



Funding opportunity

Expression of interest: Supporting researchers to involve public at pre- application stage

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	Medical Research Council (MRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£100,000
Award range:	£5,000 - £20,000
Publication date:	25 February 2025
Opening date:	24 February 2025 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	8 April 2025 4:00pm UK time

Apply for funding for your own scheme to reimburse time and expenses for public partners to work with researchers to develop Medical Research Council (MRC) research funding applications.


You must be based at a research organisation eligible for MRC funding.

This can be an existing scheme or a new one and must support:

- research funding applications to MRC
- researchers to develop, plan and deliver their activity

The full economic cost (FEC) of your scheme can be up to £20,000 over a duration of up to 18 months. MRC will fund 100% of the FEC.

You must complete the mandatory [expression of interest survey](#) (stage one) and be invited to the full stage (see 'How to apply').

 The full funding opportunity will open on 24 April 2025. More information will be available on this page then.

Who can apply

To lead a project, you must be based at an eligible organisation. [Check if your organisation is eligible](#).

Who is eligible to apply

To be eligible to apply for this funding opportunity you must:

- be employed by an eligible research organisation
- show that you will lead the project and be actively engaged in the work

For applicants who do not have a contract of employment for the duration of the proposed project, by submitting an application the research organisation is confirming, if it is successful:

- contracts will be extended six months beyond the end date of the project
- all necessary support for the project and the applicant/s will be provided

A research organisation may lead or partner on more than one application and applications may comprise more than one research organisation.

Individuals may be project lead on only one application. However, individuals can act as project co-leads on any number of applications.

Who is not eligible to apply

You are not eligible to apply for this funding opportunity as a project lead if you are based at an international research organisation. This does not include project leads from MRC Unit The Gambia or MRC/UVRI Uganda Research Unit at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Before applying for funding, [check if your organisation is eligible](#).

Equality, diversity and inclusion

[We are committed to achieving equality of opportunity](#) for all funding applicants. We encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers.

We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. This includes:

- career breaks
- support for people with caring responsibilities
- flexible working
- alternative working patterns

[UKRI can offer disability and accessibility support](#) for UKRI applicants and grant holders during the application and assessment process.

What we're looking for

Aim

To support researchers to involve the public in developing research funding applications (at pre-application stage).

Scope

You can apply for funding for your own scheme to reimburse public partners to work with researchers to develop MRC funding applications.

Public partners include a diverse range of communities and people of all ages and backgrounds, who bring different life experiences, knowledge and perspectives.

To be eligible members of the public must be contributing in a personal capacity and not working in a professional capacity (where their contribution is already covered by existing payment, for example, employed by a charity or support group and contributing on behalf of this organisation).

Research organisations must devise and manage their own scheme.

This can be an existing scheme or a new scheme and must:

- support research funding applications to MRC
- support researchers to develop, plan and deliver their activity

As part of a devolved scheme, public involvement support must be provided to researchers including:

- initial review and feedback on each application to the devolved scheme
- tailored support to develop a meaningful public partner activity, with a focus on mutual benefit

- support in planning the delivery and evaluation of the activity
- encouraging researchers to attend relevant public involvement training and to include this in their personal development plans

Researcher and public partner expectations should be aligned. It is essential that public partner expectations are considered and managed with integrity, from receipt of applications to the devolved scheme and throughout the planning and delivery of the activity.

Institutional payment rates for public partners can be used for the devolved scheme. [MRC public partner payment guidance](#) may be helpful if no institutional rates exist and to inform MRC research funding applications.

Report back on this scheme

Evaluation criteria, which the scheme lead will need to report against, will be provided when the 'full' funding opportunity is launched. There is likely to be an online evaluation workshop, which the scheme lead will be expected to attend and contribute to.

For more information on the background of this funding opportunity, go to the Additional information section.

Duration

The duration of this award is up to 18 months.

Funding available

The FEC of your project can be up to £20,000.

MRC will fund 100% of the FEC.

Find out more about [full economic costing](#).

