



Ten Tips for writing a PHIND application

1. A convincing scientific rationale

Is the need for an early-phase study clearly justified? It is rare that a proposed intervention will be the first of its kind to tackle a particular public health problem. Explain what the literature shows and why a new intervention is needed. For example, is it likely to be more effective, cheaper or more practicable?

2. Ambitious but realistic

Are you proposing an innovative intervention, that can be developed within the lifetime of the grant? Proposed interventions should be highly novel with the potential for significant impact. At the same time, it is vital that the work you are proposing can be realistically achieved within the required timeframe (i.e. <18 months).

3. Development vs. feasibility

Is it clear why this proposal is suitable for PHIND rather than a related scheme? Feasibility research is undertaken prior to a main study to determine whether the study can be done and estimate logistical parameters needed to deliver it. Feasibility testing should be limited within a PHIND project, the focus of which has been to define and specify the intervention itself. If your focus is testing the feasibility of the final intervention, you could consider appropriate NIHR funding schemes.

4. Description of the methods

Have you fully specified the methodological approach you intend to use? Successful PHIND applications clearly describe robust methods. For example, if you are using focus groups, specify the number of sessions that will be involved and justify sample sizes, as well as defining the selection criteria and recruitment strategy for your study participants.

5. Target population

Has the target group, and any subgroups within that population, been clearly defined? The target population identified in your proposal should be fully justified, with clear consideration of the potential for differences according to socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, age group or other characteristics.

6. Conveying what the final intervention will be

Have you explained what the final intervention might look like? While you are not expected to know the outcome of your research, a strong proposal will consider the format of the proposed intervention, what the 'product' will be and whether it is likely to be affordable and feasible to deliver. For example, specifying that you intend to develop an online alcohol reduction programme would give the panel a clearer picture of what you envisage than simply referring to an educational resource. You may also find it helpful to develop a logic model and relevant programme theory to underpin and explain the intervention and its likely effects.

7. Stakeholder buy-in

Does your proposal include strong stakeholder engagement? Engagement of potential commissioners and users of an intervention is often crucial to its potential success. You should be able to identify both the potential beneficiaries of your intervention, who would be delivering the intervention and who would commission it. As well as identifying these groups, your proposal will be strengthened by demonstrating that users will be willing to participate in the development study (and potentially further testing and evaluation).

8. Unanticipated consequences

Could there be any unexpected consequences of the proposed intervention, and if so, how will these be managed? You should evaluate the potential of your proposal to cause harm. For example, some interventions may risk widening inequalities. Alternatively, if you are proposing a computing or gaming-based intervention, you should consider the possible negative health effects associated with promoting increased screen-time, and what you could put in place to mitigate this risk. Equally, be open to the possibility of unexpected positive outcomes and consider how these might best be captured.

9. Expertise

Is there sufficient expertise across the breadth of the proposal? The relevant experience, knowledge and/or skills of the team members should be highlighted to show that the team has the expertise necessary to successfully deliver the project. If there are areas where expertise is lacking, you may want to identify individuals beyond the immediate team with relevant expertise who could be consulted at the appropriate stage.

10. Progression criteria

Have you detailed how the intended outcomes of the intervention will be captured and ultimately attributable to the intervention? Not all PHIND projects will necessarily be developed into feasible interventions - but either way, results will be valuable for informing future research and should be appropriately disseminated. Moreover, you should detail the criteria you will use to determine whether the project should progress to the next stage of evaluation. This may be related to uptake of the intervention, its feasibility or scalability, or practicality of delivery. It is not essential to provide figures, but try to give the panel an indication of what you will be looking for.