Evidence Synthesis

Evidence Synthesis Programme (ESP): Researcher-Led – Evidence Synthesis

Overview

Opportunity status:	Open
Type:	Programme
Funding available amount:	£1500000.00
Opening date:	26 January 2026 at 1:00 pm
Closing date:	18 May 2026 at 1:00 pm
Reference ID:	2026/361

Ready to apply?

**Apply now
(https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp?
dest=/Apps/app_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunity
id%3D10212931)**

We are inviting researcher-led applications for standalone evidence synthesis research.

We are providing a streamlined pathway for high-impact research by integrating funding routes previously managed under the Health Technology Assessment (HTA), Public Health Research (PHR), and Health and Social Care Delivery Research (HSDR) programmes.

We invite applications for standalone evidence syntheses that address the UK's most pressing health and social care challenges. Our goal is to support:

- rigorous synthesis – projects that employ bias-minimising techniques to resolve conflicting data and reduce uncertainty in critical fields
- better services – research focused on optimising the quality, accessibility, and organisation of health and social care delivery
- health equity – evidence that drives cost-effective interventions to improve population health and proactively reduce inequalities

By unifying these streams, we are empowering researchers to provide the definitive insights that shape our national services and improve lives.

This is a single-stage, researcher-led funding opportunity. Applicants will be expected to submit a full application.

Eligibility

See our ESP page (/research-funding/funding-programmes/evidence-synthesis) for details about the overall programme remit and eligibility criteria.

Methodological sub-studies – SWATs/SWARs/SWAPs

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

Key dates

26 January 2026

Full application opening date

11 February

Webinar

18 May 2026

Full application closing date

September 2026

Expected full application funding decision

Webinar

We are holding a webinar on Wednesday 11 February to support applications to this funding opportunity. Please fill out our webinar application form (/evidence-synthesis-programme-esp-webinar-form) to sign up.

Apply now
(https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp?
dest=/Apps/app_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunity
id%3D10212931)

Research specification

Our Evidence Synthesis Programme (ESP) is inviting researcher-led applications for standalone evidence synthesis research. Our new workstream consolidates researcher-led funding opportunities for evidence synthesis previously offered by the Health Technology Assessment (HTA), Public Health Research (PHR), and Health and Social Care Delivery Research (HSDR) programmes.

Background

Our Evidence Synthesis Programme (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/funding-programmes/evidence-synthesis#one) funds research that identifies, appraises and combines data from existing research studies to address questions of importance to policymakers, practitioners and the public. The evidence syntheses that we fund use systematic approaches and robust methodologies to provide trustworthy evaluations of existing research and best evidence to inform decision-making.

Funding opportunity scope

The scope of this funding opportunity is broad, covering (but not limited to) the areas below:

- evidence synthesis addressing the clinical and cost-effectiveness – and broader impact – of healthcare treatments, tests, and other interventions
- evidence synthesis focused on improving public health and wellbeing, including studies aimed at reducing health inequalities
- evidence synthesis focused on improving the delivery of health and social care services
- evidence synthesis addressing the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of social care interventions, with outcomes related to the health and wellbeing of service users and their carers

We seek high-impact evidence synthesis research with national relevance. Submissions that address very narrow questions, or those limited to rapid reviews, scoping reviews, or evidence maps, are outside the scope of this funding opportunity. Proposals may include systematic reviews, employ a range of synthesis methods and may include an economic analysis or modelling component. All applications need to take account of Best Research for Best Health: The Next Chapter (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/best-research-best-health-next-chapter) and other wider NIHR priorities.

Study design

This is a single-stage, researcher-led funding opportunity. You will be expected to submit a full application. The chosen synthesis methodology should be appropriate for the research topic and the nature of the available evidence. You must clearly demonstrate your knowledge of the research topic and related current research as well as of evidence synthesis methods. We strongly encourage you to develop proposals through co-production with topic experts and relevant stakeholders which may, for example, include health, public health and social care practitioners; patients, carers, and the public; charities, local authorities, and third sector organisations.

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
- health, public health and social care practitioners
- charities, and other third sector organisations

- community audiences

Duration and costs

Projects should state timelines for project delivery that are proportionate to the type of evidence synthesis proposed. We expect to commission projects which range in size, scope and cost.

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

Inclusive research

You must detail how you have considered inclusive research design and sex and gender throughout the whole research lifecycle and provide information on any associated costs.

For full details see our research inclusion funding application guidance (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/who-we-are/research-inclusion/funding-application-guidance).

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 ESP looks for in applications. You can also check our ESP page (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/funding-programmes/evidence-synthesis) for details about the programme's scope and remit.

Detailed research plan

Write a maximum of 20 A4 pages for your detailed research plan at the full stage. This should include the background, rationale and all figures. When reviewing applications, we will not consider any additional information over the page limit.

Background and rationale

Refer to the domestic full application guidance for details on what to include.

Aims and objectives

Refer to the domestic full application guidance for details on what to include.

Methodology/plan

For your methodology/plan, please refer to the domestic full application guidance and also include the detail below.

1. Project design and methods

Please elaborate on the proposed design as described in the full application guidance.

Methodological sub studies (Studies Within A Trial/Review/Project)

We encourage you to embed a methodological sub-study into your research. See our methodological sub-studies page (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/methodological-sub-studies-studies-within-trial-or-project-swat-and-studies-within-review-swar) for more information, including any restrictions of specific funding programmes.

2. Timeline and milestones

Please refer to the domestic full application guidance.

3. Working in partnership with those affected by your research

Please refer to the domestic full application guidance.

4. Your research team

Please refer to the domestic full application guidance.

5. Inclusive research

Please refer to the domestic full application guidance.

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. You must either comply with the research ethics framework formulated by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) or obtain approval via the National Research Ethics Service (NRES).

Knowledge mobilisation, dissemination and impact

Please refer to the domestic full application guidance.

Project management

Please refer to the domestic full application guidance.

Intellectual property and commercialisation

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

Budget section

Please refer to the domestic full application guidance.

Uploads

Please add the following to the 'Uploads' section of your application.

Flow diagram

Optional

Logic model

Optional

Gantt chart or project management plan (mandatory)

Attach a detailed project timetable. It must show key deliverables and milestones that assess specific interim achievements which are crucial to fulfilling the stated research objectives.

References (mandatory)

Upload a maximum of 3 A4 pages of references as a PDF document.

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%3D1 0212931). 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 18 May 2026 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: 3 December 2025

Download document (2.32 MB)

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 (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/support-and-services/research-support-service).

Contact Details

- For help with your application contact espapplications@nihr.ac.uk (mailto:espapplications@nihr.ac.uk)

- For more information about the funding Programme, visit the Evidence Synthesis page (/node/62841)

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