

# FAQs – arising from the webinar on 24 April 2025

## Summary

Please note that if you need to refer to more detailed applicant guidance, e.g. eligibility, costing, than is included in the opportunity text, [MRC Guidance for applicants](#) applies as MRC is administering the opportunity on behalf of the seven Research Councils (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, NERC, MRC and STFC) and co-funders (Defra and FCDO). All funders have been involved in the opportunity development and will be involved in assessment of applications.

For specific remit queries you may provide an approximately half-page summary of the project to [TacklingEpidemics@ukri.org](mailto:TacklingEpidemics@ukri.org) which includes explanation of how it fits the opportunity. Your summary should set out your aims and objectives to enable us to understand what you plan to do and how. Please allow time for a response as we will consult across Councils to ensure that it meets the requirements of this cross-Council opportunity.

## Funding

[Will applications including organisations linked to one of the funders be weighted and considered more favourably?](#)

Inclusion of applicants and/or project partners will be judged based on their contribution to the project towards delivering its stated aims. All funders want to fund the highest quality and most impactful interdisciplinary research through this opportunity, whether that be delivered through Public Sector Research Establishments or through Universities. We won't be preferencing one over the other in any assessment criteria.

[Given the total fund ceiling, will smaller, less expensive proposals be at an advantage over larger proposals? What is the minimum budget we could apply?](#)

We are seeking ambitious interdisciplinary proposals. Each proposal will be assessed according to the criteria set out for the opportunity, which includes an evaluation of value for money – this is not about how expensive an application is, but whether the budget is appropriate to deliver the research and justified by the anticipated outputs.

[Is there a requirement for match funding from eligible institutions? What level of institutional support would be expected?](#)

There is no a requirement for match funding. However, consideration will be given to your research environment to ensure the right expertise and facilities are available to deliver the research.

### Is there a limit on equipment costs for this call?

There is no limit, however equipment over £10,000 (which is the limit in place on the date that the opportunity went live) will need to be fully justified in the Resources and cost justification section of the application. For more information see [Guidance for applicants 'Directly incurred: equipment'](#).

### What are the restrictions on funding that we can provide from the project to developing country collaborators?

As stated in the opportunity text: You can request costs for work to be undertaken at international organisations by international project co-leads. We will fund 100% of the eligible costs in these organisations. The total of such costs requested for international applicants from high-income countries (those not on the [OECD DAC List of ODA Recipients](#)), India and China must not exceed 30% of the total resources requested. There is no cap on costs requested for international applicants from DAC list countries and we will additionally pay overhead support and for equipment providing such costs are justified. For more information on international costs and what we will and will not fund see the [UKRI project co-lead \(international\) policy](#).

### Can project partners request costs?

A project partner is a collaborating organisation that will have an integral role in the proposed research. Project partners provide cash or in-kind contributions to the delivery of a project and therefore should not normally seek to claim funds from the grant. However, if there are specific circumstances where project partners require funding for minor costs such as travel and subsistence, this will be paid at 80% FEC (unless exceptionally agreed otherwise in advance). You should outline any project partner costs and fully justify them in the application. They will be subject to peer review. Note that we will also consider any applicable subsidy control regulation and HMRC guidance. This may affect the percentage of these costs that we will fund.

## Applicant team & eligibility

### Would early researchers be considered for funding? Is someone without a PhD eligible to receive funding? Will a person with no PhD be able to get the grant?

We actively encourage the involvement of early career researchers and their integration into the interdisciplinary team. It is not a requirement to possess a PhD to receive funding. However, the lead applicant must demonstrate their track record have a substantial record of securing research funding and delivering high-quality research.

### Does the funding support PhD studentships?

Studentship costs are ineligible. We support students via block grants directly to research organisations, who then recruit and manage the students. We do not award individual studentships or allow inclusion of studentships on research grant applications.

### Can an individual apply for any of the funding?

The project lead should be the individual who will act as our main contact and coordinator of the research programme. The project lead's research organisation will be responsible for all administration relating to the award. As this is an interdisciplinary opportunity the research proposed, and therefore team expertise, must cross the disciplinary remits of at least three UKRI research councils.

