Environment & Social Ecology of Human Infectious Diseases (ESEI) phase 1 – Catalyst Grants guidance and evaluation notes

Application process .................................................................1
Case for support ........................................................................2
Evaluation notes .......................................................................4
Eligibility ...................................................................................4
Funding ....................................................................................5
Assessment process and timetable ..............................................5
Performance review .................................................................5

Application process

Electronic Application and Assessment (EAA) system

Your completed proposals must be submitted via MRC’s Electronic Application and Assessment (EAA) by 4pm on 16th December 2009. Applications are submitted to the MRC by your research organisation’s administrative department after they have completed their section of your EAA application form. All eligible lead Research Organisations must be registered with MRC to apply for funding via the MRC EAA. See eligibility section below.

EAA How to apply?

Within the application details page, please follow the following guidelines:

Grant scheme you are applying for: Strategic Grant
Are you applying in: Managed Mode
Type of Grant: New Application
Are you creating an Outline Application for a Centre, Trial, Strategic, Programme or DPFS grant? No
Proposed Duration of Award (in months): 9 months maximum
Within the **scientific classification** page, for ‘**MRC Office Scientific Contact for your Application:**’ select ‘**Dr Claire Newland**’ from the drop down list.

Please note all mandatory sections on the application highlighted in yellow need to be completed.

Applicants should refer to the general guidance for applicants (in the **applicant’s handbook** and **using the EAA guidance**) which will guide you through the standard process for preparing and costing your proposal. Applicants should take into consideration all relevant **ethics and research governance policy** and guidance relating to the proposed research. Relevant documents can be found on the MRC website under **Our Research**, including those relating to good research practice; clinical research governance; open access to published research; data sharing initiative; data access; consent to take part in research; use of human tissues; and use of animals in medical research.

**Case for support**

Catalyst Grants may support the following kinds of activity and the resources needed to undertake them:

- Evidence gathering, strategic reviews and research needs/impacts assessments.
- Planning and hosting of themed “research challenge workshops” and research meetings.
- Building appropriate research strategies, plans and proposals.
- Bringing together working partnerships, collaborations and management mechanisms.
- Developing leadership teams and management structures.
- Negotiations with host institutions and outside funders.
- Developing communication strategies.

In your case for support please address each of the following headings using the description under each heading as guidance. The case for support may be up to four A4 pages in length, including references, using Verdana 10pt typeface with margins of 2cms on the left hand side and 1.5cms on other edges. No annexes are allowed.

1. **Title of the proposal**

2. **What are the principal aims and objectives of the proposal?**
   
   Outline the research questions and explain how the proposed research strategy fits with the objectives of this ESEI call.

3. **Describe the inter-disciplinary collaborations and partnerships involved in the proposal**
   
   Summarise the expertise of applicants and collaborators and describe their involvement in the development of the research strategy. Describe the research environment in which this will take place.
Outline any other strategic partnerships and user engagement. Explain how these associations will contribute to achieving the objectives of the proposed research and describe how these relationships will be developed.

At the catalyst grant stage applicants are eligible to submit proposals that do not have all interdisciplinary collaborations in place at the outset, provided that applicants demonstrate how they will address this. If there are any gaps in inter-disciplinary collaborations/partnerships, detail the network’s ability to develop appropriate contributions from, and a good working relationship with, individuals from disciplines identified as currently missing from the team.

To progress this research area the vision is the establishment of interdisciplinary teams of researchers, conducting high quality state-of-the-art innovative research, addressing national/international research priorities that will inform and impact on policy and practice. It is therefore expected that Research Consortia Grants submitted in Phase II of this call would propose truly interdisciplinary approach that encompasses health, environmental, social and biological sciences.

4. Summarise the programme of activities proposed

Provide a development path which could potentially lead to an application for a Research Consortia Grant. Give a description of the programme of activities proposed to develop the research strategies and what outputs will be delivered at each stage. Outline the resources that will be required to achieve these goals.

5. Timetable of proposed activities

Give a timetabled plan of the proposed activities and expenditure.

6. What is the proposed management structure?

Describe how activities will be coordinated including the management structure and organisation of resources.

7. Describe the potential impact of this work

Describe the potential impact of the proposed research strategy.

Identify which users/stakeholders will benefit from the proposed research strategy developed by the partnership/network and what benefits would be delivered.

