Medical Research Foundation

# 2026/27 Antimicrobial Resistance

## Early-Career Fellowship Grant Opportunity

## Guidelines for Applicants

# Summary

This document guides you through the preparation and submission of an application for the Antimicrobial Resistance Fellowship.

**Deadline for Submission:**
**12:00 Thursday 2 July 2026**

Applications must be submitted and approved by all signatories and the application received in its entirety by this deadline. All applications must be submitted via the Medical Research Foundation online grants management system (https://medicalresearchfoundation.flexigrant.com/). Paper application forms will not be accepted.

We advise that you prepare your application in good time to allow for your Research Organisation's checks and approvals to take place in accordance with its internal timelines. You will not be able to submit applications after this deadline. We recommend that you submit your application in advance of the deadline so that any technical issues can be resolved in good time.

The Medical Research Foundation is committed to making this application accessible to all by offering assistance where needed. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Research Team if you have any questions or concerns about the application or interview processes:

**Email: research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk**

**Tel: 020 4581 2403**

# Overview

The Medical Research Foundation is inviting applications from early-career researchers in the field of Antimicrobial Resistance research.

The aim of this funding call is to fund outstanding early-career researchers to build capacity within the field of AMR and develop interdisciplinary researchers. The proposed research must have AMR and human health as its primary focus, however we encourage researchers from related fields to apply.

All areas of research relevant to Antimicrobial Resistance will be considered; Proposals which include research investigating the following themes in relation to **human health** are particularly encouraged:

- Climate change or the environment and AMR
- The impact of AMR on children and young people
- Social sciences, community and policy
- Large scale data and genomics
- Infection prevention and control
- Global studies

Research purely into novel drug development, including early- and late-stage trials will not be considered within the scope of this scheme.

Applicants are encouraged to spend time during their fellowship undertaking placements or collaborations in one or more areas to broaden their interdisciplinary skillset. This must be an area of expertise outside of the researchers' field and may include non-traditional collaborations such as with policy makers, economics experts and government bodies.

Applicants are encouraged to explore opportunities for multi-disciplinary collaborations and the meaningful inclusion of Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) activities.

## The Funder

The Medical Research Foundation is an independent charitable foundation. Formed by the Medical Research Council (MRC) over 100 years ago, we grow and nurture people and ideas wherever we see research opportunities with great potential.

The research we fund is only possible thanks to the generosity of our donors.

## The Funding

Applicants may apply for a Fellowship over a maximum of a 2-year period (pro-rata for part-time positions). Costs to be requested should include the following:

- The applicant's personal salary for time committed to the Fellowship (see below for expected time commitments).
- A budget of an average of £30,000 per year for research costs (which may include research staff costs, but not applicant's personal salary) up to a maximum of £60,000 over 2 years.

There will be up to £2,500,000 available in this competition which will be split flexibly between the Antimicrobial Resistance Early-Career Fellowships and the Antimicrobial Resistance Mid-Career Fellowships.

## Placements

Short-term placements and structured training opportunities are encouraged as part of early-career development. While these activities are not a requirement of the funding competition, they can provide valuable exposure to new disciplines, methods, and professional environments, helping researchers broaden their skills and strengthen future research plans.

These opportunities should be designed to broaden the researcher's existing expertise in a new field and support their progression towards more interdisciplinary or collaborative work.

Examples of relevant short-term placements or training activities:

- Placement within a core research facility (such as imaging, genomics, or proteomics) to gain hands-on experience with new laboratory techniques or technologies.
- Time spent with a health-data, informatics, or analytics team to learn the basics of working with electronic health data or other large datasets.
- An insight placement with a policy, charity, or public engagement organisation to explore how research informs strategy, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement.
- Attendance at a specialist training course, such as advanced microscopy, statistical methods, qualitative analysis software, health-economics fundamentals, or other targeted skills relevant to the researcher's development.

For questions about placements, please contact the Research Team:
research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk.

## Who can apply

This competition is open to all UK-based researchers and clinical academics at eligible institutions (UK HEIs, UKRI research institutes, hospitals, and other independent research organisations). Applicants must hold a PhD, DPhil, MD or doctorate (or the appropriate postgraduate qualification for a researcher at the 'exploration' career stage in their field of research) in a relevant area and be conducting their research at an eligible institution. Partnerships outside academia are allowed, providing the collaboration will advance the research project in line with the aims of the funding competition. Clinical academics and applicants with clinical duties are encouraged to apply.

We encourage applicants at this stage of their career to seek a mentor to aid development of ideas. A mentor is an experienced PI / Senior faculty member, you should select a mentor whom you trust and feel comfortable discussing research ideas and career progression. Preferably they will not have a direct role in

your day-to-day work, but will be able to offer an external, expert perspective.

Applicants will need to:

- Provide evidence of previous research projects with demonstrable outputs.
- Show an understanding of the contribution of their research to their field.
- Propose a research project which enables the development of their research skills.

For a guide on the skills, preparation and experience recommended to be considered a competitive candidate for an early-career award of this kind, see the "**career stage: exploration**" section at "MRC skills and experience needed to win support".

This competition is for early-career researchers. It is expected that applicants will be seeking their first substantial grant income as a Principal Investigator through this award programme. This award is not intended to support those who have already secured substantial research funds and/or have already established their own research group (e.g. Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Readers, Professors, MRC and other funders' Senior Fellows).

**Applicants cannot hold a salaried position and a Fellowship at the same time.** If awarded a Fellowship, the award holder would need to give up their permanent position for the duration of the Fellowship or change to a proleptic appointment. Applicants with a permanent, funded position may also be eligible if they choose to use the Fellowship to join a new research organisation. In this case, the new research organisation will be required to provide a letter confirming their willingness to support the Fellow for the duration of their Fellowship. Any applicant wishing to apply who currently holds a salaried position should contact the Research Team.

