Better Methods Better Research

BMBR Programme Researcher-Led

Overview

Opportunity status:	Open
Type:	Programme
Funding available amount:	£625000.00
	Opening date: 11 September 2025 at 1:00 pm
Closing date:	2 December 2025 at 1:00 pm
Reference ID:	2025/393

Ready to apply?

Apply now

(https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10173692)

The Better Methods, Better Research (BMBR) Programme, is accepting applications to this funding opportunity. This is a single stage, researcher-led funding opportunity – you will submit a full application.

The BMBR Programme is a collaboration between the MRC (Medical Research Council) (https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/) and NIHR. It aims to ensure that optimal research methods are used to advance biomedical, health and care research, policy and delivery.

Project proposals would typically be valued up to £625,000 (100% full economic cost (FEC)). MRC and NIHR will usually fund up to 80% of your project's FEC.

Research outputs should be available and usable to the fullest extent. Open-source software and code are encouraged. Costs to support this are eligible under the NIHR Open Access publications funding guidance.

Key dates

11 September 2025

Full application opening date

2 December 2025

Full application closing date

April - May 2026

Expected full application funding decision

Studies within a trial or review

This funding opportunity is eligible for a SWAT/SWAR (study within a trial or study within a review), which can help significantly improve methodology of future research as well as the host study. Find out about the benefits of SWATs/SWARs and how to include one in your application (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/methodological-sub-studies-studies-within-trial-or-project-swat-and-studies-within-review-swar).

Apply for this funding opportunity through our online application form

Apply now

(https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10173692)

Research specification

BMBR aims to improve efficiency, quality and impact across biomedical, health and care related research within MRC and NIHR remit. The programme supports methodology research that develops and delivers ways to improve the research methods used by others.

Methodology research maximises benefits for researchers, patients and the general population. It also ensures health and social care research and policy are built on the best possible evidence.

To fulfil these aims, methodology development or improvement supported by BMBR must:

- underpin an evidenced research need within MRC or NIHR remit
- be able to be generalised beyond a single case study
- demonstrate early engagement with a broad range of end users for developed methodology
- improve best practice, and evidence a pathway to implementation and sustainable impact
- demonstrate awareness of current gaps in the translation of methodological research

To achieve its objectives, BMBR works with organisations to identify methodological needs. These include emerging and current needs. BMBR also ensures the methodologies developed are taken up by others and add value to research.

Standing partners providing input into the programme include:

- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (https://www.nice.org.uk/)
- Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/medicines-and-healthcare-products-regulatory-agency)
- Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) (https://www.gov.wales/health-and-care-research-wales)
- Chief Scientist Office, Scotland (CSO) (https://www.cso.scot.nhs.uk/)
- Health and Social Care, Northern Ireland (HSCNI) (https://research.hscni.net/)

Additional stakeholders are consulted as required to support emerging priority areas. For example, the National Advisory Group on Clinical Audit and Enquiries (https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/national-advisory-group-on-clinical-audit-and-enquiries).

Please refer to the BMBR Programme page (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/funding-programmes/better-methods-better-research) for further information on our scope and remit.

Application guidance

Please read our domestic full application guidance (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/domestic-programmes-funding-guidance-full-applications) to help you complete all aspects of your application. You must read this alongside the information below, which details specific requirements our BMBR Programme (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/funding-programmes/better-methods-better-research) looks for in applications. You can also check our BMBR Programme page for details about the programme's scope and remit.

Research plan

Write a maximum of 20 A4 pages for your research plan. When reviewing applications, we will not consider any additional information over this 20 page limit.

Background and rationale

BMBR funds the development or improvement of generalisable methods underpinning biomedical and health research. Please provide a clear explanation of the methodological issue to be addressed, how it is generalisable and how this will underpin and impact health research. Please briefly explain:

- why is this research needed now?
- what is the knowledge gap this research will address?

Aims and objectives

Please summarise the research question(s) and key aims and objectives.

Methodology/plan

1. Detail the design of your research, ensuring it is clear how it builds on established research methods. Awareness of the current gaps in translation and uptake of methodology research should be demonstrated, and assurance provided that the project is designed to mitigate these risks to impact.
2. Clearly state the statistical test or software package to be used. Describe the methods and timing for assessing, recording and analysing outcomes.
3. Provide detail of any outcome measures and how the proposed new method/improvement in a current method will be generally applicable without significant modification, beyond a single case study or research question.

