Apply for funding to investigate the causes, progression and treatment of human disease.

Your project must:

- include an experimental intervention or challenge in humans
- focus on a mechanistic hypothesis
- be academically-led.

You must be based at an eligible research organisation. Any researcher employed by an eligible research organisation, including MRC institutes and units (including those in Gambia and Uganda), can apply for this funding opportunity.

In addition to our usual eligibility criteria, you can apply if you hold a fellowship or lectureship.

There is no limit to the amount of funding you can apply for or the length of your project.

We will fund 80% of your project’s full economic cost.
This is an ongoing scheme with an annual budget of £10 million. Application rounds open every six months, closing in April and October.

Who can apply

You must have at least a postgraduate degree and an employment contract at an eligible research organisation to apply for this funding opportunity.

Eligible organisations include:

- higher education institutions
- UK Research and Innovation-approved independent research organisations or NHS bodies
- government-funded organisations
- public sector research establishments
- MRC institutes
- MRC units and partnership institutes (including those in Gambia and Uganda)
- institutes and units funded by other research councils.

Read more details on institutional and individual eligibility in the general [MRC guidance for applicants](#).

Investigators in receipt of fellowships (MRC, National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), charity, learned societies) and NIHR lectureships are eligible, if their fellowship terms and conditions allow.

We encourage applications from collaborative teams, which may include international co-investigators where they provide expertise that is not available in the UK. Please contact us to confirm eligibility prior to submission.

Applicants can also include one or more project partners in their application.

What we're looking for

You can apply for academically-led experimental medicine projects that are conducted in humans. Your project should be based round a clearly articulated gap in understanding of human pathophysiology and have a clear path to clinical impact.

Successful projects will produce new mechanistic insights, including those that may:

- identify opportunities to modify disease pathways
- enable the future development of novel therapeutic or diagnostic approaches.

The panel welcomes all disease areas and interventions.
Before submitting an application, we encourage you to contact the experimental medicine team to arrange a discussion with the programme manager around remit suitability.

There is no limit to the amount of funding you can apply for or the length of your project. You should instead justify the timescale and resources needed in the context of the proposed work.

What your application must include

Your application must involve an experimental intervention or challenge in humans, which has been designed to validate a mechanistic hypothesis. The challenge may be, but is not limited to:

- pharmacological
- immunological
- physiological
- psychological
- infectious.

Activities we support

The following types of proposals are eligible for support:

- the use of novel readouts or technologies related to early evaluation of clinical efficacy or pathogenic mechanism
- the use of drugs, other interventions or measures with established safety profiles in new settings or conditions (for example, repurposing drugs as tool compounds to probe disease mechanism)
- characterisation or phenotyping of subjects using samples from clinical studies may be included where there is a clear link to a current treatment strategy but should not be the sole focus of the proposal:
  - limited, hypothesis-driven, retrospective sample analysis may be included at the start of the project to improve the design of the interventional, experimental medicine study
  - milestone criteria should clearly detail what data is required from the confirmatory analysis for the project to progress.

Prospective, nested studies within a larger cohort trial may be eligible provided they:

- can demonstrate added value
- are exploring disease mechanisms
- test a novel hypothesis
- address a different question to the main study.

Competitive proposals will aim to address a clear mechanistic question and provide strong rationale to justify the suitability of the experimental system proposed to test the presented hypothesis. Proposals which are predominantly descriptive will not be shortlisted.

Activities we do not support
The following activities are ineligible for support:

- characterisation or phenotyping work aiming to elucidate disease aetiology (supported by the MRC research boards)
- biomarker discovery (supported by the MRC research boards)
- experimental intervention or challenge in animals, using clinical assets to explore disease mechanisms and pathways (supported by the MRC research boards)
- development and evaluation of novel therapeutics, diagnostics or devices (supported by the MRC Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme)
- high-throughput screening approaches to target validation
- pre-clinical model development and validation (supported by the MRC research boards)
- clinical efficacy trials (supported by the NIHR MRC Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation funding scheme).
- observational studies involving no experimental challenge.

Resubmissions

If you’re thinking of resubmitting a previously declined application, please first contact the programme manager and check the guidance on the MRC resubmission process.

MRC industry collaboration framework

If your application involves the collaboration of one 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.

How to apply

You must first submit an outline proposal via the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system.

Experimental medicine outline opportunities open during January and July each year. Opportunities are open for approximately eight weeks.
When applying select:

- council: MRC
- document type: outline proposal
- scheme: standard outline

For your Je-S application you must use our outline proposal form (Word, 271KB). This is attached to the Je-S application as the ‘case for support’.

Before applying for the outline stage, please read our guidance for outline applicants (PDF, 303KB).

If successful at the outline stage, you will be invited to submit a full application. We will send guidance on completing a full application.

---

**How we will assess your application**

Your application will be assessed in a two-stage process. Your outline proposal will first be considered by an independent panel of experts.

The panel will assess your proposal on the following criteria:

- fit to the funding opportunity remit
- scientific rationale and potential impact
- research strategy and experimental design
- deliverability of the project.

If successful, you will be invited to submit a full proposal. This undergoes external peer review before a further and more detailed review by the panel. All applicants will receive feedback from the assessment process within eight weeks of the panel meeting.

We aim to complete the process from outline submission to full decision in approximately 30 weeks.

Following the funding decisions and the project starting, information relating to the funded project will be published on Gateway to Research. Award information is usually published on Gateway to Research within six to eight weeks of the confirmed project start date.

---

**Contact details**

**Ask a question about this opportunity**

Email: experimental.medicine@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

Additional info

Resources

You may find the following organisations and resources useful when preparing an application.

The MRC Regulatory Support Centre acts as a hub for advice and resources around research using human participants, their tissues, or data.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research provides a clinical trials toolkit that gives practical advice to those planning or running clinical trials in the UK.

Applicants considering a drug repurposing project may wish to explore the Repurposing Medicines Toolkit, developed by MRC and LifeArc.

Supporting documents

Outline proposal form (Word, 271KB)
Guidance for outline applicants (PDF, 303KB)
Frequently asked questions (PDF, 162KB)

Timeline

18 January 2023 9:00am
Outline application opening date

19 April 2023 4:00pm
Outline application closing date

27 to 28 June 2023
Outline panel meeting

6 September 2023
Full proposal submission

6 to 7 December 2023
Funding decision meeting

Within 10 working days of funding decision meeting
Informed of funding decision

10 July 2023 to 4 October 2023
Future round open for applications

18 January 2024 to 17 April 2024
Future round open for applications

5 July 2024 to 2 October 2024
Future round open for applications

Guidance on good research

Good research resource hub

© 2023 Copyright UKRI

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/experimental-medicine