FDCO/MRC/Wellcome
Health Systems Research Initiative
In collaboration with ESRC

Foundation Grant Application
Guidance: Call 8

1. Important information

The application/review process in summary

- Foundation grant application deadline: 16:00 BST 26th May 2021.
- Panel meeting of academic experts: October 2021
- Decisions to be relayed in early November 2021.

**If you have any queries when preparing your application, please contact:
HSRI@mrc.ukri.org**

We anticipate that Foundation Grants will have a duration of no longer than 24 months. The size of a grant may vary but a general guideline would be up to £200,000 full economic cost (fEC). However, grants exceeding this value will still be considered if the costs are fully justified. Applicants wishing to exceed this should contact the office to discuss prior to applying, not doing so may lead to an application being rejected. The purpose of a Foundation Grant is to conduct preliminary studies needed before a credible Research Grant proposal can be designed, to conduct a small standalone research study with impact or to explore innovative health systems

topics, under-researched areas or creative approaches that have the potential to be developed further.

Funding for projects awarded under this call for proposals is provided by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Medical Research Council (MRC) and Wellcome, in collaboration with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

MRC administer the call for proposals on behalf of the funders and so all applications should be submitted to the MRC and will be awarded according to UKRI Terms and Conditions.

General information about how to apply to the MRC can be found in the MRC Guidance for Applicants. Where guidance in the present document differs from that in the standard guidance, you should follow the direction in this present, scheme specific, document.

Please complete the proposal in English and use British Pounds Sterling for all costs.

All proposals must have a Principal Investigator (PI) based at either an eligible UK Research Organisation (RO) or an eligible RO in a low- or middle-income country (LMIC, excluding India and China). It will be the ROs hosting the successful PIs that receive the funding and manage distribution of the funding to any Co-Investigator RO(s). PIs from high income countries outside the UK are not eligible to apply for this scheme.

The submission deadline for applications is: 16:00 BST 26th May 2021.

2. Who can apply and how to apply

Who can apply?

The intellectual challenge should be the determining factor when configuring appropriate partnerships and collaborations. Proposals must demonstrate equitable partnerships in line with the UK Collaborative on Development Research report 'Building Partnerships of Equals'. The balance of intellectual leadership and costs between high income countries and LMICs will be considered in the assessment of proposals.

Types of research organisations (ROs)

In addition to the eligible research organisations outlined in the MRC guidance for applicants, applications will be accepted from the following lead organisations. All organisations must have sufficient capacity to deliver research projects, including robust financial management processes:
- **Higher education institutions based in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)** A university or institution based in an LMIC with degree awarding powers recognised by the government in which the organisation is based.
- **Research institutes based in LMICs**
  A research focused institution based in an LMIC funded by the government of the country in which the organisation is based or by a not-for-profit organisation.
- **Research focused non-profit organisations based in LMICs**
  A not-for-profit organisation based in an LMIC with dedicated research capacity.

Health systems research requires the involvement of a diverse range of collaborating organisations in order to effect sustainable change. As such applications with the involvement of the following collaborating organisations will be accepted (please note that these organisations are not eligible to lead a proposal but can be named as Co-Investigators):
- **Non-profit organisations**

A not-for-profit organisation based in an LMIC. This can include grass roots organisations, and community groups.

Institutions based in China or India are no longer eligible to lead applications but are welcomed as collaborating organisations hosting Co-Investigators within applications. Collaborations with Co-Investigators from China or India must have global or regional development impact as the primary objective, with local or national impacts within China or India as secondary objectives. It is expected that Co-Investigators from China and India make a significant contribution to their own research costs, including covering their own overheads. Please note it is not possible for Co-Investigators from China or India to be hosted by local or national government departments, or by international intergovernmental organisations.

Applicants working in India and/or China who wish to apply are strongly advised to contact the office for guidance as early as possible.

Any collaboration with industry or other for-profit organisations is governed by the MRC Industry Collaboration Agreement (MICA). More information can be found on the MRC's MICA pages. All decisions regarding organisational eligibility lie with the MRC office. Applications will be returned to the research organisation if the MRC office deem that the organisational eligibility requirements have not been met.

Many non-UK institutions will not currently be recognised to hold UK Research and Innovation grants. Lead institutions which are not currently recognised will have to obtain recognition (further eligibility and financial checks) before any grant can be confirmed. In order to minimise administrative burdens and costs to both applicants and funders, formal recognition will only be pursued if the grant is successful.

