

## Call for research in Global Maternal and Neonatal Health – Seed-funding Grant Applicant Guidance

**PLEASE NOTE THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING A SEED-FUNDING APPLICATION IS  
15 OCTOBER 2019 16:00 BST**

If you have any questions regarding your application, please contact:

**Samantha Palmer, GCRF Science Manager, [international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk)**

This guidance is relevant to applicants submitting a seed-funding proposal to the Global Maternal and Neonatal Health funding call 2019. Separate guidance is available for applicants submitting invited research grant applications.

## Contents

1. Important application information.....	3
1.1. MRC guidelines for management of global health trials.....	3
2. Creating your seed-funding application on Je-S.....	3
2.1. Je-S Registration for Co-Investigators.....	3
2.2. Creating your Je-S application.....	4
2.3. Application submission.....	4
3. Online Je-S Proposal Form.....	4
3.1. Completing the budget section on Je-S.....	6
3.2. Completing the project partners section on Je-S.....	6
4. Required application documentation (attachments).....	7
4.1. Case for Support.....	7
4.1.1.Reproducibility and statistical design annex (recommended).....	9
4.2. ODA Compliance Statement.....	10
4.3. Pathway to Impact.....	10
4.4. Justification of Resources.....	10
4.5. Data Management Plan.....	11
4.6. Letter(s) of Support.....	11
4.7. Covering letter.....	11
4.8. CVs and Publications.....	12
5. Applicant eligibility.....	12
6. Assessment process.....	13
6.1. All seed-funding proposals.....	13
6.2. Research projects (e.g. pilot/feasibility studies).....	14
6.3. Network building projects.....	14
6.4. Capacity building projects.....	15
7. Further guidance documents.....	15

## 1. Important Application Information

Your application should be submitted through the [Joint electronic-Submission \(Je-S\) system](#).

Most of the requirements are the same as for a standard MRC application. The MRC Guidance for Applicants and Award holders can be found on the MRC website:

<http://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/>

This document provides additional information specific to the call for seed-funding grant applications in global maternal and neonatal health. Where guidance in the present document differs from that in the MRC Guidance for Applicants, you should follow the guidance in this document.

### Updated guidance for research involving human participants in low and middle-income countries (LMICs)

MRC recently updated its ethical guidance for research involving human participants in LMICs; please refer to [Section 5.2.2](#) of MRC's Guidance for Applicants for further information.

#### 1.1 MRC guidelines for management of global health trials

Applications using seed-funding to collect preliminary data via the conduct of feasibility/pilot clinical trials are required to adhere to the UK Clinical Trials Regulations 2004 and any relevant amendments. MRC policy on UK clinical trials regulations can be found on our [website](#). In addition to this, MRC has recently put together specific guidelines for the management of global health trials which can be [downloaded here](#). It is essential that applicants proposing the use of feasibility/pilot trials consult these resources as they put together their application.

## 2. Creating your seed-funding application on Je-S

Please note that for all queries relating to the Je-S system please contact the **Je-S Helpdesk**:

Email: [JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org](mailto:JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org)

Phone: +44 (0) 1793 44 4164

The **Je-S handbook** is also a useful resource that will answer many questions about Je-S, including how to register, how to complete all sections of your application, and how to submit: <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/Index.htm>.

#### 2.1 Je-S registration for co-investigators:

**All Co-investigators (Co-Is), including Researcher Co-Investigators (RCols), should be registered on the Je-S system and added to the online application.** It is important that you do this so that reviewers can immediately see who is providing the scientific leadership for the proposed research.

Investigators based in LMICs should ensure their Research Organisation has been added to the Je-S database, preferably before they start their proposal. Applicants have the option to [self-register](#) their

overseas organisation which allows the direct submission of proposals by LMIC applicants, when their organisation has not been through the IRO Je-S Registration process. This applies to the Research Organisation of the Lead Applicant and any Research Organisations (including NGOs) of individuals listed as Co-Applicants, but not Project Partners or sub-contractors.

Please ensure your Je-S registrations are completed at least 10 working days in advance of the submission deadline as the accounts have to be manually processed before investigators can be included in the proposal. Registration is not an instant process and if you leave registration until the last week before the deadline it may not be possible for your Co-Is to be registered in time.

