Collaborative Awards

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Version 18.06.18

This is not an exhaustive list and we will update the FAQ with more examples based on queries received.

Contents

1. What is the expected size for a Collaboration Award and how many key co-investigators should I list? ................................................................. 2
2. Will applications with industry partners be considered? ...................... 2
3. Why is it important to bring in other disciplines in addition to nutrition? 2
4. Must collaborative awards funded work across institutions/ have multi-disciplinary partners? ................................................................. 3
5. What is your expectation regarding local versus national collaboration? 3
6. Can we involve international participants in the collaboration? .......... 3
7. What is meant by nutrition research? .................................................. 3
8. Are some disciplines excluded? ............................................................ 3
9. Are there some types of research or funding requests excluded? ........ 4
10. What scale of pump-prime funding would be appropriate for the Collaborative Award as a whole? ......................................................... 4
11. What scale and duration of funding would be appropriate for individual pump-priming research activities? ........................................ 4
12. Can you provide more information on Exemplar pilot/feasibility studies? 4
13. What do you mean by Pre-existing, established collaborations cannot apply for additional funding? .......................................................... 5

14. What do you mean by leadership team? ........................................... 5

15. For assessing the application which criteria are more important: the ideas/challenge area, or the relevance/multidisciplinary of the partners? ....... 5

16. Will there be one funding point for awards? ...................................... 5

17. Does the Collaborative Award support fellowships and students? ........ 5

18. Why is there an outline stage? ............................................................ 5

19. Can I skip the outline stage? ............................................................... 6

20. When can the Collaborative Awards start? ......................................... 6

21. What are the FEC rule for the Collaborative Award? .......................... 6

1. What is the expected size for a Collaboration Award and how many key co-investigators should I list?

Up to £2m will be available for this call. The Collaborative Awards will provide funding for up to three years related to the challenge(s) identified.

We have indicated that up to 6 key Co-Investigators may be included in the application where individuals have a clearly definable research leadership role central to the collaboration; however, it is anticipated that in most instances no contribution to their salary will be requested. One exception might be where a modest amount of time is required to supervise a pilot project.

The number of others members and partners is more flexible and ultimately depends on the breadth of the scientific theme underpinning the application. The Collaboration Award should comprise the most appropriate mix of expertise to address your identified research challenge(s) in the most effective way(s).

2. Will applications with industry partners be considered?

Industry partners may join the collaboration where this add value, for example in terms of access to expertise, technologies and tools, certain population groups or environments, materials or funding. Industry partners will be expected to meet their own costs and are not expected to request MRC funding to participate. They may provide cash or in-kind contributions to the collaborative. At the full application stage, applicants working with industry partners will be required to detail plans for the academic-industry partnership, complete the MRC Industry Collaboration Agreement (MICA) and declare any conflicts of interest. This is not required at the outline stage.

3. Why is it important to bring in other disciplines in addition to nutrition?

Collaboration between different disciplines is the best way to achieve impact and scientific excellence. The strategy is to embed nutrition science into relevant
disciplines such as the biological sciences, disease disciplines, social sciences, data scientist and informaticians to work together on important challenges in the field. Whilst it is important to bring different partners in the field the nutrition focus and expertise should be strong to ensure research robustness.

4. Must collaborative awards funded work across institutions/ have multidisciplinary partners?
Co-leadership (designated as Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator) of each Collaborative Award must be from two different disciplines relevant to the challenge(s) identified. Collaborations may be regional or national. As the award will bring together a range of disciplines and make linkages to relevant stakeholders/users of research, the expectation is that each Collaborative Award will operate across institutions and HEIs and will include at least two different higher education institutes/research organisations and preferably more than one geographical location. Furthermore, the collaboration should not appear insular and inward looking and should be multidisciplinary, bring different people together, and catalyse new ideas and approaches. Focus around the identified nutrition challenge, will however, be important.

5. What is your expectation regarding local versus national collaboration?
A Collaborative Award can work across regions of the UK; this may well strengthen an application but it is not a requirement. However, we expect at least two research organisations to be involved in the collaboration; collaborations should not appear insular. Also, see the answer to question 4.

As stated in the call text, Collaborative Awards are expected to be open to individuals with relevant experience across the UK, and internationally when appropriate. Also, see the answer to question 6.

6. Can we involve international participants in the collaboration?
Yes, it may be appropriate to involve international participants in collaboration where they could add significant value to the proposal e.g. unique expertise or infrastructure required to address the identified challenge. However, the majority of the Collaborative Award funding should be held in the UK.

7. What is meant by nutrition research?
Nutrition can be described as the study of the interaction between one component of the environment - food - and an organism at the individual (molecular to whole-body) or population level. It can include the impact of diet, dietary pattern or food components on normal biological function, health status or the development of disease. It can also include the development of appropriate methodology and tools to improve nutrition research. Behavioural research should be linked to indicators of health states or health outcomes.

