Medical Research Council

Supplementary guidance for outline submissions to the Applied Global Health Research Board – Partnership Grant

This document describes the additional requirements for outline applications to MRC's Applied Global Health Research Board. Applications to the Board should follow standard MRC policies and processes as set out in our funding pages, applicant guidance, and peer review pages. These pages should be consulted prior to reading this document which sets out instances where different rules apply.

This document covers:

- additional guidance for outline applicants
- the application process
- the assessment criteria for applications to the Board

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Supplementary Guidance for Outline Applications – Partnerships

This guidance should be consulted after the applicant has consulted the standard MRC guidance for applicants. The numbers listed next to the section headings below link to the relevant section in the standard guidance for ease of comparison.

1. Who can apply and how to apply

1.1 Types of research organisations (ROs)

In addition to the eligible research organisations outlined in the MRC guidance for applicants, the Board will accept applications 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 funded 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.

Applied global health research requires the involvement of a diverse range of collaborating organisations in order to effect sustainable change. As such the Board will accept applications involving the following collaborating organisations (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.

1.2 Country Eligibility

Researchers based in the UK, or an eligible LMIC research organisation, are eligible to be Principal Investigators. However, applicants should note the following exceptions.

India
Institutions based in India are no longer eligible to lead applications but are welcomed as collaborating organisations hosting Co-Investigators within applications. Collaborations with Co-Investigators from India must have development impact for country/ countries on the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients (DAC list) as the direct and primary objective, with local or national impacts within India as secondary objectives. It is expected that Co-Investigators from India make a significant contribution to their own research costs, including covering their own overheads. Where India is involved in an ODA funded project, it can only be included as one of many countries in which there are secondary benefits to. There should not be primary benefits to India through this project.

China

China is no longer eligible to participate in any UKRI-funded ODA activities via this funding opportunity. Researchers or other partners based at Chinese organisations are not eligible to apply in any capacity and no research activity should take place in and/or benefit China.

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.

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 Board team at: international@mrc.ukri.org.

1.3 Applicants

1.3.1 The Principal Investigator

The Board is open to applications from Principal Investigators (PIs) based in LMICs except China and India. There is no requirement for a project to involve UK based investigators. The Board is also open to UK based PIs working in equitable partnership with LMIC colleagues.

1.3.2 Co-Investigators

Applied global health research requires the involvement of a diverse range of collaborators, as such the eligibility requirements for Co-Investigators (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) who are not eligible to receive funding, applicants should include them as a named project partner. Please refer to the guidance on project partners below.

In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to include staff members of government ministries as named Co-Is 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: international@mrc.ukri.org.

Investigators from high-income countries outside of the UK, and investigators based in India, 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.

China is no longer eligible to participate in any UKRI-funded ODA activities via this funding opportunity. Researchers or other partners based at Chinese organisations are not eligible to apply in any capacity and no research activity should take place in and/or benefit China.

All Co-Is must be registered on the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) System, information on how to register can be found in the MRC guidance for applicants.

1.3.3 Project partners

In addition to the information provided in the MRC guidance for applicants, we encourage applications to the Board involving contributions from key stakeholders (industry partners, 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. Each project partner must provide a letter of support please see the MRC guidance for applicants for more information.

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

If the project partner listed is from industry, applicants must follow the ICF Guidance Applicants with an industrial partner(s) will need to include ICF: as a prefix to their project title. At the outline stage the input/involvement of the industry partner should be detailed in the Case for Support. Please refer to the guidance described below. Applicants invited to submit a full application need to include a ICF Form and a letter of support from the industry partner or partners as part of their Je-S application.

1.3.4 Studentships

The Board cannot award grants directly to individual students. In addition, Studentships cannot be included within grant proposals. Please refer to information on Studentships for further details on what support is available.

1.4.0 How to submit your application

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 (GMT/BST)**, on the advertised MRC submission deadline.

