

**MRC/DFID Call for Proposals:
Implementation research for improved adolescent health in low
and middle income countries.**

This call for proposals is supported by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and Department for International Development (DFID). £3million is available. Please note: applications will be accepted from Principal Investigators based at organisations in the UK and in Low, Lower-middle and Upper-middle income countries as highlighted on the OECD list <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/49483614.pdf>

Contents

1. How to apply to UK MRC	2
2. Application Timeline	3
3. Eligibility Information	3–4
a. Principal Investigators	
b. Co-investigators	
c. Project Partner/s	
d. Eligible Countries for this scheme	
e. Costs for LMIC applicants	
f. Application process for IRO or Non HEI UK Organisations	
4. Application Submission	5–9
a. A1. The online Je-S form	
b. A2. Outline case for support	
c. A3. CVs and publication lists of investigators	
5. Assessment Criteria	9–10

1. How to apply to the UK Medical Research Council

This guidance is for applicants wishing to apply to the UK Medical Research Council in response to the MRC/DFID call for research proposals for implementation research for improved adolescent health in low and middle income countries.

This guidance supplements the MRC Guidance for Applicants: <http://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/>. The MRC Guidance for Applicants is the most comprehensive guidance for applicants applying for MRC funding and is updated regularly. The majority of queries can be answered by referencing this document.

This present document provides additional information specific to the MRC/DFID adolescent health call for proposals. Where guidance in the present document differs from that in the MRC Guidance for Applicants you should follow the guidance in this present, scheme specific, document.

This MRC/DFID adolescent health call will accept applications from UK researchers and from researchers based in low and/or middle income countries (LMIC). The Principal Investigators applying for this call must be hosted by a UK institution or an institution based in an LMIC. The expectation is that projects will be collaborative endeavours, with shared scientific and intellectual leadership.

We intend to fund several projects out of £3m available; we are flexible on the sizes of project and are open to considering feasibility and pilot work as well as aiming to fund several larger-scale projects.

Please refer all queries to:

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2. Application Timeline

This scheme has a two stage application process, you will firstly need to submit an outline proposal. Only applicants successful at the outline stage will be invited to submit an application at the full stage.

JeS System opens for submission of outline applications	5th November 2015
Deadline for outline submission	21st January 2016 16:00 GMT
Outline panel meeting	March 2016
JeS System opens for submission of full applications	Late spring 2016
Full stage panel meeting	Autumn 2016

3. Eligibility information

This call differs from the standard MRC rules as for this call Principal Investigators can be based either in the UK (as per usual MRC rules) or in a low or middle-income country (LMIC).

Principal Investigators (PIs)

Eligibility of UK-based PIs is covered in the [Guidance to Applicants and Award Holders](#). The PI must be employed by an eligible institution that is legally registered in the UK or LMIC. Please refer to the [Guidance to Applicants and Award Holders](#) to find out more about MRC rules regarding eligible institutions.

Principal Investigators cannot be based in a high income country outside the UK.

For researchers based in low- or middle-income countries, eligible institutions include higher education institutions and non-profit research institutions. Funding for non-UK research institutions that have not previously received funding from one of the funding partners will be dependent on further eligibility and financial checks, to be conducted if the proposal is selected for funding. Please see annex I for further details regarding the registration of overseas applicants. For further advice on eligibility, please contact aaron.holliday@headoffice.co.uk.

It is not permitted for the same person to be Principal Investigator on any more than two proposals submitted to this call.

While there is formally only one PI, you can make it clear in your Case for Support that the scientific leadership is shared and that in this respect, the applicants listed are co-principal investigators.

Co-investigators (Co-Is)

Co-investigators can be based in the UK as per usual MRC funding rules.

Co-investigators can also be based in low- and middle-income countries as per usual MRC funding rules. They can claim 100% of their direct costs and up to 20% of costs as indirect costs. Please refer to the **MRC Guidance for Applicants**, specifically section **3.1.5 Overseas costs**.

Co-investigators can be based in high-income countries outside of the UK as per usual MRC funding rules. They can claim 100% of their direct costs but no indirect costs. However, as the scheme is intended to fund work in low- and middle-income countries, high-income country applicants are advised to keep their costs claimed to a minimum.

All Co-investigators should be registered and added to the application. **There is a delay between registration and the investigator being available on the online system to add to the application, so please ensure that registration is completed well in advance of the submission deadline.**

Important Information for Lead applicants (UK or Overseas) regarding the inclusion of Overseas Investigators within the Je-S application

All lead applicants (UK or Overseas Lead), **MUST** ensure that each investigator's overseas research organisation has been successfully added to the Je-S database, to allow each overseas investigator to create the required level of Je-S account.

Project Partner/s

A Project Partner is an organisation or individual who is providing substantial contribution to the project and will not take any funds out of the project. Therefore any persons already named on the proposal (e.g. as PI, Co-I or Named Researcher), should NOT also be included as a Project Partner.