#### Can project leads be involved in more than one application?

A project lead can only take this role on one application. That person can participate in other applications in a different role, providing their time can be justified.

#### Can project co-leads be involved in more than one application?

You can be a project co-lead on more than one application providing your time can be justified.

#### Is a minimum number of project co-leads required?

There is no minimum number of co-leads on the application however the research proposed, and therefore team expertise, must cross the disciplinary remits of at least three UKRI research councils and applicants will need to demonstrate that the right team is in place to successfully deliver the proposed work.

#### How can early career researchers (postdoc level, having fixed contract) being involved in this grant application process?

Postdoctoral researchers can be named as a researcher co-lead or a research and innovation associate, depending on the level of their contribution to developing the project – see the [role descriptions and responsibilities](#) for more information. For applicants who do not have a contract of employment for the duration of the proposed project, by submitting an application the research organisation is confirming, if it is successful:

- contracts will be extended beyond the end date of the project
- all necessary support for the project and the applicants will be provided, including mentorship and career development for early career researchers

#### Can SMEs/spin outs/commercial partners be a project co-lead on the grant?

No, such organisations cannot co-lead an application; they may participate as a project partner.

#### Is it possible to include different (non-eligible) sectors as collaborators, such as companies, small businesses, and start-ups?

In all cases, a project partner is defined as a third-party person or organisation that will support your research project through cash or in-kind contributions. All project partners must provide a statement of support; if the project partner is from a company (an enterprise that puts or has an intention to put goods or services on a market), applicants must follow the guidance in the [Industry Collaboration Framework](#).

#### Are LMICs eligible?

Yes, research in LMICs, and by researchers in LMICs is eligible - with an eligible, UK employed project lead.

### Do proposals need to have an international partner?

It is not a general requirement to have an international partner, however the focus of the proposal may determine the need for an appropriate international partner – where projects have an LMIC focus, LMIC leadership as co-leads (international) is a requirement.

### Can you clarify the different role types in the core team?

Please see the [role descriptions and responsibilities](#) for more information – only those role types listed under this opportunity can be selected for your application (see ‘Core team’ under ‘How to apply’).

### Is there any restriction on the disciplinary expertise required to lead a proposal?

No, this is a UKRI-wide funding opportunity therefore the project lead can be from any discipline.

### Is there any platform/network to help facilitate the formation of research collaborations?

This is something that we enabled for phase 1 where the purpose was on building research teams and developing research ideas but is not something we are offering for phase 2.

### Does the application need to be supported and informed by public contributors?

This is not a requirement of the funding opportunity, but some applications might be strengthened by the inclusion of communities and people with lived experience depending on the project.

### Sometimes councils’ research funding guidance differs. As each application must cover at least three Councils’ remits, do all of the corresponding research funding guides apply, and if so, how are conflicts handled?

The seven Research Councils are moving towards harmonised funding policies and procedures. However, MRC is administering this opportunity on behalf of all the research councils and our co-funding partners, therefore [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) should be followed where there is any discrepancy.

## Demand Management

### Is there any restriction to the number of applications an institution can support?

An institution can support more than one application and there is no requirement to limit the number of applications being submitted. However, we encourage institutions to explore opportunities to enrich the interdisciplinary nature of submitted proposals, where appropriate.

## Assessment

When will the decision date be published? Please advise anticipated funder decision date; and earliest/latest possible start dates under this call.

We have yet to finalise the assessment timeline but expect decisions around the end of the calendar year. So, you should anticipate starting your project between one to six months after this. We will update the opportunity timeline when details have been finalised.

How will the applications be scored? Insight about funding process

Applications will be scored using a [standard scoring matrix](#), which is underpinned by the assessment criteria specified in the funding opportunity. In brief these are:

- vision of the project
- approach to the project (including reproducibility and statistical design and data management)
- capability of the applicants and the project team to deliver the project
- ethical and responsible research and innovation considerations of the project
- resources requested to do the project
- equality, diversity and inclusion

Applicants should address the application questions that underpin these assessment areas (see 'How to apply' on the [funding opportunity page](#), which explains what assessors are looking for in your response).

