

## UKRI-NHMRC Built Environment and Prevention Research Scheme

The [Medical Research Council \(MRC\)](#) and the [Australian National Health and Medical Research Council \(NHMRC\)](#) together with the [Economic and Social Research Council \(ESRC\)](#) are pleased to invite proposals to the UKRI-NHMRC Built Environment and Prevention Research Scheme.

This scheme will provide funding for approximately **five collaborative** research projects focused on improving population health through the primary prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) associated with the built environment.

In total, approximately £4 million will be made available through this scheme: £2 million of MRC/ESRC funding in support of the UK components, and \$4 million AUD from NHMRC in support of the Australian research collaborators.

### Background

This funding scheme is being run under the umbrella of the [Fund for International Collaboration \(FIC\)](#). FIC aims to enhance the UK's excellence in research and innovation through global engagement. It focuses on bilateral and multilateral partnerships with global research and development leaders and is administered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) which includes the MRC and ESRC.

The MRC and ESRC are committed to forming strategic partnerships that will encourage world-leading collaborative research and enable UK scientists to engage with the best minds, ideas and resources wherever they are located. NHMRC's international engagement strategy acknowledges that no single country has the resources, skills and capacity to address all health and medical research challenges and, therefore, recognises the need to encourage and support international collaboration with different countries.

Our health is influenced by the natural and built environments in which we live. These environments contribute to harming and promoting health and wellbeing. There is evidence demonstrating the links between non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the built environment, including motor vehicle and public transport systems, the quality of housing, reduced opportunities for physical activity and the lack of social cohesion. The evidence also shows differences in health risks across population groups arising from inequalities in factors in the urban environment.

NCDs tend to be of long duration and are the result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors. They are the leading causes of death and disability worldwide, representing 70 per cent of all deaths<sup>1</sup>. Given the increasing proportion of the population living in urban areas, it is vital to understand how complex and interacting factors in the built environment influence health in order to develop NCD-prevention strategies targeted at these factors. Generating evidence on how best to address factors in the built environment that increase the risk of NCDs and poor mental health is the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases>

principal focus of this funding scheme. By improving the urban environment, there is scope to deliver benefits across a range of NCDs and other non-health outcomes.

This joint funding scheme with NHMRC will extend MRC and ESRC's research portfolio on prevention, which includes the [UK Prevention Research Partnership \(UKPRP\)](#). Prevention is one of MRC's four strategic 'priority challenges'. Prevention research also addresses a number of major health issues identified in NHMRC's Corporate Plan, including integrated and coordinated approaches to chronic conditions and resilience to environmental change, emerging health threats and emergencies as well as Australia's National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions focusing on prevention and management of chronic conditions for a healthier Australia.

## Aim

Through the UKRI-NHMRC Built Environment and Prevention Research Scheme, MRC, ESRC, and the NHMRC aim to support world-leading prevention research seeking to address the shared burden of NCDs influenced by the built environment.

The collaborative research projects will aim to generate evidence that can be translated into actionable, sustainable and cost-effective ways of preventing NCDs, to improve population health and reduce health inequalities in the UK and Australia.

## Objective

The objectives of the funding call are to:

- (i) invest in competitive and innovative collaborative research projects between researchers from Australia and the UK that will enable the pursuit of shared research interests on preventing NCDs associated with the built environment. The investment will strengthen collaborations between academic researchers in institutions across both countries.
- (ii) to deliver multi-disciplinary approaches to preventing NCDs that address the influences of the built environment on NCDs.

## Scope

There is a need both in the UK and Australia to improve our understanding of the factors that work to shape and support healthy, liveable and resilient built environments, and to develop approaches for improving the built environment to prevent NCDs. The areas listed below are given as examples of aspects of the built environment in which multi-disciplinary research proposals are welcomed. Applicants should note that **proposals need not be restricted to the examples cited as applications across the breadth the built environment are encouraged**. Examples include:

- urban planning and regeneration
- city design, including increasing conditions that promote health such as 'active travel' and access to green space

- housing
- transportation systems
- air quality, both indoor and outdoor, and noise
- the indoor environment
- neighbourhood diversity, including social regeneration and social cohesion, and access to health services
- the relationship between the built environment, extreme weather events, and their impact on health

It is also important that we learn how to best use the instruments available to us, including policies, programmes, design, and technology, to promote and maintain health and well-being.

Developing multi-disciplinary approaches to improving the built environment and preventing NCDs requires links between a range of academic researchers (for example public health, biomedicine, engineering, social science, atmospheric chemistry and climate science) and end users such as policy makers, practitioners, health professionals, the public and industry (where appropriate to the research question). Diverse teams, with a mix of skills that are appropriate to the research questions are strongly encouraged under this funding scheme. Both the UK and Australia recognise that drawing on the expertise from different disciplines and users, including across both countries, brings opportunity to deliver new knowledge on how best to address the influences of the built environment on NCDs. Research proposals should include mechanisms for translating their outputs into policy and practice, and for building long-term relationships between academics and users.

