

■ Changing Policy and Practice Award

Guidelines for Applicants:
Expression of Interest

Summary

This document guides you through the preparation and submission of an Expression of Interest application for the Changing Policy and Practice Award.

Submissions will take place via a two-stage process. Expression of Interest (Eoi) applications will be accepted from eligible researchers who will be asked to provide a short overview of planned dissemination activities. Expression of Interest applications must be submitted and the application received in its entirety by this deadline. All applications must be submitted via our online grants management system (<https://medicalresearchfoundation.flexigrant.com>). Paper application forms will not be accepted.

Full applications will be by invitation only: applicants who have not submitted an Eoi application will not be able to submit a full application.

You will receive notification of your invitation to submit a full application within two working weeks of the Eoi submission, following eligibility checks. Eoi's will be assessed on a rolling basis.

Deadline for Expression of Interest form:

12:00 Wednesday 24 July 2024

Deadline for full submission:

12:00 Wednesday 25 September 2024

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 process accessible to all and will provide assistance where needed. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with our Research Team if you have any questions or concerns about the application process.

Email: research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk Tel: +4420 4581 2419 or +4420 4581 2420.

Overview

The Medical Research Foundation is inviting applications from MRC and Foundation-funded researchers for the Changing Policy and Practice Award. This scheme is designed to support the dissemination of research findings beyond the scientific peer reviewed press, with the aim of maximising the impact of medical research by taking the results directly to the patients, healthcare practitioners and policy makers intended to benefit.

The scheme is designed to support researchers in disseminating a specific research finding to a specific audience to inform and influence healthcare policy or practice, or to change patient and public behaviour and opinion.

All areas of medical research will be considered in this funding competition and applications can focus on any target group outside of the scientific press.

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.

Support for this funding competition comes from the Fleming Memorial Fund for Medical Research, which was established in 1959 in memory of Sir Alexander Fleming.

The Funding

Applicants may apply for up to £30,000 over a flexible time period, typically one year.

Who can apply

This competition will run twice a year and is open to MRC and Foundation-funded grant and fellowship holders based at eligible institutions, as well as MRC-funded and MRC core-funded researchers in MRC research institutes, units and centres. To be eligible, the MRC or Foundation funding supporting the research should be within one-year prior to the grant finishing or within two years after the grant has finished. This time restriction may be reconsidered in exceptional circumstances i.e. for large scale clinical trials which take longer to publish their findings. Applicants must hold a PhD, DPhil or MD.

The specific research finding forming the basis of the dissemination work must have been published in a peer reviewed journal prior to applying to the scheme and must have been funded by their MRC or Medical Research Foundation grant. The MRC or Medical Research Foundation funding supporting the research should be acknowledged in the publication.

To be eligible for funding the applicant should be listed as either the PI or as a Co-investigator on the original grant.

To assess eligibility, applicants are required to complete a short expression of interest application form. Applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be invited to submit a full application.

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

Applicants who had their eligibility confirmed in a previous round but did not apply should contact the Medical Research Foundation Research Team.

Please note that applicants who previously applied but were not successful may not re-apply unless invited by the Expert Review Panel. Resubmissions should be a substantially revised proposal and applicants should submit a list of changes made.

Responsibilities of the Lead Research Organisation and the Principal Investigator

Principal Investigator (PI)

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

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

Lead Research Organisation

Head of Department and Administrative Authority declarations are not required for the Expression of Interest application but will be required for the full application.

By submitting a full application, a Lead Research Organisation (RO) 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.

Head of Department and Administrative Authority declarations will need to be signed at the full application stage.

Application process

Expression of Interest forms will be checked for eligibility by the Medical Research Foundation Research team.

Full applications will be assessed by a panel of independent experts against three core criteria; the significance of the research finding, the merit of the dissemination plan and the implementation of the findings. Applicants are encouraged to consult or include a science communications professional (i.e. from their university) on the application, although this is not a requirement.

Significance of Research Finding

- Prevalence of condition (if disease-related)
- Potential impact of findings for public health or on healthcare policy/practice.
- Contribution of results to current practice or knowledge
- Consideration of other relevant research
- Publication of findings in peer-reviewed journal(s)

Dissemination

- Need for wider dissemination beyond the scientific community
- Appropriateness of the target audience and method of delivery
- The value-for-money of the individual elements of the dissemination activities
- Effectiveness of the proposed activities and likelihood of reaching the target audience

Implementation

- Impact of the dissemination plan on the target audience
- Potential of the dissemination activities to change behaviour, policy and practice
- Plans to evaluate change in behaviour, practice and policy

What makes a successful application?

- A clear understanding of the significance of the research findings and the need for dissemination beyond the normal scientific press to the target audience
- A strong consideration of how disseminating the finding will influence behaviour, healthcare policy or practice
- Appropriateness and suitability of the target audience
- Justified and appropriate methods for disseminating the research findings that are effective and likely to reach the target audience.
- Clearly defined objectives that help to guide project activity and facilitate effective evaluation.

- Detail of the longevity of developed dissemination resources (if applicable).
- Considered or defined expected outcomes, influence or impact from disseminating the key finding to the target audience.
- Detail of the planned methods of assessing, recording and evaluating the impact of the results on the target audience.

What is not within remit for this scheme?

- Applications requesting funding to continue existing research or conduct new research.
- Dissemination plans that are too broad and incorporate multiple messages or are not targeted to a specific audience.
- Applications focussing on disseminating research findings to other researchers (for example requests for academic conference travel).
- Applications that request funding for Public Engagement with Science activities without a target outcome.
- Applications that are principally educational in nature.
- Applications focussing on increasing participation in research.

Examples

Below are examples of previously successful applications.