4. Indicate the anticipated duration of the study. A Gantt diagram, included as a visual summary of the overall project, is mandatory. Outline the main stages of your proposed project including regulatory steps; team recruitment; participant recruitment; data collection, access, linkage, analysis; and knowledge mobilisation. Include the expected duration of each. As per our full stage domestic guidance please upload your Gantt chart as a separate upload in the mandatory upload section.
5. Please set out the measurements of success you intend to use, the risks to the proposed research and how you intend to mitigate against them.

Inclusive research

We are committed to actively and openly supporting and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in research. This is, in part, achieved by diversifying research participants in the studies we support and the voices of those who shape our research agenda by redesigning our processes, introducing targeted interventions and the effective monitoring and evaluation of impact.

We invite you to consider how the above principles of equality, diversity and inclusion can be incorporated into your proposal.

Knowledge mobilisation, dissemination and impact

The purpose of this section is for you to describe the planned outputs of the research, how these will be communicated and to whom, and how the research may lead to short (and longer-term) impacts.

We understand that the impact of any research may take time to be realised and will likely involve other funders, institutions and sustained efforts in practice. We also recognise it may be difficult to provide definitive answers or guarantees on longer term impacts. However, you are invited to consider various aspects of pathways below and how the likelihood of impact can be maximised. This includes considering what outputs are produced, how these can be best connected to the health and/or social care environment, what efforts and investment are likely to be needed beyond the project, what barriers are likely to be encountered and what impacts the research is seeking to achieve.

a. What do you intend to produce from your guidance?

Please provide brief details of each anticipated output. Please note that the term 'outputs' refers to any tangible product of the research, not just academic publications. Outputs can include, but are not limited to:

- conference presentation or other workshop events
- publications (academic or otherwise)
- guidelines (clinical, service or otherwise)
- other copyright (for example, questionnaires, training aids, toolkits, manuals, software)
- new or improved design of medical devices or instrumentation
- new or improved diagnostic
- trial data that could be used to support a CE mark, market authorisation or equivalent
- trial data that could be used to shape or influence a healthcare market or government
- potential new drug or health or social care interventions

b. How will you inform and engage patients/service users, carers, NHS, social care organisations and the wider population about your work?

Describe who you need to communicate with within this development of guidelines, and your plans for engaging relevant audiences. For impact, it is unlikely that simply making outputs available will be sufficient. Please consider and outline the active approach you will take to engaging key parties, or identify the process you will use to identify them and formulate an engagement plan.

See our Plan knowledge mobilisation page (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/how-disseminate-your-research) for more information on how to disseminate your research.

c. How will your outputs enter our health and care system or society as a whole?

Describe the process by which the guideline will enter the health and/or social care environment, including how your outputs will be acknowledged, selected and introduced for use in the health and care service or wider society. Where possible consider how the work will be adopted and implemented longer term. Please describe the proposed route to market (commercial or non-commercial) for your outputs. Describe who is needed to take it forward and the relationship you currently (or propose to) have with these parties. If your outputs are likely to be commercially exploitable, please include details on how you plan to develop this.

d. What further funding or support will be required if this research is successful (e.g. from NIHR, other Government departments, charity or industry)?

Consider what investment or support may be needed at the end of this project to maximise impact. Not all projects will require this but if so, plans should be linked to the responses in points 2 and 3 above.

e. What are the possible barriers to the development, adoption and implementation?

- Describe the difficulties which may be faced in generating impact from your guidelines. These may be difficulties you will face yourself, or challenges faced by those in the implementing context (for example, clinicians). How will you ensure wider implementation or learning from project outputs, including approaches for benchmarking (method performance and implementation costs), outreach and the ability to influence wider audiences?
- Will the proposed development of guidelines use data, technology, materials or other interventions that are subject to any form of intellectual property protection (for example, copyright, design rights, patents) or right owned by another organisation(s)? If yes, provide brief details including how such third party IP will be accessed (for example, collaboration agreement, drug supply agreement)
- What are the key current and future barriers to uptake of any likely output or innovation directly in the health and care service, through commercial exploitation or other means, e.g. potential regulatory hurdles?
- What are the challenges for getting your guidelines implemented in terms of acceptability, accessibility and feasibility? How will you address these?

f. What do you think the impact of your guidelines will be and for whom?

