UK Research and Innovation

Developmental pathway funding scheme

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	Medical Research Council (MRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£30,000,000
Publication date:	20 September 2020
Opening date:	16 October 2020
Closing date:	25 November 2020 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 28 October 2020

Start application

You can apply for funding from this scheme for academically led pre-clinical development and early clinical testing of novel therapeutics, devices and diagnostics, including repurposing of existing therapies.

Awards are made every year and there are deadlines every four months. We generally fund 80% of the full economic costs of your research, and your research organisation must agree to find the balance.

Open all

Who can apply

You should be based at an eligible research organisation, which 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.

Our **general guidance for applicants (PDF, 721KB)** contains more details on institutional and individual eligibility.

What we're looking for

You can apply for academically led translational projects that aim to improve prevention, diagnosis, prognosis or treatment of significant health needs, or to develop research tools that increase the efficiency of developing interventions. All diseases and interventions are eligible for support. You can also address global health issues.

Support is available for the following stages of development:

- prototype discovery and design
- pre-clinical testing of novel interventions
- early-phase clinical studies of novel interventions (phases I and IIa).

Your projects can start and finish at any point. You can submit follow-on proposals where you can justify the need for continued support.

You can apply for funding for work in:

- candidate therapeutic entities, for example drug discovery
- vaccines for infectious or non-infectious disease
- novel biologics (antibodies, peptides, proteins)
- advanced therapeutics (gene therapy, T-cell therapy, etc)
- regenerative medicine
- repurposing clinical studies, using existing therapies for new indications
- novel devices
- diagnostics (including biomarker validation)
- novel medical imaging technology
- new surgical techniques or tools
- behavioural and psychological interventions
- digital healthcare, app development, enabled devices, artificial intelligence enabled diagnosis
- radiotherapy and radiation protocols
- interventions that benefit health in low- and middle-income countries.

This funding opportunity will not support:

- fundamental or investigative research not linked to a development plan (supported by the **MRC Research Boards**)
- clinical studies where the main aim is to investigate disease mechanism (supported by the **MRC Research Boards**)
- late-phase clinical trials (supported by **MRC-NIHR efficacy and mechanism evaluation** and **NIHR health technology assessment** programmes)

- late-phase global health trials (supported by the **Applied Global Health Research Board**).

There is no limit to the amount of funding you can apply for or the length of your project. You should instead justify the timescale and resources needed in the context of the proposed work.

Collaborations

We encourage working with charities or industry where these partnerships can add value to the project, for example in terms of access to expertise, technologies, reagents or funding. Please note that collaboration is not a prerequisite for application.

Applications involving collaboration with industry should consult the **MRC industry collaboration agreement**. Please note that we do not fund the work of your industrial partners.

How to apply

You must first submit an outline proposal via the **Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S)**.

The funding opportunity is open for six weeks leading up to the deadline, and there are **deadlines for outline proposals** in July, November and March.

When applying, select:

- council: MRC
- document type: outline proposal
- scheme: Biomedical Catalyst DPFS Outline
- call/type/mode: Biomedical Catalyst: DPFS (relevant deadline)

You must use our **outline proposal form (DOC, 271KB)** for your Je-S application. Please read our **guidance for outline stage applicants (PDF, 228KB)** before applying.

If successful at the outline stage, you will be invited to submit a full application. We will send guidance on completing a full application.

We aim to complete the process from outline submission to full decision in approximately 26 weeks.

How we will assess your application

Your application will be assessed in a two-stage process. Your outline proposal will first be considered by an **independent panel of experts**.

The panel will assess your proposal on:

- the need and whether meeting it would significantly improve treatment, reduce disease or improve quality of life
- scientific or medical rationale
- deliverability of the project
- an appropriate strategy for intellectual property and downstream exploitation or adoption.

If successful, you will be invited to submit a full proposal. This undergoes external peer review before a further and more detailed review by the panel. All applicants will receive feedback from the assessment process within eight weeks of the panel meeting.

You can find out more about how you will be assessed in our **assessment guidelines (PDF, 70KB)**.

Contact details

General enquiries: **dpfsanddcs@mrc.ukri.org**

You are encouraged to get in touch with the programme manager to discuss your proposal ideas:

- Dr Adam Babbs, **adam.babbs@mrc.ukri.org**
  Small molecules and drug (other)
- Dr Charlotte Durkin, **charlotte.durkin@mrc.ukri.org**
  Regenerative medicine
- Dr Tim Ellis, **tim.ellis@mrc.ukri.org**
  Biomarkers, diagnostics and psychological therapies
- Dr Agnes Leong, **agnes.leong@mrc.ukri.org**
  Medical devices, digital health (software, apps and AI tools), radiology and imaging
- Dr Penny Morton, **penny.morton@mrc.ukri.org**
  Advanced therapeutics (vectors, gene, nucleic acid and siRNA therapies)
- Dr Alex Phillips, **alexandra.phillips@mrc.ukri.org**
  Antibodies, proteins and peptide therapeutics

Additional info

This scheme was established in 2008 and is run by MRC. It is a key part of the MRC translational research strategy and supports the translation of fundamental discovery into benefits to human health.

You can read about projects that have won funding under the scheme in our **collection of case studies**.

Related content

- Outline proposal form (DOC, 271KB)
- Guidance for outline stage applicants (PDF, 228KB)
- General guidance for applicant (PDF, 721KB)

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**.