All investigators and their institutions are required to be registered on the Je-S system, before proposals can be submitted. Whether the proposal is UK led or LMIC led, it is expected that the PI will liaise with all Co-Is included in the proposal, to ensure each Investigator creates the required Je-S account well in advance of the call closing date e.g., a minimum of two weeks before the call closes.

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.

We will assess your proposal in two stages:

- **Stage one** - outline proposals are reviewed by independent Board members and MRC's Global Health Faculty of Experts.
- **Stage two** - if your outline proposal is successful, we will invite you to submit a full application. This will undergo external peer review and applicants will be given the opportunity to respond to reviewer comments. The Board will review all applications, including reviewer comments and applicant responses, and will make a funding decision.

If invited to the full submission stage, the assessment process will take around nine months from the outline proposal submission deadline to the final decision. Unsuccessful outline applicants will be notified within approximately three months of submission.

We will provide guidance on how to prepare a full proposal if you are successful at stage one, along with feedback from the initial review.

Those considering submitting a partnership grant application must contact the MRC Programme Manager prior to submission via international@mrc.ukri.org.

1.4.1 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 to the Board should make the following selections on Je-S:

- Select Council: **MRC**
- Select Document Type: **Outline Proposal**
- Select Scheme: **Standard Outline**
- Select Call/Type/Mode: **Applied Global Health Research Board Outline Round 5 2023**
- Select: **'Create Document'** option

Indicating your application is a 'Partnership Grant' application

When you have created your Je-S application form, select the document menu section 'Grant Type', and select the option adjacent to 'Partnership Grant'. Select 'Save' to complete the section.

1.4.2 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 GMT/BST UK time on the advertised submission deadline.

2. The Application

The Applied Global Health Research Board will have a two-stage application process. Applicants are required to initially submit an outline proposal for consideration by the Board. The Board will then invite the highest quality proposals to submit a full application.

The outline application is shorter than a standard MRC application and a lot of the attachments detailed in MRC’s guidance for applicants are not needed at this stage.

The Applied Global Health Research Board requires the following at the outline stage:

- The proposal form
- The case for support (5 pages + 1 page for references)
- CVs (2 pages) and Publications (1 page)
- Cover Letter – Outline Resubmissions only (2 pages)

The following attachments are optional at the outline stage:

- Letters of support (2 pages per letter)

Please **do not** submit a Justification of Resources at the outline stage.

2.1 The proposal form

At the outline stage minimal information is requested through the Je-S form. Information will be requested under the following headings:

Organisation where the grant would be held

This should be the lead RO responsible for administering the grant.

Project title
This should be no more than 150 characters and reflect the aim of the project.

Please note that if an application falls under the MRC Industry Collaboration Framework then the project title should start with "ICF:".

Start date and duration
The anticipated start date should be realistic and would normally be between one month and six months after the date of the decision-making Board meeting.

The duration of a grant will typically be from 12 to 60 months. Research grant applications for two years or less are not restricted to proof of principle or pilot work and will be accepted provided they are within the Board's remit.

Once a grant has been issued, grant holders are required to make every effort to start on the agreed date. The start of the grant may be delayed by up to 3 months from the start date shown in the offer letter, with the duration of the grant remaining unchanged. The grant may lapse if it is not started within this period.

Applicants
This should include the PI and all Co-Is involved in the project.
Please note that the PI and all Co-Is **must** be registered on the Je-S system before they can be added to an application, information on how to register can be found in the MRC guidance for applicants.

Objectives
What is the project aiming to achieve? The objectives of the proposed project should be listed in order of priority and should be those that the investigators would wish the MRC to use as the basis for evaluation of work upon completion of any grant awarded.

Summary
In plain English, provide a summary of your proposal.

This summary will be made publicly available on external facing websites if funded, so please ensure it can be understood by a variety of readers, for example:

- opinion-formers
- policymakers
- the general public
- the wider research community.