Will the assessment process involve portfolio balancing and, if so, what features (e.g. disciplines) will it focus on?

Where application quality allows, we expect to support a portfolio of awards covering a breadth of infectious pathogens, hosts and contexts, and across the Councils' remits.

The funding opportunity spans animals, humans and plants. Is there an intended percentage prioritisation towards/away from certain pathosystems?

We are committed to supporting a broad portfolio across animals, humans and plants, subject to application quality.

How will the three Council remit criterion be assessed?

The cross-council delivery team will work together to determine whether their council's interests are included in an application to meet the three Council minimum. In terms of managing overlap between Councils, where a research discipline is applicable to more than one Council, we will look at how it is being applied to determine whether it is relevant to one or both Councils. This office-based check will not assess interdisciplinarity, which is the responsibility of the expert reviewers and panel.

How will the review panel be briefed to fully appreciate interdisciplinary, if not transdisciplinary, proposals?

The panel and expert reviewers will comprise interdisciplinary experts and are being identified by all the funding partners to ensure the necessary breadth of expertise. The panel and reviewers will be briefed on the nature of this opportunity and will use the published assessment

criteria to judge the proposal as a whole rather than through a single disciplinary lens. The criteria include assessing the applicant team's approach to interdisciplinarity.

## Phase one seed funding

[Can you apply if you are not in receipt of/or applied for phase one \(seed\) funding from Tackling Epidemics?](#)

It is not necessary to be a seed funding (phase one) awardholder to apply to this opportunity. We offered seed funding in recognition that both new and established teams might want to do research in this space and be at different stages on their interdisciplinary journeys.

[Will those groups in receipt in phase one funding be prioritised or receive a competitive edge for funding under phase 2?](#)

We will take a quality-driven portfolio approach to making awards, ensuring that we support research across a range of pathogens, hosts and contexts, and crossing the breadth of research council remits. The portfolio approach does not include any prioritisation of applications from those in receipt of phase 1 funding. For those interested, descriptions of phase 1 seed awards are available via the additional information tab of the opportunity on funding finder.

[Is receipt of phase one seed funding an assessment criteria for this application?](#)

A seed award is not a requirement for this opportunity and all applications will be judged based only on what is submitted against the published assessment criteria, so a prior seed award will not give an explicit advantage.

[What seed awards were made under phase one?](#)

The opportunity follows phase one: [Develop interdisciplinary research proposals to tackle epidemic threats](#), which provided [seed funding awards](#) to build diverse interdisciplinary teams. You do not need to be in receipt of Phase one funding to apply to Phase two.

[Are there any similar seed funding opportunities \(supporting the establishment of interdisciplinary teams/ideas\) coming in the near future?](#)

There are currently no plans to launch another funding opportunity for seed funding in this area.

## Remit and scope

[Is my project within remit of the opportunity?](#)

For specific queries you may provide a ~half-page summary of the project to [TacklingEpidemics@ukri.org](mailto:TacklingEpidemics@ukri.org) which includes explanation of how it fits the opportunity. Your summary should set out your aims and objectives to enable us to understand what you plan to do and how. Please allow time for a response as we will consult across Councils to ensure that it meets the requirements of this cross-Council opportunity.

### Is AMR in remit?

AMR is not in remit. In general, if a proposal is focused on an epidemic-potential pathogen which happens to be drug resistant, then that would be acceptable, but if the proposal wants to explore the emergence and spread of the resistance itself, then that would be out of scope.

### Are there priority pathogens or diseases that you expect to support?

We do not have predefined expectations in this regard. In all cases you are required to make a strong case justifying the epidemic (or epizootic or epiphytotic) potential of your chosen infectious disease(s). However, we do particularly encourage applications that expect to deliver insights that are applicable to more than one pathogen, disease or context.

