MRC neurosciences and mental health partnership grants: Sep 2021

Opportunity status:	Upcoming
Funders:	[Medical Research Council (MRC)](#)
Funding type:	Grant
Publication date:	3 March 2021
Opening date:	14 June 2021
Closing date:	29 September 2021 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 14 April 2021

You can apply for a partnership grant to support new partnerships between diverse groups of researchers in the area of neurosciences and mental health. Funding is available for between one and five years to:

- establish new, high-value collaborative activities or capabilities
- add value to high-quality scientific programmes that are already supported by grants from MRC and other funders.

Who can apply

Any UK-based researcher with an employment contract at an eligible research organisation can apply. You will need to:

- have at least a graduate degree, although we usually expect most applicants to have a PhD or medical degree
- show that you will direct the partnership and be actively engaged in the work.

You can include one or more industry partners as project partners in your application. International co-investigators can be included if they provide expertise not available in the UK.

A principal investigator must lead the partnership. Any researchers you invite to become co-investigators must contribute to the academic leadership of the partnership.

You can find more details on eligibility in **section one of our guidance for applicants**.

The focus of this funding opportunity is neurosciences and mental health research. There are similar opportunities across **other areas of medical research within our remit**, including:

- infections and immunity
- population and systems medicine
- molecular and cellular medicine
- applied global health.

You can also apply for a partnership grant through the methodology research programme. There are also other types of awards, including research, programmes and new investigator.

You should contact us if you are not sure which opportunity to apply to.

What we're looking for

We fund partnerships working to transform our understanding of neuroscience and mental health. Partnership grants are expected to support these research areas, although research itself is not supported through this route.

The neurosciences and mental health board funds research in neurosciences, mental health and disorders of the human nervous system. We aim to transform our understanding of the physiology and behaviour of the human nervous system throughout the life course in health and in illness, as well as how to treat and prevent disorders of the brain.

The research we support includes the interactions between the nervous system and other parts of the body – the brain, mental health and physical health. We are also interested in how episodes throughout life impact on lifelong mental and neurological health.

Research we fund includes, but is not limited to, the following areas:

- neurodegeneration
- clinical neurology and neuroinflammation
- mental health
- addictions and substance misuse
- behavioural and learning disorders including autism
- cognitive and behavioural neuroscience and cognitive systems
- sensory neuroscience including vision and hearing
- neurobiology and neurophysiology

- underpinning support, such as neuroimaging technology, brain banking and neuroinformatics.

[Find out more about the science areas we support and our current board opportunity areas](#).

We encourage you to contact us first to discuss your application, especially if you believe your research may cross MRC research board or research council interests. If your application fits another research board remit better then we may decide to transfer it there to be assessed.

We will fund partnerships between diverse groups of researchers. These partnerships must:

- establish new, high-value collaborative activities or capabilities
- add value to high-quality scientific programmes that are already supported by grants from MRC and other funders.

We will not fund stand-alone, hypothesis-driven research projects which are eligible for MRC research or programme grant funding.

Collaborative activities can include:

- networking and partnership activities
  - establishing multidisciplinary collaborative partnerships or consortia
  - fostering and enabling a national or international strategy in this area
  - enabling knowledge sharing or creation across institutions.
- infrastructure support for establishing a unique shared resource or helping to exploit it, for example staff, systems, equipment, seminars or workshops
- activities such as specialist data and software platforms or resources.

We may support small scale, pump-priming projects but your focus should not be on specific research questions. These should be interdisciplinary, high-risk and high-gain projects that would exemplify your partnership's novel capability

Successful partnership grants usually include a combination of these components. We will reject applications for funding only networking activities.

We expect partnership grants to reach maturity by the end of the initial award. You should find alternative ways of funding any follow-on activities.

Resource requests will vary between partnerships so we advise you to discuss this with the relevant **[programme manager](#)** before you apply.

You can request funding for costs such as:

- a contribution to the salary of the principal investigator and key co-investigators, see details below
- support for other posts such as research and technical
- consumables
- equipment
- travel costs
- data preservation, data sharing and dissemination costs

- estates or indirect costs.

We won't fund:

- standalone hypothesis-driven research projects
- funding to use as a 'bridge' between grants
- publication costs.