Guidance for writing a summary

Succinctly describe your proposed work in terms of:

- goals to be addressed, please identify a concise and clearly articulated ultimate aim of the partnership
- its context
- the global health challenge the partnership addresses and its potential impact
- its aims and objectives
- its potential applications and benefits

Summary of resources required for the project
Staffing, equipment and other resources required to carry out the project. Only high-level figures are required at the outline stage. Applicants are encouraged to request resources commensurate with the objectives of their research; both small- and large-scale grants will be accepted. Please see the guidance provided below.

Project Partners
This should include all Project Partners involved in the project, i.e., collaborators not requesting funding or that are providing their own contribution. PI and Co-I research organisations should not be added as Project Partners.
Please note that it is not required for Project Partners to be registered on the Je-S system. Each project partner must provide a letter of support, please see the MRC guidance for applicants for more information.

Classifications - Grant Type
Applicants that are unsure which grant type to select, are advised to select the option 'Research Grant' and save this information to ensure this section of the Je-S form validates correctly. It should be noted that the selection is the judgement of the applicant and there is no right or wrong answer. A description of the two different grant type options is provided below with links to further information if required. To reiterate, if applicants are still unsure which option to select, please select the 'Research Grant' option, there is no need to raise this with MRC for further advice.

1. Partnership Grant

Partnership grants provide funding to establish new networks in neglected areas, set up a new research platform, or conduct training and capacity building. Stand-alone, hypothesis-driven research projects should not be included in partnership grant applications, although small proof-of-principle studies can be (e.g., to test the performance of the new platform). More information can be found on the funding pages on MRC's website.

2. Research Grant

The research grant is designed to be flexible enough to support a very wide range of research needs. More information can be found on the funding pages on MRC's website, although please note the exceptions to the standard guidance throughout this document (e.g., awards for less than two years are not only for proof of principle work).

2.2 Attachments

The following attachments are required at the outline stage:

Mandatory Attachments	Page Limit
Case for Support	Maximum 5 sides of A4 (plus 1 side for references)
CVs	Maximum 2 sides of A4 per person
Publications	Maximum 1 side of A4 per person
Letters of support (optional)	Maximum 2 sides of A4 per letter
Re-submission Cover Letter	Maximum 2 sides of A4 (re-submissions only)

2.2.3 Resubmissions

If your application is a resubmission of a previous application to this opportunity, please provide a cover letter (maximum 2 side of A4) to detail your response to the feedback you were given

2.2.4 Case for Support

The MRC guidance for applicants gives detailed information on the requirements for the case for support document.

An outline case for support is required at the outline stage, it should not exceed five sides of A4 plus one additional page of references (six pages in total). Additional annexes are not permitted, this includes the reproducibility and statistical design annex. Any applications missing or exceeding the case for support page limit will be rejected. Any additional attachments will be removed from the view of the referees.

Please use the following headings when preparing your outline Case for Support:

2.2.5 The vision of the project
2.2.6 The approach to the project
2.2.7 Outcomes and Impact
2.2.8 Capacity strengthening
2.2.9 Research Project Team
2.3 Ethical implications
2.3.1 Financial Information
2.3.2. Proposal History

2.2.5 The vision of the project

What the assessors are looking for in your response

The assessors are looking for the importance of the global health question and the need for the partnership to address the issue or issues, taking account of the current landscape.

- What is the strategic importance of the subject area?
- Is the research agenda driven by LMIC needs?
- How will the partnership provide distinct and important contributions to the research landscape?
- What evidence is there that your partnership is needed and wanted by relevant users and/or policymakers?
- What impact will this partnership have on current or future research?

2.2.6 The approach to the project

What the assessors are looking for in your response:

- Is the partnership equitable? If this is a partnership between the UK and LMIC please demonstrate that there is LMIC leadership. Does the partnership include links within and between LMICs?
- How are you going to deliver your proposed work?
- Is the partnership based on a strong track record of applied research funding?
- Which stakeholders will be consulted and when? Additionally, outline how co-production with relevant stakeholders, such as Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE), communities, health care workers, policy makers and implementers etc, is embedded in the project.
- What is the potential of this partnership to advance the scientific area?
- How appropriate are the network activities?
- Is the methodology robust and experimental design clear for any small scale/proof of principle work? Who will the research participants be and why?
- How feasible are the plans?
- What is the proposed timeline?