## 2.2 Creating your Je-S application:

In order to submit your proposal to the correct scheme please ensure you select the following categories when you create your application:

- Select Council: **MRC**
- Select Document Type: **Standard Proposal**
- Select Scheme: **Research Grant**
- Select Call/Type/Mode: **Seed funding Call - Global Maternal and Neonatal Health 2019**
- Select '**Create Document**' option

## 2.3 Application submission:

The deadline for submission is the date by when your research organisation needs to submit your proposal to the MRC. You may need to submit your proposal to colleagues within your research organisation several days before the deadline so that they have time to approve the proposal for submission to the MRC.

**Please ensure you comply with your research organisation's rules with regards to application submission.**

Once you have completed the Project Details section of the Je-S form you are able to find out the submission arrangements for your organisation. **Select the Document Actions Button** and then **Select Show Submission Path**.

If the screen shows **With Owner** and **With Council**, then the proposal will be submitted directly by you.

If the screen shows **With Owner** and **Submitter Pool** (there should be names listed against this section) and **With Council**, then the proposal has to be approved and submitted by one of your research organisation's named submitters. You should allow at least 48 hours for them to do this, your research organisation may require longer, and we would strongly advise you check this.

Please check that at least one of your organisation's named submitters will be available on the day you plan to submit it. Please note that they will need to do this no later than 16.00 UK time on the date the call closes.

## 3. Online Je-S Proposal Form

The Je-S form will cover the administrative and financial aspects of your application. It includes: Objectives; Summary; Technical Summary; Academic Beneficiaries; Communication Plan; Impact Summary. You will need to provide details of all researchers and staff on the award.

Please access the Je-S system well in advance of the deadline so that you have time to complete these sections. You do not have to use the whole word limit for each section, especially if you feel you have provided sufficient detail for some items already in your Case for Support.

Highlighted below is guidance on completing the Budget and the Project Partners sections of the Je-S proposal form. These are two areas where we feel that specific guidance may be helpful.

Further information on the Je-S proposal form can be found in the [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) and in the [Je-S Handbook](#).

### 3.1 Completing the Budget section on Je-S:

Applicants are required to provide detailed financial information as part of their application. [Section 3](#) of the MRC Guidance for Applicants describes the MRC's rules for requesting resources. It is important that all of this information is entered correctly as the total amount requested is determined by the information provided here.

**For seed-funding applications, funding claimed from the MRC should not exceed £100,000 and can be requested for a maximum of 12 months.** Funding can support, but is not limited to, the following activities: salary costs, consumables, collection of preliminary data, feasibility/pilot work, network building, training opportunities, travel and subsistence, purchasing of small-scale equipment.

The majority of queries received by the office concern the financial section of the Je-S form. Please note the following common issues:

- All UK costs entered should be in line with the standard [MRC resources guidance](#). Please note, **for this scheme all costs claimed by UK investigators should be claimed at 80% of the full economic cost (FEC) (the MRC standard)**.
- **All overseas costs need to be entered as Exceptions and claimed at 100% full economic cost (FEC)**. For example, all salary costs incurred by overseas investigators should be entered as Exceptions and claimed at 100%.
- A contribution towards Indirect and Estates costs at the overseas organisations is permissible where the research is being undertaken in a low or middle income country (LMIC). This should be calculated using the overseas institution's standard overhead calculations but cannot exceed 20% of the total costs claimed by the overseas organisation. **Please note that these costs need to be entered on the Je-S form as "Other Directly Incurred Costs" and entered as Exceptions funded at 100%.**
- Indirect and Estates costs cannot be claimed by research organisations based in a high income country outside of the UK.
- Please note that **only single pieces of equipment over the value of £10,000** should be categorised under the "Equipment" heading on the Je-S system. All equipment under the value of £10,000 should be categorised as "Other Directly Incurred Costs". For example, 20 laptops with a total cost of £20,000 should NOT be entered under the Equipment heading, as in this scenario a single laptop would cost less than £10,000.
- Staff costs cannot be included for **staff based at MRC Units** whose salary costs are already met through core support (i.e. as part of Unit funding rather than other awarded grants).

