Cancer Research and Global Health Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

**GCRF and ODA, country eligibility**

What is Official Development Assistance (ODA)?

ODA is an international definition owned by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and is not a RCUK or UK government term:

The OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines Official Development Assistance (ODA) as “flows to countries and territories” which are on the DAC’s list of ODA recipients\(^1\), provided by official agencies to promote the economic development and welfare of countries on the list. It is expected that funding streams eligible for allocation from the UK’s ODA budget demonstrate how they aim to contribute to reducing poverty and increasing sustainable development. ODA is highly relevant to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which 17 goals have been described as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including zero hunger and good health and well-being.

How does my research meet the ODA criteria for the Call?

Generic guidance cannot be provided; you will need to demonstrate that the primary purpose of your project is the economic development and welfare of LMIC(s) (listed [here]\(^1\)). To achieve this, you should consider the following aspects when preparing your application:

- Your proposed research should investigate a specific problem or seek a specific outcome which will impact on the economic development and welfare of LMIC(s) in the immediate or longer-term;
- You should articulate a clear and specific case for the benefit and relevance of the proposed research to the LMIC(s);
- Consider the pathway to realising the development impact (even if outside the timeframe of the project).

Any applications that do not address the ODA criteria will not be accepted.

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\(^1\) Please note that Antigua and Barbuda, Seychelles, Chile and Uruguay are likely to graduate from the DAC list. If you wish to include these countries as partners, please contact the MRC.
What is the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)?

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is a 5-year £1.5 billion resource funding stream, announced as part of the 2015 Spending Review, to ensure that UK research plays a key role in addressing global challenges and issues faced by developing countries. The GCRF demonstrates the UK government’s pledge to allocate 0.7% of Gross National Income to ODA. The remit of GCRF spans across multiple disciplines including social, biological, the environment and health. Therefore, the GCRF investment is of high relevance to all seven Research Councils, who are the primary partners to deliver the Fund.

For more information, please see the UK Research and Innovation GCRF webpage.

Which countries are eligible for partnering with for the “Cancer Research and Global Health” calls?

The OECD Development Assistance Committee’s (DAC) list of Official Development Assistance recipients is available here. This is the list of ODA recipient countries categorised by population income. More information can be found at www.oecd.org. Researchers based in any of the countries in this list2 are eligible co-applicants.

Note that for the outlines call you do not have to work with specific partners from the DAC list, whereas for the pump-priming call you are required to identify LMIC-based co-investigators.

For both calls, you will need to demonstrate how your research proposal will deliver primary benefits to Lower and Middle Income Countries (LMIC) in the long-term, and how you will deliver this pathway to impact.

Are middle income countries eligible to be partnered with? What if my partner country is taken off the DAC list?

Yes, middle income countries are eligible for partnering - if the country is named on the DAC list your application will be accepted.

If any other countries currently on the “Upper Middle Income Range” are taken off the list before the end of your project2, the project will continue through to completion but will be ineligible for any future awards.

Can my research also benefit the UK?

LMICs should be the primary beneficiaries. However, we expect that the research will also benefit the UK, in terms of the wider impacts such as new scientific knowledge, publications and training, etc.

2 Please note that Antigua and Barbuda, Seychelles, Chile and Uruguay are likely to graduate from the DAC list, if you wish to include these countries as partners, please consult the MRC Head Office.
Eligibility

Which institutions are eligible to lead on applications?

Only UK-based research institutions are allowed to lead on applications. Researchers from other UK or LMIC research institutions may be co-applicants. International research organisations cannot lead on this call. Standard MRC eligibility rules apply, as set out in Section 1.3 of the MRC Guidance for Applicants.

Can LMIC partners be included as Co-Investigators?

Yes. Developing UK-LMIC research partnerships is a central objective of the pump-priming call and so at least one LMIC-based scientist must be included as a co-investigator. Whilst co-applicants from LMICs are encouraged for the call for outlines, they are not a formal requirement as long as the work still meets the ODA criteria. LMIC co-applicants may be based at higher education institutions, non-profit research institutions or non-governmental organizations.

Please note, the work undertaken under the proposal must fulfil ODA criteria; i.e. must be shown to be primarily relevant to the benefit of health and prosperity of people in LMIC settings.

Which LMIC-based institutions are eligible to apply as co-applicants?

LMIC research institutions may include higher education institutions, non-profit research institutions or non-governmental organisations. Please note that LMIC-based research institutions must be registered on Je-S. Please contact the Je-S helpdesk (JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk) providing details of the relevant research organization (name, address, weblink). The Je-S helpdesk will advise you as to whether the research organization is already on the system or whether it needs to be registered. Note that you will be allowed to submit the application even if the Je-S accounts are not fully verified (as the verification may take some time), but you must start the registration process for all the ROs before submitting.

Are Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) eligible to lead on applications?

No. NGOs are not eligible as main applicants. UK or LMIC-based NGOs are eligible as co-applicants only. Note that co-applicants must be registered on Je-S.