If you have previously received funding from the MRC but do not currently meet the organisational eligibility requirements, or you are unsure of the eligibility of your organisation please contact the MRC team at: HSRI@mrc.ukri.org.

Principal Investigators (PIs)

This call differs from the standard MRC rules in that PIs can be based either in the UK (as per usual MRC rules) or in an eligible Low- or Middle Income Country.

Projects with PIs from LMICs are strongly encouraged and all proposals must include Co-Is from the LMIC in which the research is taking place. Funding is not dependant on the involvement of a UK-based research organisation. The PI is responsible for the intellectual leadership of the research and for the overall management of the project. The PI will be the funding agencies' main contact for the proposal.

Exceptions: applicants based in China or India are not eligible to be the PI of any application to this call but are welcomed as international Co-Is within proposals.

Applicants without experience of UK funding are encouraged to seek mentorship or guidance on grant writing from colleagues with experience of winning UK funding.

For administrative purposes when completing the Je-S form, you will only be able to list one PI. While there is formally only one PI, you can make it clear in your Case for Support that the scientific leadership is shared and that in this respect, the applicants listed are Co-Principal Investigators.

It is not permitted for the same person to be PI on any more than two proposals submitted to this call. If you have already submitted an outline proposal for a Research Grant under HSRI Call 8 then you can submit no more than one Foundation Grant application.

Please note, the PI is responsible for ensuring that each investigator's overseas research organisation has been successfully added to the Je-S database and has the required level of Je-S account.

Co-Investigators (Co-Is)

The PIs may be supported by a number of Co-Investigators (Co-Is) named on the application. The eligibility requirements for Co-Is are broader than those set out for the PI. As well as being based at a higher education institute, research institute, or research focused non-profit organisation, a Co-I can also be based at a not-for-profit organisation which does not have specific research capacity.

Where there is engagement from individuals based in government agencies, international intergovernmental organisations (e.g. WHO) or other stakeholder organisations (e.g. industry collaborators), applicants should include them as a named project partner.

In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to include staff members of government ministries as named co-investigators rather than project partners, where a proportion of their time is spent working on the project. Inclusion of named government officials as co-investigators must be discussed and agreed with the relevant programme manager in advance of application, please contact: HSRI@mrc.ukri.org.

Investigators from high-income countries outside of the UK are not eligible to apply as PIs but can be named as Co-Is with justification for why the expertise they are providing cannot be found in the UK or an LMIC.

All Co-Is must be registered on the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) System and added to the online application. It is important that you do this so that reviewers can immediately see who is providing the scientific leadership for the proposed research. Please ensure your Je-S registrations are completed at least 10 working days in advance of the submission deadline as the accounts have to be manually processed by the Je-S team before you can add investigators to the proposal. Registration is not an instant process and if you leave registration until the last week before the deadline it may not be possible for your co-investigators to be registered in time. Information on how to register can be found in the MRC guidance for applicants.

Overseas Investigators should follow the following guidance:
1. Self-Register your Overseas Organisation by selecting this link, or navigate to the Je-S login page and select the option Self-registration for organisations, to add your organisation to the Je-S database.
2. Following the creation of the Overseas Organisation, the overseas Investigator should be directed to create a 'Research Proposal' type Je-S Account, by either selecting the following link, or by navigating to the Je-S Login page and selecting the Create an Account option.

UK based Investigators (that do not already have a Je-S account), should navigate to the Je-S Login page and select the 'Create an Account' option.

Project Partner/s

In addition to the information provided in the MRC guidance for applicants, we encourage applicants to involve key stakeholders (policy makers, implementers, patient/participant groups).

Stakeholders who are not receiving funding from the project, or are providing a contribution in cash or in-kind, should be included as project partners. A project partner provides a substantial intellectual contribution to the project and their contribution and involvement should be acknowledged in the project partner section of the Je-S application form. Please also note that you should include a nominal sum of £1 when adding project partners who are not contributing financially to the project.

Please note that PI and Co-I host organisations should not be listed as project partners on the application.

Please note:
- Project partners do not need to be based at an eligible RO or have a verified Je-S account.
- Each project partner must provide a letter of support, please see the MRC guidance for applicants for more information.
- If the project partner listed is from industry, applicants must follow the guidance relating to the MRC Industry Collaboration Agreement (MICA). Applicants with an industrial partner(s) will need to include "MICA:" as a prefix to their project title and will need to include a MICA Form and Heads of Terms as part of their Je-S application.