Grants will be managed per UKRI and MRC standard terms and conditions and any additional MRC-NIHR specific terms and conditions. Funding is not available for PhD or Masters studentships, or for capital equipment.

All costs associated with overseas Co-Is, whether salary, fieldwork, equipment or travel and subsistence should be entered as 'Other Directly Incurred Costs' and should be marked as an 'Exception' using the tick box. To enable MRC to meet transparency and external reporting requirements all overseas costs must be entered into this section using the format 'Organisation: Country: Cost Category: Cost Description'. For example:

- University of Nairobi: Kenya: Staff: 1 x PDRA
- University of Nairobi: Kenya: Travel and Subsistence: 4 x flights
- University of Nairobi: Kenya: Other Directly Incurred Costs: 5 x Workshops including catering and accommodation

Costs for work undertaken at an overseas organisation should be calculated in GBP based on prevailing exchange rates at the time of application (see MRC Guidance for Applicants [Section 3.3](#)). Applications led by a UK Research Organisation must consider how the finances will be managed and deployed between partners, and the financial controls and risk mitigations that will be put in place for the transfer of funding to overseas organisations. The time taken for these assurances to be put in place should be factored in to the proposal.

### 3.2 Completing the Project Partners section on Je-S:

**PLEASE NOTE: Institutions where the PI and Co-Is are based are not classed as Project Partners and should not be listed in this section.**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage with local stakeholders, including local government, policy makers, and local communities. 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. The contribution and involvement of project partners should be acknowledged in the project partner section of the application form and described in detail in the Case for Support.

Please note, seed-funding applications proposing networking activities should include individuals playing a leading role in the management and organisation of the network (if known) as Co-Is rather than project partners. Their requested salary cost should be commensurate with their input to the network.

Projects may also involve collaboration with industry. If the project partner is from industry, applicants must follow the guidance relating to the MRC Industry Collaboration Agreement (MICA). Please see the MRC [MICA webpages](#) and [Section 1.3.4](#) of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for more information.

**Please note that all listed project partners must provide a letter of support. Please also note that you should include a nominal sum of £1 when adding project partners who are not contributing financially to the project.**

Please note that it is expected that any resulting intellectual property from the research will be vested in the UK and/or LMIC research organisation(s). Where this arises as a result of joint UK and LMIC activity we expect that arrangements are made to ensure equitable and fair distribution of intellectual property rights.

## 4. Required application documentation (attachments)

You are required to submit several attachments with your Je-S submission. Please carefully read the following information regarding each attachment. These requirements differ from outline and invited research grant submissions.

**Section 2.2** of the MRC Guidance for Applicants provides guidance on the required attachments. **Where this document differs from the MRC Guidance for Applicants please follow the guidance provided in this document.**

The following table summarises the required documents along with the maximum accepted page lengths for each document. Please note the page limits represent maximum values and it is likely that one-year seed-funding proposals will not reach these limits.

Required Documents	Notes
Online Je-S Proposal Form	Word limit specified in Je-S
Case for Support	Maximum 6 sides A4 including references, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statistical Design and Reproducibility annex (additional 1 side A4; optional)</li> </ul>
ODA Compliance Statement (Please use Je-S attachment option: <b>Non-UK Components</b> )	Maximum 1 side A4
Pathway to Impact	Maximum 2 sides A4
Justification of Resources	Maximum 2 sides A4
Data Management Plan	Maximum 3 sides A4
Letter(s) of Support	Maximum 2 sides A4 each
Covering Letter	Maximum 2 sides A4
CV's	Maximum 2 sides A4 each
Publications	Maximum 1 side A4 each

### 4.1 Case for Support

The Case for Support should be a self-contained description of the proposed work with relevant background information and should not depend on additional information.

Please remember that your application, including the Case for Support, will be reviewed by a panel of experts. Previous panel feedback has highlighted that the Case for Support should be clear, succinct and accessible. Section 6 of this guidance outlines the criteria against which proposals, including the Case for Support, will be assessed.

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.