Are MRC Units eligible?

MRC Units have now transferred to Universities and are eligible to submit applications to the MRC, including GCRF proposals. However, they must make clear within their application (e.g. in the cover letter) how the proposed research will be distinct from that which is already supported by MRC core funding.
Can Industry partners (UK or LMIC-based) be included within an application?

Yes, collaborations with industry or other private sector contributors (LMIC or UK-based) are welcomed, however they cannot be recipients of MRC funding. The role of industrial or other private partners must be clearly explained and justified, with special emphasis on the anticipated benefit to the health and prosperity of LMICs. If industrial collaborations are in place, a MICA form is required and must be submitted with the application.

Can non-LMIC international partners be co-applicants?

International researchers from High Income Countries may be included as co-investigators in the application in exceptional circumstances. For example, if they provide expertise not available in the UK. The inclusion of co-applicants from high income countries should be approved by the MRC Head Office in advance of submitting your application (please email queries to globalcancer@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk). Applicants are expected to clearly justify the contribution of the non-LMIC international co-investigators in the case for support.

Who should be the lead investigator (PI) on the application?

The lead or principal investigator (PI) must be a senior member of the institution. The PI should have demonstrated scientific leadership and relevant scientific expertise to lead the application, and should be well-placed to lead and coordinate activities within the institution if successful. An institutional letter of support must be included in the application.

Applications may include additional co-investigators from UK research organisations and/or LMIC partners. Their roles on the application should be clearly justified. CVs for the PI and Co-Is should be included.

Can a lead investigator submit applications to both Cancer Research and Global Health calls (pump-priming and outlines for substantial proposals)? Does this preclude any other applications for GCRF funding?

Yes. These are two separate funding calls. Applying for either of these calls or both does not preclude PIs from applying to any other GCRF or MRC funding. Please note that the pump-priming call is seeking to establish new research partnerships with LMIC researchers / gather preliminary data / explore new areas of research, which can help develop future, more substantive proposals. The outline call is for groups who are already well situated to submit more ambitious applications and are seeking constructive feedback to make the proposals more competitive for funding at the Research Boards.

Staff:

Can funds be used toward the salary of the PI or Co-I?

- Pump-priming call: No. Requests to use the funds for salary costs of PI or Co-Is should not be part of the proposal unless in exceptional circumstances (e.g. junior researchers who will be directly involved in the research). Any such requests should be approved by MRC in advance of submitting your application.
Outlines call: Yes. Funds towards salary costs of the PI and Co-Is can be included under directly allocated costs, and should be adequately justified (e.g. which work packages are PI and/or Co-Is involved in and why?).

Indirect and estates costs:

Please note that indirect / estates costs, if any, should be kept to a minimum for the pump-priming call, as the aim of the call is to help develop new research activities.

Indirect costs include the costs of administration such as staff, finance, library and some departmental services.

Estate costs provide a share of the cost of providing the physical infrastructure for research. These costs may include building and premises costs, basic services and utilities and any clerical staff and equipment maintenance or operational costs that have not been included under other cost headings.

Indirect and estates costs will be calculated by each RO using TRAC methodology, so will vary between institutions and between departments within those institutions. A single figure will be required at time of application.

Overseas partners are generally not eligible to receive indirect or estates costs. However, where the research is being undertaken in a developing country the MRC may contribute towards these costs at its discretion, if it will assist in developing research capacity.

Although the MRC will not question the indirect costs and estates costs rates declared by overseas ROs, the full cost of the proposed research (including these costs) will be taken into account in any assessment of value for money. Please contact Head Office ahead of submission to discuss any indirect/estates costs overseas.

Costs should be entered as exceptions and costed at 100% FEC.

What project partner Letters of Support are required?

We only require letters of support from project partners that will play an important role in the activities described in the proposal, and/or will contribute to the development of the institutional strategy. A project partner provides a substantial intellectual contribution to the project, and their organisation may also provide resources either in-kind or financially. Project partners are not expected to request MRC funding to participate.

How should the applications be costed on Je-S?)

Please input costs under the following headings:

- Directly incurred: staff; travel and subsistence; other.
- Directly incurred/ Exceptional (LMIC) costs: staff; travel and subsistence; other.

Note that directly allocated costs are only allowed in exceptional circumstances (i.e., when salary contributions for UK-based PI or Co-Is have been pre-approved by Head Office).
What information should be included in the “other support section”?

Lead applicants (PIs) and Co-Investigators should list their grant funding in areas relevant to the calls. For any other queries regarding submitting your application on Je-S please contact the Je-S helpdesk.

Questions specific to the “Cancer Research and Global Health” Initiative

Should submissions include projects relevant to multiple priority areas outlined in the call, or is it expected that the proposal will be more targeted, addressing a small number of the priority areas?

It is entirely up to researchers to decide how broad or targeted their proposals should be. Also, the priority areas outlined in the call text are non-prescriptive, and applicants are welcome to focus on other cancer-relevant research areas, provided that they make a compelling case in the case for support.