Subcontractors

Please note the role of a subcontractor is distinct from a project partner. Subcontractors should not be named as part of the project team. They carry out a specific piece of work on behalf of the investigators on a fee-for-service basis, with no potential claim as an inventor over any arising intellectual property. Details of any subcontracts should be specified in the Case for Support and fully justified in the Justification of Resources.

How to apply

As stated in the MRC guidance for applicants it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure they apply to the correct funding call/board/type of grant and that their application is submitted with adequate time to allow their research organisation to complete necessary checks and complete the final submission (through Je-S) to the **MRC by 16:00 (BST) on the 26th May 2021.**.

Please telephone Je-S Helpdesk +44 (0) 1793 444164 should you require any assistance with the Je-S System.

Applying for a funding opportunity

Applicants should read the appropriate guidance set out in the MRC guidance for applicants regarding starting an application on the Je-S system.

Applicants should make the following selections on Je-S:
- Select Council: **MRC**
- Select Document Type: **Standard Proposal**
- Select Scheme: **MRC Jointly Funded Initiatives Full**
- Select Call/Type/Mode: **Joint Health Systems Research Initiative – Foundation May 2021**

- Select: **'Create Document'** option

Who can submit

The [MRC guidance for applicants](#) gives details on who should submit the research proposal to Je-S. The submission route for an application is not always clear to organisations who do not routinely use the Je-S system. Some organisations have set up a "Submitter Pool" who will need to approve and submit the application before the deadline.

It is important that you clarify the Je-S submission arrangements for your organisation well in advance of the submission date.

Once you have completed the Project Details section of the Je-S form you are able to find out the submission arrangements for your organisation (which will vary depending on how the account is set up). Select the "Document Actions" button and then select "Show Submission Path" button.

If the screen shows "With Owner" and "With Council", then the proposal will be submitted directly by you (the PI) to MRC (the Council).

If the screen shows "With Owner" and "Submitter Pool" (there should be names listed against this section) and "With Council", then the proposal has to be approved and submitted by one of your research organisation's named submitters. You should allow at least 48 hours for them to do this, your research organisation may require longer, and we would strongly advise you check this.

Please check that at least one of your organisation's named submitters will be available on the day you plan to submit it. Please note that they will need to do this no later than 16:00 BST UK time on 26th May 2021.

3. The application

The proposal form

Complete project information is requested through the Je-S form. The Je-S form will cover the administrative and financial aspects for your application. It includes: Objectives; Summary; Technical Summary; Academic Beneficiaries; Communication Plan. You will also be required to provide details of all researchers and staff on the award.

Please access the Je-S system well in advance of the deadline so that you have time to complete these sections. You do not have to use the whole word limit for each section, especially if you feel you have provided sufficient detail for some items already in your case for support.

Information about each of the headings can be found in the [MRC guidance for applicants](#).

There is additional guidance, such as the word limits for these sections, in the [Je-S Handbook](#).

Only applications submitted through Je-S will be recognised: https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/

Attachments

Please note: all attachments, with the exception of Letters of Support and the Cover Letter are mandatory, and no additional attachments are allowed (this includes the reproducibility and statistical design annex).

Mandatory Attachments	Conditions
Case for support	4 sides of A4 (plus one for references)
CVs	2 sides of A4 per person
Publications	1 side of A4 per person
Justification of Resources	2 sides of A4
Data Management Plan	3 sides of A4
Gender Equality Statement	1 side of A4
ODA Compliance Statement	1 side of A4
MICA Form and Heads of Terms	Mandatory only for MICAs
Optional Attachments	**Conditions**
Letters of Support	2 sides of A4 per letter
Covering Letter	2 sides of A4 per letter (mandatory for resubmissions)

All requested supporting attachments/documentation uploaded to the Je-S application e.g. Case for Support, Justification for Resources, etc. must be prepared as follows:

- Arial font or equivalent (e.g. Helvetica), with minimum font size of 11 pt. (excluding text on diagrams and the use of mathematical symbols).
- A minimum of single line spacing and standard character spacing must be used
- Margins must not be less than 2cm.

Case for Support

When completing the Case for Support, please bear in mind that the committee will also receive your Je-S proposal form which contains the Objectives, Summary, Technical Summary, Academic Beneficiaries and Communication Plan. You therefore do not need to repeat what has already been detailed. Feedback from reviewers has shown that they are keen to see clarity, succinctness and accessibility.