There is scheme specific guidance outlined below but applicants should also consult the general MRC Guidance for Applicants [section 2.2.3](#). The page limit is six pages including a maximum one page for references, with an additional one page each for the ODA Compliance Statement (mandatory) and Statistical Design and Reproducibility annex (optional).

The funders recognise that seed-funding proposals will include diverse activities. The following content is a guide to the type of information that should be included. Applicants should use their discretion and include necessary information that allows assessment of their proposal.

### Summary Information

- Title of the project
- Country/countries in which the project will take place
- Duration in months (maximum 12 months)
- Total amount requested from this funding scheme (maximum £100,000)
- Seed-funding activity/activities proposed (name only e.g.: collection of preliminary data, feasibility/pilot study, network building, training and capacity building – please include all that apply)

### Project Description

For proposals including research activities (e.g. pilot/feasibility studies):

- What is the primary research question?
- What experimental approach and study design will be used?
- Information on target population, recruitment strategy, statistical analysis, sample size, outcome measures/endpoints, research setting, timeline, ethical considerations, etc.
- Information on embedded capacity building components (training, mentorship, career development, networking, infrastructure) included within the proposal.

For proposals including network building activities:

- Are activities aimed at building on an existing network or establishing a new network?
- What is the primary aim of the network?
- Who will participate in the network? Will the network be open or closed? Have the participants collaborated on projects previously?
- What activities will the network engage in? Please provide details of proposed meetings, workshops and other activities of the network and state where and when you plan to hold the networking activities.
- Are there plans for collaboration beyond the grant? How will sustainability of the network, or resulting collaborations be ensured?
- What outcomes will be used to measure success of the network building activities?

For proposals including capacity building activities:

- What type of capacity building activity is proposed?
- Who will be the target recipients/beneficiaries?
- How will the project contribute to strengthening individual, team, host institution and country capacity?
- How will the built capacity be sustained? What outcomes will be used to measure success of the capacity building activities?

### Impact and Importance

- Explain the need for research/network building/capacity building in this area.
- How will the proposed activity lead to improvements in maternal and neonatal health, as a) an immediate result of this application and b) future work building upon it?



- What activities may feasibly be expected to follow-on from the seed-funding activity proposed?
- Might the results be generalisable beyond the immediate research setting?
- What value will the strengthened research capacity add to the field of maternal and neonatal health, and specifically, in the LMIC location(s)?
- Does the research engage with LMIC academic/non-academic stakeholders? Projects requiring government buy-in should demonstrate engagement with the public sector.

### Research Team

- Outline the track record and experience of those involved in the project.
- Does the research team have the necessary interdisciplinary expertise to undertake the project?
- Have LMIC researchers had intellectual input into the seed funding proposal and its ongoing strategic direction? Is the partnership equitable?
- Have relevant stakeholders been identified and engaged from outside of the academic community? If they have not yet been engaged are there clear plans to do so?
- How suitable is the host organisation(s) (i.e. commitment to providing appropriate levels of support to the research team)?

### Capacity building

We acknowledge that the scale of seed-funding available means not all research projects or networking activities will be able to embed capacity building components within them. Where capacity building is included the following questions should be addressed:

- Are the capacity building activities appropriate in the context of the wider research/networking activity?
- Are opportunities for the development of LMIC/early career researchers provided?
- Where relevant, are early career researchers provided with sufficient support and mentorship to enable them to lead/participate in the project?

### Project Partners

- All partner contributions, whether in cash or in-kind should be explained in detail.

There is no distinct Case for Support document for applicants proposing feasibility/pilot studies and the same page lengths apply. However, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the Case for Support includes all necessary information to judge the proposed work. Applicants wishing to undertake feasibility/pilot studies are encouraged to make use of the optional Reproducibility and Statistical Design annex for this purpose.

Where the research proposed includes the development or evaluation of an intervention information on potential for replicability, acceptability, scalability, and affordability should be included. Projects which assess the effectiveness of a particular intervention without situating that assessment within a broader research and policy context will not be funded. It is up to applicants to consider how the cost of any intervention is supported. Researchers are advised to refer to the [MRC framework on the development and evaluation of complex interventions](#) for further guidance on interventions, where appropriate to their proposed plans.

