

NOTE This is the first phase of our new website – let us know if you have [feedback](#) or would like to [help us test new developments](#).

Better methods, better research: Nov 2021

Opportunity status:	Upcoming
Funders:	Medical Research Council (MRC)
Co-funders:	National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
Funding type:	Grant
Publication date:	20 September 2020
Opening date:	1 October 2021
Closing date:	11 November 2021 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 22 October 2020

This funding opportunity is open to researchers at eligible organisations including higher education institutions, approved independent research organisations and NHS bodies, and MRC institutes.

You can apply for funding to support research to improve research methods being applied by others anywhere within the remit of MRC or the NIHR. We encourage applicants to learn from others where possible, and welcome multidisciplinary teams or approaches.

You apply under the normal process for the type of grant. These are:

- research grants
- new investigator research grants
- partnership grants.

We will usually fund 80% of the full economic cost of your research to your institution.

[Open all](#)

Who can apply

The lead applicant should be based at an eligible research organisation. These include:

- higher education institutions
- UKRI-approved independent research organisations or NHS bodies
- government-funded organisations
- MRC institutes
- MRC units and partnership institutes
- institutes and units funded by other research councils.

You must have a graduate degree, although we expect most applicants to have a PhD. We recognise the diversity of skills necessary for a successful research team, and encourage proposals to recognise the contribution of technical professionals (including via use of researcher co-investigator status as appropriate).

We welcome collaboration with industry, which should be managed via an [MRC industry collaboration agreement](#).

You should check any specific eligibility criteria for the type of grant you are applying for.

[See our general guidance for applicants for more details on institutional and individual eligibility \(PDF, 721KB\)](#).

What we're looking for

We are seeking research that includes at least one of these project categories:

- research into underpinning methodologies that extend beyond a single case study or application
- development of methods to understand research standards and drive improvements in quality
- research that increases the implementation and adoption of optimal methodologies (by methodologists and/or non-methodologists)
- research that makes the outputs of biomedical/health research more useful to others (across scales, experimental approaches, systems, disciplines or translational pathways).

The research themes in scope include:

- integrative biological systems and mechanisms including: molecules to humans and mechanisms; underpinning methods for technologies (including multiscale visualisation and precision perturbations); methods for discovery and translation
- phenotyping, endotyping, populations and people, including: cohorts; epidemiology and public health (including geography, anthropogenic change);

- complexity for aging and multimorbidity; precision medicine; prevention; measures; health psychology, behaviours and social science for health
- clinical and translation for health, including: evidence, health economics, policies, decisions (clinical/operations/management), ethics, law and regulation; digital; trials, assessment and comparisons; underpinning methods for advanced therapies
 - global health
 - health research systems and culture, including: research on health research; knowledge exchange, reporting and learning research systems; public trust; commercial engagement.

This list is not exhaustive, and you are encouraged to contact the programme manager (see contacts below) ahead of developing a full application.

Methods in this context do not include technology or biomarker development (although new methodological approaches to improve their implementation or broader uptake may be considered).

If you are seeking support for development of a methodology within a specific application, you should apply through the relevant MRC research board and include a covering letter noting the relevance to the 'Better methods, better research' programme. If you are seeking support for biomarker identification and validation, you should also apply through the relevant MRC research board.

We encourage applicants to learn from others where possible, and welcome multidisciplinary teams or approaches.

We will normally award up to £500,000 and support 80% of the full economic costs of your proposal. If you anticipate requesting funding of more than £500,000, you should contact the programme manager.

If you hold active or pending funding from NIHR you may apply to embed an additional 'Better methods, better research' award via this programme. Embedded awards need to demonstrate additional methodological insight and added value from the integration of this research into an ongoing study.

[Find out more about the programme's remit.](#)

How to apply

You must apply through the [Joint Electronic Submission system \(Je-S\)](#). If you need help in applying, you can contact the Je-S help desk on 01793 444164 or by email jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org.

You apply for funding through the normal application process for the type of MRC grant you wish to apply for. These are:

- [research grants](#)
- [new investigator research grants](#)
- [partnership grants](#).

The MRC [guidance for applicants](#) gives more details on how to apply.

When applying select:

- council: MRC
- document type: standard proposal
- scheme: research grant
- call/type/mode: methodology research panel (enter month and year of deadline).

If you are applying for a new investigator research grant, you should prefix the application title with “NIRG:”

This programme is open twice a year with deadlines in June and November. The next deadline is 16:00 on 11 November 2020. Opening dates in 2021 are 8 May 2021 and 1 Oct 2021, and the deadlines are 17 Jun 2021 and 11 Nov 2021.

How we will assess your application

Your proposal is assessed via a two-stage peer review process. A triage panel will consider your application roughly one month before the full panel meeting. You will have two weeks to respond to external written peer review and any feedback from the triage panel if your application goes to the full panel meeting. We aim to communicate funding recommendations within one week of the full panel meeting.

Your application will be assessed on:

- quality of proposed research
- project management, risk mitigation and decision-making approaches, including community consultation as appropriate
- assurance of wider implementation and/or learning from project outputs, including approaches for benchmarking (method performance and implementation costs), outreach and the ability to influence wider audiences
- value for money and impact.

Contact details

Dr Samuel Rowley, Programme Manager
samuel.rowley@mrc.ukri.org

Additional info

See our policies and guidance on:

- [animal use](#)
- [panel membership](#)

- [industry collaboration](#).
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Timeline

- **1 October 2021**
Opening date
- **11 November 2021**
Closing date
- **17 April 2022**
Shortlisting
- **11-12 May 2021**
Panel meeting