The case for support should not exceed **four sides of A4**. You may include one additional page for references, so the document can be **five sides in total**. Your Case for Support is mandatory and must be attached to your Je-S online application as a pdf.

Please see Section 4 of this document for Case for Support scheme specific guidance.

CVs and publications

A CV should be provided for each investigator and each named researcher. Each CV should not exceed **two pages of A4.**

A list of publications should be provided for each investigator and each named researcher. Each list of publications should not exceed **one side of A4**.

Please upload all CVs and publications as a single attachment, with the publication document following on from the CV of each researcher. This must be attached to your Je-S online application as a pdf.

Please see Section 2.2.1 of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for more information about CVs and see Section 2.2.2 for more information about publications. Please disregard the requirement to upload these documents separately.

Justification of Resources

Full details of costings should be detailed on the Je-S online form. In addition to this, applicants should prepare a Justification of Resources document that should clearly and concisely state the rationale for the resources requested. The document is mandatory and should be no longer than **two sides of A4**. Your Justification of Resources document must be attached to your Je-S online application as a pdf.

Please see Section 2.2.4 of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for full details on the requirements of the Justification of Resources.

It is important that the figures quoted in the Justification of Resources clearly match up with those entered in the Je-S online form.

Please include the following table at the top of your justification of resources document:

Participant Organisation name	Total amount	Total amount requested from this scheme*
Participant Organisation 1 (please enter name)		
Participant Organisation 2 (please enter name)		
etc.		
TOTAL		

*Costs claimed by UK institutions should be claimed at 74% fEC. Costs claimed by institutions in LMICs should be claimed at 100% fEC.

Data Management Plan

The Data Management Plan should demonstrate how the PI will meet, or already meets, their responsibilities for research data quality, sharing and security. Please see Section 2.2.7 of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for full details on the requirements for the Data Management Plan. This document is mandatory, should be no longer than **three pages of A4** and must be attached to your Je-S online application as a pdf.

Gender Equality Statement

Official Development Assistance provided by UKRI must comply with the requirements of the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014 which states, the "desirability of providing development assistance that is likely to contribute to reducing poverty in a way which is likely to contribute to reducing inequalities between persons of different gender".

To comply with the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014, applications must provide a Gender Equality Statement, outlining how applicants have taken meaningful yet proportionate consideration as to how the project will contribute to reducing gender inequalities. This document is mandatory, should be no longer than a **one page of A4** and must be attached to your Je-S online application as a pdf.

Please see [Section 2.2.9.1](#) of MRC's Guidance for Applicants for further information on Gender Equality Statements.

Applicants are required to address the below criteria, with an understanding that, depending on the nature of their research and innovation, not all questions will be applicable.

Criteria to address while considering gender impact:

- Have measures been put in place to ensure equal and meaningful opportunities for people of different genders to be involved throughout the project? This includes the development of the project, the participants of the research and innovation, and the beneficiaries of the research and innovation.
- The expected impact of the project (benefits and losses) on people of different genders, both throughout the project and beyond.
- The impact on the relations between people of different genders and people of the same gender. For example, changing roles and responsibilities in households, society, economy, politics, power, etc.
- How will any risks and unintended negative consequences on gender equality be avoided or mitigated against, and monitored?
- Are there any relevant outcomes and outputs being measured, with data disaggregated by age and gender (where disclosed)?

ODA Compliance Statement

Research funded through this call will form part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA), as defined by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

An ODA compliance statement is required to explain how your proposed research is compliant. It should be a maximum of **one-page A4** and be attached as attachment type: **Non-UK components.** The document is mandatory and must be attached to your Je-S online application as a pdf.

The ODA compliance statement should answer the following questions:

1. Which country/ countries on the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients (DAC list) will directly benefit from this proposal and are these countries likely to continue to be eligible to receive ODA for the duration of the research? Please refer to the DAC list for information about countries that will be considered for graduation at the next review.
2. How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries? Please provide evidence of the development need and articulate how the proposed activity is appropriate to address this need.
3. How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?
4. What approach(es) will you use to deliver development impact within the lifetime of the project and in the longer-term? Please consider the potential outcomes, the key beneficiary and stakeholder groups in the DAC list country/ countries and how they will be engaged to ensure opportunities for them to benefit and to enable development impact to be achieved.

Please note: this document should make clear the ODA relevance of the proposed research without reference to other documents in the proposal (i.e. Case for Support). It should also include meaningful project specific detail. Proposals that do not articulate clearly the ODA relevance of the research throughout their application will be rejected prior to peer review.