What we will fund

The costs included in the devolved scheme should be those specifically related to the public partner activity undertaken to support applications for MRC research funding.

Devolved schemes can support the following costs:

- compensation for time and reimbursement of expenses for public partners, for example, travel, accommodation, food or internet data fee
- reasonable catering and venue costs
- special requirements, such as care or support workers, interpreters and childcare (which must be agreed before the activity takes place)
- costs to identify suitable public partners (for example Facebook advertising)

- public partners from an existing public and patient involvement group or charity, voluntary or community group
- specific expertise, such as a professional facilitator, to support public partner activity
- organisations who represent members of the public, for example support and community groups or charities, may be offered payment for public partnership contributions provided by their staff or members in a professional capacity. The level and arrangements for payment should be agreed before the activity takes place.

What we will not fund

The key aim of this pilot is to reimburse public partners for their contributions.

Devolved schemes should not support costs for:

- public involvement and engagement staff managing and supporting the scheme
- public involvement and engagement training
- equipment (for example headsets) for online sessions and other general IT costs, unless it is to fulfil special requirements (see [MRC public partner payment guidance](#))
- long term funding for public involvement and engagement groups.

Supporting skills and talent

We encourage you to follow the principles of the [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) and the [Technician Commitment](#).

Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&I)

UKRI is committed in ensuring that effective international collaboration in research and innovation takes place with integrity and within strong ethical frameworks.

Trusted Research and Innovation (TR&I) is a UKRI work programme designed to help protect all those working in our thriving and collaborative international sector by enabling partnerships to be as open as possible, and as secure as necessary.

Our [TR&I Principles](#) set out UKRI's expectations of organisations funded by UKRI in relation to due diligence for international collaboration.

As such, applicants for UKRI funding may be asked to demonstrate how their proposed projects will comply with our approach and expectation towards TR&I, identifying potential risks and the relevant controls you will put in place to help proportionately reduce these risks.

See further [guidance and information about TR&I](#), including where applicants can find additional support.

How to apply

Stage one: expression of interest

We are running a mandatory expression of interest (EOI) stage. You must submit an Expression of interest by 8 April 2025 at 4:00pm UK time.

You must submit your EOI by completing the survey: [Expression of interest: Supporting researchers to involve the public to develop MRC research funding applications.](#)

Stage two: full application

We are running the full funding opportunity on the new UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service so please ensure that your organisation is registered. You cannot apply on the Joint Electronic Submissions (Je-S) system. We will publish full details on how to apply when the funding opportunity opens.

The full funding opportunity is expected to open on 24 April 2025 and close on 26 June 2025. Please follow future announcements for confirmed dates.

Personal data

Processing personal data

MRC, as part of UKRI, will need to collect some personal information to manage your Funding Service account and the registration of your funding applications.

We will handle personal data in line with UK data protection legislation and manage it securely. For more information, including how to exercise your rights, read our [privacy notice](#).

Sensitive information

If you or a core team member need to tell us something you wish to remain confidential, email publicengagement@mrc.ukri.org

Include in the subject line: [the funding opportunity title; sensitive information; your Funding Service application number].

Typical examples of confidential information include:

- individual is unavailable until a certain date (for example due to parental leave)
- declaration of interest
- additional information about eligibility to apply that would not be appropriately shared in the 'Applicant and team capability' section
- conflict of interest for UKRI to consider in reviewer or panel participant selection
- the application is an invited resubmission

For information about how UKRI handles personal data, read [UKRI's privacy notice](#).

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

Expression of Interest

Information provided as part of the expression of interest will not be formally assessed.

We will use this information to:

- check eligibility to apply
- anticipate expected submission levels

Full application

We will assess your full application using the following process.

Panel

We will invite experts to assess the quality of your application and rank it alongside other applications after which the panel will make a funding recommendation.

In the event of high demand for this funding opportunity, UKRI reserves the right to introduce shortlisting at this stage.

We reserve the right to modify the assessment process as needed.

Principles of assessment

We support the San Francisco [declaration on research assessment](#) and recognise the relationship between research assessment and research integrity.

