

## Guidance for completing the African Research Leader (ARL) Case for Support

The case for support should be a maximum of **nineteen** pages in length, including references, using Arial 11 pt typeface with margins of 2cms on all sides.

The case for support should describe four key elements:

- A. The talented 'rising star' African Research Leader candidate (1 page)**
- B. The high-quality science programme proposal (10 pages including references)**
- C. The research-conducive academic African environment / institution (4 pages)**
- D. A firm existing partnership with the UK partner institution (where the principal investigator is based) (4 pages)**

You should use the following guidance to structure your case for support in these four areas.

### **A. The candidate for Research Leader (1 page)**

*Curriculum Vitae and publication details are input elsewhere in the electronic submission. Applicants should use this section to demonstrate that they are a talented 'rising star' candidate appropriately qualified to undertake the research proposed.*

Candidates should describe their:

- key research interests;
- career development to date;
- research experience and scientific independence;
- track record and productivity;
- ability to cultivate and lead a research team;
- medium and long-term career goals.

### **B. The candidate's programme of Research (10 pages including references)**

*The scheme covers all biomedical and health research areas within the MRC/DFID global health remit, for example infections research; nutrition research; maternal and reproductive health research; research on non-communicable diseases including metabolic, cardiovascular, cancer and mental health research; epidemiological and social science approaches to health issues; public health research; health systems and implementation research.*

*Candidates should also bear in mind that priority will be given to applications that address the key health problems relevant to national and regional health needs in sub-Saharan Africa.*

Candidates should focus on the key points as set out in the guidance below. These are based on the generic guidance on the content of the case for support for research grants, as detailed in the [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#).

### **Title (maximum of 150 characters including spaces and punctuation)**

This should be structured to include the name of the proposed Research Leader together with the name of the African institution they will be employed at followed by the title of the research

i.e. **first initial surname, African Institution - research title**. In this way the proposed ARL will be acknowledged at the outset on the grant.

## Importance

- Explain the need for research in this area and the rationale for the particular lines of research planned.
- Justify the research either through it addressing a key national/regional health problem, its importance for human health, or its contribution to relevant areas of basic biomedical science.
- Give sufficient details of other past and current research to show that the aims are scientifically justified, and to show that the work will add distinct value to what is already known, or in progress.
- Where relevant, explain how plans benefit, fulfill unmet needs or contribute to current plans in the health service or industry.
- Where the research plans involve creating resources (eg a cohort) or facilities, or forming consortia, networks or centres of excellence, the case will need to address the potential added value, as well as issues of ownership, direction and sustainability.

## Scientific potential

### People and track record

- Each of the CVs will be uploaded separately as attachments in Je-S. If it is not obvious, the candidate may elaborate on why the group is well qualified to do this research in the Case for Support.
- Explain how each of the investigators named in the proposal would work together and outline other major collaborations important for the research.
- Acknowledge any previous or current MRC funding and describe progress to date on delivery of this research. The quality and productivity of the recent work will be a factor in assessing the likely quality of future work.
- If the candidate has not been active in research recently, simply state this.
- Describe any other factors which the candidate considers may promote delivery of the proposal.
- This scheme is not primarily intended to support PhD studentships in obtaining their degree. However, if the ARL candidate wishes to involve PhD students on their research programme they will need to demonstrate that the research and timeframe of the programme is appropriate and how the supervision of the student will be managed.

### Research plans

- Give details of the general experimental approaches, study designs, and techniques that will be used. It is not necessary to describe each experiment, but enough detail must be given to show why the research is likely to be competitive in its field.
  - Highlight plans which are particularly original or unique.
  - Describe all foreseeable human studies and animal experiments (in as much detail as possible at this stage).
  - Explain in greater detail how new techniques, or particularly difficult or risky studies, will be tackled and alternative approaches should these fail.
  - Identify facilities or resources you will need access to.
  - Give sufficient detail to justify the resources requested.
- If this is pilot work or proof of principle proposal, give a brief description of likely subsequent proposals if the work is successful. Please note that any proposals that are intended to lead

directly to a clinical trial must be discussed at an early stage with the relevant Programme Manager

- Explain opportunities or plans for pursuing commercial exploitation.