As this is a Fellowship, **we expect that that the grant will cover 80-100% of the applicant's academic salary**, and the majority of their research time will be spent on the Fellowship (at least 80%). As an example, if a clinical academic has 0.5FTE of their time allocated to research, we would expect that at least 0.4 FTE be dedicated to the Fellowship. **Clinical applicants should contact the Medical Research Foundation Research Team** to discuss their time contributions and salary requirements. All applicants may contact the Medical Research Foundation Research Team to discuss their time arrangements where necessary.

Applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not have their proposal assessed**.**

Only one application will be accepted per applicant for this funding call, though individuals can hold more than one Medical Research Foundation grant at any one time.

As well as funding innovative research projects, the Foundation is committed to supporting its Fellow's career progression by providing an additional programme of support. This includes access to:

- The Medical Research Foundation's Leadership Development Programme
- The Academy of Medical Sciences Mentoring Scheme
- Further funding opportunities only open to MRC and Foundation funded researchers
- MRC Fellow opportunities

If you have any queries about your eligibility for the scheme, please contact the Medical Research Foundation Research Team via email at: research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Medical Research Foundation is committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all funding applicants and aims to create an inclusive environment that encourages excellence in research through good equalities practice. Diversity is important to the Medical Research Foundation, and we are working to ensure that the ways in which we fund research embraces a diversity of thought, people, geographical locations and ideas.

We strongly encourage applications from under-represented groups including female and ethnic minority researchers, and researchers with disabilities or long-term health conditions. We will support our researchers and their teams to work flexibly and in a way that meets their personal circumstances. Guidance

on the Medical Research Foundation's flexible working policies can be found in our Terms and Conditions. Please contact the Research Team if you have any questions about flexible working: research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk.

The Medical Research Foundation encourages lead applicants to consider the diversity of the research team, as well as area of expertise, when inviting Collaborators to support their application.

## Environmental Sustainability

At the Medical Research Foundation we know that we need to protect planetary health if we are to deliver our vision of a world with better health. We aim to reach net-zero in our activities as soon as possible and influence the activities of others whom we work with and fund.

As supporters of the concordat for Environmental Sustainability in Research and Innovation Practice we recognise the need to change how the research and innovation we fund is conducted and our part in promoting solutions. We are taking shared action now and into the future to reduce and eliminate our own environmental impacts and emissions, and achieve the transition to sustainable practices.

Applicants are encouraged to design their research using the most sustainable approaches available to them, describe these measures within their grant application and provide a rationale for the choices made. For example, if you are considering attending a conference, outline whether you plan to participate online to reduce travel or attend in person and explain why this option is the most appropriate and worthwhile for your research or professional development. Please see our tips and resources for improving the environmental impact of your research for further suggestions.

Applicants may include direct costs in their budget to support the adoption of sustainable practices, where relevant. All costs associated with environmentally sustainable options such as purchasing more sustainable materials or equipment, or choosing lower-carbon travel options should be fully justified within the application, even if these options incur a higher upfront cost.

We recognise that research based in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) might face infrastructure and resource constraints which make it more challenging to meet the same sustainability standards as those in high-income settings. However, if a placement or part of the research is to be undertaken in a LMIC, applicants should consider environmental sustainability in their research design, adapted appropriately to the local context and available resources.

## Responsibilities of the Lead Research Organisation and the Principal Investigator

### Lead Research Organisation

By submitting an application, a Lead Research Organisation (LRO) indicates their formal acceptance of the proposal, approval of the salaries and resources sought and, if the application is successful, acceptance of the Terms and Conditions of a Medical Research Foundation award.

Administrative authorities have responsibility for ensuring that salaries and resources cited in the proposal are sufficient to undertake the proposed research, attract sufficiently experienced and skilled staff and represent good value-for-money.

### Principal Investigator (PI)

The PI is responsible for the intellectual leadership of the research project and for the overall management of the research. They will be the Medical Research Foundation's main contact for the proposal. There can only be one PI on a Fellowship proposal.

The PI must be based at the LRO at which the award will be administered.

### Key dates

Deadline for submission: **12:00 Thursday 2 July 2026**

Shortlisting notification: **November 2026**

Interview: **December 2026**

Funding decision and feedback: **January 2027**

# Review and Selection

### Review and selection process

Following applicant eligibility checks, applications will undergo external peer review, then be shortlisted by an Expert Review Panel of independent scientific and Lived Experience Experts and/or Public Engagement and Involvement Professionals. The shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview with the Expert Review Panel.

Applications will be assessed on both the quality of the proposed research, value for money and its potential for impact. The reviewers will also consider the suitability of the applicant, based on evidence of their career stage as well as the originality and strength of their research ideas. They will assess the potential benefit of the award to the applicant as they prepare to move towards independence. The Expert Review Panel will also consider the potential of the proposed research to lead to future research and funding, impact on AMR research, improved understanding and scientific progress.

Given the emphasis on PPIE in this funding call, the Panel will be provided with independent review relating to the quality and meaningfulness of the PPIE activities included in the proposal, to be considered in their funding decisions

### Confidentiality

The proposal and any additional details submitted will be shared confidentially via a secure channel with the Expert Review Panel and attendees of the Review Panel meeting, which may include external observers. While assessing proposals, our experts may sometimes need to consult with colleagues, in confidence, about individual applications.

In order to fund as much high-quality research as possible, the Medical Research Foundation may partner with other funders to support research in this area. In the application form we ask for your consent for the Medical Research Foundation to share your application and information from the assessment process with appropriate potential co-funding partners, in confidence.

### Declarations of Interest

If a proposal presents a potential conflict of interest for any of the Expert Review Panel or the Medical Research Foundation Board of Trustees, the individual with a conflict will not be involved in the discussion of the application and in the decision-making process.