Summarise how the outputs of the partnership/network activities and proposed research strategy will be disseminated and translated to target audiences and stakeholders. Summarise how data outputs from the proposed research strategy will be effectively managed and shared for future use.

8. What is the added value of the Catalyst grant over and above existing activities of the applicants and collaborators?

Describe how the establishment of a network/partnerships through a Catalyst Grant creates new inter-disciplinary, cross-sector partnerships within the research priority areas that complement and build on the expertise and research interests of applicants and collaborators. Explain how this research
strategy could not be achieved through current activities of those involved and how this approach is new and adds value over and above ongoing activities.

Evaluation notes

Applications will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- **Fit to the call.** The application must address the strategic aims and objectives defined by the call. Preference will be given to proposals addressing systems giving rise to zoonotic infections and their drivers into human populations. Applications outside the priority area will be considered but with lower priority.
- **Potential importance, impact, quality and novelty of the interdisciplinary research question(s).**
- **Capability building and added value.** Does the partnership/network have the potential to create a new inter-disciplinary partnership within the research priority area. To what extent does the partnership/network add value over and above existing activities?
- **Strategic partnerships with users.** Does the collaboration include (or potentially include) appropriate user involvement and engagement?
- **Potential for delivery in the timeframe including the feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed programme of activities.** Are the requested resources appropriate and justified? Is the proposed management structure appropriate? Does the proposed team of investigators possess the necessary range of expertise and experience to successfully carry out the proposed activities?
- **Potential impacts for users/stakeholders.** Are the proposed benefits for the listed beneficiaries appropriate for the likely outcomes of this work? Are the knowledge exchange plans suitable?

Eligibility

The initiative is open to any UK-based researcher who can demonstrate that they will direct the proposed research and be actively engaged in carrying it through. Please see the [applicant handbook](#) for further details.

An eligible individual may submit a maximum of either (i) one proposal as a PI and one as a co-applicant, or (ii) two proposals as a co-applicant. An individual may be a collaborator on any number of proposals in addition to the above.

All eligible lead Research Organisations must be registered with the MRC to apply for funding via the MRC EAA. Eligible institutions include UK higher education institutions, Research Council institutes, and eligible Independent Research Organisations (IROs). Eligible institutions are those normally eligible for MRC, NERC, ESRC and BBSRC funding - all IROs listed on the [RCUK web page](#) are eligible to apply. If institutions wish to submit an application they must have pre-registered with the MRC Electronic Application and Assessment (EAA) system before submitting an application; [www.eaa.mrc.ac.uk](http://www.eaa.mrc.ac.uk). Please note that the registration can take up to 10 working days. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Researchers from developing countries are eligible to apply as co-applicants, providing their inclusion in the project is justified. To note, all funds are awarded
to the lead Research Organisation, which is then responsible for the distribution of any funds to collaborating research organisation.

Funding

Applicants can request up to £50k (80% fec) for a maximum of 9 months. It is anticipated that around 10 Catalyst Grants will be awarded in this call. As a condition of funding, all successful applicants must be able to commence activities within a month of receipt of their award offer.

MRC will administer and manage the call on behalf of the ESEI funders. Awards will follow standard MRC terms and conditions.

Applicants can apply for support for:

- Staff support including costs for evidence gathering, strategic reviews and research needs/impacts assessments.
- Costs to cover activities such as workshops or meetings in order to build research strategies, plans and new relationships, developing working partnerships and management mechanisms, developing and implementing communication and dissemination strategies.
- Travel costs to support activities bringing together partners and collaborators.

Assessment process and timetable

The deadline for submitting proposals will be 16 December 2009. Proposals will be assessed by a Scientific Advisory Panel and recommendations for funding made to the ESEI funders. Final funding decisions will be made by the ESEI funders taking into account the recommendations of the Scientific Advisory Panel, the strategic objectives of the call and balance of the ESEI programme as a whole. Applicants will be notified of awards in April 2010.

Application for a Catalyst Grant is a pre-requisite to be eligible to apply for Research Consortia Grants in Phase II of this initiative, because of the intention to provide a strategic steer to applicants at the catalyst grant stage.

Up to a further 6 applicants may be invited to submit an application for Research Consortia Grants without being awarded a catalyst grant, if there is sufficient potential for high quality proposals in the Research Consortia round.

Performance review

Catalyst grant holders will be expected to provide a brief report to the funders on request.