For further guidance regarding Project Partners, please see the relevant Je-S guidance page at <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Login.aspx> and **MRC Guidance for Applicants** looking specifically at section **1.3.4 Project Partners**.

Eligible Countries for this scheme

The scheme funds research in low and middle income countries as defined in the DAC list of ODA recipients: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm>. The implementation strategies proposed should be designed to meet the most vulnerable groups within ODA recipient countries.

Costs for LMIC applicants

As per standard MRC policy regarding investigator based in LMICs, all LMIC applicants can claim 100% of their direct costs and 20% of indirect costs as exceptional costs. Please refer to the **MRC Guidance for Applicants**, specifically section **3.1.5 Overseas costs**.

4. Application Submission

All applications to the MRC/DFID adolescent health call need to be submitted through the Je-S submission system. **To submit your outline proposal you will need to:**

- A1. Complete the online Je-S form**
- A2. Upload your Outline Case for support**
- A3. Upload your CVs (including publication lists) of investigators**

When completing all of these documents, please refer to Section **5. Assessment Criteria** for this scheme.

Your outline application should be submitted by **16:00 GMT on Thursday, 21st January 2016**.

The assessment panel will meet approximately 2 months after the deadline and you will receive notification of whether you are invited to submit a full proposal within a fortnight of that meeting.

If you are invited to submit a full application you will be provided with a guidance document for completion of your full application. You may also be provided with panel feedback notes for you to take into consideration when preparing your full application.

A1. The online Je-S form

The online Je-S form is where you enter administrative information about the investigators, a summary of costings and summary information about the proposed project and its potential impact. Please access the Je-S form well in advance of submitting your proposal so that you can see exactly what information is required for this section.

Accessing Je-S: <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Login.aspx>

When submitting your application through Je-S you will be provided with the following drop down menus. Please select the following options:

Select Council: **MRC**

Select Document Type: **Outline Proposal**

Select Scheme: **Standard Outline**

Select Call/Type/Mode: **MRC/DFID ADH Out Jan 2016**

All co-investigators should be registered on the Je-S system and added to the online application. There is a delay between registration and the investigator being available on the system to add to the application, so please ensure that registration is completed well in advance of the submission deadline. For this call co-investigators can 'self-register' their Research Organisation on Je-S. To self-register please follow the links available through the Je-S log in page: <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Login.aspx>

As well as entering information about the investigators on Je-S there is an option to enter Project Partners. Project Partners are defined in the Je-S system as organisations that are participating in the research project but are not requesting funding from the project. Project Partners are partners who would, instead of receiving funding, be themselves providing cash or in-kind contributions. For instance, they might be a pharmaceutical company who have agreed to provide drugs that are required for the project. **The only letters of support required at this stage of the process are letters of support from Project Partners.** It is not essential to have Project Partners included in your application.

Important information regarding application submission

All Overseas Lead applicants and Independent Research Organisations (IROs), e.g. UK NHS Trusts, Hospitals, Boards, Primary Care Trust & GP Practices, are advised to check the electronic submission path of their application.

There are two ways an application is submitted to the MRC through Je-S.

1. If your organisation is "Self Registered", then the submission will be direct from applicant to Council (MRC).
2. If your organisation has an electronic pool structure, submission will not be direct and will first go to a member in your organisations submitter pool.

If your organisation has a submitter pool, then a member of this pool will be required to complete the application submission process ensuring that the application reaches MRC before the advertised deadline. MRC would recommend that all lead applicants contact their submitter pool members to ensure that at least one of those listed will be available to complete the application submission process by the advertised closing time of 16:00 GMT on 21st January 2016.

Submission problems

Should you require any assistance with the submission process and/or the Je-S system please contact the Je-S helpdesk.

To contact the Je-S Helpdesk, email: JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk, or call: **+44 (0) 1793 44 4164**.

A2. Outline case for support

Your Case for Support is a document including your scientific proposal, details of the research environment, people involved and references. Your Case for Support should indicate how your proposal fits the call specification for this scheme.

The outline Case for Support should not exceed five sides of A4 plus one additional page of references (six pages in total). Please use:

- Arial font with a minimum size of 11pt (excluding text on diagrams and mathematical symbols)
- A minimum of single line spacing
- Standard character spacing
- Margins of no less than 2cm.

Please number all pages of the Case for Support.

Please complete the proposal in English and use British Pounds Sterling for all costs.

Additional annexes are not permitted. You do not need to submit letters of support at the outline stage except for Project Partners (see section A1 for more information on Je-S Project Partners).

If you plan to include unpublished data it must be included in the Case for Support. Manuscripts in press or submitted to journals should not be included.

Your proposal cannot be supplemented with further information after the submission deadline.