### Terms and Conditions of Award

Awards made through this competition will follow standard Medical Research Foundation Terms and Conditions. The Medical Research Foundation terms and conditions spell out the responsibilities of the Principal Investigator and the Lead Research Organisation. The Principal Investigator and the Lead Research Organisation are required to indicate their formal acceptance of the application, their acceptance of the terms and conditions of a Medical Research Foundation award, and the approval of the salaries and resources sought in the application. The Medical Research Foundation may add additional conditions to an award to reflect the particular circumstances and requirements of the funding, or the nature of a particular award. Acceptance of an award constitutes acceptance of both the core conditions and any additional conditions. The Medical Research Foundation reserves the right to vary these terms and conditions.

# Application Guidance Notes

The information provided in this section provides guidance on completing the application form on the Medical Research Foundation online grants management system: https://medicalresearchfoundation.flexigrant.com/

Guidance is provided within the system itself and this additional guidance will also be available on our website.

Please clearly label all uploaded files and ensure that all relevant documents are suitable and present.

As members of the AMRC, we support its position statement on the use of AI in grant funding applications and assessment. **Please read this statement prior to any use of generative AI tools for your application.**

If you have any questions about any aspects of the application process, please contact a member of the Medical Research Foundation's team.

Email: research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk

Tel: 020 4581 2403

## Completing the Narrative CV

Lead applicants are required to submit a CV using the Medical Research Foundation Résumé for Researchers CV template. A word version of the template is available on our website and within the online application form.

The Résumé for Researchers is an open-source template which has been developed by The Royal Society as a tool to more broadly evaluate researchers, particularly at the early career stages. The template has been adopted and adapted by the Medical Research Foundation as it supports the Foundation's approach of considering a wider view of contribution to the research landscape, at all career stages, not based solely on publication record.

Applicants are encouraged to provide examples of their impact outside publications lists, although these should still be provided. Examples such as collaborative working, effective leadership, coaching and mentoring as well as inspiring others are welcomed.

There are sections to include the information which would normally be found on a traditional CV, such as employment history and funding record, which are still used as part of the application assessment. Please include these as a list if appropriate.

### Career progression disruptions and Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant and variable impact on researchers' careers across the world. The Foundation is committed to helping mitigate this as much as possible through our grant-making policies and practices, and we are pleased to support the UK Academy of Medical Sciences Cross-funder COVID-19 memory statement as co-signatories. Please see our website for further details.

There is a dedicated space within the application form, to detail how your career progression has been impacted by COVID-19. Additionally, guidance will be given to our Expert Reviewers and Panel Members so that they are able to take these impacts on an applicant's career into account when they are making funding recommendations.

Applicants are also provided with space to detail any other career disruptions (e.g. parental leave, ill health) that may have impacted their progression. Please only share details that you are comfortable with being shared with the Panel and do not include identifying information about third parties.

### Contribution to knowledge generation

This section can be used to explain how you have contributed to the generation of new ideas and hypotheses and which key skills you have used to develop ideas and test hypotheses. It can be used to highlight how you have communicated your ideas and research results, both written and verbally. It can include a small selection of outputs, with a description of why they are of particular relevance and why they are considered in the context of knowledge generation. Outputs can include (but are not limited to) open data sets, software, commercial, entrepreneurial or industrial products, clinical practice developments, educational products, policy publications, evidence synthesis pieces and conference publications that you have generated. Where outputs have a digital object identifier (DOI) please only include this.

### Contribution to the development of individuals

This section can be used to highlight expertise you provided which was critical to the success of a team or team members, including project management, collaborative contributions, and team support. It can include your teaching activities, workshops or summer schools in which you were involved (for undergraduates and post-graduates as well as junior colleagues), and the supervision of students and colleagues. It can be used to mention mentoring of members in your field and support you provided to the advancement of colleagues, be it junior or senior. It can be used to highlight the establishment of collaborations, from institutional (maybe interdisciplinary) to international. It can be used to describe where you exerted strategic leadership, how you shaped the direction of a team, organisation, company or institution.

### Contribution to the wider research community

This section can include various activities you have engaged in to support the research community. It can be used to mention commitments including editing, reviewing, refereeing, committee work and your contributions to the evaluation of researchers and research projects. It can be used to mention the organisation of events that have benefited your research community. It can highlight contributions to increasing research integrity, and improving research culture (gender equality, diversity, mobility of researchers, reward and recognition of researchers' various activities). It can be used to mention appointments to positions of responsibility such as committee membership and senior management roles within your department, institution or organisation, and recognition by invitation within your sector.

### Contribution to broader society

This section can include examples of societal engagement and knowledge exchange. It can include engagement with industry and the private sector. It can be used to mention engagement with the public sector, clients and the broader public; to highlight positive stakeholder feedback, inclusion of patients in processes and clinical trials, and other impacts across research, policy, practice and business; to mention efforts to collaborate with particular societal or patient groups; or to highlight efforts to advise policy-makers at local, national or international level and provide information through the press and on social media.

## Application form question guidance

### Section 1: Principal Investigator details

There can only be one lead/principal investigator, as this is a Fellowship application. Any other individuals involved in the application can be listed as collaborators in section 2, unless they will be employed on the grant, in which case they should be named as staff members. Collaborators will need to provide a signed declaration on letter-headed paper confirming that they have consented to co-operate in the research project and explaining the role they will play.

### Section 2: Research Proposal

The scientific title and abstract should be written in a form understandable to an academic audience.

The lay title and summary abstract will be reviewed by Lived Experience Experts and/or Public Engagement

and Involvement Professionals, it should be written in a form understandable to members of the public (e.g. current or potential supporters) who are not specialists in the subject area. Please use plain English, explain any technical terms and avoid any jargon.