2.2.7 Outcomes and Impact

- What changes might be implemented as a result of the partnership?
- Who will make those changes happen and how?
- Might the outputs be generalisable beyond the immediate research setting?
- What is the envisaged social impact of the project?
- How will you evaluate the outcomes of the partnership?
- Are there clear plans for sustaining the partnership activities beyond the funded period of the grant?

2.2.8 Capacity strengthening

We take a broad view of where capacity strengthening activities could be targeted, however plans must be directly linked to the proposed project. Activities could target the individual, institutional or contextual level (or span multiple levels), and plans should be proportionate to the scale of the project, with larger proposals expected to be more ambitious.

Please outline your capacity strengthening plans including details of the following:

- Details of capacity building needs and opportunities
- What are the capacity building plans within the project?
- Who will participate in delivering these activities and who will benefit from them?

2.2.9 Research Project Team

- the relevant experience (appropriate to career stage) to deliver the proposed work
- the right balance of skills and expertise to cover the proposed work
- the appropriate leadership and management skills to deliver the work and your approach to develop others

2.3 Ethical implications

The ethical and responsible research and innovation (RRI) considerations of the project?

- What are the ethical or RRI implications and issues relating to the proposed work?
- If you do not think that the proposed work raises any ethical or RRI issues, explain why.

2.3.1 Financial Information

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

- In addition to the costing you have provided on Je-S, please provide a breakdown of the funding request per institution using the below table.

Organisation name	Total project costs (GBP)	Total cost requested from this scheme (GBP)

Please refer to section 3.1 below for information on how to calculate the total cost requested.

2.3.2. Proposal History

Has an application for funding for this project been submitted previously to FCDO, MRC, NIHR, another UKRI council or another funding organisation? If so, please indicate the status of the previous application.

2.3.3 Letters of Support

At the outline stage, letters of support can be included in the application where available. These letters should come from relevant academic and non-academic stakeholders such as local or national government authorities, other public sector actors and project partners (e.g., industrial partners and NGOs). Each letter of support should be no longer than 2 pages A4.

Letters of support **are not** required from the PI and Co-I host research organisations.

Please see Section 2.2.6 of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for full details on the requirements for Letters of Support for Project Partners.

3. Costs we fund

3.1 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 research organisations based overseas the MRC will fund 100% of the FEC. For funds requested by research organisations based in the UK the MRC will typically fund 80% of the FEC and the RO(s) must agree to find the balance of FEC from other resources.

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

3.2 Fund Types

At the outline stage applicants are required to detail the funding requested under four headings detailed below. Full details of what costs should be covered under each heading can be found in the MRC guidance for applicants. The following specifies how UK and overseas costs should be entered.

Directly Incurred
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.

Directly Allocated
UK costs of resources used by a project that are shared by other activities. Charged to projects on the basis of estimates. Do not represent directly auditable costs on a project-by-project basis.

Indirect Costs
UK RO overhead costs

Exceptions
All overseas costs. Exceptions costs will be funded at 100% FEC.

3.3 Overseas Costs

It is expected that all applications to the Board will include overseas costs, it is not necessary to discuss these costs with a programme manager before submission.

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

MRC will support indirect and estates costs for organisations based in low- and middle-income countries participating in the project. Each LMIC RO can request indirect costs up to the value of 20% of their direct costs. These costs should be entered as exceptions.

MRC will only support the direct costs of researchers based in high incomes countries outside of the UK, as well as researchers based in India. These costs should not exceed 30% of the proposal total.

3.4 Open access

Projects led by an organisation based in an LMIC can request open access costs as part of their application.

