UK Research and Innovation

Funding opportunity

Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme

Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	Medical Research Council (MRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£30,000,000
Publication date:	23 March 2022
Opening date:	8 June 2023 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	19 July 2023 4:00pm UK time

Apply for funding to develop and test novel therapeutics, medical devices, diagnostics and other interventions.

You must:

- be based at a research organisation eligible for MRC funding
- meet individual eligibility requirements

Your project can start and finish at any stage on the developmental pathway from early development, through pre-clinical refinement and testing to early-phase clinical studies and trials (up to phase 2a).

There's no limit on the amount of funding you can apply for, but it should be appropriate to the project. We usually fund 80% of a project's full economic cost.

This is an ongoing scheme.

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 funding opportunity you must:

- be a researcher employed by an **eligible research organisation**
- show that you will direct the project and be actively engaged in the work
- be looking to develop and test novel therapeutics, medical devices, diagnostics and other interventions

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

You can apply for academically-led translational projects that aim to either:

- improve prevention, diagnosis, prognosis or treatment of significant health needs
- develop research tools that increase the efficiency of developing interventions

All diseases and interventions are eligible for support. You can also address global health issues.

Your project can start and finish at any stage on the developmental pathway from early development, through pre-clinical refinement and testing to early-phase

clinical studies and trials (up to phase 2a). You can submit follow-on proposals where you can justify the need for continued support.

You can apply for funding for work on novel:

- candidate therapeutic entities (for example, drug discovery)
- vaccines for infectious or non-infectious disease
- biologics (antibodies, peptides, proteins)
- advanced therapeutics (for example, gene therapy and T-cell therapy)
- regenerative medicine approaches
- repurposing clinical studies or using existing therapies for new indications
- medical devices
- digital healthcare, app development or artificial intelligence
- diagnostics (including biomarker validation)
- medical imaging technology
- surgical techniques or tools
- behavioural and psychological interventions
- radiotherapy and radiation protocols
- interventions that benefit health in low and middle-income countries

This funding opportunity will not support:

- fundamental or investigative research not linked to a development plan (supported by the MRC science areas)
- clinical studies where the main aim is to investigate disease mechanism (supported by the **MRC Experimental Medicine Panel**)
- late-phase clinical trials (supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) efficacy and mechanism evaluation and NIHR health technology assessment programmes)
- late-phase global health trials (supported by applied global health)

Learn about:

- **MRC's remit, programmes and priority areas**
- **NIHR's efficacy and mechanism evaluation programme**
- **NIHR's health technology assessment programme**
- **applied global health**

Length and limit of funding

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.

Collaborations

We encourage working with charities or industry partners where these partnerships can add value to the project.

Collaborators may add value by giving access to:

- expertise

- technologies
- reagents
- funding

Please note that collaboration is not a prerequisite for application.

Applications involving industry collaboration

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 Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system 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 apply using the **Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system**.

You can find advice on completing your application in the **Je-S handbook**.

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.

When applying:

1. Select 'documents', then 'new document'.
2. Select 'call search'.
3. To find the opportunity, search for: Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme (DPFS) outline July 2023.

This will populate:

- council: MRC
- document type: outline proposal

- scheme: Biomedical catalyst DPFS outline
- call/type/mode: Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme (DPFS) outline July 2023

You must use our **outline case for support form (Word, 268KB)** for your Je-S application.

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 outline application by 19 July 2023 at 4:00pm UK time.

You will not be able to apply after this time. Please leave enough time for your proposal 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.

Attachments

Along with the outline case for support, you will also need to include the following mandatory attachments with your Je-S application:

- CVs of up to two sides of A4 each for:
  - principal investigator
  - co-investigators
  - researcher co-investigators
  - named research staff
- list of publications of up to one side of A4 each for:
  - principal investigator
  - co-investigators
  - researcher co-investigators
  - named research staff
- Gantt chart showing your work plan (one side of A4)
- letter of support from your organisation's technology transfer office, or equivalent (up to two sides of A4)
- supporting data (up to two sides of A4)

The following attachments are mandatory if they apply to your project:

- feedback letter (up to five sides of A4) if your project is a resubmission
- **industrial collaboration framework (ICF) form**: if your project involves industrial partner collaboration (upload to Je-S using attachment type 'MICA form')

- **industrial collaboration letter of support**: if your project involves industrial partner collaboration
- small molecule supplementary information form: if you are seeking funding for hit-to-lead and lead optimisation projects

Optional attachments include:

- letters of support from key collaborators or partners (up to two sides of A4 each)
- letters of support for research co-investigators (up to two sides of A4 each) to highlight the support and career development that will be provided for any included research co-investigators
- risk table (up to one side of A4) which can be used in place of part 6.9 of the case for support form

Please read our **guidance for outline stage applicants (PDF, 333KB)** for full details before applying.