Please indicate the key scientific objectives and challenges of the research and any potential medical, clinical or societal implications.

These abstracts will be used for external communications about the award and should therefore not contain specific details of any sensitive information, such as patient details or personal information.

## Case for Support: proposed research project

Provide details of the proposed research project. References, diagrams, tables or charts, and justification of samples sizes (including sample size calculations, where appropriate, or a justification for why these have not been included) can be included within the text or as an appendix.

The Case for Support and appendices for applications should not exceed 9 A4 pages PDF format (size 12, Arial font, 2 cm margins, references can be size 8 Arial font or DOI list).

The detailed Case for Support should include the following information:

1. **Background** – provide relevant background information that is needed to understand the wider context of your application. Explain the need for research in this area and the rationale of the lines of research planned. Give sufficient details of other past and current research to show that the aims are scientifically justified and to show that the work will add distinct value to what is already known, or in progress. Justify the research either through its importance for human health, or its contribution to relevant areas of basic biomedical science.

2. **Hypothesis and objectives** – describe the main hypotheses to be investigated, details of the objectives and how they will be achieved.

3. **Study design** – describe the experimental approaches and methodology for the research project in detail (for example giving and explaining sample sizes, methods of recruitment and trial designs). It is not necessary to describe each experiment (if relevant), but sufficient detail is required to show why the research is likely to be competitive. Where human participants are involved, consideration should be given to how diversity factors such as sex, ethnicity and age are included and accounted for in the study design.

4. **Placements** – describe any placements you will undertake as part of the fellowship. Give sufficient details of the activities to justify the time, location and budget allocation of the placement with respect to your career and wider research development.

5. **Timelines and milestones** – give timelines for the research with major milestones and deliverables.

6. **Potential problems and contingency plans** – highlight any potential risks and identify procedures that can be put in place to deal with them.

7. **People** – outline how each of the investigators named in the proposal would work together and outline other major collaborations important for the research. Detail productivity from previous appointments/research funding and demonstrate how the award will promote the applicant's trajectory towards research independence. Where appropriate, explain how the grant will contribute to the applicant's career and also the development of others.

8. **Environment** – describe how the scientific or clinical environment(s) in which the research will be conducted will promote the delivery of the proposed research. Explain how the research will benefit from facilities provided by the Research Organisations. Describe any clinical, commercial, or organisational dependencies necessary to support the research, or to help translate it into practice.

9. **Ethics & Research Governance -** describe the ethical issues arising from any involvement of people, human samples or personal data in the research proposal. Give details of how any specific risks to human participants will be controlled, and of any new animal research the funding would be supporting. Describe the ethical review and research governance arrangements that would apply to the proposed research.

10. **Exploitation and Dissemination** – describe plans to disseminate the findings of the research. Is the proposed research likely to generate commercially exploitable results? Other than publication in peer reviewed journals, indicate how any results arising from the research will be disseminated to promote or facilitate take-up by users in the health services.

## Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) Activities

These plans will be reviewed by Lived Experience Experts and/or Public Engagement and Involvement Professionals, so please use plain English, explain any technical terms and avoid jargon.

Provide details of the proposed PPIE activities to support your research. The plans for PPIE should not exceed 1 A4 page in PDF format (size 12, Arial font, 2 cm margins, references can be size 8 Arial font or DOI list) and should be at an appropriate level for the proposed work. The Medical Research Foundation recognises that the format and scale of PPIE activities may be different depending on the type of work proposed.

These activities may include, but would not be limited to, inclusion of the views of people with lived experience, carers of people with lived experience, patient advocate groups, or other relevant stakeholder individuals (for example, clinicians) or organisations (for example, charities). If you would like further guidance, please contact the Medical Research Foundation Research Team.

Taking into account the Lived Experience Experts and/or Public Partners you propose to include, please consider the following (dependent on the format and scale of the proposed activities):

- Who is involved and why?
    - Who are your lived experience experts and why are they the right people for the topic and context?
    - What perspectives are you prioritising and how will you reach these groups?
- The recruitment and inclusion plan
    - How will you recruit and support diverse lived experience experts?
    - Who might be missed and how will you reduce potential barriers?
    - What accessibility adjustments will be offered?
- The roles, way of working, and influence of lived experience experts in the research
    - What will the lived experience experts do as part of the project?
    - How often will they be involved?
    - How will meetings be facilitated to support safe and confident involvement?
    - How will input be recorded, responded to and used to support decisions?
- The safeguarding, ethics, and emotional support plan (essential)
    - What are your distress protocols before, during and after involvement?
    - What boundaries and support is in place?
    - How are staff trained to work in a trauma-aware and safe way?
    - How will you minimise re-traumatisation, tokenism or pressure to disclose?
- Plans for training, induction, and reciprocity for the lived experience experts and wider team
    - What training will lived experience experts receive?
    - How will you support ongoing participation
    - How will you ensure reciprocity?
- Resourcing and budget

    - Please detail your payment/ recognition costs as well as accessibility costs and budgets for partner organisations.
- How the involvement will be evaluated
    - How will involvement be evaluated?
    - How will learning be used to adapt delivery during the project?
- How the contributors and wider communities will be informed of research outputs
    - How will contributors hear outcomes/ impacts and what changed because of their input?
    - How will wider communities be informed of the research outputs?

PPIE activities may be relevant at various or multiple stages of the research proposal, depending on the nature of the research, for example in protocol development, interpretation of results, or consultation on future directions or dissemination activities beyond the Fellowship.

To aid in the planning and budgeting of these activities, a large repository of guidelines and tools are available on the AMRC website These include the UK standards for public involvement, an involvement cost calculator and a practical guide to patient and public involvement in lab-based research.