UK led proposals cannot claim open access costs and should follow the guidance set out in the MRC guidance for applicants.

4. Proposals involving animal use

4.1 Use of animals overseas

MRC has published specific guidance on the requirements when using animals overseas.

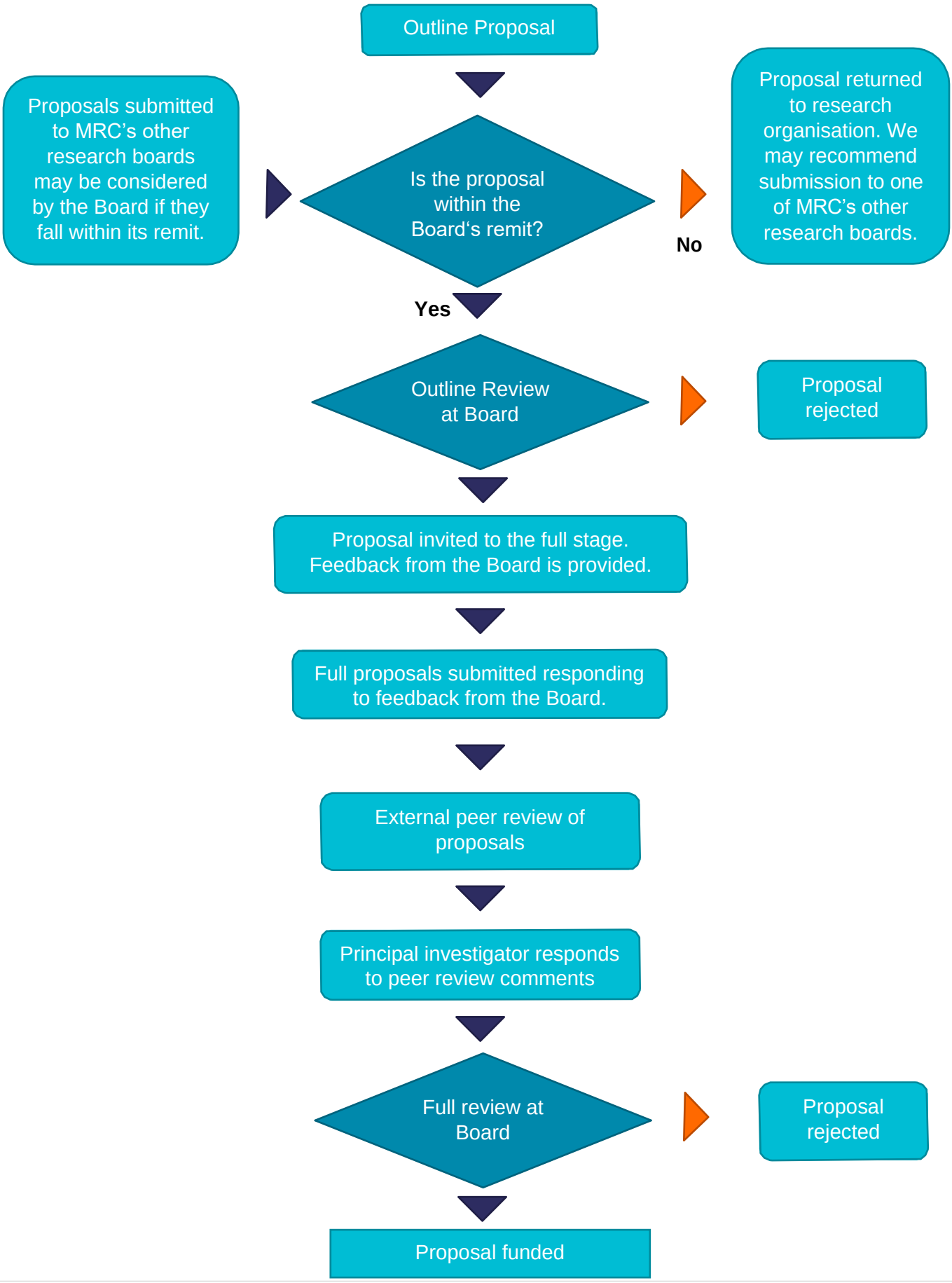
The Board cannot fund research involving animals overseas where there is no UK collaborator involved in the project.

