life of the host organisation, and is enabled to make effective use of the opportunities funded by the Fellowship or reasonably by the organisation itself;
2. Make available all reasonable pastoral care to the Fellow;
3. Acknowledge the Fellowship through its communications;
4. Administer and manage the Fellowship funds in accordance with the terms and conditions of the funding, including ensuring appropriate processes are put in place to manage flow of funds to the employing organisation (if applicable);
5. Recognise intellectual contributions of the Fellow to the organisation's own programmes and that all reasonable efforts are made to realise opportunities for continuing, mutually beneficial collaboration with the Fellow.

## 2.3. Employing organisation

### Eligibility

The employing organisation must:

- Be a **sub-Saharan African (excluding South African) 'not-for-profit' research organisation**;
- Be a **legal entity** constituted under the national law of the country it is based.

### Role and responsibilities

Employing organisations must:

- Guarantee that they will continue to pay the Fellow's salary and agreed benefits under his/her current contract until the end of his/her AREF Fellowship. If the Fellowship would

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<sup>3</sup> Africa Research Excellence Fund may extend the range of organisations and regions in the future.

<sup>4</sup> Applicants may propose a placement or **part of their placement (if a pharmaceutical)** in non-academic organisations, such as international policy organisations. If you are applying for a placement in a non-academic organisation, please contact the AREF secretariat at an early stage to discuss your application.

take you beyond the end of that contract, one of the following has to be guaranteed: either (1) your current employer will extend your contract at least to the end of your fellowship; or (2) you have another contractual arrangement in place at least to the end of your fellowship.

- Continue to employ and cover the salary of the awarded Fellow during the course of the fellowship. The Fellow will not become an employee of the MRF, AREF or of the host organisation by virtue of the AREF Research Development Fellowship.
- Provide support for the awarded Fellow during the AREF Fellowship. The Director of your employing organisation will need to provide a letter of support describing how the organisation intends to support the Fellow's development.
- Work with the host organisation to support the Fellow.

### 3. Funding

#### 3.1. Supported costs

The **maximum funding** that an applicant may seek **for a nine-month award will be £43k (pro-rata for shorter awards)**.

The funding requested will need to be justified by the applicant and the host organisation in relation to specific activities proposed. The funding may include contributions to the following:

- Accommodation in the host country;
- Fares, visas, medical, insurance and costs associated with direct travel to and from the host country (one return journey);
- Reasonable travel within the host country;
- Reasonable research costs;
- Research conference participation;
- A short appropriate training course;
- Engaging with mentors.

The AREF Research Development Fellowship will contribute towards the costs of the host organisation that are directly attributable to Fellow's research and learning. The contribution will not be above £1.5k per month.

#### 3.2. What we do not fund

The following items are not supported under the AREF Research Development Fellowship:

- Salary for the Fellow;
- Living, accommodation, travel, education or other benefits that the Fellow may be entitled to under his/her existing contract of employment<sup>5</sup>;
- Fees to advisors or mentors;
- Residential or distance-learning Masters course fees or other examination or professional fees;
- Indirect costs – costs that are not specific to the Fellow's research and training set out under the application. These include general office costs, the costs of basic laboratory or other workplace consumables, library and learning services, secretarial support, financial, communications and departmental services, central and distributed information and technology services, estates costs (building and premises costs) and utilities such as electricity; and clinical infrastructure.

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<sup>5</sup> AREF Research Development Fellowship is not intended to support you if your employment contract is about to end.

### 3.3. Additional fellowship benefits

Each Fellow will be able to apply *after* their fellowship for up to two follow-on research conferences/mentoring visits, to sustain and extend collaborative and mentoring relationships built up during the AREF Research Development Fellowship. The follow-on conferences/mentoring visits will be assessed in competition and against criteria that we will publish.

To access these benefits the Fellow will need to have delivered on their Fellowship and met the requirements of the AREF.

The award of these additional Fellowship benefits does not extend the Fellowship itself.

### 3.4. Financial management

The majority of the funding will be for work in the host organisation and the Fellowship awards will normally be made to the host organisation, which will be responsible for the receipt and administration of the awarded funds. The award will only fund direct costs of the award.

If costs are requested for the employing organisation or directly for the individual Fellow, they must be clearly identified in the application. It is expected that the host and employing organisation should put in place appropriate processes to manage the flow of funds.

## 4. Application Process

Applicants are reminded to set aside enough time to get the application approved and signed ahead of the deadline.

### 4.1. Preparation

Applicants should do the following:

- Read the application form and accompanying guidance carefully
- Develop their ideas for a Fellowship, checking that the ideas map to the scope
- Discuss their ideas and draft text several times with the advisor/supervisor at the organisation in which they aim to have the placement, and with their programme head or director in their employing institution
- Contact the AREF Fellowship secretariat by 15<sup>th</sup> June 2015 for advice (if required). Potential applicants may submit a draft of their application for advice on whether it fits to programme objectives, and whether it needs to be clearer. An applicant may request advice on their draft application only once. While the advice will be provided to enable the applicant to improve their application, the applicant alone remains responsible for the final content of their application. June 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 is the deadline for sending any requests for such advice.
- Ensure that their application can be approved and signed in time for the deadline: remember, those who need to sign the form may be away when you need them.

### 4.2. Application

Applicants are to submit the following:

- A completed application form as a PDF, which will include details from their CV and an outline of the candidate's research proposal, signed by the applicant, named senior scientist at host organisation and administrative authority at host organisation.
- Letters of support from named senior scientist at host organisation and director of employing organisation.
- PDF of scanned copies of two research publications of which the applicant is sole-author or co-author (optional)
- An electronic copy of the candidate's most recently attained degree certificate, usually the PhD certificate

- Two professional references from academics that have worked with you.

**Deadline for receipt: 1600 hours (GMT) on 8 July 2015** to [aref@mrf.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:aref@mrf.mrc.ac.uk)

**Contact for queries:** All questions should be sent to **Sulayman Janneh (Fellowship Manager)** at [aref@mrf.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:aref@mrf.mrc.ac.uk)

## 5. Assessment Process

### 5.1. Eligibility checks

All applications will be checked by AREF secretariat for eligibility against the Eligibility Criteria

- Ineligible applications: candidates will be informed by early August 2015.
- Eligible applications will go forward to peer review; these candidates will be informed of this progression.

### 5.2. Peer review, shortlisting and interview

Short-listing will be conducted on the basis of independent peer review, which will be followed up by a Skype Interview to ascertain credibility of applicants.

At the short-listing stage, the assessors will seek to establish the following:

- The applicant has the potential to become an **independent researcher**
- The applicant is likely to contribute to the overall aims for the Fellowship Programme

Candidates will be informed of the outcome of the short-listing process by early September 2015. Short-listed candidates will be provided with feedback on their application from the Short-listing Committee.

### 5.3. Feedback

Candidates will be provided with feedback and granted the opportunity to submit a revised proposal so they can articulate their ideas and plans as best as possible.

### 5.4. Award

Panel will meet and consider the revised short-listed applications, agree a rank and quality threshold, advised by the AREF secretariat. Awards will be decided on the recommendation of the panel.