In order to assist in the review of your PPIE plans, please also determine the category of research with which your research activities most closely align:

- Basic research
- Preclinical research
- Clinical research
- Translation to clinical practice
- Translation to population health
- Other (Please specify)

## Sex and/or gender in research design

The Medical Research Foundation is committed to supporting high-quality, equitable research that reflects the diversity of the populations it aims to benefit. In line with the MESSAGE policy framework and the Medical Research Council (MRC) guidance on diversity in research design, applicants are expected to integrate sex and/or gender considerations into their research proposal wherever scientifically relevant. These requirements relate to the subjects of research (human participants, animals, human or animal tissues, cells, organoids, datasets, etc.).

Sex refers to the biological attributes which differentiate females and males, and which can include variations of what are considered female-typical and male-typical characteristics (sometimes known as “variations in sex characteristics” or “intersex”).

Gender refers to an aspect of a person’s identity. A person is subjected to a range of social forces (both constraints and privileges) based on their gender, which may influence their behaviours, their perception of themselves and how they are treated by others. All of these influences might be relevant for biomedical, health and care research.

Applicants must clearly describe how sex and/or gender have been considered in their research design. Expectations differ slightly for preclinical and human research.

*Studies Involving Animals, Cells, Tissues, or Other Preclinical Models (Sex Only)*
Applicants should include the following information:

1. Specify which sex(es) of animals, tissues, cell lines, or organoids will be included. The Foundation expects the use of both sexes as the default unless there is a clear, evidence-based justification for using a single sex.
2. Provide the expected distribution of sexes and explain why this distribution is appropriate for answering the research question. There is no requirement to ‘balance’ or use equal numbers of different sexes.

The NC3Rs has developed a **free online tool to guide researchers** through the design of their

experiments, helping to ensure that they use the minimum number of animals consistent with their scientific objectives, methods to reduce subjective bias, and appropriate statistical analysis.

*Studies Involving Human Participants or Human-Derived Data (Sex, Gender, and Other Diversity Characteristics)*

Applicants should include the following information:

1. Specify which sex and/or gender characteristics are relevant to the research question
2. Details of any planned sex- and/or gender-disaggregated analyses; or, if none are planned, a justification for why.
3. Outline the diversity characteristics of the population or subpopulations who could benefit from the research (e.g., age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status) and explain how considering these factors might contribute to improved health equity.
4. Describe how diversity and inclusion have been addressed throughout the research design (e.g., recruitment strategies, data collection, analysis) and explain why this approach is appropriate for the research question.

Researchers are expected to record and report relevant information about the diversity characteristics of research participants, so this is available even if these characteristics are not used in the analyses.

*Justifying When Sex and/or Gender Are Not Applicable*

If sex and/or gender are **not** relevant to the research design, applicants should include the following information:

- A clear, scientific justification, and
- Evidence demonstrating that exclusion does not compromise the robustness, reproducibility, or applicability of the findings.

Please refer to the MRC guidance on sex and gender in experimental designs.

## Cell lines

Where cell lines are used or generated throughout the course of the study, their identity must be validated and cell culture best practice followed, in order to prevent misidentification and/or contamination of cell cultures by unwanted cell types.

Costs can be included for the purchase of authenticated cell lines or the authentication of generated cell lines, as well as routine best practice protocols such as mycoplasma testing. Please see guidance on the use of cell lines in biomedical research.

## Data Management Plan

The Medical Research Foundation is committed to ensuring that the knowledge and discoveries which result from our funded research are available freely and immediately to everyone. A Data Management Plan (DMP) is required to detail how you will collect, store, curate, and manage data, including how it will be shared and any open access requirements.

Where substantial data is generated from the research, the DMP will be more in depth and therefore likely to be up to 1000 words long, for studies generating smaller amounts of data, DMPs will be short i.e. 200-500 word in total.

The MRC Policy and Guidance on Sharing of Research Data from Population and Patient Studies is a useful reference for data relating to studies involving human participation.

## Collaborators

Please provide details of any additional collaborators on the project. Collaborators will need to provide a signed declaration on letter-headed paper confirming that they have consented to co-operate in the research project and explaining the role they will play. Please note, if there are multiple collaborators from the same institution, they will all still need to provide individual letters.

A letter of support must be provided from any placement organisations.

### Recommended and Excluded Reviewers

Please suggest up to three experts to review the application. These individuals should not be: i) closely associated with the proposed project or any related work; ii) collaborators/co-applicants on any active or recent grants; iii) have published with the lead applicant/s in the past five years; or, iv) previous mentors/supervisors of the lead applicant/s. We cannot guarantee that we will approach these experts for an assessment of the applications.

Please provide the names of up to three reviewers that you do not wish to review the application due to potential conflicts of interest.

## Section 3: Use of Animals in Research

The Medical Research Foundation expects that before work commences on any research, the Principal Investigators will have ensured in collaboration with the Lead Research Organisations that all appropriate regulatory approvals are in place. These could include those relating to human participation, radiation, genetic manipulation, animals, stem cells, personal safety and health and safety.

The Medical Research Foundation expects that research involving animals will comply with UK regulations, regardless of which country the research is carried out in, and the research is planned and conducted according to the 3Rs. Applicants should plan their experiments according to the PREPARE guidelines, and are encouraged to use the NC3R's Experimental Design Assistant. If successfully funded, Investigators are required to publish their work according to the ARRIVE guidelines.

If the project involves the use of animals in the UK, please provide confirmation of home office licences for all members of staff, as well as the relevant project licence are in place. UK Home Office licences will only be required when research involving animals is being conducted within the UK. If your research involves animal use outside of the UK, complete the relevant questions regarding national and local ethical approval for animal research and describe how your research complies with UK animal procedure regulations.

## Section 4: Human participation and ethical approval

If the project involves the use of human participants and/or organs, tissues or cells relevant to The Human Tissue Act 2004 (England, Wales and N. Ireland) and The Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 in the UK, please detail the relevant ethical approvals.