5. Ethics and approvals

Full guidance on ethics and approvals can be found in the MRC guidance for applicants. We ask all applicants to take into consideration the guidance set out in section 5.2.2 Research involving human participants in lower- and middle-income countries. Please note that research requiring an ethical approval will need to obtain both local and UK approvals, regardless of the location of the research organisation.

Application Process

The Applied Global Health Research Board will have a two-stage application process. All applications to the Board will start with the submission of an outline proposal which will be assessed by the Board. The Board will then select the highest quality proposals to be invited to submit full proposals.



Assessment Criteria

The following assessment criteria will be used to assess all proposals submitted to the Applied Global Health Research Board. The assessment of any research proposal is based on four core criteria:

1. **The vision of the project:** how important are the questions, or gaps in knowledge, that are being addressed?

2. **The approach to the project:** what are the prospects for good scientific progress?

3. **Outcomes and Impacts:** What are the planned out puts and impact

4. **Capacity strengthening**: are the capacity strengthening plans meaningful to the research proposal?

5. **Research Project Team**: does the team have the necessary skills and expertise to deliver the research

6. **Resources requested**: Are the resources requested commensurate with the type of research being conducted

7. **Ethics**: Are there any ethical considerations

The following outlines the detailed assessment criteria that will be used depending on the type of grant that has been applied for.

Partnership Grant assessment criteria

Vision	**The vision of the project** • What is the strategic importance of the subject area? • Is the research agenda driven by LMIC needs? • How will the partnership provide distinct and important contributions to the research landscape? • What evidence is there that the partnership is needed and wanted by relevant users and/or policy-makers? • What impact will this partnership have on current or future research?

The approach to the project	• Is the partnership equitable? If this is a partnership between the UK and LMIC is there LMIC leadership. Does the partnership include links within and between LMICs? • Are the partnership plans appropriate? • Is the partnership based on a strong track record of applied research funding? • Have appropriate stakeholders been consulted? • What is the potential of this partnership to advance the scientific area? • How appropriate are the network activities? • Is the methodology robust and experimental design clear for any small scale/proof of principle work? • How feasible are the plans?

Outcomes and Impact	• Are there clear plans for sustaining the partnership activities beyond the funded period of the grant?
	• What is the potential economic and societal impact of the proposed research in LMICs?
	  • identification of realistic potential improvements to human or population health
	  • contribution to relieving disease/disability burden and/or improving quality of life
	  • identification of potential impacts of research and plans to deliver these
	• Is there sufficient engagement with relevant stakeholders within the country/countries of focus to enable appropriate dissemination of the research findings?
	• Has consideration been given to the impact of the research on gender equality?
	• Are the findings likely to be generalizable to other relevant settings?
	• Are evaluation plans appropriate?

Capacity strengthening	• Are capacity building plans appropriate?

Ethics	• Are there any ethical and/or research governance issues?
	  • whether the proposed research is ethically acceptable
	  • any ethical issues that need separate consideration
	  • appropriateness of ethical review and research governance considerations
	  • any potential adverse consequences for humans, animals or the environment and whether these risks have been addressed satisfactorily in the proposal

Resources requested	*Please note that at the outline stage only limited information is required on the resources requested. Please see guidance provided above.* • Are the funds requested essential for the work and justified by the importance and scientific potential of the research? • Is the applicants' stated time commitment to the work appropriate and sufficient? • Does the proposal demonstrate value for money in terms of the resources requested? • Is the distribution of funding across partners appropriate for the intended contribution within the research proposal? • Are requests for equipment (>£10,000) fully justified?

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