ODA Transparency and Reporting

As part of the government's commitment to ODA transparency and in line with FCDO ODA reporting requirements, UKRI is responsible for publishing information about UKRI ODA grants including project titles and summaries via the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) registry and via FCDO's national statistics. The purpose of publishing information via the IATI registry is to make information about ODA easily accessible to governments, stakeholders and other relevant groups in beneficiary countries. All UKRI funded projects from this programme will be published in this way. Please therefore write your project title and summary in such a way that they are meaningful and accessible to non-specialist audiences, following publication. We would be grateful if you would ensure that the project title and summary are written in plain English and avoid the use of jargon, acronyms, puns and plays on words. Please also make clear in your project title and summary how your project is ODA compliant, for example by identifying the development challenge(s) being addressed, the aims of the project and the beneficiary countries.

Letters of Support

There are two types of Letter of Support:

Project Partner Letters of Support are mandatory for each Project Partner organisation and should be uploaded to the '**Project Partner'** section of the Je-S application (not the 'Letter of Support' attachment type). Please see Section 2.2.6 of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for the full details on the requirements for Letters of Support for Project Partners.

Stakeholder Letters of Support are optional but highly recommended. It is expected that the proposed project engages with relevant stakeholders, for example academic and non-academic groups such as local or national government authorities or other public sector actors. It is recommended that you obtain letters of support to demonstrate buy-in (e.g. local/national) and/or support (e.g. of the importance of the research). Stakeholder Letters of Support should be uploaded to the Je-S application using the 'Letter of Support' attachment option.

Each letter of support should be no longer than **two pages of A4** and must be uploaded as a PDF.

Covering Letter

A Covering Letter may be included within the application but should not be used to include any details that should be included in the proposal form, case for support or other attachments. The cover letter should be no longer than **two pages of A4** and must be uploaded as a PDF.

If your application is a resubmission then the cover letter is mandatory and should describe any changes you have made to the research since the earlier submission. The covering letter can also be used to cover details such as conflicts of interest and names of conflicted experts that you request not to be used as reviewers.

Please see Section 2.2.5 of the MRC's Guidance for Applicants for further details of what can be included in a covering letter.

4. Completing your Case for Support

Your Case for Support is a document including your scientific proposal, details of the research environment, people involved and references. Your Case for Support should indicate how your

proposal fits the call specification for this scheme. Please see Section 2.2.3 of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for further information on the requirements for the Case for Support.

Please number all pages of the Case for Support. If you plan to include unpublished data, it must be included in the Case for Support. Manuscripts in press or submitted to journals should not be included.

Any applications that do not follow this guidance or have missing information may be rejected.

Please use the following headings:

Research Project summary information

- Full title of the project (no more than 150 characters)
- In which country(ies) the project will take place
- Duration in months
- Total amount requested from this funding scheme
- Principal health systems research question to be addressed

Health Systems relevance and importance: why is this research needed now and in this proposed location?

Please consider it's priority for local, regional and national health systems and how this research could lead to health system strengthening. Proposals must outline why the research is important to the particular LMIC context and engage with context specific academic and non-academic stakeholders. What evidence is there that the answer to your research question is needed and wanted by relevant users, for instance, policy-makers, research users and decision makers? You must demonstrate knowledge of relevant health systems empirical literature, particularly from LMICs, and propose how this research may contribute to this literature. Please ensure that the proposal clearly addresses a health system research question rather than, for example, only evaluating the effects of a specific health service intervention.

1. If your Foundation Grant is intended to obtain information needed to undertake a well-informed full-scale research project, it is essential that you clearly articulate how this Foundation Grant will lead to specific further research.
2. If your research is standalone or intends to explore possible health system innovations, under- researched areas or creative approaches that have the potential to be developed further, proposals should also either have practical applications or, for conceptual proposals, be able to demonstrate their potential for practical application.

Theoretical Framework

Please describe how your research questions and methodologies are embedded within a suitable theoretical framework with reference to relevant scholarly literature. This framework could draw from any of the appropriate disciplines (economics, sociology, anthropology, political science etc.) and should demonstrate an understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to your research focus. Where appropriate, proposals should also outline what contribution this research will make to an advance in theoretical knowledge.

Project and methodology description

Please bear in mind that insufficient methodological detail is a common cause for a proposal to be declined.