Example 1: Fluid management of severely ill children in Africa

The dissemination work supported meetings with key international policymakers, development of training resources, production and distribution of a film and development of information packs. Policy changes were made as a result with amendments to Médecins Sans Frontières and WHO guidelines.

Example 2: The molecular causes of five novel disorders affecting developmental processes within North American Amish communities

The team worked with the local community and developed a strategy to share clinically relevant findings with affected families, education providers, clinicians and other healthcare professionals. This involved generating culturally appropriate disorder specific literature, holding family information days and educational meetings for local healthcare providers and special educational needs (SEN) teachers, and online educational tools for specific audiences. The dissemination activities have been linked to a rise in diagnosis rate of these disorders from 5% to 70-80%, with a large effect on the developmental, clinical and social outcomes of the affected individuals.

How to Apply

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

Queries

Any queries on the competition, the application process, or eligibility should be addressed to Susanna Roberts at research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk

To assess eligibility, applicants should submit a short Expression of Interest form including details of their MRC or Medical Research Foundation grant, the published research they plan to disseminate and the planned dissemination activities.

Applicants will be notified if they have been invited to apply within two working weeks. The deadline for submitting the Expression of Interest form is **12:00 Wednesday 24 July 2024**.

Eligible applicants will be sent a link to the full application form.

Please refer to the sections below to complete your application form. If you have any questions about any of the application process, please contact a member of the Medical Research Foundation Research Team research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk or 020 4581 2420.

Application form question guidance

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion data

The Medical Research Foundation collects equality and diversity data from current grant holders, funding call applicants and Expert Panel members. It is really important for us to collect this data so that we can benchmark, and therefore work to improve diversity and inclusion within our grant application processes.

To do this, we wish to collect information on key characteristics which can be related to equality and diversity via our online Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) form. The information will form a confidential record database for statistical analysis and will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. The data will be used by authorised personnel only.

The results from your EDI data submission will not be stored with any documents relating to grant or fellowship applications nor will they be seen by those involved in the assessment process.

EDI information is collected via a short form which is associated with your profile. All questions have a “prefer not to say” option.

Section 1: Principal Investigator details

There can only be one lead applicant. Any researchers who wish to be considered as applicants in addition to the lead applicant should be listed as co-applicants in Section 2.

Any other individuals involved in the application can be listed as collaborators unless they will be employed on the grant, in which case they should be named as staff members.

Additional Co-Investigators and Collaborators can be added at the full application stage, in addition to those included in the Expression of Interest application, by invite from the Principal Investigator.

Section 2: Medical Research Foundation/MRC funding

Published research findings

Applications should be based on research findings from a Medical Research Foundation or MRC grant. This includes awards funded solely by the Foundation or the MRC, as well as co-funded awards.

Please provide details of the grant that supported the research to be disseminated in this proposal.

The research finding to be disseminated must have been published in a peer reviewed journal prior to submission of an application. Please detail the journal reference of the published article include a DOI where possible. Publications must be full, peer-reviewed articles. Pre-prints are not eligible.

Lay description of published research

The lay description should be written in a form understandable by members of the public (e.g. current or potential supporters) who are not specialists in the research field.

Please provide a summary of the research findings to be disseminated, highlighting key findings to be disseminated and indicating the research significance.

We may use this section for external communications associated with the Changing Policy and Practice Award and we aim to publish the lay summary of successful applicants on our website. The text style should be suitable to a lay audience and not contain specific details of any sensitive information.

The MRC or Medical Research Foundation funding supporting the research should be acknowledged in the publication.

Section 3: Dissemination Activities

Please provide a short, 250-word summary of the planned dissemination activities. The summary should include the proposed types of dissemination activities, planned outputs and who might be involved.

A detailed budget is not required in the Expression of Interest application form but will be required for the full application stage.

When preparing the summary of the dissemination activities, applicants may wish to consider the requirements for the full application detailed dissemination plan:

The detailed Dissemination Plan should not exceed 3 A4 pages (size 12 Arial font). References, diagrams, tables or charts can be included within the text or as an appendix.

The detailed Dissemination Plan should include the following information:

1. **Key message** – The key message or implication from the research finding that is to be disseminated.
2. **Target audience** – The specific target group that can act upon the research finding.
3. **Background** – Provide relevant background information that is needed to understand the wider context of your application. Detail the original aims of the MRC/Foundation-funded research and the subsequent published research result. Explain the need for dissemination of the research finding and the rationale of the dissemination activities planned. Place the published research finding in the context of existing evidence. Detail any previous dissemination activities and the impact of prior dissemination if applicable. Justify the significance of the research finding to be disseminated, in terms of its potential to improve health in the target group, effect a behaviour change or impact on healthcare practice and/or policy.
4. **Aims and Objectives** – Outline the changes in practice, policy or behaviour that the dissemination plan is aiming to achieve.

5. **Dissemination Programme** – Indicate the proposed methods of dissemination. Include information about who will deliver the programme, how the activities will be undertaken, where the activities will take place and the timeframe in which the programme will be completed. Indicate the numbers of the target audience that the dissemination activity is expected to reach. If applicable, outline any expert advice sought in preparation of, or involved in, the dissemination programme.
6. **Evaluation** – Identify how the impact of the dissemination programme will be assessed. Provide details of how the behavior/practice/policy change will be measured and evaluated.
7. **Justification for support** – Justify the resources requested.

The Medical Research Foundation expects that before work commences, the Principal Investigator will have ensured, in collaboration with the lead research organisation, that all appropriate regulatory approvals are in place. These could include those relating to human participation, personal safety and health and safety.

Section 4: Declaration

For the Expression of Interest application, only the Principal Investigator is required to submit a declaration.

For the full application form, authorisations and/or declarations are needed from the following application participants:

- Principal Investigator, any Co-Investigators, Research Administrator, Head of Department

The Principal Investigator 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.