### Does the prevention of chronic disease resulting from emerging epidemic threats fall under the remit of this call?

No, the focus of the opportunity is on understanding, predicting and preventing (re-)emergence of infectious diseases of humans, animals and plants with epidemic potential. The downstream symptoms and longer-term sequelae of infection are not in remit.

### Can you confirm whether the focus has to be a pathogen, rather than a system in which a (or many) pathogens might be transmitted?

The opportunity is aimed at projects focusing on pathogens that are considered a significant threat now or in the future to animal, human or plant health. You will be expected to justify the epidemic potential of the pathogens or types of pathogens included in your application. Applications focusing on more fundamental, non-specific (in terms of pathogen, disease or host) or more generalisable activity (such as models, predictive tool development, policy and governance research) are in scope providing the project objectives align with the aim of the funding opportunity in terms of helping us to understand, predict and prevent infectious disease epidemic threats. These types of projects should be fully justified and demonstrate applicability beyond the study system or setting as appropriate.

### Is a One Health approach a requirement?

Approaches using 'One Health' or, similarly, 'Planetary Health' framing are encouraged where appropriate but not explicitly required.

### What is the minimum number of councils that a proposal needs to cover? How is this assessed?

An important component of this opportunity is to drive ambitious interdisciplinarity. To drive this step-change in interdisciplinarity we've included a requirement that applications must include the disciplinary remits of at least three Research Councils.

### Can you confirm that involvement of discipline X is an essential part of this call?

The involvement of specific disciplines is not essential; it will be determined by its relevance to the research question you seek to address. However, your proposal must cross the distinct disciplinary remits of at least three UKRI Research Councils in its definition of interdisciplinarity.



### How do you define interdisciplinary?

We are aligned to the REF definition of interdisciplinary research requiring 'significant interaction between two or more disciplines (in our case, the interdisciplinarity needs to be broad enough to be relevant to minimum of three Councils' remits) and should move beyond established disciplinary foundations in applying or integrating research approaches from other disciplines' with 'interdisciplinary research achieving outcomes (including new approaches) that could not be achieved within the framework of a single discipline.' In brief, in distinguishing interdisciplinary research from multidisciplinary research in which multiple disciplines are each applied separately to address a question, interdisciplinary research requires integration of disciplines. An interdisciplinary approach is the minimum requirement for this opportunity; beyond this, transdisciplinary research transgresses boundaries of disciplinary knowledge and strives for co-creation and integration of knowledge between academic disciplines and non-academic stakeholders to address societal challenges (which would include the involvement of policy makers in government and the 3rd sector). Transdisciplinary research is also allowed but not required.

### What do you mean by 'epidemic potential'?

We define epidemic (or epizootic or epiphytotic) potential to mean pathogens that are highly transmissible and capable of rapid uncontrolled spread within a community, population or region (or actively spreading to multiple regions for a pandemic) and highly virulent, making them likely to cause significant destruction, morbidity and/or mortality. It is up to applicants to justify the epidemic potential of the pathogen(s)/pathogen type in their research proposal.

### What are the anticipated/desirable outputs? What would impact look like for this call? Do we have to aim at particular technology readiness level (TLR)?

This is a wide-ranging funding opportunity and aims to support fundamental research through to projects at the more translational or applied end of the spectrum therefore research questions and their outputs and impacts will be determined by individual projects.

### Are epidemics that affect multiple species or a zoonotic risk more desirable in this grant?

No, although we encourage applications that expect to deliver insights that are applicable to more than one pathogen, disease or context.

### Could you clarify what you see as "operationalisation of public health and social health measures" (that will not be funded)?

Implementation of public health and preventative social measures at the individual and community level (for example testing, contact tracing, vaccination programmes) are not in scope of this opportunity.

### Is research into the impacts of climate a factor to consider for this call?

The aim of the opportunity is to improve our understanding of factors that influence the risk and severity of infectious disease threats and inform new ways to manage and respond to infectious disease threats. Climate is one of several factors to influence the risk and so would fall within the remit as part of an interdisciplinary approach.