Please describe your research plans, ensuring that you cover the following points:
- What specific research questions will be addressed by the Foundation Grant?
- Describe the methodological plans, study design and techniques that will be used to address the research questions. It is helpful to directly link the research questions to the methods.
- Where will the research take place and why this site(s)/context(s)?
- Who will the research participants be and why?
- Enough detail must be given to show why the research is likely to be competitive in its field.
- Particular care should be taken to explain any innovation in the methodology or where you intend to develop new methods.
- Please describe why your proposed methodology is the most appropriate and innovative way of addressing the research question/s.
- What pilot or preliminary information do you have available to help the panel assess the feasibility of the proposed study?
- If the research involves data collection or acquisition you must demonstrate that you have carried out a datasets review, and explicitly state why currently available datasets are inadequate for the proposed research.
- How will you evaluate the outcomes of the study?
- What is the proposed timeline?

If your methodology is an RCT, please contact HSRI@mrc.ukri.org to discuss the eligibility of your study for this scheme. While RCTs are accepted it will be important to demonstrate how your proposed work is embedded in and relates to the wider health system in the proposed context. Applicants should note that the MRC, FCDO, National Institute for Health Research and Wellcome currently fund a scheme for randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in LMICs. For further information please visit the Joint Global Health Trials webpage.

Research project team

- How does the team of investigators incorporate the range of discipline and experience necessary to carry out the study?
- To what extent is this application led and/or informed by LMIC researchers?
- Please ensure that the balance of investigators (and budget breakdowns) between high income and LMIC researchers are appropriate with the aims of the scheme.
- Where numerous investigators are involved, applicants should consider appropriate management structures/advisory groups.
- How can the host institution demonstrate that it has the facilities and resources available to manage the study?

Capacity building

All funders are committed to strengthening research capacity within LMICs and the UK. Grants funded through this scheme are expected to contribute to the development of equitable and sustainable global research systems. Applicants are encouraged to start discussing priorities as early as possible, in consultation with key stakeholders within and outside of the project team (for example - researchers, data collectors, managers, practitioners, grass roots organisations, policymakers and research management offices). The proposed approach to capacity building will be assessed as part of the review process and will help to demonstrate the equity of the partnership. Examples of capacity building include, but are not limited to:

- Building leadership skills amongst early career researchers
- Opportunities for mutual learning across the project team (such as through staff exchanges), for example, in the subject of the research, the context where it is being conducted, engagement with policy-makers and research management
- Building capacity to working collaboratively, across disciplines and across practice-research boundaries (for example with policy-makers, managers and practitioners in the system)
- Providing mentoring to improve the capacity of less experienced researchers to generate new knowledge and attain policy impact
- Team members attending training courses to develop specific expertise or obtain relevant qualifications (excluding Masters and PhDs)
- Opportunities for staff and associated health managers to author/co-author journal and conference papers and participate in national and international conferences
- Building organisational capacity, (for example in management, finance or communications)
- Formation of LMIC research networks.

Please describe your proposed approach to capacity building within the research project.

Successful proposals will also demonstrate a strong understanding of the local research context and ensure the research programme does not undermine local research capacity.

Research impact: How will the results of this study be used?

- What changes might be implemented as a result of the study?
- Who will make those changes happen and how?
- Might the results be generalizable beyond the immediate research setting?
- Please describe how this research will engage with in-country actors such as academic and non-academic stakeholders and policy makers. Research engagement strategies should reflect stakeholder priorities and any interventions that require government buy-in should demonstrate engagement with public sector actors.

Ethics

It is essential that applicants describe the ethical considerations that have informed the proposed research. Details of the ethical review and research governance arrangements that would apply to the proposal must be described.

Financial Information

- Are other funding partners involved? Who are the partners and what is the status of the discussions?

Proposal History

Has an application for funding for this project been submitted previously to FCDO, ESRC, MRC, Wellcome or another funding organisation? If so, please indicate the status of the previous application. If your project has been previously submitted to FCDO, ESRC, MRC or Wellcome please contact the MRC in advance of submission to request approval for a resubmission. Please include in your e-mail a description of how you have revised the project design since your last submission, and, if you previously received feedback, please include a response to each feedback point.

5. Resources

Full economic cost

All grants should be costed on the basis of the full economic costs (fEC) necessary to deliver the research. For funds requested by ROs based overseas the MRC will fund 100% of the fEC. For funds requested by ROs based in the UK the MRC will typically fund 74% of the fEC and the ROs must agree to find the remaining fEC from other resources.

