

UKRI GCRF Health and Context call 2019 – Frequently Asked Questions

The following provides answers to frequently asked questions about the UKRI GCRF Health and Context call 2019. These FAQs should be consulted along with the call text on the MRC website, call specific Guidance for Applicants, and MRC Guidance for Applicants. If you would like further clarification after reading these documents, please contact: **Samantha Palmer, GCRF Science Manager**, international@mrc.ukri.org who will gather advice from collaborating councils where necessary.

Q: What do you mean by ‘context’?

A: We are looking to fund proposals that either seek to determine a causal relationship between contextual factors and infections/NCDs or develop interventions that seek to reduce infections/NCDs by creating context sensitive solutions. Contextual factors may include:

- cultural or historical traditions, or religious practice
- water and sanitation as it relates to health (WASH), agricultural practices, urban planning, infrastructure
- interactions between the community and the natural environment, wider land-use and environmental changes
- social and economic factors grounded in the local context.

Contextual factors can be common to multiple locations, whether they are within the same city or on different continents. Where this is the case we encourage applications that address the same factor in multiple locations.

Q: Can you fund interventions?

A: Yes, if it is feasible to undertake an intervention in the time available. However, this is not a requirement and we also welcome innovative approaches to understand health outcomes that are not intervention driven.

The research related costs of developing, implementing and evaluating effectiveness (including trials) of interventions are permissible.

Please read the call text carefully to ensure your proposal fits with what is sought. Where research proposed includes the development or evaluation of an intervention it is particularly important to include information on potential for replicability, acceptability, affordability and scalability. Further detail on the information that should be included in the Case for Support if a trial is proposed is included in Annex 1 of the call specific Guidance for Applicants.

Q: Are proposals relevant across more than one country eligible?

A: Yes, we encourage proposals that are relevant to multiple settings which may include multiple countries on the DAC list. Proposals must be of primary benefit to countries on the DAC list and therefore any comparison with countries not on the DAC list must be clearly justified in the proposal.

Q: I am not a previous GCRF award holder. Can I still apply?

A: Yes. Although we see this call as a viable option for further funding for GCRF Infections/NCD Foundation award holders and MRC-AHRC Global Public Health Partnership award holders, we are open to applications from all eligible applicants.

Q: Where can I find more information on previous GCRF awards?

A: Successful proposals must add value to the current UKRI GCRF portfolio. Information on previous MRC GCRF schemes, including GCRF Infections/NCD Foundation award holders and MRC-AHRC Global Public Health Partnership award, can be found [here](#). UKRI previous investments can be found [here](#). Additionally, you can view all UKRI funding on [Gateway to Research](#).

Q: I was involved in one of the previous GCRF calls but want to change the make-up of my team for this call. Is this allowed?

A: Yes. The expertise of the research teams should reflect the objectives of the new proposal.

Q: Are all infections and NCDs included within the scope of this call?

A: Yes. As long as your proposal meets the key criteria of addressing the context in which the disease occurs then it can be submitted to this call. Projects involving anti-microbial resistance are also eligible for the call.

Q: This call is being run by MRC. Does this mean the primary focus has to be MRC remit science, and the principal investigator from an MRC discipline?

A: No. MRC is running this call on behalf of UKRI for administrative purposes. Proposals involving any disciplines covered by the funders involved in this call (MRC, ESRC, AHRC, NERC, BBSRC) that address infections and NCDs are welcome. And, proposals that reach across disciplinary boundaries of different research councils involved are encouraged. We want to fund strong, ambitious proposals where possible and also to support research across disciplinary boundaries. However, proposals must fit the call remit and ambitions as described in the call specification and will be rejected if they don't.

Q: My research idea extends beyond the remit of the funders involved in the call for proposals: is this permissible?

A: Proposals should fit within the remit of the call but the team delivering the proposal can be drawn from any relevant academic discipline, even if this lies outside of the remit of the named funders. For instance, despite EPSRC not being part of this call an engineer can be involved in the project and comments may be sought from EPSRC on the application.

Q: The call explicitly requests proposals for 'interdisciplinary research', how are you defining this?

A: Proposals must be interdisciplinary, and this will be part of the assessment criteria for proposals received. The involvement of different disciplines should be carefully thought through and integrated, without particular inputs being 'tagged on'. We are not stipulating particular combinations of disciplines that are acceptable, but they must be appropriate to the question(s) being addressed. We appreciate that interdisciplinarity can occur within an academic field but encourage proposals to cut-across council remits.

Q: Can I resubmit a proposal that was previously unsuccessful when considered by one of the councils involved in this call?

A: Resubmissions of full proposals that have been previously rejected by UKRI Council funding panels must be discussed with the funders prior to submission (International@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk). MRC will discuss with the other councils involved in this call. Any resubmission must have clearly addressed issues that had previously prevented funding, and this should be communicated in the cover letter. Re-submission of an unsuccessful application within one year of the previous submission

is not permitted. Simultaneous submission of the same proposal to more than one UKRI scheme is not permitted.

