

Funding opportunity

Molecular and cellular medicine programme

Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	Medical Research Council (MRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Publication date:	30 January 2023
Opening date:	15 February 2023 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	3 May 2023 4:00pm UK time

Apply for funding to support a programme of research focused on molecular and cellular medicine.

You must:


- be a researcher employed by a research organisation eligible to apply for MRC funding
- have at least a postgraduate degree
- have a record of securing funding and delivering research

There is no limit to the funding you can apply for. Applicants typically apply for £1 million or more. We will usually fund up to 80% of your project's full economic cost.

Your programme can last up to 5 years.

This is an ongoing scheme. Application rounds close every January, May and September.

 MRC is preparing the [transition of responsive mode funding opportunities to the new UKRI Funding Service](#).

 You may need to apply to the next round of this opportunity using the new service. Check this opportunity at the time the next round opens for confirmation on how to apply.

Who can apply

Before applying for funding, check the following:

- [the MRC eligibility guidance for applicants](#)
- [the eligibility of your organisation](#)
- [your eligibility as an individual](#)

Who is eligible to apply

To be eligible to apply for this opportunity you must:

- be a researcher employed by an [eligible research organisation](#)
- have at least a postgraduate degree, although we expect most applicants to have a PhD or medical degree
- show that you will direct the project and be actively engaged in the work
- have a substantial record of securing research funding and delivering high-quality research
- focus your application within the science area molecular and cellular medicine

A principal investigator can usually hold only 1 programme grant at a time.

Who is not eligible

You are not eligible to apply for a programme grant if you lead a programme at an:

- MRC institute
- MRC partnership institute
- MRC unit

International applicants

You can include international co-investigators if they provide expertise not available in the UK. The inclusion of an international co-investigator must be discussed and agreed with the [relevant programme manager](#) before you submit the application to us.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

We are committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all funding applicants. We encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers.

We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. This includes:

- career breaks
- support for people with caring responsibilities
- flexible working
- alternative working patterns

Read MRC's [guidance on flexible working and career breaks](#). You can also find out more about [MRC's current EDI initiatives](#) and [EDI at UK Research and Innovation](#).

What we're looking for

Scope

We're looking to provide funding to support a programme of research focused on molecular and cellular medicine.

The molecular and cellular medicine board (MCMB) funds research into basic biological mechanisms or technologies relevant to human health and disease.

We aim to increase understanding of:

- the structure and function of molecules and complexes
- the cellular environment during development and mature states
- how biological systems respond to challenges (for example, drugs and toxins) and diseases

We lead MRC's investments in cancer, from fundamental discovery science to epidemiology, experimental medicine and early translation.

Research focused on specific organ systems or diseases (with the exception of cancer and haematology) is normally supported through our other research boards.

We're looking to fund research in areas including, but not limited to:

- cell biology
- structural biology and biophysics
- molecular and functional genetics, epigenetics, genomics
- developmental and stem cell biology (excluding neurobiology)
- [regenerative medicine](#)
- molecular haematology
- development of new tools and technologies relevant to MCMB remit, such as:
 - nanotechnology
 - chemical biology
 - synthetic biology
- medical bioinformatics, including:
 - biostatistics
 - computational biology
 - systems biology
- cancer
- toxicology and adverse health effects of environmental exposures
- pharmacology

We encourage you to [contact us first to discuss your application](#), and for advice if you believe your research may cross MRC research board or research council interests, or if you would like to apply for a short or long-duration project.

If your application fits another research board remit better, we may decide to transfer it there to be assessed.

We define a programme as a coordinated and coherent group of related projects. You may develop these projects to address an interrelated set of questions across a broad scientific area.

We do not expect you to find answers to all questions within the duration of the project. Parts of the programme may be a continuation of current activity, but we expect other elements to be innovative and ambitious.

Programmes are a large investment for MRC, so we expect you to show how your application fits within the [MRC strategy](#).

What we will fund

We will consider requests for costs such as:

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

We will not fund

We will not consider requests for costs such as:

- research involving randomised trials of clinical treatments
- funding to use as a 'bridge' between projects
- costs for PhD studentships
- publication costs

How to apply

You can submit to any 1 of the available deadlines in the year.

We do not expect you to submit more than 2 applications at the same time. We encourage you to focus on application quality, not the number you can submit. Read our [guidance for applicants about multiple applications](#).

Pre-application stage: new programmes

The standard of applications for programme grants is very competitive. You must contact the relevant programme manager before you apply to check if your proposal is suitable. You must do this at least 6 weeks before the deadline.