#### 4.1.1 Reproducibility and statistical design annex (optional)

Applicants proposing feasibility/pilot studies are recommended to include an annex with their Case for Support to provide important additional information on reproducibility and statistical design. This

annex should be included as part of the Case for Support submission at the end of the document. It should be clearly titled and can be a maximum of **1 side A4**.

Please refer to [Section 2.2.3.4](#) of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for more information as to the correct usage of this annex.

## 4.2 ODA Compliance Statement

Research funded through this call will form part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA), as defined by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The ODA compliance statement should explain how your proposed research is compliant by answering the following questions:

- 1. Which country/countries on the DAC list of ODA recipient countries will directly benefit from this proposal?**
- 2. How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of this country/these countries?**
- 3. How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and/or welfare of this country/these countries?**

Please note: this annex should make clear the ODA relevance of the proposed research without reference to other documents in the proposal (i.e. earlier sections of the Case for Support, Pathways to Impact). It should also include meaningful project specific detail. Proposals that do not articulate clearly the ODA relevance of the research throughout their application will be rejected prior to panel review.

## 4.3 Pathway to Impact

The Pathway to Impact document should be used to clearly demonstrate the potential economic and societal benefits of the proposed work. Applications should have clear potential to have an impact on Global Maternal and Neonatal Health and the Pathway to Impact should refer to how seed-funding activities might realistically lead to improvements in maternal and neonatal health, as a) an immediate result of this application and b) inform future impactful activity. This document should be no longer than 2 sides A4.

Please see [Section 2.2.5](#) of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for full details on the requirements of the Pathway to Impact.

## 4.4 Justification of Resources

It is important that all resources requested in your application are fully justified. The Justification of Resources should be used to justify the resources required to undertake the research project and is mandatory. It should be no longer than **2 sides of A4**.

Please see [Section 2.2.4](#) of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for full details on the requirements of the Justification of Resources.

Full details of costings should be detailed on the Je-S online form. **It is important that the figures quoted in the Justification of Resources clearly match up with those entered in the Je-S online form.**

As part of your justification of resources for this scheme, please include the following table. For proposals including networking activities only include the organisation(s) of those members that are playing a major role in the organisation and leadership of the network.

#### Financial breakdown per participating research organisation

Participant organisation name	Total amount	Total amount requested from this scheme*
Participant Organisation 1 (please enter name)		
Participant Organisation 2 (please enter name)		
etc.		
<b>TOTAL</b>		

\*Costs claimed by UK institutions should be calculated at 80% of the full economic cost (fEC). **Costs claimed by institutions in low and middle income countries must be claimed at 100% fEC.**

#### 4.5 Data Management Plan

The Data Management Plan should demonstrate how the PI will meet, or already meets, their responsibilities for research data quality, sharing and security. Please see [Section 2.2.8](#) of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for full details on the requirements for the Data Management Plan. This document should be no longer than **3 sides A4 and for seed-funding activities may be as short as quarter of a page**. All activities, including network building and capacity building activities, will generate some form of data (e.g. network members contact details). Consideration should be given to how this data will be collected, stored, distributed, processed, and destroyed, in line with legal requirements.

#### 4.6 Letter(s) of Support

It is very important that you obtain the necessary letters of support from stakeholders engaged in the project. Stakeholders may include the lead research organisation, collaborating research organisations in the UK and overseas, local or national government authorities, and project partners (e.g., industrial partners, NGOs). Each letter of support should be no longer than **2 sides A4**.

For applications proposing the formation of new research networks, we acknowledge that not all network members will be known to the applicant prior to submission.

Please see [Section 2.2.7](#) of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for the full details on the requirements for Letters of Support for Project Partners.

#### 4.7 Covering Letter

You may wish to provide a cover letter with your full stage application, maximum **2 sides A4**. Please see [Section 2.7](#) of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for full details on the requirements for the Covering Letter.

## 4.8 CVs and Publications

A CV should be provided for each investigator and each named researcher. Each CV should not exceed **2 sides A4**.