Please see [Section 3.1](#) of MRC's Guidance for Applicants for further information on fEC.

Please note that research teams should consider the breakdown of budgets between UK/high income costs and LMIC costs, keeping in mind the aims of the scheme.

Funding for non-UK research institutions that have not previously received funding from MRC will be dependent on further eligibility and financial checks, to be conducted if the proposal is selected for funding. For further advice on eligibility, please contact HSRI@mrc.ukri.org.

Fund types

All submissions will have overseas costs and it is essential that these are entered correctly as 'Exceptions' and claimed at 100%.

The following sections specify the fund types and fund headings that can be used in the Foundation Grant application. Full details of how costs should be entered can be found in the [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#).

Directly Incurred (DI)

DI are UK costs that are explicitly identifiable as arising from the conduct of a project, charged to projects as the cash value actually spent and supported by an auditable record.

The following fund headings can be used:
- DI - Staff
- DI - Travel & Subsistence
- DI - Equipment
- DI - Other Costs

Directly Allocated (DA)

DA are UK costs of resources used by a project that are shared by other activities, charged to projects on the basis of estimates and do not represent directly auditable costs on a project-by-project basis.

The following fund headings can be used:
- DA - Investigators
- DA - Estates Costs
- DA- Other Directly Allocated

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are UK Research Organisation overhead costs.

The following fund headings can be used:
- Indirect Costs

Exceptions

Exceptions are all overseas costs. Exceptions costs will be funded at 100% FEC.

The following fund headings can be used:
- Exception - Staff (including overseas Investigators)
- Exception - Travel & Subsistence
- Exception - Other Cost (including LMIC Estates and Indirect Costs)

Overseas costs

All applications will include overseas costs, it is not necessary to discuss these costs with a programme manager before submission.

All costs requested by an overseas organisation should be entered under the 'Exceptions' heading and requested at 100% FEC.

MRC will support indirect and estates costs for organisations based in LMICs participating in the project (excluding India and China). Each LMIC RO can request indirect costs up to the value of 20% of their direct costs. These costs should be entered under 'Exceptions – Other Cost'.

To enable MRC to meet transparency and external reporting requirements, the line descriptions for all overseas costs must be entered using the format 'Organisation: Country: Cost Category: Cost Description'. For example:
- University of Nairobi: Kenya: Staff: 1 x PDRA
- University of Nairobi: Kenya: Travel and Subsistence: 4 x flights
- University of Nairobi: Kenya: Other Directly Incurred Costs: 5 x Workshops including catering and accommodation

Open access

UK ROs are not eligible to request costings for access publishing charges (APCs) or other types of publication in respect of peer reviewed research articles (including review articles not commissioned by publishers) and conference proceedings that acknowledge funding from the MRC as these costs are supported through block grants to UK HEIs, approved independent research organisations and research council institutes. **LMIC ROs can include the aforementioned costs, both when they lead a proposal and when they are involved in a proposal.** These costs should be budgeted under 'Exceptions – Other Cost' at 100% FEC.

6. Assessment Criteria

General information on the MRC's approach to peer review is provided on the MRC's webpage.

The review panel for this scheme will consider whether applications are of world-class standard (being intellectually innovative, well-focused and methodologically sound), and whether the research has the potential to make real improvement to health outcomes in LMICs.

Panel members will be asked to comment on the following criteria in assessing proposals:

Research Quality

- Scientific Rationale: novelty, importance and timeliness of the research and whether this is likely to lead to new understanding;
- Has the proposal outlined a need and justification for the proposed research area and situated the work within an existing body of literature?
- Has the proposal demonstrated engagement with relevant theoretical frameworks?

Impact

- Will this research generate evidence on how to strengthen and improve health systems for people living in LMICs?
- Has this research used a health systems approach to inform the delivery of evidence-based interventions or structural changes? Proposals must demonstrate how interventions relate to and affect wider elements of a health system such as governance, financing, health workforce, information systems, service delivery etc.
- Will this research provide evidence that is of direct relevance to decision makers and practitioners in the field?
- Has the proposal identified potential barriers to uptake of the research outcomes in the setting and proposed plans to overcome these?
- Has this proposal identified key factors relevant to the potential scalability of the research?

