

FUNDING CALL FOR GLOBAL MATERNAL AND NEONATAL HEALTH FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If you still have queries after reading the call text, generic and call-specific applicant guidance, and these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), please contact international@mrc.ukri.org

Q: Are non-Anglophone countries eligible and can more than one country be involved?

Answer: Proposals should seek to address maternal and/or neonatal health issues facing low and middle income countries (LMICs) as listed on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) list. This includes both Anglophone and non-Anglophone countries (including Francophone Africa) although all applications must be written in English. Applications involving more than one LMIC are welcomed.

Q: Are multiple middle-income country (MIC) or low-income country (LIC) collaborators acceptable?

Answer: There can be only one Principle Investigator (PI), however it is acceptable to include multiple collaborators from different low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) as listed on the OECD DAC list.

Q: Can the LMIC investigator be a Principal Investigator in seed funding applications?

Answer: Yes, both the seed-funding and research grants calls are open to PIs from both UK and LMIC organisations.

Q: What is the level of LMIC co-I involvement required?

Answer: Where the application is led by a UK PI, it should include effective, sustainable and equitable partnerships with researchers based in the LMIC location(s) where the research will take place, with strong governance and management processes in place. All applications should demonstrate scientific leadership and intellectual contribution from LMIC investigators with a clear plan for sustaining partnerships beyond the duration of the award.

Q: Can staff based in London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)/Medical Research Council (MRC) overseas units be included and funded by this scheme?

Answer: Yes, collaborations with LSHTM/MRC Units in the Gambia and Uganda are classed as LMIC partnerships although costs should be included at 80% full economic cost (fEC).

Q: Can early/mid-career applicants apply as PI's?

Answer: We encourage the involvement of early and mid-career researchers in proposals. Where early/mid-career researchers are leading the proposal as PI we encourage more senior investigators to be involved to provide guidance and mentorship, depending on the scope and scale of the project.

Q. Can PhD fellowships be included in the applications even though these may not be completed within three years of the award?

Answer: Research grants and seed-funding grants are **not** intended to support studentships (such as costs associated with masters or PhD programmes). The cost of PhD fellowships cannot be included in the application.

Q: Can those applying for seed funding, then return with a research grant application?

Answer: Yes, it is hoped that seed-funding results in substantive research grant applications either to this scheme or to other funding opportunities. Timing should be borne in mind if applicants wish to submit a research grant proposal to this scheme following seed-funding at this first round: Those seed-funding projects successful at this round will complete in March 2021 with the deadline for research grant applications to round 3 of this scheme likely to be April 2021. Seed-funding awards are not guarantees of further funding nor are seed-funding awardees required to submit full research grant applications.

Q: Will methodological research be eligible?

Answer: Yes, as long as the methodological research question being posed is directly relevant to maternal and neonatal health and a clear account of the likely benefits and impact of the methodological development is provided.

Q: Will implementation research be eligible (e.g., informing new modalities of service delivery)?

Answer: Yes, the funders recognise that progress in maternal and neonatal health relies on both innovation and better implementation of known interventions. Implementation research that informs and supports the uptake of such interventions would be within the remit of this call.

Q: Will health system research be eligible in this call given there is also a separate call for this field?

Answer: Yes, health systems research will be considered within this call where directly relevant to maternal and/or neonatal health. Given the expected budget demand on this call it is possible that applications proposing health systems research or clinical trials may be directed to the next available Health Systems Research Initiative or Joint Global Health Trials scheme at the outline panel stage. Please note that submission of the same application to more than one funding call (either within MRC or elsewhere) is not permitted.

Q: Are implementing partners, including charities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and overseas government departments eligible to be the lead applicant on research applications?

Answer: No, the lead applicant (i.e. the PI) must be based at an eligible research institution either within an LMIC or the UK. Implementing partners that have sufficient research capacity may be named as co-Investigators, but this should be discussed with the MRC Office prior to submission. Implementing partners may be named as Project Partners where they are not drawing funding from the proposal or as sub-contractors where they are carrying out a specific piece of work on a fee-for-service basis.

Q: What counts as a Project Partner and who needs to provide a Letter of Support?

Answer: Project Partners are collaborators based at non-academic institutions (typically in industry) that are providing intellectual input to the project but are **not** requesting funding to participate. Rather, they typically offer a financial or in-kind contribution to the project, such as access to equipment or resources. Project partners should provide a Letter of Support but academic institutions where PIs/Co-Is are based are not required to.

Q: Do the projects need to be intervention based, or can it can be based on aetiology/pathogenesis? Will basic research or research closer to applied clinical utility be prioritised?

Answer: The challenges facing global maternal and neonatal health are multi-faceted and wide-

ranging. Accordingly, proposals from across the translational pipeline are welcomed and do not need to be focused solely on intervention. Nor is there a bias towards funding basic versus applied research. Proposals should seek to address an important and novel research question regardless of the methodology that is implemented.

Q: Can a study cover the 2 phases of: intervention development then intervention evaluation?

Answer: Yes, if the applicant believes that both development and evaluation are feasible within the given time and budgetary constraints.

Q: Are the funds for research grant funding guaranteed for the maximum of three years for any award?

Answer: Yes, however any changes to the award in relation to Official Development Assistance (ODA) compliance should be reported to the relevant MRC programme manager.

Q: Can funding be used to cover capacity-strengthening activities including research project management?

Answer: Yes, we encourage capacity building to be included within all proposals. However, capacity strengthening cannot be the sole or primary aim of a research grant application – there must also be a clear research question. Seed-funding, on the other hand, can be used for purely capacity building activity, collection of preliminary data, pilot/feasibility work, or networking costs.

Q: Can funds be used for systematic reviews or other modes of secondary research?

Answer: The scheme is intended to fund primary research, but systematic reviews and other secondary research could be included within research proposals addressing important, novel research questions, with justification.