A list of publications should be provided for each investigator and each named researcher. Each list of publications should not exceed one side of A4.

**Please upload all CVs and publications as one attachment with the publication document following on from the CV of each researcher.**

Please see [Section 2.3.1](#) of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for more information about CVs and see [Section 2.3.2](#) for more information about Publications. Please disregard the requirement to upload these documents separately.

## 5. Applicant Eligibility

PIs should be based at an eligible LMIC or UK Research Organisation.

UK PIs or Co-Is must be based at a UK higher education institution or at an eligible [independent research institution](#).

LMIC PIs or Co-Is must be based at a higher education institution, non-profit research institution, or non-governmental organisation. Applicants should check with their Research Office whether previous applications have been submitted to MRC. If they have not, applicants should contact [international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk) to determine eligibility prior to submitting their application.

Researchers based at MRC University Units and the Francis Crick Institute are eligible to apply for funding, as either a PI or Co-I. However, they should address in their cover letter how the proposed research is distinct from that already supported through existing 'core' support.

Researchers from overseas research organisations not based in LMICs may be Co-Is or part of a network if they provide expertise not available in the UK or an LMIC. Inclusion of these Co-Is and any costs associated with their activities must be discussed and agreed with the relevant MRC programme manager in advance of application (please email any queries to [international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk)). Costs for overseas non-LMIC organisations must not exceed 30% of the total budget requested in the application.

Industrial collaborators are welcomed, but it should be noted that they cannot be PIs/Co-Is or recipients of funding (i.e. Project Partners or Sub-contractors only). The role of industrial partners must be clearly explained, with special emphasis on the benefit to LMICs. When an industrial collaborator is involved, a MICA form must be submitted within the proposal. Please see MRC [MICA webpages](#) and [Section 1.3.4](#) of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for more information.

## 6. Assessment Process

All proposals will be checked internally for fit to remit, page lengths, mandatory attachments, ODA eligibility, etc., before being shared with an external panel of experts who will convene in February 2020. There will be no external peer review and no opportunity to respond to the Panel's comments. Applicants will be contacted via email shortly after the panel to inform them of the panel's decision (award or decline). Panel decisions are final and are not subject to appeal.

The panel will assess your application based on the following criteria:

### 6.1 All seed-funding proposals

#### Research Team

- Do the named investigators have experience of successfully conducting studies/leading networks/building capacity?
- Does the research team have the necessary interdisciplinary expertise to undertake the project?
- Have LMIC researchers had intellectual input into the seed funding proposal and its ongoing strategic direction? Is the partnership equitable?
- Have relevant stakeholders been identified and engaged from outside of the academic community? If they have not yet been engaged are there clear plans to do so?
- How suitable is the host organisation(s) (i.e. commitment to providing appropriate levels of support to the research team)?

#### Justification of resources and appropriate financial management/risk assurance

- Does the project and its proposed size and scale represent value for money?
- Is the distribution of funding across UK and LMIC partners appropriate for the intended contribution of partners within the project?
- Are there any financial dependencies, e.g. co-funding arrangements?
- Have risks to the work been identified and appropriate plans for mitigation outlined?
- Has appropriate time been allocated for risk assurance and establishing financial management arrangements with partners?

#### Compliance with ODA eligibility requirements

- Will the research directly benefit a country or countries on the OECD DAC list of ODA eligible countries?
- Is the proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of this country/these countries?
- Could the proposal's outcomes promote the economic development and/or welfare of a country or countries from the OECD DAC list of ODA eligible countries?

#### Clear and effective pathways to impact

- Have the potential beneficiaries of the proposed activities been identified?
- Where appropriate, has consideration been given to how scale up of the research findings into policy and practice would occur? What is the likelihood of uptake of the research findings e.g. has a cost effectiveness evaluation, where relevant, been included as part of the proposed research?
- Where relevant, are the capacity building activities proposed likely to yield tangible benefit in the near future?

- Is there sufficient engagement with relevant stakeholders within the country/countries of focus?

### Capacity building

Where capacity building activities have been embedded in networking/research activity:

- Are the capacity building activities appropriate in the context of the wider research/networking activity?
- Are opportunities for the development of LMIC/early career researchers provided?
- Where relevant, are early career researchers provided with sufficient support and mentorship to enable them to lead/participate in the project?