Research proposals must sit within, or across, the remits of the participating funders, with interdisciplinarity encouraged. Proposals must seek to generate research outcomes relevant to the prevention of NCDs in the UK and Australia.

## Funding

In total, approximately £4m will be made available for this scheme. The intention is to support approximately five collaborative projects.

Each grant will require a UK Principal Investigator (PI) and an Australian Chief Investigator (CI). They will equally share leadership and project management for each project. Each PI and CI will apply for funding to support their specific component from their respective funding agency.

MRC/ESRC will invest up to £2 million to cover the UK component of the research projects selected for funding under this call. MRC/ESRC will provide funding for the UK-based applicants under standard arrangements and at 80% Full Economic Cost (FEC). **The UK element of funding will not cover UK PhD studentships or requests for capital items.**

NHMRC will invest up to \$4 million AUD to cover the Australian component of the research projects selected for funding under this call. NHMRC will provide funding for the Australian-based CI in accordance with standard NHMRC funding agreement and the UKRI-NHMRC Built Environment and Prevention Research Scheme 2019 Guidelines.

The size of the grants will vary according to the needs of each research project. UK and Australian applicants do not need to request equal amounts from both sides. The difference in values should reflect the difference in costs covered and local prices. The agencies also expect the costs on each side to accurately reflect the research effort to be carried out. It is expected, however, that the research effort on both sides is comparable.

For further information, please read the call-specific [Guidance for Applicants](#).

### **Duration**

Projects must be three years in duration. The UK component must start on 15 May 2020. The Australian component must start on 15 May 2020. There is no flexibility on the commencement date for funding.

UK applicants should refer to the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) for information on what the starting procedure entails. Please inform the relevant support staff in your organisation of this requirement to ensure the project starts on time. Australian applicants will be notified through the usual channels.

### **Spending obligations**

Successful UK research organisations will need to adhere to strict spending requirements. For this call, the end date of the proposed research should be no later than 14 May 2023. The UK payment profiles are likely to be slightly irregular for this scheme.

### **Eligibility**

This call will fund partnerships between researchers based in the UK and Australia, fostering relationships between researchers working in the area of NCD prevention in the context of the built environment.

For support under this call, applicants must be eligible to apply for funding from their respective country's funding agency:

#### **MRC/ESRC**

- For the UK participants, standard UKRI eligibility criteria as described on the [UKRI website](#) will apply. Research Organisations that are eligible to apply to the MRC, for example MRC Units and Institutes, may apply to this call. Further information on eligibility is available in section 1 of the [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#).

#### **NHMRC**

- Applications will only be accepted from NHMRC-approved Administering Institutions. A list of NHMRC approved Administering Institutions and NHMRC's Administering Institution policy are available on NHMRC's website. Further information on eligibility

is available in Section 4 of the [UKRI-NHMRC Built Environment and Prevention Research Scheme 2019 Guidelines](#).

UK PIs/Australian CIs may only submit one application to this scheme as PI/CI but may be involved in more applications if listed as a UK Co-Investigator/Australian Associate Investigator.

The funders are not seeking to fund partners outside of the UK and Australia through this scheme. Please contact [international@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:international@mrc.ukri.org) if you are planning to involve a partner from a third country in your proposal.

### How to apply - Intention to Submit

Researchers planning to submit to this scheme must submit a short 'Intention to submit' by 23:00 UK time on 17 September 2019 through our [online survey](#). This is a compulsory stage and your full application will not be considered if an Intention to Submit is not provided by the Intention to Submit deadline. It is the responsibility of the UK PI to submit the Intention to Submit on behalf of the UK/Australian research collaboration.

Please note, this step does not form part of the review process. MRC, ESRC and NHMRC will not undertake eligibility checks at this point; applicants should not await a response from the funders following the Intention to Submit submission, but simply continue with the development of the full proposal to be submitted by the deadline for the full application. The MRC, ESRC and NHMRC will use the Intention to Submit to help prepare for the review process.

The PI/CI cannot change between the Intention to Submit and full application, however, additional participants can be added/removed at full application.

### How to apply – Full Application

#### Both of the following must be submitted:

- A Full Application jointly prepared by the UK and Australian researchers submitted on the UK Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) System by 16:00 BST on 15 October 2019.
- Australian applicants must submit the Australian budget to NHMRC by 17:00 AEST 16 October 2019 through [NHMRC's Research Grants Management System](#) (RGMS). and upload a PDF copy of the final full application (including an identical Justification of Resources and Case for Support) that has been submitted to MRC.

The UK and Australian applicants should jointly prepare a common research plan and jointly the full application, including:

- a jointly prepared '**Case for Support**' (including, if applicable, a one-page methodology annex and optional one-page Gantt chart) providing **full details of the work proposed for both the UK and Australian components**

- a jointly prepared [Justification of Resources using the call-specific template](#).

The Australian Electronic submission requires Administering Institutions and all CIs on an application to register for an account in [NHMRC's Research Grants Management System](#). Applicants who are not registered can submit a new user request via the login page of NHMRC's granting system.

Applicants should refer to NHMRC's granting system Training Program on [NHMRC's website](#) for detailed user instructions or contact their RAO or NHMRC's Research Help Centre for further assistance.

