



UK Research
and Innovation

Funding opportunity

Neurosciences and mental health new investigator

Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	Medical Research Council (MRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Publication date:	3 February 2023
Opening date:	15 February 2023 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	24 May 2023 4:00pm UK time

Apply for funding to:

- research neurosciences and mental health
- take the next step towards becoming an independent principal investigator

Timeline

- **15 February 2023 9:00am**
Opening date
- **24 May 2023 4:00pm**
Closing date
- **27 September 2023**
Shortlisting decision meeting
- **8 to 9 November 2023**

You must have:

- a postgraduate degree
- the support of a host research organisation eligible for MRC funding

You are not eligible if any of these apply:

- you have held an award with a duration of 3 years or more and direct science costs of more than £50,000 per year
- you have applied unsuccessfully to this scheme twice
- you are waiting for the outcome of a UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) fellowship application

There is no limit to the funding you can apply for, but the typical full economic cost of a project is under £1 million. MRC will usually fund 80% of the full economic cost.

This funding lasts 3 years and covers up to 50% of your salary.

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.

Funding decision meeting

○ **Within 10 working days of funding decision meeting**

Informed of funding decision

○ **23 June to 21 September 2023**

Future round open for applications

○ **13 October 2023 to 24 January 2024**

Future round open for applications

○ **16 February to 22 May 2024**

Future round open for applications

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

Who can apply

This opportunity is one of a number of [new investigator research grants](#). It is aimed at researchers in the field of neurosciences and mental health who are capable of becoming independent principal investigators and are now ready to take the next step towards that goal.

You can apply for funding to carry out research at your current eligible research organisation or any other eligible research organisation you want to move to. You can find details of eligible types of research organisations in [section 1.1 of the MRC guidance for applicants](#).

You must:

- have [research organisation support](#)
- be able to show that your skills and experience match those in the 'transition to independence' stage of the [MRC applicant skills and experience table](#), such as showing evidence of career progress and clear plans to develop your own research niche
- provide a clear rationale of why this grant will best support your long-term career goals and chosen career route
- have at least a postgraduate degree, although most applicants have a PhD or medical degree
- be the sole intellectual leader of the proposed project, although we will allow co-investigators when they bring expertise to the project that is outside the applicant's field
- focus your application within the research area of neurosciences and mental health

You are also eligible to apply if you:

- are employed as a postdoctoral research assistant, but this grant cannot start until your current work finishes
- hold a lecturer appointment, a junior fellowship or another research staff position
- hold, or have held, an early career training fellowship such as an MRC skills development fellowship
- do not have a contract with your chosen host institution
- are either a non-clinical or clinically active researcher

You do not need any postdoctoral experience to be eligible to apply.

You can only have 1 new investigator research grant or fellowship application under consideration by MRC at any one time.

Who is not eligible to apply

You are not eligible to apply if you have achieved independence, for example by receiving substantial grant income as a principal investigator.

‘Substantial grant income’ is typically defined as grants or fellowships up to 3 years long, with more than £50,000 direct science costs (excluding the principal investigator’s salary) per year. If you are unsure whether you fulfill the eligibility criteria, [contact an MRC programme manager to discuss](#) further.

You are also not eligible if you have:

- applied to the scheme twice unsuccessfully
- an application for any UKRI fellowship under consideration, including a [career development award](#) or [clinician scientist fellowship](#)

If you have any doubts about your eligibility, you should [contact the relevant MRC programme manager](#) to find out whether you can apply.

If you are still unsure as to whether you are eligible to apply, read our [new investigator research grants frequently asked questions](#) for situation-specific eligibility information.

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 UKRI](#).

What we're looking for

Scope

We are looking for new investigators with a proposal for research that increases understanding within the field of neurosciences and mental health.

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.

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

- 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

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.

Co-investigators can be involved, but must bring expertise to the project that is outside the applicant's field. Your current supervisor or lab head should not

be a co-investigator.

How you spend your time

We expect you will want to combine your research project with other activities. For example:

- time spent on other research grants or clinical duties
- teaching
- administration duties
- other time spent in faculty

You may spend up to 50% of your contracted working time on this project and we will cap our contribution to your salary at this level.

If you want to spend more time than this on your project, you must provide a strong scientific rationale and your host institution will need to underwrite the extra time.

The salary requested should be in line with the research organisation's usual new investigator levels.

Project duration

New investigator research grants usually last 3 years and are not renewable. It may be possible to apply for a longer period but you will need to justify why this is necessary. Projects help applicants in the transition to independence so will not usually be for shorter periods.

What we will fund

We will consider requests for costs such as:

- a salary contribution, capped at 50% of your total working time
- the salary for any hours that your co-investigators will spend working on the project
- support for extra research or technical posts
- consumables and equipment
- travel costs
- data preservation, data sharing and dissemination costs
- estates or indirect costs

There is no set limit to the funding available, but your application must be for an amount that:

- is appropriate to the project
- you can justify in order to deliver the objectives of the proposed research

Your application must show 100% of the full economic cost. We will fund up to 80% of the full economic cost of your research to your institution. Find out more about [full economic costing](#).

We will not fund

We will not consider request for costs such as:

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

Team project partner

Project partners can optionally be included with your application if they are providing support to your project with cash or in-kind contributions, such as:

- staff time
- access to equipment
- sites or facilities
- the provision of data
- software or materials

If you do include a project partner, you must provide a letter of support for each project partner you include within your application. If your application involves [industry partners](#), they must provide a company letter of support if the team project partner falls within the [industry collaboration framework](#).