Please use the following headings when preparing your outline Case for Support:

1. Project summary information

- Full title of the project (no more than 150 characters)
- In which country(ies) will the project take place
- Duration in months
- Total amount requested
- Principal implementation research question(s) to be addressed

2. Project description

Please describe the methodology to be used. Please ensure that you cover the following points:

- Where will the research take place?
- Who will the research participants be and why?
- What are your research plans to address those questions?
 - Give details of the study design and techniques that will be used and why.
 - Enough detail must be given to show why the research is likely to be competitive in its field.
 - Please explain why your chosen methodology is the most appropriate to address your research question.
- Please describe any preliminary and feasibility data that informs the approach taken.
- If the research involved data collection or acquisition you must demonstrate that you have carried out a datasets review, and state why currently available datasets are inadequate for the proposed research.
- What is the proposed timeline?
- How will you evaluate the outcome of the study?

3. Rationale for the study

- Please indicate how your project fits the objectives and scope of the call specification.
- Why is the study needed now and in the proposed location? Please consider issues such as burden of disease and priority for the relevant local, regional and national health services.

- What gaps in existing knowledge will be addressed by the study and why is addressing those gaps using an implementation research approach important?
- What evidence is there that the answer to your research question is needed and wanted by relevant users, for instance, policy makers?

4. Research project team and engagement strategies

Please indicate the level and nature of involvement of multidisciplinary research teams, clinical and non-clinical health workers, civil society, industry, policy and decision makers and patient and community groups.

What policymaking partners or other stakeholders will be involved?

Please describe how the project will have relevant community engagement by individuals, communities and/or organisations who are the intended beneficiaries of the research.

Please describe how the team of investigators incorporate the range of discipline and experience necessary to carry out the study.

5. How will the results of this study be used?

- What changes might be implemented as a result of this study?
- Who will make those changes happen and how?
- Might the results be generalizable beyond the immediate research setting?
- What are the planned knowledge translation strategies?
- How will scale up be addressed?

6. Financial Information

Are other funding partners involved? Who are the partners and what is the status of the discussions?

In addition to the costings you have provided on Je-S, please provide a breakdown of the funding request per institution using the below table.

Organisation name	Total project costs (GBP)	Total cost requested from this scheme (GBP)*

7. Proposal history

Has an application for funding for this project been submitted previously to the MRC or another funding organisation?

If so, please indicate the status of the previous application.

A3. CVs and publication lists of investigators

For each named investigator please submit a 2 page CV and a 1 page publication list.

Please upload each CV and each publication list separately to the system.

5. Assessment Criteria

Information on the MRC's approach to peer review is provided in the MRC Reviewers Handbook.

The assessment panel for this scheme will consider whether outline applications are of world-class standard (being intellectually innovative, well-focused and methodologically sound), and whether the research has the potential to make a real improvement to health outcomes in low and middle income countries.

For this scheme, peer reviewers will be asked to comment on the following criteria in assessing the proposals.

- i) Relevance and Quality of Project
- ii) Quality of Team
- iii) Project Implementation Plans
- iv) Potential Impact

Criterion One: Relevance and Quality of Project

- Proposal fits well within the objectives and scientific remit set out in the call.
- Strong scientific rationale for pursuing the questions or gaps in knowledge that are being addressed. Success is likely to lead to significant new understanding that is relevant for scientists and knowledge users. Applicants are aware of complementary research underway elsewhere.
- Proposed methods are appropriate and feasible to answer the study question(s) and are considered best in the international field of implementation research.
- Proposal is innovative
- Ethical issues have been considered

Criterion Two: Quality of Team

- Multidisciplinary team members have established a high quality track record in related fields of proposed research and pertinent to implementation science and they have the right balance of expertise given goal(s) of research project.
- Each country participating in the project must have a named principal investigator.
- Early career investigators are part of the team and strong training plan for research capacity-building is included.
- Demonstrated engagement of decision-makers.
- Identify stakeholders such as decision-makers and service delivery partners and include them on the research team.
- Demonstrable engagement with relevant patient and community groups.

Criterion Three: Project Implementation Plans

- Major scientific, technical or organisational challenges been identified, and realistic plans to tackle these are outlined.
- Proposed intervention strategies are relevant to the socio-political, cultural, legislative and economic contexts of the study settings.
- Inequities and equity gaps, including gender, have been taken into account in the design of an implementation strategy.
- Appropriate measures of evaluation have been included. Programmes that are able to track long-term clinical, policy and/or health system outcomes are strongly encouraged.

Criterion Four: Potential Impact

- Project appropriately leverages existing programmes and platforms (e.g. research, data, delivery platforms)
- The potential for scaling up intervention strategies has been considered. For example, applicants could address affordability for users and the financial implications for implementing organisations and funders or might assess scalability to various socio-political contexts.
- Projects are designed to inform practice, programmes and/or policy development and/or refinements.
- Describe how health economic dimensions will be assessed such as cost-effectiveness of proposed intervention and its scalability.
- Where appropriate project demonstrates alignment with relevant international and/or national commitments.