If ethical approval is required for the research proposal, please provide details of the relevant approvals.

If your research involves the use of human participants and/or organs, tissues or cells outside the UK, please provide details in the relevant questions. Describe how your research complies with relevant UK regulations. Applications involving human participants in counties outside of the UK may be subject to additional ethical implications.

Please see the MRC guidance related to Using Human samples in research and Human Participants in Research for further direction on research involving human participants in countries outside of the UK.

## Section 5: Intellectual property

Please detail any intellectual property that this project will generate, either during or beyond the lifetime of the award. Please include details of any existing background intellectual property that will need to be used and/or modified and plans for ownership of this intellectual property.

## Section 6: Environmental sustainability

We ask you to confirm whether reducing the environmental impact of your research has been considered in your application and if so to describe how it has been considered. You may include measures that you will take in practicing your research to reduce environmental impact. Please see our tips and resources about environmental sustainability in research.

We understand that sustainability practices vary between organisations. Please indicate that you have designed your research using the most sustainable approach available at your organisation that you can access and describe the support, resources and/or initiatives at your organisation to support you with environmental sustainability in your research. When planning, please use the expanded guidance in the appendices at the end of this document.

## Section 7: Funding requested

The Medical Research Foundation will meet the full direct costs of research. Direct costs are those that will arise from the conduct of the research project and can be charged as the cash value spent and can be supported by an auditable record. Like all medical research charities, the Medical Research Foundation does not meet the indirect costs of research.

Applications should be costed at today's prices and inflation should not be included.

Applications can include requests for the costs of:

**Personal salary**

- Lead applicant salary including annual pay-scale increments but excluding predicted annual pay awards and overheads

**Research Costs**

- Research staff (who will directly support the research proposal) including annual pay-scale increments but excluding annual pay awards and employment overheads i.e. the UK apprenticeship levy
- Research consumables and minor equipment costs
- Access charges for specialist equipment or services
- Travel costs of the PI or members of staff travelling between multi-centre research sites or for scheduled collaborator meetings relating to the project.
- Conference travel and subsistence
- Costs related to Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE)
- Costs associated with reducing the carbon footprint of travel, as per our terms and conditions.
- Animals and animal husbandry
- Partnership and network building activities
- Training or capacity building activities
- Other direct costs of research
- Open access publishing costs (up to £4,000 for grant duration of two years)
- Research equipment
- Travel costs of the PI travelling for placements detailed in the project.
- Direct costs for sustainability measures. This includes:
    - Environmentally sustainable consumables and materials, including those with a higher upfront cost where they offer demonstrable environmental benefits.
    - Refurbished, second-hand, or shared equipment, or costs associated with the maintenance and repair of existing equipment to extend its usable life for the purpose of the project.
    - Training and capacity-building activities that support the adoption of sustainable research practices within the team for the purpose of the research project.
    - Travel costs that reduce the carbon footprint of the research, including the use of lower-emission

transport options (e.g. rail travel in place of flights), even where these incur higher costs.

- Costs related to sustainable data management and dissemination, including open access publishing and infrastructure that supports low-impact data storage and sharing.

Medical Research Foundation research grants will not fund:

- Any directly allocated costs i.e. estate costs and costs of shared resources such as staff and equipment.
- Any indirect costs necessary for underpinning research but which cannot be allocated to individual projects (including but not limited to bench fees, computing and information support, general maintenance and other infrastructure costs, HR and recruitment costs etc.). Note: for placements in LMICs, indirect costs for organisations in LMICs are permitted to be up to 15% of research budget .
- Patient care, NHS treatment or NHS support costs associated with clinical research, which are met through other sources of funding.
- Cost of public engagement in science work
- Studentship costs
- Collaborators' salaries
- General sustainability training for research staff (not project-specific).
- Systems and staff time for tracking and reporting carbon emissions from research activities

Justify the budget requested and provide details of any costs to be met through other funding sources.

**In 'Salary and related costs', the applicant should create a separate line for their personal salary, then add an additional line to include the salaries of any staff to be employed.** For all other categories, the breakdown of costs should be included in the text, but one combined value per category per project year should be entered into the budget table.

**Direct environmental sustainability costs** are specific, project-related expenses that directly support the reduction of your research's environmental impact. Examples include:

- Purchasing sustainable or recycled consumables and materials.
- Upgrading to energy-efficient equipment which will be necessary for your project.
- Costs for sustainable travel (e.g. train instead of air travel).
- Costs for recycling or waste reduction initiatives directly linked to your project.

Applicants should clearly explain how each cost contributes to environmental sustainability and why it is necessary for the proposed research.

Applicants are encouraged to minimise the environmental impact of equipment purchases by:

- Using existing equipment or shared facilities where possible.
- Leasing equipment for short-term needs.
- Collaborating with other research groups to share resources.

If new equipment is essential, applicants should justify why alternatives were not feasible and describe any steps taken to ensure the purchase is as sustainable as possible (e.g. choosing energy-efficient models, considering lifecycle impacts).

## Sections 8-10: Authorisation and Declarations

Authorisations and/or declarations are needed from the following application participants:

- Principal Investigator
- Research Administrator

- Head of Department

Participants should be invited to complete their sections of the application by following the instructions under the participants tab on the Application Summary page. Please check which email address they would like to use, as they may already be registered on Flexi-Grant and mistakes may lead to a delay in processing the application.

Applicants can keep track of the progress of submission completion status on the Application Summary page. Applicants can issue a reminder email to the invited participants through the participants tab on the Application Summary page. If the instruction email from the Medical Research Foundation has not been received please: a) double check the accuracy of the email address supplied on the application form; b) advise the intended recipient to check their spam filters/junk folders; c) contact the Medical Research Foundation with an alternative email address for the recipient. The Medical Research Foundation is happy to help where possible but cannot be held responsible for automated emails that are not received due to address errors or spam filters.