Find out more about [subcontractors and dual roles](#).

Who cannot be included as a team project partner

The individual named as the contact for the project partner organisation cannot also be named as staff.

Supporting skills and talent

We encourage you to follow the principles of [The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) and the [Technician Commitment](#).

International collaboration

If your application includes international applicants, project partners or collaborators, visit [Trusted Research](#) for more information on effective international collaboration.

How to apply

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

You may only submit to the new investigator scheme twice. You can submit a second application only if your first is not successful. You must wait at least a year after your first submission before submitting a second application.

You must apply using the [Joint Electronic Submission \(Je-S\) system](#).

You can find advice on completing your application in:

- the [Je-S handbook](#)
- [MRC guidance for applicants](#)

We recommend you start your application early.

Your host organisation will also be able to provide advice and guidance.

Submitting your application

Before starting an application, you will need to log in or create an account in Je-S.

All investigators involved in the project need to be registered on Je-S.

Any investigators who do not have a Je-S account must register for one at least 7 working days before the opportunity deadline.

When applying:

1. Select 'documents', then 'new document'.

2. Select 'call search'.
3. To find the opportunity, search for: 'New investigator research grants (NIRG) only research boards May 2023'.

This will populate:

- council: MRC
- document type: Standard proposal
- scheme: research grant
- call/type/mode: new investigator research grants (NIRG) only research boards May 2023

Once you have completed your application, make sure you 'submit document'.

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

Deadline

MRC must receive your application by 24 May 2023 at 4:00pm UK time.

You will not be able to apply after this time. Please leave enough time for your application to pass through your organisation's Je-S submission route before this date.

You should ensure you are aware of and follow any internal institutional deadlines that may be in place.

What to include in your application

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

- the [new investigator research grant CV and salary template](#) (your CV should not exceed 2 sides of A4)
- a CV for each named researcher and co-investigator. Each CV should not exceed 2 sides of A4
- publications (up to 1 side of A4 per named person)
- a case for support. If your application duration is:
 - 36 months or less, your case for support must not exceed 8 pages
 - 37 months or more, your case for support must not exceed 12 pages
- 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](#). You must use the available [DMP template form](#)

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:

- covering letter: this should not exceed 2 sides of A4 using a sans-serif typeface (Arial or equivalent) and font size of 11pt
- letters of support: each letter should 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 your application
- 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](#).

Each project partner must provide a project partner letter of support, that should not exceed to 2 pages on headed paper or a PDF of an email. The letter must:

- be an integral part of the application
- focus on the application it accompanies, which includes the requirement to include a project partner letter of support

Full details of the content the project partner should include in their letter of support, are provided in [section 2.2.6 of the MRC guidance for applicants](#).

Declaration

Your new investigator research grant application must include a declaration confirming that you have originated the research question and written the

research application. The declaration is limited to 1 page.

Attach your declaration to the Je-S form using the 'letter of support' attachment type.

Host organisation statement of support

Research organisations must also attach a statement of support to all applications, signed by a senior authority. It should:

- support the application including through long-term financial commitment
- describe why the organisation considers you to be a suitable candidate for a new investigator grant
- lay out plans for how the organisation will mentor, guide and support your career development
- detail how they will financially support non-project time
- confirm that you are a recognised and valued part of their team, integrated into the research organisation, and able to develop your independence and the focus of your research
- detail the internal process the application has gone through before submission
- describe how the research organisation will support you following the end of the award
- provide details of a named senior academic who has supported you during the development of your application and who will continue to do so

This statement of support should also describe how the host organisation will support you, for instance by providing:

- guidance and training on setting up a research group, building partnerships and collaborations, or with public engagement

- rapid access to resources at the research organisation through knowledge of appropriate processes and systems
- access to career development support and advice to enable future career transitions
- support for any proposed leadership activities
- access to laboratory space or investment in equipment to establish the applicant's laboratory, and access to communal departmental resources

The host organisation statement of support document should not exceed 2 pages.

When uploading the attachment to your Je-S form, please select the attachment type 'host organisation statement' and describe the uploaded document as 'host organisation statement of support'.

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.

Research disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic

You have the option to include this 1 page annex to the case for support. You can use it 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 against the [MRC applicant skills and experience criteria](#) (transition to independence), which focuses on your:

- research vision
- research experience and potential
- personal development
- leadership
- communication and engagement skills
- profile and influence

We will also take into consideration the support that your host research organisation will provide. We recommend that you review these criteria and

discuss them with your research organisation when you are developing your application, as this will help you secure an appropriate statement of support.

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
- the application 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.

All MRC research boards handle new investigator applications as a cross-board opportunity. This means that they may be prioritised during funding discussions.

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

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 application, or to ask which science area you should apply to, please [contact the relevant MRC programme manager](#).

You can email the Neurosciences and Mental Health Board admin team, if you are not sure who to contact, you have a general query, or if you do not receive a response to your email enquiry within 10 working days, please email: nmhb@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

Background

New investigator research grant (NIRG) webinars are hosted throughout the year. [Check for the next NIRG webinar](#).

Since January 2020, all successful new investigator research grant holders are eligible to register for the [Academy of Medical Sciences mentoring scheme](#).

Supporting documents

[New investigator research grant CV and salary template form](#)

[Data management plan template](#)

<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/neurosciences-and-mental-health-new-investigator>