NB If the MRC require additional information on any points which seem contentious or unclear, there is an opportunity to do this when responding to referees' comments.

## Ethics and research governance

- Describe briefly the ethical issues arising from any involvement of people, human samples or personal data in the research proposal. Please give details of how any specific risks to human participants will be controlled, and of any new animal research MRC would be supporting. Please refer to Section 8 of this handbook for further guidance.
- Describe the ethical review and research governance arrangements that would apply to the work done.

## Exploitation and dissemination

- Is the proposed research likely to generate commercially exploitable results?
- What arrangements and experience does the research group or the host research organisation have to take forward the commercial exploitation of research in this area?
- Other than publication in peer reviewed journals, indicate how any results arising from the research will be disseminated so as to promote or facilitate take up by users in the health services.

*Please note that this scheme will not support clinical or health related trials including phase 1 safety, proof of principle, efficacy or effectiveness trials of any new medicinal product, device, vaccine or other interventions. There are specific strategic streams of funding available for such research proposals.*

*It will support observational programmes of epidemiological, laboratory, field and clinical research and early stage developmental research which may be associated with, or lead to future intervention evaluation or clinical trials. If this is the case the outcomes of the research and how these will be anticipated to inform future work should be made clear.*

## C. The African Environment / Institution: demonstration of a research-conducive environment (4 pages)

*Candidates must be employed by either, African Government-owned institutions and well-established 'not-for-profit' institutions in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Universities, Medical/Dental Schools and Academic Institutes or the MRC units in Uganda and The Gambia.*

This section should be used to describe the proposed African Institution's research environment including:

- The African Institution's mission, scientific objectives, strategy, management and governance policies.
- The level of research funding currently received in the proposed area by the African Institution, in terms of both national (government) and international funding.
- The level of the African Institution's commitment to the mid to long-term career of the proposed Research Leader. Describe how the institution intends to increase its level of financial support of the proposed Research Leader.

- The commitment of the African Institution for supporting the proposed programme of research and career goals of the candidate.
- What relationships have been established with the research relevant health services and Ministry of Health?
- What is the African Institution's commitment to developing systems for translating research outputs towards health policies, practices and products?
- Is the institution a valued partner in South-South and/or North-South links, demonstrated through contribution to research networks, joint training and development of initiatives nationally and internationally?
- How the proposed Research Leader's activities will generate added value/synergies for the African Institution.
- Please describe and make a persuasive case (appropriateness, quality, feasibility, value for money and likely benefit) for any request relating to the African Institution's institutional development needs relating to the proposed African Research Leader candidate.

#### **D. The African-UK Institutional Partnership (4 pages)**

*The individual scientific partnership between the ARL candidate and the UK principal investigator must be underpinned EITHER by an established track record of partnership at the institutional level OR a clear plan for developing and sustaining long-term cross-institutional collaboration'. Any previous partnering need not be in exactly the same area of research proposed in the application however the relevant strengths that each institution brings to the research proposed should be indicated.*

This section should be used to describe and justify:

- The existing strength and equity of the research partnership between the UK and African Institutions demonstrating a commitment to research excellence, capacity development and research to improve the health of disadvantaged populations.
- How the existing partnership provides a platform for the proposed Research Leader activities, both in scientific and developmental terms.
- Any existing links between the UK Principal investigator and the ARL candidate.
- The proposed broader benefits of the partnership to the ARL candidate over and beyond collaboration on the specific research proposed in the award.
- How the partnership will provide a unique opportunity to catalyse both leadership and research activities for the candidate.

If appropriate also:

- Indicate and justify any visit/placement to the UK, to provide a period (up to 3 months in total) of training/career development that cannot be effectively achieved within the African Institution. Where will this be? How will the learning be used for the wider benefit of the African partner?  
(Please also separately complete and submit, as one PDF, the placement template together with a supporting letter from the UK placement organisation).