Research Management and People

- The suitability of the investigator group including track record(s) of the individuals in their field(s) and whether they are best-placed to deliver the proposed research.
- How have team members from different disciplines been included and how has their variety of input been embedded in the approach to research?
- The management strategy proposed, including equitable access to any shared resources and sufficient capability and time commitments of senior staff to steer and oversee the research.
- Links with local research/health institutions and involvement of investigators from LMIC countries;
- Have opportunities for research capacity building been embedded into research plans?

Methodology

- The feasibility of experimental plans, statistics, methodology and design, including provision of sample size calculations, strategies to avoid bias, and preliminary data where appropriate;
- Is the design of the study appropriate to answer the question?
- Is the timeline realistic and achievable?
- Has the methodology been underpinned by a relevant theoretical or conceptual framework?

Ethics

- Comments on ethical and/or research governance issues, including whether proposed research is ethically acceptable and the appropriateness of ethical review and research governance arrangements.

Data Management Plan

- Is there is a sound plan for managing the research data, taking into account the types, scale and complexity of data being (or to be) managed and also the likely long-term value for further research including by sharing data.

Resources Requested

- Does the proposed research demonstrate good value for money?
- Are the funds requested essential and justified by the importance and scientific potential of the research?

7. Additional Guidance Documents

For further guidance about your Je-S submission please refer to the Je-S Helpdesk pages: https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/Index.htm

Please note for any submission issues please email the Je-S Helpdesk directly: JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org

MRC Guidance for Applicants: http://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/

MRC Terms and Conditions: https://mrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-mrc-award-holders/

MRC Ethics Guide: Research involving human participants in developing societies: https://mrc.ukri.org/publications/browse/research-involving-human-participants-in-developing-societies/

Wellcome Research Involving Human Participants: https://wellcome.org/grant-funding/guidance/research-involving-people-low-and-middle-income-countries

8. Data Protection

Privacy Notice

All personal data provided to the MRC as part of UK Research and Innovation via the Je-S form will be processed in accordance with current UK data protection legislation. Please see Je-S Terms and Conditions for guidance on how personal data collected from applicants is used. Further information on how we use personal data can also be found in the UK Research and Innovation Privacy Notice.

Information on the terms and conditions that guide the general management of funded grants can be found in the MRC's Guidance for Applicants.

What will be shared and with whom?

As the Global Health Systems Initiative scheme is a jointly funded scheme, information will be shared between the partners, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Medical Research Council (MRC) and Wellcome.

Retention policy

The data that you provide will be held securely in accordance with the MRC IT and Records Management policies. It will be retained in accordance with the Medical Research Council's disposition schedule for the following schedules:

Business process	Record type	Retention
10.1 Grants	Grant programme policy	Permanently
10.1 Grants	Grant programme board agenda, minutes and papers (e- volume/CD)	Permanently
10.1 Grants	Grant programme board assessment feedback	Permanently
10.1 Grants	Grant programme board administration and correspondence	3 years
10.1 Grants	Triage meeting agendas, minutes and papers	Permanently
10.1 Grants	Triage decision	Permanently
10.1 Grants	Application processing statistics and summaries	20 years
10.1 Grants	Successful applications	20 years
10.1 Grants	Unfunded applications (unsuccessful, withdrawn, not accepted)	3 years
10.1 Grants	Grant summary record (Siebel etc.)	Permanently
10.6 Research Management	Clinical trials oversight and monitoring information (incl. protocols and annual	Permanently
10.6 Research Management	Research management administration	3 years
10.6 Research Management	Systems training	1 year
10.6 Research Management	Information Systems manuals/guidance	1 year
10.6 Research Management	Induction material	1 year
10.6 Research Management	Council Operating Procedures/Standard	1 year
10.6 Research Management	Interfaces with other organisations	7 years
10.6 Research Management	Research Portfolio files	Permanently
12.1 Strategy	Research strategy	7 years
12.1 Strategy	Internal working groups	7 years
12.2 Evaluation	Corporate reports (scorecard, economic impact etc.)	Permanently
12.2 Evaluation	Data analysis and	Permanently
12.2 Evaluation	Commissioned evaluation	Permanently

Further information can be found on the [MRC Records Management Policy](#).

The retention periods cited are those in force at the time of writing and are subject to change due to periodic revision of the Medical Research Council's disposition schedule. Information about the retention periods currently in force may be obtained from the Medical Research Council by emailing [Corporate@mrc.ukri.org](#). The data provided may also be aggregated and anonymised for the purposes of reporting and analysis.

9. Contact

Enquiries should be sent to [HSRI@mrc.ukri.org](#).