Investigators' salaries

If you are asking for funding to cover investigator time, you must:

- detail each named investigator's input
- justify why the partnership needs this time commitment.

Usually we will fund only the principal investigator and a small number of co-investigators. Other co-investigators may be involved without funding. We do not expect to fund project partners for participating in the partnership.

Research costs

You should request minimum resources for research. For example, we will support postdoctoral research positions only in exceptional cases. We may support technical posts if you can justify them.

You may use a partnership grant to buy equipment. You can also use it to cover the cost of essential infrastructure or to provide a platform for partnership activities.

We will fund the cost of working at an overseas research organisation if international collaboration is important to the success of your partnership. You must discuss this with the programme manager before you apply.

How to apply

Application deadlines for Neurosciences and Mental Health Board funding are usually around January, May and September or October, although sometimes dates can change so for details, **search funding opportunities**.

You can submit to any of the available deadlines in the year. We do not expect you to submit more than two applications at the same time and encourage you to focus on application quality, not the number you can submit. **Read our guidance for applicants for details of our resubmission process**.

Pre-application stage

You must contact the programme manager at least six weeks before you apply for a partnership grant. You must provide a brief abstract of your application to help them decide if it is eligible.

After we have received your abstract, the programme manager will give you advice on how best to develop your application. They will also ask you to email a pre-application summary. This should be no more than two pages A4 but may include an extra page of references if needed.

The summary should include the following information:

- the title of the potential MRC partnership
- a list of the principal investigator, co-investigators and their affiliations
- a list of collaborators (if known at this stage)
- the aims of your application. This should explain why the partnership is important, the nature of the partnership and its activities, and how these align with the partnership grant expectations
- an estimate of the likely cost to MRC including staffing and equipment costs.

You should also provide a two-page CV for the principal investigator and co-investigators, including a summary of recent funding for those investigators. You can add a list of publications as page three of the CV document.

Full application stage

We may invite you to complete a full application via our online Je-S system. We will do this in advance of the closing date.

Your application should include a cover letter confirming the name of the programme manager who agreed you could apply.

for information on how to complete the application you should **read section two of the MRC guidance for applicants**.

Industrial partners

If you want to include one or more industry partners as a project partner, you must also:

- complete the project partner section in Je-S
- submit an MRC industrial collaboration agreement (MICA) form and heads of terms
- include 'MICA' as a prefix to your project title.

Find out more about **MRC industry collaboration agreements**.

Case for support

The list below covers specific points that you should address when writing your case for support. You must make sure that your application answers all these questions. You should read this list in conjunction with the general guidance in **section 2.2.3 of the MRC guidance for applicants**.

You must include the following in your case for support.

Importance

State the aims of the partnership.

Explain why establishing a partnership is necessary for this area of research.

Explain how establishing a partnership will add value to current research, for example creating new capabilities or enhancing coordination.

Justify why you can't access support for the partnership through other means.

Explain how a partnership will improve the UK's international standing in this area.

Partnership plans

Describe the activities associated with the partnership, including timelines and indicating where activities may be concurrent. You may include a Gantt chart to depict this.

For any infrastructure or equipment requests, state how you will use this to further the aims and objectives of the partnership.

If you are requesting funding for an infrastructure project in one university but providing a service to the wider research community, you should make this clear in your application.

Outline future plans:

- for sustaining the partnership beyond the proposed duration of MRC funding
- for accessing further funding (from MRC and elsewhere) to support any follow-on hypothesis-driven research, which may develop as a result of the partnership.

Participants in the partnership and existing funding

Describe how the partnership grant will enable researchers to work together and how it will build capability in a strategic area, for example, partnerships that bring together researchers who otherwise would not work together. There should be clear discrimination between co-investigators and partners/collaborators

Describe how the partnership between the participants will benefit the wider research community

Justify why each of the named investigators is necessary for the partnership, including their level of time commitment

Provide a brief report on the progress of recent research for investigators in the partnership including an acknowledgement of any previous or current MRC funding and progress to date on delivery of this research. You should also include the scale of support provided, for example, the number of post doctorates and/or technicians, and total amount of consumables and equipment.