You should email the programme manager, attaching a brief description of your proposal (must not exceed 2 pages). The document should not exceed 3 sides of A4, including 1 A4 side of references. The document should include:

- the title of the potential programme
- a list of the principal investigator and co-investigators and their affiliations
- a list of collaborators (if known at this stage)
- an estimate of the likely cost to MRC

You should address the strategic fit and suitability of your programme for a major investment. You should also answer the following questions on the suitability of your proposal for a programme grant:

- is the proposed work a programme (a coordinated and coherent group of related projects to answer an interrelated set of questions)
- does the work need long-term and extensive support
- is the proposed work in an MRC area of high strategic priority
- is there a case for a major investment in the context of the board portfolio and budget
- do you have a track record that shows you have the potential to successfully manage and deliver a major research programme

It is important that you clearly state your aims, but we do not expect this initial document to contain detailed research proposals.

You must also attach:

- a CV (must not exceed 2 sides of A4)
- a list of publications for the principal investigator and co-investigators (must not exceed 1 side of A4 only)
- a summary of the principal investigator's funding history. We will assess your track record of research and potential to manage and deliver a major research programme

Full application stage: new programmes and renewals

You should only start the full application stage if you have been invited by email to do so after the pre-application stage.

Full applications must be submitted using our online [Joint Electronic Submission system \(Je-S\)](#). We will invite you to do this in advance of the relevant closing date if you have been successful at the pre-application stage.

If you are submitting a new application, you should include a cover letter confirming the name of the programme manager who agreed that you could apply. If you are applying to renew your award, the cover letter should include details of the original funded application.

You should read the [MRC general guidance on how to complete an MRC application \(section 2\)](#).

Applying through Je-S

You must apply through [Je-S](#).

We recommend you start your application early. You can save completed details in Je-S at any time and return to continue your application later.

When applying, select 'new document' then:

- council: MRC
- document type: standard proposal
- scheme: research grant
- call/type/mode: Research boards May 2023 submissions

After completing the application, you must select 'submit document'. This will send your application to your host organisation's administration

Your host organisation's administration is required to complete the submission process. You should allow sufficient time for this between submitting your proposal to them and the funding opportunity closing date.

You should give your administrative department sufficient notice that you intend to apply.

Your organisation must submit your application before 4:00pm on the deadline date.

Indicate that the proposal is a programme grant

Select the 'grant type' option from the proposal document menu, within the Je-S proposal form. Within the section, select the radio button adjacent to the 'programme grant' option and select the 'save' button.

Attachments

In addition to the Je-S application, you will also need to include the following mandatory attachments:

- a CV for each named researcher, including investigators and named researchers (each CV must not exceed 2 sides of A4)
- publications (up to 1 side of A4 per named person)
- a case for support (must not exceed 12 sides of A4)
- a justification of resources (must not exceed 2 sides of A4)
- a data management plan (DMP). Page length can vary, see section 2.2.7 of our [attachments guidance](#). Applicants must use the available [DMP template form](#)
- covering letter, this can be up to 2 sides of A4 using a sans-serif typeface (Arial or equivalent) and font size of 11pt

If your research includes excess treatment costs of studies involving human participants, you will need to include a 'schedule of events cost attribution template' (SoECAT). For details and access to the SoECAT form, see the [National Institute for Health and Care Research's information on excess treatment costs](#).

If there will be a researcher co-investigator on your project, you will need to include a statement of support for researcher co-investigators. This should not exceed 2 sides of A4 or equivalent on headed paper or a PDF of an email.

Optional attachments include letter of support, each letter must not exceed 2 sides of A4 or equivalent on headed paper or a PDF of an email.

You can find full details of what to include in mandatory and optional attachments in [section 2.2 attachments guidance](#).

Guidance for applicants

The [MRC guidance for applicants](#):

- helps you check your eligibility
- guides you through preparing a proposal
- shows you how to prepare a case for support
- provides details of any ethical and regulatory requirements that may apply

Industrial partner information

If you want to include 1 or more industry partners as a project partner, you must also complete the [project partner section in Je-S](#).

MRC industry collaboration framework

If your application involves the collaboration of 1 or more industrial partners, you should review the information published within the [MRC industry collaboration framework \(ICF\)](#) to decide if you should submit your application under the ICF.

After reading the ICF information, if you decide that your application will include industry collaboration, you will need to include the following within your application for each collaborating industry partner:

- [ICF form](#)
- [ICF company partner letter of support](#)

The completed ICF form should be uploaded to the Je-S attachments section using the 'MICA form' document type. Please type 'Industry Collaboration Framework form' in the description box.

The company letter of support must use the available template and be uploaded to the relevant project partner entry you are required to add to your Je-S application.

Case for support

It is mandatory to submit a case for support along with your full proposal application.

The following list covers specific points that you should address when writing your case for support. It also provides details of what reviewers and research board members are looking for.

You should read the list in conjunction with the [MRC attachments: case for support general guidance \(section 2.2.3\)](#).

