

Development Guidance for Better Research Methods

Overview

Opportunity status: Open

Type: Programme

Funding available amount: £120000.00

Opening date: 11 September
2025 at 1:00 pm

Closing date: 2 December 2025 at 1:00 pm

Reference ID: 2025/395

Ready to apply?

Apply now

(https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10174724)

Our [Better Methods, Better Research \(BMBR\) Programme](/research-funding/funding-programmes/better-methods-better-research) (a partnership co-funded by the [Medical Research Council \(MRC\)](https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/) (<https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/>) and the NIHR) is looking to fund research into developing guidance on biomedical and health and social care research methodologies; there is an aim to understand how each methodology should be applied and to increase a focus on research in priority areas of methodological uncertainty.

This is a full funding opportunity. To apply you will need to complete and submit a full application.

Eligibility

Applications should meet the remit and eligibility requirements of our BMBR Programme.

Key dates

11 September 2025

Full application opening date

2 December 2025

Full application closing date

April - May 2026

Expected full application funding decision

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%3D10174724)

Research specification

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and Medical Research Council (MRC) Better Methods Better Research (BMBR) programme invites applications in response to specific research questions. These have been identified, developed and prioritised for their importance to stakeholders, including;

- Department of Health and Social Care
- NHS
- Medical Research Council (MRC)
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)
- Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
- Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW)
- Chief Scientist Office, Scotland (CSO)
- Health and Social Care, Northern Ireland (HSCNI)
- patients and public

Research question

Apply for funding to develop new guidance on biomedical and health and social care research methods.

Based on completed methodological research, the guidance should aim to:

- improve the understanding and use of methods within the remit of MRC-NIHR Better Methods, Better Research Programme
- be accessible to those without specialist methodology knowledge

In order to apply for this funding opportunity, you will need to carefully review the guidance for applicants. It is anticipated that this will be an annual funding opportunity.

Background

Gaps remain between the development of improved biomedical and health and social care research methodologies, widespread awareness and uptake, and their recognition as best practice. Where multiple methodologies are available, it can be difficult to understand when, where or how each methodology should be best applied.

Funding opportunity scope

This funding opportunity will support the development of guidance to catalyse the uptake of validated research methods in priority areas of methodological uncertainty. Following an award, teams must begin the proposed work within 6 months to ensure that the resulting guidance for better research methods retains its relevance as assessed when awarded.

Programme of Work

Your proposed guidance should allow others to navigate the methodological options available and provide frameworks to ensure the optimal research approach or approaches are used.

Any area of unmet methodological need within NIHR Better Methods, Better Research remit will be considered.

To develop your guidance, you should engage and involve relevant groups. These could include:

- methodologists
- non-methodologist researchers
- technical professionals
- health and allied health professionals
- industry
- non-expert stakeholder groups, such as: funding bodies, policy, and decision makers.

The guidance you produce will need to be accessible, appropriate and informative to the groups involved.

Outputs

Pathways to impact – we are focused on the impact of the research we fund. You are asked to consider the timing and nature of deliverables in your proposals; and encouraged to maximise the impact of your research by explaining how you will mobilise knowledge and ensure that it is useful and relevant to stakeholders such as;

- policy makers
- public health officers
- special interest groups
- charities
- community audiences
- other stakeholders

Duration and costs

You are advised that we are custodians of public funds and value for money is a key criteria that peer reviewers and commissioning committee members will assess applications against.

It is expected that applications to the Develop Guidance for Better Research Methods funding opportunity would typically be valued up to £120,000, with deliverable expectations within 18 months.

Application guidance

Please read our [domestic full application guidance](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/domestic-programmes-funding-guidance-full-applications) (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 looks for in applications. You can also check our [BMBR Programme page](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/funding-programmes/better-methods-better-research) (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/funding-programmes/better-methods-better-research) for details about the programme's scope and remit.

Detailed research plan

Write a maximum of 12 A4 pages for your research plan. When reviewing applications, we will not consider any additional information over this 12 page limit.

Background and rationale

Gaps remain between the development of improved biomedical and health and social care research methodologies, widespread awareness and uptake, and their recognition as best practice. Where multiple methodologies are available, it can be difficult to understand when, where or how each methodology should be best applied.

This funding opportunity will support the development of guidance to catalyse the uptake of validated research methods in priority areas of methodological uncertainty.

Your proposed guidance should allow others to navigate the methodological options available and provide frameworks to ensure the optimal research approach or approaches are used.

Any area of unmet methodological need within NIHR Better Methods, Better Research remit will be considered.

Please provide a clear explanation of what the guidance aims to address, how the guidance aims to improve the understanding and use of methods within the remit of MRC-NIHR BMBR Programme.

Please briefly explain:

- Why is this guidance needed now?

- What is the gap this guidance 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, providing the details of the methodology you will use to develop your guidance. Include the methodology for identifying stakeholders, eliciting their views and co-producing guidance.
2. Provide detail of any outcome measures and how these will be achieved, providing the proposed scope and format of consensus activities.
3. 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.
4. Please set out the measurements of success you intend to use, the risks to the proposed guidance 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 guidance, how these will be communicated and to whom, and how the guidance 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 guidance is seeking to achieve.

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

Explain the format of the proposed outputs and dissemination strategy, including optimal targeting, delivery and promotion and legacy plans. Outputs can include, but are not limited to:

- conference presentation or other workshop events
- publications (academic or otherwise)
- other copyright (for example questionnaires, training aids, toolkits, manuals, software)

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 will and need to engage with to develop the guidance and ensure uptake of the 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) (<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 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?

e. 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/) (<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, if any, 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. 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/) (<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

References

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%3D10174724). 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) (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) (/support-and-services/research-support-service).

Contact Details

- For help with your application contact bmb@nihr.ac.uk (mailto:bmb@nihr.ac.uk).
- For more information about the funding programme, visit the [Better Methods Better Research programme page](/node/63896) (/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/) (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/).