8. Are some disciplines excluded?
No relevant discipline is excluded, although the disciplinary mix will be determined by the nature of the challenge identified.
9. Are there some types of research or funding requests excluded?  
Yes, some types funding will not be appropriate for this call. Some examples excluded from the scope of this call are listed below:

- The analysis of data that is already generated and which is not integrated into a new feasibility or pilot study or directly related to the identified challenge.
- Significant support for infrastructure.
- Incremental research based on existing collaborations that does not have the potential to lead to exciting new insights.
- Standalone fully developed single projects of 2-3 year duration – even if they are collaborative.
- Projects submitted to this call must be pre-competitive. Whilst it is helpful for applicants to understand relevant European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) criteria as part of routes to translation, projects assessing proof-of-principle for efficacy should not focus on generating evidence for EFSA about propriety products.

This is not an exhaustive list and we will update the FAQ with more examples based on queries received.

10. What scale of pump-prime funding would be appropriate for the Collaborative Award as a whole?  
A key aim of the call is to facilitate and support feasibility studies and the generation of robust pilot data and/or tools/technologies/methodologies and know-how. Thus, we would expect a significant part of the overall Collaborative Award to be allocated to this type of pump-priming activity.

11. What scale and duration of funding would be appropriate for individual pump-priming research activities?  
This is variable and depends on what applicants feel would be appropriate to begin to address the challenge(s) set out by the collaborative. A range of funding of differing scales and duration may be envisaged depending on the challenge.

12. Can you provide more information on Exemplar pilot/feasibility studies?  
These studies should not be typical research grant proposals for single standalone projects which would normally be considered by response mode Boards or Panels. Exemplar studies should illustrate the dynamic nature of the collaboration and allow for evolving flexibility, whilst contributing to the specific scientific challenges identified by the collaboration. Collaborative Award outlines should describe how these studies will be assessed and selected for funding; also how their progress and outcomes will be measured.

13. What do you mean by Pre-existing, established collaborations cannot apply for additional funding?

Pre-existing collaborations which already receive funding cannot apply for a Collaborative Award. Proposals for this call must be for new collaborations which offer innovation and novelty, both in terms of the partners and the nutrition challenge(s) to be addressed. The proposed collaboration should represent a departure from existing partnerships and applicants must clearly convince the Expert Review Panel of its novelty and potential.

14. What do you mean by leadership team?

The leadership team is composed of the PI, Co-PI and key Co-Is, they must collegially define the collaboration vision and challenge area. A successful collaboration will have an identified active core management team with complementary skills. Each core member should have defined objectives and roles within the collaboration.

15. For assessing the application which criteria are more important: the ideas/challenge area, or the relevance/multidisciplinary of the partners?

They are both equally important and both aspects will be assessed. An application with novel ideas focused on an important nutrition challenge is unlikely to be highly rated if no effort has been made to address the challenge in a multidisciplinary way.

16. Will there be one funding point for awards?

This is a two-stage call process. Applicants should complete an outline on the proforma provided and submit this by 16:00 on 31 July 2018. Those outlines selected to proceed to full proposals will be assessed by an Expert Review Panel at a meeting in March 2019 and awards agreed by the Panel. Thus, there is a single funding point in March 2019.

17. Does the Collaborative Award support fellowships and students?

The Collaborative Award will not provide career development posts or studentships. Pump-priming funding comprised of shorter-term pilot/feasibility studies or development work is not an appropriate vehicle to fund studentships or personal career development awards. However, the Collaborative Awards have the potential to provide a strong environment for training; the participation of students and Early Career Researchers should be encouraged to ensure they benefit from it. Ultimately the collaboration should become a research nucleus that will support applications for fellowships.

18. Why is there an outline stage?

The purpose of the outline proposal is to ascertain the potential of the planned collaboration to fulfil the Collaborative Award call objectives. In addition, previous experience indicates that the successful forming of collaboration can be more difficult than standard research projects. The outline stage will help facilitate community coordination and collaboration formation. The comments
that will be provided after the first Expert Review Panel will help the applicants to further refine their proposal for the full application award.

19. Can I skip the outline stage?
No this is not possible. Full applications can only be submitted if your outline proposal is selected by Expert Panel Members to proceed to the next stage.

20. When can the Collaborative Awards start?
The collaborative award expected start date must be after the 1st of April 2019.

21. What are the FEC rule for the Collaborative Award?
Pump-priming funds will be funded at 80% FEC by the funders and should be allocated at 80% FEC for each project by the collaboration's host institution. The institution where the research is to be undertaken will be responsible for the remaining 20%. As these are research-based projects, they can include a component to cover estates and indirect costs for the relevant institution.

Costs for meetings to aid research collaboration can be requested and costed at 100% FEC due to their community focus. No general estates and indirect costs should be claimed in association with research collaboration meetings. Costs for the time spent by the PI, Co-PI on the co-ordination of the collaboration will be funded at 80% FEC and include a contribution to estates and indirect costs. Co-investigators ('key co-investigators') may be included in the application where individuals have a clearly definable research leadership role central to the collaboration; however, it is anticipated that in most instances no contribution to their salary will be requested.