All declarations must be signed by the appropriate persons prior to the submission of the application. It is the applicants' responsibility to ensure that approval of the application by the Lead Research Organisations is completed before the closing date.

### Applicants

Lead applicants are required to report any conflicts of interest. Each lead applicant is required to declare that they will abide by the Medical Research Foundation's Terms and Conditions and will be actively engaged in the proposed research.

### Head of Departments

The Head of Department must provide a statement of support and authorise the application confirming that the potential award can be hosted within their organisation and that there is the capacity to deliver the proposed research. The relevant Head of Department should state how the applicant will be supported to focus on their proposed research, for example by being released from competing duties such as teaching or administrative commitments. Additionally, they should provide details of the resources that the department will commit to the applicant should the application be successful.

Before inviting the Head of Department to participate in completion of the application form, applicants are advised to ensure that their Head of Department is willing and available to provide a confirmation of support prior to the deadline. Incomplete confirmations will mean that an application cannot be submitted and will be deemed to be ineligible.

It is the responsibility of the lead applicants to inform the Head of Department of the deadline and liaise with them to ensure that they have received their invitation with instructions to participate in completion of the application.

### Research Administrators

Research Administrators at the Lead Research Organisation should be invited to approve the application ("Administrative Authority"). They must be someone with delegated authority at the Lead Research Organisation where the award will be held. This may be someone within the research office, Faculty administration, or other administrative or management role. The approver must be someone with the authority to confirm that the potential award can be hosted within their organisation and assure the proposed budget is appropriate and eligible for the scheme.

This section should be completed by individuals at the Lead Research Organisation responsible for the administration of funds. They will be contacted regarding financial arrangements and other contractual agreements, if your application is successful.

# Appendices

## Scoring Matrix for Expert Review Panel

| Score Indicators | Fundable |
|---|---|
| **10. Exceptional – Top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance** | |
| ■ Quality<br>– Highly original and innovative<br>– Novel methodology and design<br>– Excellent potential for research leadership (excellent contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals)<br>– Excellent research environment, collaborators amongst the best in a broad field<br>– Excellent engagement and involvement plan with people with relevant lived/living experience<br>■ Impact<br>– Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap<br>– Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact<br>– Internationally unique resource of value to many disciplines<br>– Exceptionally meaningful and wide-reaching impact on people and communities affected by antimicrobial resistance<br>■ Productivity<br>– Potential for high return on investment<br>– Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well managed)<br>– Clearly resourced and feasible plan for involvement of people with lived/living experience<br>■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are fully considered<br>– Excellent consideration of safety, wellbeing, inclusion and accessibility of lived experience experts and participants | **Fundable** |
| **9. Excellent – Internationally competitive and leading edge in most areas** | |
| ■ Quality<br>– Original and innovative<br>– Novel methodology and design<br>– Excellent potential for research leadership (excellent contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals)<br>– Excellent research environment, collaborators amongst the best in a specialist field<br>– Excellent engagement and involvement plan with people with relevant lived/living experience<br>■ Impact<br>– Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap<br>– Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact<br>– Internationally significant resource of value to many disciplines<br>– Meaningful and wide-reaching impact on people and communities affected by antimicrobial resistance<br>■ Productivity<br>– Potential for high return on investment<br>– Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well managed)<br>– Clearly resourced and feasible plan for involvement of people with lived/living experience<br>■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are fully considered<br>– Excellent consideration of safety, wellbeing, inclusion and accessibility | **Fundable** |

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| of lived experience experts and participants | |
| **8. Very High Quality – Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally** | |
| ■ Quality<br>– Original and innovative<br>– Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts)<br>– Excellent potential for research leadership (excellent contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals)<br>– Excellent research environment and collaborators<br>– Very high quality engagement and involvement plan with people with relevant lived/living experience<br>■ Impact<br>– Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK<br>– Potential for high health and /or socioeconomic impact<br>– Resource of value to many disciplines<br>– Meaningful and significant impact on people and communities affected by antimicrobial resistance<br>■ Productivity<br>– Potential for significant return on investment<br>– Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well-managed)<br>– Clearly resourced and feasible plan for involvement of people with lived/living experience<br>■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are fully considered<br>– Very good consideration of safety, wellbeing, inclusion and accessibility of lived experience experts and participants | **Fundable** |
| **7. High Quality – Leading edge nationally and internationally competitive in parts** | |
| ■ Quality<br>– Innovative<br>– Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts)<br>– Very good potential for research leadership (very good contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals)<br>– Very good research environment and collaborators<br>– High quality engagement and involvement plan with people with relevant lived/living experience<br>■ Impact<br>– Key scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK<br>– Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact<br>– Valuable scientific resource<br>– Meaningful impact on people and communities affected by antimicrobial resistance<br>■ Productivity<br>– Potential for significant return on investment<br>– High likelihood of successful delivery | **Fundable** |