Find out about the [UKRI principles of assessment and decision making](#).

Using generative artificial intelligence (AI) in peer review

Reviewers and panellists are not permitted to use generative AI tools to develop their assessment. Using these tools can potentially compromise the confidentiality of the ideas that applicants have entrusted to UKRI to safeguard.

For more detail see our [policy on the use of generative AI](#).

Assessment areas

The full criteria for assessment will be published when the full application funding opportunity opens.

Contact details

Get help with your application

If you have a question and the answers aren't provided on this page

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Helpdesk is committed to helping users of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service as effectively and as quickly as possible. In order to manage cases at peak volume times, the Helpdesk will triage and prioritise those queries with an imminent opportunity deadline or a technical issue. Enquiries raised where information is available on the Funding Finder opportunity page and should be understood early in the application process (for example, regarding eligibility or content/remit of an opportunity) will not constitute a priority case and will be addressed as soon as possible.

Contact details

For help and advice on costings and writing your application please contact your research office in the first instance, allowing sufficient time for your organisation's submission process.

For questions related to this specific funding opportunity please contact publicengagement@mrc.ukri.org

For general questions related to MRC funding including our funding opportunities and policy please contact rfd@mrc.ukri.org

Any queries regarding the system or the submission of applications through the Funding Service should be directed to the helpdesk.

Email: support@funding-service.ukri.org

Phone: 01793 547490

Our phone lines are open:

- Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 5:00pm
- Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm

To help us process queries quicker, we request that users highlight the council and opportunity name in the subject title of their email query, include the application reference number, and refrain from contacting more than one mailbox at a time.

For further information on submitting an application read [How applicants use the Funding Service](#).

Additional info

Background

MRC invests public money in world-class biomedical research and innovation. We aim to improve human health and economic prosperity for everyone, regardless of background, place or upbringing.

Our new [MRC public partnerships strategy](#) was published in July 2024. It was co-developed with researchers, MRC staff, public involvement and engagement professionals, members of the public, patients and voluntary and community groups, based in the UK and internationally.

By public partnerships we mean all the different ways that people and the research community can come together to shape and share scientific research. Public partnerships cover the whole spectrum of public engagement, which includes involvement and community engagement.

Public partners encompass a diverse range of communities and people of all ages and backgrounds, who bring different life experiences, knowledge and perspectives.

The co-development process identified a gap at the earliest stage of the research cycle, which is to reimburse time and expenses for public partners who work with researchers to develop funding applications.

In our [action plan](#) we have committed to pilot a funding initiative that enables public partnerships to inform research design at the pre-application stage.

Research and innovation impact

Impact can be defined as the long-term intended or unintended effect research and innovation has on society, economy and the environment; to individuals, organisations, and the wider global population.

Research disruption due to COVID-19

We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major interruptions and disruptions across our communities.

We are committed to ensuring that individual applicants and their wider team, including partners and networks, are not penalised for any disruption to their career, such as:

- breaks and delays
- disruptive working patterns and conditions
- the loss of ongoing work
- role changes that may have been caused by the pandemic

Reviewers and panel members will be advised to consider the unequal impacts that COVID-19 related disruption might have had on the capability to deliver and career development of those individuals included in the application.

They will be asked to consider the capability of the applicant and their wider team to deliver the research they are proposing.

Where disruptions have occurred, you can highlight this within your application if you wish, but there is no requirement to detail the specific circumstances that caused the disruption.

Timeline

- **24 February 2025 9:00am**
Expression of interest opening date
- **8 April 2025 4:00pm**
Expression of interest Closing date
- **24 April 2025 9:00am**
Full application opening date
- **15 May 2025 2:00pm**
Webinar (registration details will be confirmed 24 April 2025)

- **26 June 2025 4:00pm**
Full application closing date

- **To be confirmed**
Funding decision meeting

- **Within 10 working days of funding decision meeting**
Informed of funding decision

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/supporting-researchers-to-involve-public-at-pre-application-stage>