## 6.2 Research Projects (e.g. pilot/feasibility studies)

### Importance of the research / likely impact of the project

- Does the study address an important research question relevant to the burden of maternal and/or neonatal mortality and/or morbidity in LMICs?
- Does the study justify the importance of the research question with reference to i) the burden of maternal and/or neonatal mortality and/or morbidity; ii) the existing evidence base?
- Does it propose a high-quality research approach to answer that question?
- Is collection of pilot/feasibility data warranted (i.e. would funds be better spent on a more substantive project)?
- Is the study relevant and novel in the proposed location(s)?
- How important an advance would this project, or resulting substantive work, be?
- What is the likelihood that the findings of this project, or resulting substantive work, will have academic and/or economic and societal impact?
- Is it likely to lead to significant improvements in maternal and/or neonatal mortality and/or morbidity in LMICs?
- Are the findings likely to be of relevance to LMIC locations outside of those named in the application where similar maternal and neonatal health challenges are faced?

### Study design and feasibility

- Is the design of the study appropriate to answer the question?
- Does the methodology allow a rigorous, valid, and reliable investigation?
- Is the timeline realistic and achievable?
- Is the sample size sufficient and based on a reproducible power calculation? Is there a feasible recruitment strategy? Has attrition been realistically accounted for?
- Are there any ethical concerns?
- Have major scientific, technical or organisational challenges been identified, and are plans in place to address them?

## 6.3 Network building projects

- To what extent would the network add value to and complement existing networks?
- How appropriate are the planned activities and how likely are they to deliver advances in knowledge/expertise around maternal and neonatal health?
- Are there clear and relevant objectives and realistic plans to deliver these, including plans for monitoring and evaluation?
- How well will the network enable new perspectives not constrained by disciplinary silos?

- Is there evidence of appropriate engagement with, or plans for engagement with, policy/practice/user stakeholders?
- To what extent will the network: forge new collaborations? Create strong and enduring equitable partnerships beyond the timeframe of the grant?
- Are there plans for collaboration beyond the grant? How will sustainability of the network, or resulting collaborations be ensured?
- How appropriate are mechanisms for promoting equality and inclusion in the network?
- Are plans presented to monitor the outputs of the network?

## 6.4 Capacity building projects

- Have appropriate capacity building activities been identified to enhance skills, infrastructure, capability, expertise, and knowledge exchange for better maternal and/or neonatal health?
- Is the project engaging in building capacity at the appropriate level (e.g. individual, team, host institution, country)?
- Have these activities been identified in collaboration with LMIC partners?
- Is there likely to be benefit of the increased capacity for both the LMIC and UK partners?
- Does the project provide opportunities for development for LMIC/early career researchers?
- Where relevant, are early career researchers provided with sufficient support and mentorship to enable them to lead/participate in the project?
- Do the activities proposed align with gaps in skills, equipment, infrastructure etc.?
- Are the activities supported by institutional partners to increase their sustainability?
- Are plans presented to monitor the outputs of the built capacity, e.g., future destinations of training recipients, use of equipment, dissemination of knowledge?

Where a seed funding proposal contains multiple project types i.e. network building with pilot data collection they will be assessed using all relevant criteria to cover the scope of the proposal.

## 7. Further guidance documents

For further guidance about your proposal please refer to:

Je-S Helpdesk pages

<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/Index.htm>

Please note for any submission issues please email the Je-S Helpdesk directly: [JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org](mailto:JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org)

MRC Guidance for Applicants

<http://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/>

MRC Terms and Conditions

<http://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-mrc-award-holders/>

MRC Research Policy and Ethics (including MRC data sharing policy)

<http://www.mrc.ac.uk/research/research-policy-ethics/>

United Kingdom Research and Innovation guidance on pathways to impact

<https://www.ukri.org/innovation/excellence-with-impact/pathways-to-impact/>

Department for International Development guidance on research uptake

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/514977/Research\\_uptake\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/514977/Research_uptake_guidance.pdf)