Q: How will the assessment process be managed?

A: An independent assessment process will be led by the MRC, and all other funders will fully contribute, in the form of formulating guidance and suggesting panel members and peer reviewers. Outline proposals will be assessed by a sift panel of experts that will convene in June 2019. Panel members will be drawn from a range of disciplines that reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the call. Pre-selected panel members will be allocated a number of proposals and asked to provide comments in advance. These comments will inform the discussion when the panel convenes. Applicants will be contacted via email shortly after the panel to inform them of the panel's decision (unsuccessful or invitation to submit full application). Panel decisions are final and there will be no opportunity to respond to the feedback.

If successful at the outline stage, invited proposals will be subject to external peer review and will then be considered the same panel as the outline applications (although it is possible we may need to add members at different stages depending on the topics of applications received and expertise needed to review them).

Once finalised, a summary of the panel membership will be put online alongside the call details.

Q: Does all my research have to take place in a DAC list country?

A: No, although given the focus of this call is on local context we would expect that all or the majority of research might take place in a DAC list country. However, applicants should bear in mind that where research is conducted, or where research participants are from, are not sufficient indicators of whether or not research meets ODA requirements. The key to ODA compliance is what the primary purpose of the research is, and where the benefits of the research are expected to be experienced. The primary purpose of any ODA relevant proposal must be to promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list. Any benefit to the UK or any other non-DAC list country can only be a secondary consideration. Not all research conducted in DAC list countries will meet these criteria, and some research involving non-DAC list countries may. Applicants will therefore need to carefully consider how they demonstrate ODA compliance regardless of where their proposed research takes place.

Q: The call text states that grants should be 'impactful'. What is meant by this?

A: The funders involved in this call believe that research can make a significant and tangible difference to health in low and middle income countries. We want to fund research that has strong potential to provide solutions to health challenges and engagement with communities where the research will take place will help ensure this. The impact could take various forms, for example changes in policy, reduction of disease transmission, behaviour change, increased acknowledgement in the community of NCD and infection risk, or improved interventions targeting hard to reach groups. These are just examples: we recognise the scope of the call is broad and that potential impacts will be wide-ranging.

Q: Does the research have to have a health outcome?

A: Yes, proposals should clearly identify a health outcome relevant to infection or NCDs. We recognise that interventions and other research related activity targeted at health can have a range of other far reaching outcomes (for example, economic circumstance, educational participation, evolving cultural practise and intervention), and we encourage applicants to think broadly about the outcomes and impacts they propose to collect information on.

Q: I am based in the UK and am planning on being a PI on a proposal. Do I need to include a collaborator based in a country on the DAC list?

A: For this call it will not be a formal requirement to include a collaborator based in a country on the DAC list. However, we strongly encourage partnerships and collaborative relationships with partners based in DAC list countries where these are substantive and add value. Given the scale of funding on offer and the desire for proposals with high potential impact, partnerships should build on existing relationships which may be augmented to fully address the research question posed. The principal requirement is for meaningful, quality collaborations or partnerships, demonstrated through clear leadership roles across the proposed partnership, and balance and proportionality in partners' roles and responsibilities. Where international partnerships are included, there must be a strong underpinning research ethic based on mutual respect and understanding for different cultural, ethnic, social and economic beliefs and practices.

Q: Do international partners need to attain matched funding from equivalent funding organisation in their country?

A: No. There is no requirement in GCRF for matched funding from the country or countries involved. If partner organisations wish to contribute to the costs of an award this should be stated clearly in the 'project partners' section of the application.

Q: Can I apply as a principal investigator more than once to this call?

A: No, applicants can only be principal investigator on one application to this call. There is no restriction on the number of applications an individual can be co-investigator for, but they must have the capacity to undertake all projects applied for, should they be successful.

Q: Can my research also benefit the UK?

A: Yes, we expect that the research will also benefit the UK, in terms of the wider impacts such as new scientific knowledge, publications and training etc., however, LMICs should be the primary beneficiaries.

Q: Are there any priority countries on the DAC list for this call?

A: There are no priority countries for this call. All countries on the DAC list are eligible for this call and proposals will be assessed on their respective merits. We particularly encourage applications where the contextual factors identified are common to multiple locations within or across LMIC settings.

Please note:

Applicants wishing to submit a proposal focusing on nutrition should note that the following are outside the remit of this call. All have other funding mechanisms available (in brackets):

- Research looking at the mechanistic links between nutrition and NCDs – i.e. what changes can someone's diet bring about that increases the risk of NCD (PSMB call)
- Research looking at the role of culture, history and society on nutrition/food systems (AHRC Collective call)
- Research looking at agriculture and food systems to address the double burden of nutrition (BBSRC Collective call)