Further guidance can be found in the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) as well as in the [call-specific Guidance for Applicants](#) document.

The MRC will organise joint peer review on behalf of the all funders (NHMRC, MRC and ESRC). **Peer review will be based on the jointly prepared proposal submitted on the UKRI Je-S system.**

Each PI and CI will also apply for funding to support their specific component from their respective funding agency. Applications submitted to only one funding agency will not be accepted.

Failure to submit a valid application to both the MRC and NHMRC by the deadline will invalidate both submissions.

The MRC, ESRC and NHMRC will conduct a remit check/relevance review to identify applications that are in alignment with the scope of the call. Applications that are deemed not to be eligible or not to be relevant to the call may be withdrawn from the competition at any point during the peer review process.

UK and Australian researchers should discuss ethics and Intellectual Property before fully developing their proposal.

### **Additional Guidance for “Case for Support”**

A jointly prepared Case for Support must be uploaded as a PDF to the Je-S application. The case for support may be up to 11 A4 pages in length (including illustrations, references and a project **Gantt chart**) plus an optional additional one-page methodology annex, using Arial 11pt typeface with margins of 2cms on all sides.

In your case for support you should address each of the following headings

- Title
- Importance of the research
- Scientific potential

- People and track record
- Research environment
- Research plans and deliverables
- Ethics and research governance
- Exploitation and dissemination

Generic Guidance on content under each of these headings can be found in [section 2.2.3 of MRC's standard Guidance for Applicants](#) document.

Details of key issues included in the Collaboration Agreement, for example management of Intellectual property, should be detailed in the 'consideration of ethical, governance and Intellectual Property issues around the project' section of the Case for Support.

A one-page annex may be included in addition to the case for support page limit providing additional detail of the methodology and experimental design aspects of the proposal. This information must be provided as a clearly marked annex at the end of the main Case for Support entitled '**Methodology and experimental design annex**'. Please note that you are not required to duplicate information presented elsewhere in the application.

**The use of this annex is strongly advised** where the proposal includes the use of animals and/or human participants, or where the methodology/experimental design proposed is practically novel. Please see sections 2.2.3.4 and 4.3 in the [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#).

### **Assessment criteria and decision-making process**

To be funded, proposals must be internationally competitive and at a standard equivalent to that normally expected to be supported by each funding organisation.

Key assessment criteria for the submissions will be:

- significance and impact of research
- scientific rationale: novelty, importance and timeliness of the research
- design and feasibility of the project plan
- leadership and partnership: including strength and clarity of collaborations and opportunities provided, quality of the project management structure proposed; track record of the team and the added value of the UK-Australian collaboration
- quality and suitability of the research environment and of the facilities
- value for money for Australian and UK science
- ethical considerations and governance arrangements.

Eligible applications will be externally peer reviewed (scores 1-6 using the [scoring matrix](#)) and applicants will be offered the opportunity to provide a written response to these reviews. Following this process, applications will be assessed by a joint UKRI-NHMRC Review Panel using a scoring system of 1-10.

Funding recommendations will be made through a joint process.

## Key dates

<b>Call Launch</b>	5 August 2019
<b>Deadline for compulsory Intention to Submit</b>	17 September 2019
<b>Deadline for investigators to submit full proposal on UK Je-S system</b>	16.00 British Summer Time on 15 October 2019
<b>Deadline for investigators to submit Australian budget on Australian RGMS</b>	17.00 AEDT on 16 October 2019
<b>External Peer Review</b>	October-December 2019
<b>PI response to peer reviews</b>	~late December 2019/early January 2020
<b>Panel Meeting</b>	February 2020
<b>Applicants notified of funding decision</b>	~Mid-April 2020
<b>Funding start date</b>	15 May 2020

## Collaboration agreement, ethics and intellectual property

As the research projects will be carried out by multiple research organisations and project partners, the basis of collaboration between the organisations and project partners, including ownership of intellectual property (IP) generated during the project and rights to exploitation, and costs of IP management (this is not an eligible cost to MRC/ESRC), as well as ethics considerations is expected to be set out in a formal collaboration agreement between the research organisations involved. It is the responsibility of the research organisations to put such an agreement in place before the research begins. **The terms of collaboration and any agreement shall not conflict any terms and conditions, policies or other requirements of the MRC, ESRC and NHMRC.**

Further details are provided in the [call-specific Guidance for Applicants](#) for this call.

## Contacts and Guidance

Please read:

- the current document (the call text)
- the [call-specific Guidance for Applicants](#)
- the [standard MRC Guidance for Applicants](#)
- the [summary of requirements for proposals submitted to this call on Je-S](#)
- any relevant NHMRC guidance including the UKRI-NHMRC Built Environment and Prevention Research Scheme 2019 Grant Opportunity Guidelines available via <https://www.grants.gov.au>.

An identical version of the [call-specific Justification of Resources document](#) should be submitted to both the MRC and NHMRC.

For further information, UK applicants should contact: [international@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:international@mrc.ukri.org)

For further information, Australian applicants should contact: [help@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:help@nhmrc.gov.au)