| | |
|---|---|
| – Mostly well resourced and feasible plan for involvement of people with lived/living experience<br>■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are well considered<br>– Very good consideration of safety, wellbeing, inclusion and accessibility of lived experience experts and participants | |
| **6. High Quality – Leading edge nationally, but not yet internationally competitive** | |
| ■ Quality<br>– Methodologically robust study<br>– Good potential for research leadership (good contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals)<br>– Good research environment and collaborators<br>– Good engagement and involvement plan with people with relevant lived/living experience<br>■ Impact<br>– Worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap<br>– Justifiable scientific resource<br>– Potential for reasonable health and/or socioeconomic impact<br>– Moderate impact on people and communities affected by antimicrobial resistance<br>■ Productivity<br>– Resources appropriate to deliver the proposal<br>– High likelihood of successful delivery<br>– Adequately resourced and feasible plan for involvement of people with lived/living experience<br>■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are well considered<br>– Good consideration of safety, wellbeing, inclusion and accessibility of lived experience experts and participants | **Fundable** |
| **5. Good Quality – Nationally competitive** | |
| ■ Quality<br>– Methodologically sound study but areas require significant revision<br>– Research leadership potential not optimal (contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals)<br>– Reasonable research environment, scope to strengthen team and/or collaborators<br>– Poorly defined question<br>– Largely good engagement and involvement plan with people with relevant lived/living experience<br>■ Impact<br>– Worthwhile scientific question with potentially useful outcomes<br>– Moderate likelihood of contributing to new knowledge generation<br>– Some potential for impact on people and communities affected by antimicrobial resistance<br>■ Productivity<br>– Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal<br>– Good likelihood of successful delivery<br>– Some evidence of a resourced and feasible plan for involvement of people with lived/living experience<br>■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are adequately considered<br>– Good consideration of safety, wellbeing, inclusion and accessibility of | **Not fundable** |

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|---|---|
| lived experience experts and participants | |
| **4. Potentially Useful – With significant weaknesses** | |
| ■ Quality<br>– Methodologically weak study (approach or study design requires significant revision)<br>– Research leadership potential not optimal (some contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals)<br>– Research environment not optimal<br>– Some indication of an engagement and involvement plan with people with relevant lived/living experience, but with significant limitations<br>■ Impact<br>– Contains potentially useful ideas but requires major revision<br>– Moderate likelihood of successful delivery<br>– Limited potential for impact on people and communities affected by antimicrobial resistance<br>■ Productivity<br>– Resources inappropriate to deliver the proposal<br>– Unlikely to significantly contribute to new knowledge generation<br>– Some evidence of a resourced and feasible plan for involvement of people with lived/living experience, but with limitations<br>■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues not adequately considered<br>– Some consideration of safety, wellbeing, inclusion and accessibility of lived experience experts and participants, but with significant omissions | **Not fundable** |
| **3. Potentially Useful – With major weaknesses** | |
| ■ Quality<br>– Question poorly defined<br>– Methodologically weak study<br>– Poor leadership potential/environment<br>– Poor evidence of an engagement and involvement plan with people with relevant lived/living experience.<br>■ Productivity<br>– Unlikely to contribute to new knowledge generation<br>– Limited evidence of a resourced and feasible plan for involvement of people with lived/living experience<br>■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues not adequately considered<br>– Limited consideration of safety, wellbeing, inclusion and accessibility of lived experience experts and participants, with major omissions | **Not fundable** |
| **2. Poor quality science, bordering on unacceptable** | **Not fundable** |
| **1. Unacceptable quality or has serious ethical concerns** | **Not fundable** |
| **0. Ineligible for funding** | **Not fundable** |

## Climate-Conscious Travel Guidelines for Researchers

As part of the Foundation's commitment to reducing the carbon footprint of funded research, researchers are expected to consider the environmental impact of travel when preparing their budgets. The following guidelines are designed to help Principal Investigators and their teams cost their applications responsibly and in line with the Foundation's grant Terms and Conditions.

General Principles

- Remote collaboration should be the default for meetings, workshops, and stakeholder engagement, unless in-person attendance is essential for project delivery or impact.
- Researchers must ensure that travel decisions are justifiable, proportional, and documented, representing a reasonable use of charitable funds and following environmental sustainability principles.

Travel Planning and Costing

When travel is necessary, researchers should:

- Prioritise low-carbon travel options, such as train travel over flights, especially for domestic and short-haul journeys, and public transport over private vehicles.
- Consider group travel to reduce the number of individual trips.
- Include carbon offsetting costs in the budget, where applicable.

Example:
If a researcher chooses to travel from London to Edinburgh for to attend a conference, they should opt for a train rather than a flight, even if the train is more expensive.

Carbon Offsetting Requirements

Investigators must follow their Lead Research Organisation's (LRO) carbon offsetting policy, where one exists.

If the LRO does not have a policy, researchers must:

- Calculate the carbon footprint of their travel (e.g. using the ICAO Carbon Emissions Calculator).
- Select a recognised carbon offset provider.

Example:

A flight to attend an international conference may be unavoidable. In this case, the researcher should calculate the emissions and include offsetting costs in the budget or plan to vire funds from another heading.

Budgeting and Approval of Carbon Offsetting costs:

Carbon offsetting costs may be included in the budget at the point of application or covered by virement between grant headings.

Example:
If, during the course of an awarded grant, offsetting costs exceed the original budget due to a change in travel plans, the Principal Investigator (PI) should meet the additional charges by using underspend available in other budget headings on the award. The PI should then inform the Research Team of the amount to be vired between budget headings to cover these additional offsetting costs.

## Environmentally Sustainable Consumables

Applicants may request funding for research consumables and materials that are environmentally sustainable, including those with a higher upfront cost, where there is a clear and demonstrable environmental benefit. This may include items that:

- Reduce plastic or hazardous waste
- Are biodegradable or recyclable
- Have lower carbon footprints in their production or transport
- Support circular economy principles (e.g. reusable labware)

Researchers should justify the environmental advantages of the proposed consumables in their application and how they align with the project's sustainability goals. The Foundation recognises that investing in greener alternatives may incur additional costs and encourages applicants to consider long-term value and impact. We also acknowledge that the use of sustainable consumables may not always be feasible where institutional procurement processes require ordering standard items in bulk or mandate preferred suppliers.

Example:
A researcher requests reusable glass vials instead of single-use plastic tubes at a higher cost as this change is expected to reduce plastic waste over the course of the project. Additionally, they outline how they will work with suppliers which offer bulk packaging to reduce transport emissions and packaging waste.