**Is this funding stream specifically focused at UK epidemic preparedness or a more global approach? / Can research be undertaken in a setting other than the UK?**

Projects can be relevant to the UK, LMICs, or a global setting. Work undertaken overseas is allowed as we recognise both that emerging infectious diseases with epidemic potential are likely to do so outside the UK and that local context is likely to be an important component of your research proposal in this instance. In practical terms, proposals must have a UK-based project lead. There are limits to funds that can be awarded overseas – see opportunity text for more information.

**What are the restrictions for applications on disease surveillance?**

This opportunity is not designed to support disease surveillance as this is outside the scope of UKRI as a funding agency. However, we recognise that surveillance data might underpin a significant programme of work and that this may not be readily available in some settings in which case we will allow surveillance as a minor, facilitating component if it's critical to enable a wider holistic programme of research but in such instances we would expect evidence of sustainability through relevant government agency or ministry support.

**Are wild plants within scope? Are epidemics in plants covered by the funding?**

Wild plants (and plants generally) are in scope. We recognise the role of wild plants within the environment as reservoirs of crop pathogens (and their vectors) and the role for transmission of diseases from one to the other. It will be important to demonstrate the epidemic potential and impact of the systems that you are studying.

**Is ODA relevant research in scope?**

The primary purpose of the opportunity is to support interdisciplinary research to better understand, predict and prevent (re)emergence of infectious animal, human, or plant diseases of epidemic potential. We recognise that infectious disease emergence and spread do not conform to national boundaries and therefore projects can be relevant to the UK, LMICs, or a global setting, providing they meet the remit of the opportunity. This can include ODA relevant research.

**Is detection of diseases in remit?**

We won't fund development or evaluation diagnostics or diagnostic technology platforms through this funding opportunity as there are other routes to secure funding for this type of research. However, while disease surveillance is also not in scope, except as a minor facilitating component for a wider programme of work, development of novel technologies to detect diseases is potentially in scope. Detection technology must be novel and not optimisation of an existing technology to different circumstances, and must also meet the 3-Council disciplinary remit criterion. You are advised to contact [TacklingEpidemics@ukri.org](mailto:TacklingEpidemics@ukri.org) if you are uncertain whether or not your proposal might be in scope.

**Are long-term (archaeological) data and perspectives relevant to tackle epidemic threats?**

Archaeological data and perspectives are in scope for this opportunity, given that it is open to applications across all UKRI council remits. As with all disciplines, it will be up to the application team to articulate the importance of all contributing approaches and to meet the minimum 3-council remit. Please note that archaeology as a research area is shared between AHRC and NERC. If you are unsure which research council's remit covers the archaeological methodologies and/or topics you plan to include in your application, you can consult AHRC's Research Funding Guide [[AHRC-201224-Research-Funding-Guide-version-7.1-December-2024.pdf](#)] and NERC's guidance on remit [[Research areas covered by NERC remit – UKRI](#)]. If these resources do not resolve your query, you are welcome to contact [TacklingEpidemics@ukri.org](mailto:TacklingEpidemics@ukri.org) for further guidance.

#### [How to approach epidemic threats of fungal infections?](#)

Fungal infections, as with all infectious pathogen families, are in scope of the opportunity providing the epidemic potential is well described.

#### [The call specifies that applications need to have been co-developed - how is co-development being defined here?](#)

This will depend on your project but as a minimum all applications need to be co-developed by researchers working across the disciplinary boundaries of at least 3 research councils. Any project partners should also be involved in the co-development of the application.

#### [Is a proposal tackling purely policies for COVID-19 pandemic suitable for this funding opportunity?](#)

Responding to a pandemic or epidemic is not in scope the opportunity is about preparedness – to better understand, predict and prevent (re-)emergence of infectious diseases of epidemic potential. However, some elements of preparedness might be about being ready with the best responses should an epidemic outbreak occur. So, some analysis and development of policies could be appropriate, where carefully justified in terms of the remit of the call including the 3 council remit requirement. We advise you to contact [TacklingEpidemics@ukri.org](mailto:TacklingEpidemics@ukri.org) for specific queries. You may provide a half-page summary of the project which includes an explanation of how it fits the opportunity.