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

The minimum time from outline submission to full decision is approximately 26 weeks. However, you can choose to defer your full submission by one round which would add approximately 16 weeks.

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.

Successful outline applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal.

Should your outline proposal be declined, you cannot resubmit the same or a similar application to the developmental pathway funding (DPFS) scheme within 12 months of the original application deadline.

In exceptional circumstances, the panel may give positive feedback, whereby the proposal is declined, but the 12-month moratorium on a resubmission is waived.

Please note that the decisions of the DPFS panel will not be open to appeal, and that MRC reserves the right to amend the application process.

See the **DPFS panel membership**.

Panel assessment areas

The panel will assess your outline proposal based on the following areas:

- clinical or medical need: whether the need is significant and whether the proposal has an advantage over competing solutions

- rationale: the strength of the rationale and supporting evidence for why the proposed solution will meet the targeted need
- deliverability:
  - how realistic the proposed development plan is and whether it is likely to answer the question or address the need identified
  - whether the team has access to the necessary assets and expertise to deliver the planned work and whether the proposal offers good value for money
- intellectual property: whether there is an appropriate intellectual property strategy in place to facilitate downstream development, clinical uptake or commercialisation

Projects with no clear and plausible development plan of their proposed route to market or patient benefit after this award are unlikely to be supportable.

Next steps

If successful, you will be invited to submit a full proposal. This will undergo an 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.

Contact details

Get help with developing your proposal

For help and advice on costings and writing your proposal, please contact your research office in the first instance, allowing sufficient time for your organisation's submission process.

Ask about this funding opportunity

Email: **dpfsanddcs@mrc.ukri.org**

We encourage you to get in touch with the relevant programme manager to discuss your proposal ideas.

Dr Adam Babbs: small molecules and other drugs

Email: **adam.babbs@mrc.ukri.org**

Dr Agnes Leong: biomarkers, diagnostics and medical devices

Email: **agnes.leong@mrc.ukri.org**

Dr Penny Morton: advanced therapeutics (gene, nucleic acid and cell therapies) and regenerative medicine

Email: **penny.morton@mrc.ukri.org**

Dr Helen Potts: digital health, software development, artificial intelligence tools, imaging, radiotherapy and psychological therapies

Email: helen.potts@mrc.ukri.org

Dr Florence Theberge: vaccines, antibodies, proteins and peptide therapeutics

Email: florence.theberge@mrc.ukri.org

Dr Teodora Trendafilova: drug repurposing studies

Email: teodora.trendafilova@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.

The **MHRA Innovation Office** provides free advice to clarify regulatory requirements from an early stage of product development.

The **NHS Innovation Service** acts as an information gateway to support people developing new innovative products, services or initiatives in healthcare.

The **MRC-LifeArc Innovation Hubs for Gene Therapies Network** supports academic-led early phase clinical development of gene therapies through manufacturing of GMP viral vector, translational and regulatory support, and manufacturing development support ahead of clinical development.

The **Nucleic Acid Therapy Accelerator** provides dedicated research capability, infrastructure and support to enable advances in the development of nucleic acid therapeutics.

Supporting documents

Outline proposal form (Word, 268KB)

Guidance for outline stage applicants (PDF, 333KB)

Small molecule supplementary information form (Word, 71KB)

General guidance for applicants

Timeline

- **8 June 2023 9:00am**
  Opening date

- **19 July 2023 4:00pm**
  Outline application closing date

- **13 to 14 September 2023**
  Outline panel meeting

- **29 September to 8 November 2023**
  Invited full proposal submission

- **17 to 18 January 2024**
  Funding decision meeting

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

- **13 October to 22 November 2023**
  Future round open for outline applications

- **26 January to 6 March 2024**

Invited full proposal submission

- **5 February to 20 March 2024**
  Future round open for outline applications

- **22 May to 3 July 2024**
  Invited full proposal submission

- **5 June to 17 July 2024**
  Future round open for outline applications

Guidance on good research

Good research resource hub