You must cover the following in your case for support:

Importance

You should:

- state the aims of the programme
- justify why you cannot fund the programme in other ways
- explain why it is appropriate to establish a programme in this scientific area
- explain how establishing a programme will help increase your productivity and create added value
- show the significance of the programme for this area or areas of research
- explain how the programme will improve the UK's international standing in this area

Scientific potential

You should provide details of the participants in the programme and any existing funding, including:

- a brief report on the progress of your recent research and any preliminary data relevant to the programme
- the scale of support provided, briefly describing, for instance:
 - the number of postdoctoral and technician staff supported
 - the total amount of consumables and equipment provided over the course of the project
- information about the research environment, including:
 - the environment or environments in which the programme will take place
 - if the proposal is for shared equipment or expertise, where this will be and how the host organisation will support it. Also describe the management arrangements for ensuring equity of access
 - the host research organisation's support for the programme
- research plans, including:
 - details of the general experimental approaches, study designs and techniques that you will use. You do not need to describe each experiment but must give enough detail to show why the research is likely to be competitive in its field. For example:
 - highlight plans which are particularly original or unique
 - describe all foreseeable human studies and animal experiments (in as much detail as possible at this stage)

- explain in greater detail how you will approach new techniques, or particularly difficult or risky studies, and alternative approaches if these fail
- identify facilities or resources you will need to access
- sufficient detail to justify the resources requested

Ethics and research governance

You must follow the ethics and research governance guidance in the [MRC attachments: case for support general guidance \(section 2.2.3\)](#).

Exploitation and dissemination

You must follow the exploitation and dissemination guidance in the [MRC attachments: case for support general guidance \(section 2.2.3\)](#).

Management

Provide a simple explanation of how you will manage the programme.

Programme grant renewals: additional requirements

You must provide a progress report with an application for renewal. You should attach this as a PDF file to your Je-S application as a 'final interim report' attachment type.

You must use the following set of headings:

- title
- summary (not exceeding 250 words)
- progress (must not exceed 5 sides of A4). Use this to:
 - describe progress made against original aims and objectives since the project was awarded or since the last report
 - any unpublished data must be included in the case for support

Along with the progress report you should provide:

- a list of publications arising from this work, including web links to online papers
- a list of staff employed on the project up to the current date

Research disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic

You have the option to include a 1 page annex to the case for support, allowing you to provide additional information explaining any disruptions you have encountered to previous or current research, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (where relevant to your pending application).

For further information relating to the annex, please see [the MRC guidance for applicants \(section 2.2.3.6\)](#).

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

We will assess your application using the following process.

Peer review

We will invite experts to review your application independently, against the specified criteria for this opportunity.

You can nominate up to 3 reviewers to comment on your application.

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

We will assess the importance of the questions, or gaps in knowledge, that are being addressed.

Scientific potential

We will assess what the prospects are for good scientific progress.

Resources requested

We will consider whether:

- funds requested are essential for the work
- importance and scientific potential justify funding on the scale requested
- proposal represents good value for money

For more information about our assessment criteria, [read our detailed assessment criteria](#).

Shortlisting

We will review the comments and scores for each application. Shortlisted applications will go to a panel who will make a funding recommendation.

If your application is shortlisted, you will have 10 working days to respond to reviewers' comments.

Panel

Following peer review, we will invite a panel of experts to collectively review your application against the criteria and rank alongside other applications after which the panel will make a funding recommendation.

Timescale

We aim to complete the assessment process within 6 months of receiving your application.

Feedback

If your application was discussed by a panel and they provided feedback, this will be sent to you when we advise you of the outcome of your application.

Principles of assessment

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) supports the San Francisco [declaration on research assessment \(DORA\)](#) and recognises the relationship between research assessment and research integrity.

Find out about the [UKRI principles of assessment and decision making](#).

Contact details

Get help with your application

For help on costings and writing your application, contact your research office. Allow enough time for your organisation's submission process.

Get help with science-related queries

For questions about the scientific aspects of your research proposal, or to ask which science area you should apply to, please [contact the relevant MRC programme manager](#).

You can email the MCMB admin team, if you're not sure who you should contact, you have a general query, or if you do not receive a response to your email enquiry within 10 working days, please email: mcmb@mrc.ukri.org

Get help with applying through Je-S

Email

jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org

Telephone

01793 444164

Opening times

[Je-S helpdesk opening times](#)

Questions about eligibility

Read MRC's [research organisation](#) and [applicant](#) eligibility guidance. If you are still unsure whether you are eligible, contact rfpd@mrc.ukri.org

Additional info

Supporting documents

[MRC policies and standards](#)

[UK Research and Innovation policies and standards](#)

[Good research resource hub](#)

[Data management plan template form](#)

Timeline

○ 15 February 2023 9:00am

Opening date

○ 3 May 2023 4:00pm

Closing date

○ 31 August 2023

Shortlisting decision meeting

○ 11 to 12 October 2023

Funding decision meeting

○ Within 10 working days of funding decision meeting

Informed of funding decision

○ 23 June to 5 September 2023

Future round open for applications

○ 13 October 2023 to 9 January 2024

Future round open for applications

○ 16 February to 1 May 2024

Future round open for applications

Guidance on good research

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/molecular-and-cellular-medicine-programme>