Environment

Describe the environment in which the partnership will take place

Describe the support the partnership will receive from the host research organisation. For example, reducing or waiving co-investigator salary, associated estates costs and other in-kind contributions such as towards the cost of equipment

If your proposal requests shared equipment, describe where this will be and how the host research organisation will support this equipment. Describe the management arrangements for ensuring equity of access.

Management

Provide an overview of how you will manage the partnership. For example, who will bring coherence and management to the partnership and how? Outline any plans for:

- regular meetings
- bringing together disparate communities
- a strategy for the set-up of networks
- arrangements for access and upkeep of equipment.

While networking or workshop activities can add value to a partnership, we will not accept applications centred only on these types of activities.

Applying through Je-S

You must apply through the Je-S system. Please read the **Je-S how to apply guidance (PDF, 190KB)** for more information. If you need further help, you can contact the Je-S help desk on 01793 444164 or by email **jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org**.

You should give your administrative department sufficient notice that you intend to apply. Your organisation must submit your application before 16:00 on the deadline date.

How we will assess your application

When we receive your application, it will be peer reviewed by independent experts from the UK and overseas.

You can nominate up to three independent reviewers. We will invite only one to assess your research proposal and may decide not to approach any of your nominated reviewers.

Peer reviewers will assess your application and provide comments. They will also score it using the peer reviewer scoring system against the following criteria:

- importance – how important are the questions, or gaps in knowledge, that are being addressed?
- scientific potential – what are the prospects for good scientific progress?
- resources requested – are the funds requested essential for the work? And do the importance and scientific potential justify funding on the scale requested? Does the proposal represent good value for money?

Read the detailed assessment criteria.

We will review these scores and comments at a triage meeting and expect to continue with the highest quality applications with potential to be funded. If your

application passes the triage stage, we will give you the chance to respond to reviewers comments.

A board meeting will then discuss your proposal and decide if it is suitable for funding. We make a decision within six months of receiving your application

Find out more about our peer review process.

Contact details

Visit our **science contacts page** or contact the programme manager most relevant to your research area for advice on developing your application and which board to apply to:

- head of programme – mental health: Dr Karen Brakspear – **brakspear@mrc.ukri.org**
- programme manager for cognition and developmental disorders: Dr Charlotte Inchley – **inchley@mrc.ukri.org**
- programme manager for neuronal function: Dr Simon Fisher – **fisher@mrc.ukri.org**
- programme manager for neurodegeneration: Dr Clara Fons – **fons@mrc.ukri.org**
- programme manager for pain and addiction: Dr Siv Vingill – **vingill@mrc.ukri.org**
- programme manager for neurological disorders: Dr Steph Migchelsen – **migchelsen@mrc.ukri.org**
- programme manager for adolescent mental health: Dr Victoria Swann – **swann@mrc.ukri.org**.

Other contacts:

- for queries about submitting your application using Je-S, email **jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org** or call 01793 444164
- for general enquiries about your application, email **nmhb@mrc.ukri.org**.

For general queries about MRC policy and eligibility or if you are not sure who to contact, get in touch with our research funding policy and delivery team:
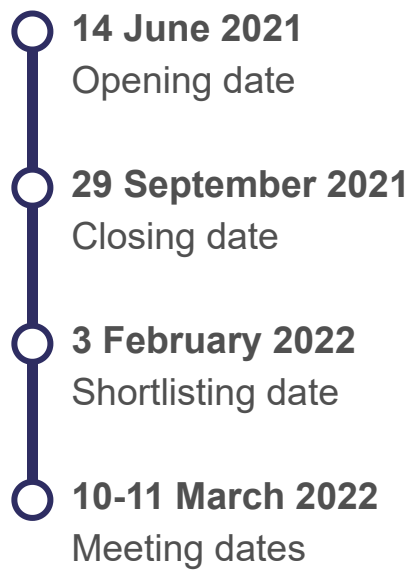
- **rfpd@mrc.ukri.org**
- 01793 416440.

Additional info

Supporting documents

- **How to apply – Research boards submissions (PDF, 190KB)**

Timeline

14 June 2021
Opening date

29 September 2021
Closing date

3 February 2022
Shortlisting date

10-11 March 2022
Meeting dates