Describe the impacts you aim to achieve as a direct result of the project and those which are anticipated longer term. Please consider how any smaller, more immediate effects may mature over time into larger scale or more significant effects, and the steps by which this may be achieved. As far as possible, indicate anticipated timescales for these benefits and a quantitative estimate of their scale. Impacts may include, but are not restricted to:

- patient, service user or carer benefit
- healthcare or social care staff benefits
- changes in NHS or care services, including efficiency savings
- commercial return, which could contribute to economic growth
- public wellbeing

g. If applicable, how will you share with study participants the progress and findings of your research?

What strategies will you use to keep your research participants informed of the progress of your project and the findings? Consider the ethical implications of informing study participants and also what the most accessible methods could be, such as newsletter, leaflets, webpages, social media and where relevant different languages and formats. The Health Research Authority provides guidance on the information participants of trials should receive at the end of the study (https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/best-practice/publication-and-dissemination-research-findings/).

Project management

Please state how your study will be managed, and who will manage it. Refer to the roles of specific applicants as appropriate.

Research governance and ethical approval

Please indicate what research governance issues will need to be addressed in your research and state how you will seek and obtain ethical approval, if appropriate.

Project/research expertise

Outline the particular contributions each member of the team will make towards the project. The BMBR Programme recommends teams proposing randomised controlled trials to include input from an accredited clinical trials unit, or organisations with equivalent experience. If commercial partners are involved in the study, a detailed description of the contributions and expectations from all parties must be included.

There should be a named person with appropriate skills and experience who is responsible for leading the PPI element within the project. This role should be an adequately costed and resourced research team member who is able to manage the PPI plans and related activities.

You can find examples of the activities a PPI lead might undertake (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/role-patient-and-public-involvement-ppi-lead).

Intellectual property and commercialisation

Please refer to the domestic full application guidance for information about intellectual property.

Uploads

As well as uploading references, you will need to upload the following document in the ‘Uploads’ section of your application:

CTU support letter (if required/appropriate to the study)

If appropriate to the study, please supply and upload a Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) letter of support.

Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool (SoECAT) (if applicable)

A completed SoeCAT is now required to be uploaded and submitted for projects that are to be registered with the NIHR portfolio. The exception to this is where no participants are being recruited and there is no Excess Treatment Cost or NHS Support Cost. This should be confirmed by an AcoRD Specialist in writing. Please note that if no patients are involved in your proposal this will not be required.

Application process

Find out how to apply for this funding opportunity and what you need to do to get your application ready.

How to apply

Log in to our application system to apply (https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10173692). This funding opportunity is on our new awards management system and you will need to create a new account if you do not have one already.

The closing date is 2 December 2025 at 1pm. Applications received after 1pm on the closing date will not be considered.

Please read all guidance detailed in the 'application guidance' section of this funding opportunity.

Download application form template

You can download a Word document template of the application form below. Please use this template as a guide only, to help you prepare your application. For example, to see how many characters are accepted in each section and to see how information in the form is laid out. Please do not try to use this as an application form; it cannot be submitted as an application. You must submit your application online via our awards management system.

(/media/24421/download/)

Domestic-full-application-form-template.docx

DOCX

Last updated: 5 December 2024

Download document (28.31 KB)

Research inclusion and reasonable adjustments

At NIHR we are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive culture (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/who-we-are/research-inclusion). We encourage applications from people from all backgrounds and communities bringing diverse skills and experiences. If you need any reasonable adjustments throughout the application process, please contact the programme team via the information in the Contact Details tab.

Research Support Service

Got a research idea and not sure how to turn it into a funding application? The NIHR Research Support Service (RSS) supports researchers in England to apply for funding, and to develop and deliver clinical and applied health, social care and public health research post award. Find out how the RSS can help you (/support-and-services/research-support-service).

Contact Details

- For help with your application contact bmbr@nihr.ac.uk (mailto:bmbr@nihr.ac.uk).
- For more information about the funding programme, visit the Better Methods Better Research programme page (/node/63896).
- For help developing your application, if in England, contact the Research Support Service (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/).