Medical Research Foundation

Meade Collaboration Travel Grants in Epidemiology 2024

Guidelines for Applicants

Summary

This document guides you through the preparation and submission of an application for a Meade Collaboration Travel Grant for mid-career researchers in the field of epidemiology.

Deadline: 15:00 (GMT) Wednesday 13 November 2024

Applications must be submitted and approved by all signatories and the application received in its entirety by the specified deadline. All applications must be submitted via our 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 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

Overview

The Medical Research Foundation is inviting applications from mid-career researchers in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) working in the field of epidemiology, who are making the transition to research independence and wish to develop collaborations with researchers based at a UK research organisation. The Grants will support SSA epidemiology researchers to spend between one to three months in a research organisation in the UK. Applicants should aim to develop collaborations, learn and share skills, or undertake a short research project which could not be completed at their employing organisation in SSA.

The Funder

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

The research supported in this competition is possible thanks to a generous donation by Professor Thomas Meade. Professor Meade was a distinguished epidemiologist with a special interest in cardiovascular disease, particularly coronary heart disease and thrombosis. His career spanned more than five decades, with highlights including receiving a CBE in 1994 and being elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1996. In 1997, he received the esteemed Balzan Prize for his pioneering and extensive work in the field of cardiovascular epidemiology, and it is this Prize that supports these Grants.

Funding available

Applicants may apply for funding to visit a UK research organisation for between one and three months.

Applicants may apply for up to £5,000 for one month in the UK, £9,000 for two months in the UK and a maximum of £13,000 for three months in the UK to support travel, visas, subsistence, and research consumables during the applicant's stay at the UK research organisation.

The Foundation is committed to awarding between three and six Meade Collaborative Travel Grants per year, depending on the length of the visits. This competition will run once per year.

Who can apply

Applications should represent a collaboration between a mid-career researcher who is a national of and based in a sub-Saharan African country working in the field of epidemiology and a UK-based researcher who has their own research group in the UK and can accommodate the visiting researcher.

SSA Principal Investigator

Should:

- Hold a PhD, DPhil or post-graduate medical doctorate (equivalent to a UK MD), have active research experience and be in the process of, or be ready for, transition to research independence.
- Work in the field of epidemiology.
- Have guaranteed employment with a legally established research organisation in Sub-Saharan Africa for the duration of the Grant (equivalent to a recognised UK research organisation, such as university, government-funded research institute, or not-for-profit research organisation). Nationality and country of residence/employment may be different.
- Not have already secured substantial research funds and/or have already established their own research group. Applicants who have held an early-career fellowship may still be eligible.

UK Co-Investigator

Should:

- Hold a PhD, DPhil or (UK) MD. UK Co-investigators may be research group leaders at any level from mid-career up to senior researchers.
- Have guaranteed employment at an eligible institution for the duration of this Grant (UK HEIs, Research Council, research institutes, hospitals, and other independent research organisations).

Please note, the Foundation does not match PI's and Co-I's and it is the applicant's responsibility to identify a suitable host.

We strongly welcome eligible applicants from Francophone and Lusophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as from Anglophone countries of the region.

In order for applications to be considered for this competition, applicants and research organisations must conform to the eligibility criteria. Applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not have their proposal assessed. **Applicants who are unsure of their eligibility are encouraged to contact the Medical Research Foundation team**.

Only one application will be accepted per PI and Co-I; individuals can hold more than one Medical Research Foundation grant at any one time. Applicants who have previously applied should contact the Research Team research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk to discuss their application before submitting.

Previous Meade Collaboration Travel Grant award holders are not eligible to re-apply.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Medical Research Foundation is committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all 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 to work flexibly and in a way that meets their personal circumstances. Guidance on the Medical Research Foundation 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.

Responsibilities of the Lead Research Organisation and the Principal Investigator

Lead Research Organisations

By submitting an application, a Lead Research Organisation (LRO) indicates their formal acceptance of the proposal 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 resources cited in the proposal are sufficient to undertake the proposed research, attract sufficiently experienced and skilled staff and represent good value-for-money.

Typically, the costs for the pre-visit period (such as visa costs, flights, insurance etc) will be awarded to the SSA Research Organisation and the costs incurred during the visit (such as subsistence, accommodation, research costs etc) will be awarded to the UK Research Organisation.

Where Grant funds are sent to both the SSA and UK Organisations, it is expected that there will be two Lead Research Organisations – one based in a country of sub-Saharan Africa, and one based in the UK. If funds are only needed for the visit period, then the UK Organisation can act as the Lead Research Organisation.

The employing organisation is required to provide a guarantee that they will continue to pay the awardees salary and benefits for the duration of the visit. By signing the application, the employing organisation is agreeing to this.

UK Research Organisation

If the UK Research Organisation is receiving all grant funds, the organisation has responsibility to ensure sufficient protocols are in place to support the SSA PI to arrange their visit, including supporting flight booking, booking accommodation, and providing a per diem/reimbursing expenses.

SSA Principal Investigator (PI)

The PI is responsible for the intellectual leadership and overall management of the Grant. They will be the Medical Research Foundation's main contact for the proposal.

The PI must be based at the named SSA Organisation at which, when applicable, part of the award will be administered

UK Co-investigator (Co-I)

The Co-I is responsible for providing a research environment that will benefit the aims of the Grant.

The Co-I must be based at the UK Organisation at which the majority or full Grant will be administered.

Review and selection

Review and selection process

Applications will be reviewed by a Panel of Experts from the field of epidemiology, who will make a recommendation to the Medical Research Foundation for approval. Applications will be assessed on the

potential to establish collaborations, learn and share new skills, and on the contribution to research networking and capacity building in the field of epidemiology.

The Medical Research Foundation strongly encourages applications from researchers based in countries in sub-Saharan Africa currently under-represented in the research landscape. The Foundation will take action to ensure a fair and inclusive review process and will work to support researchers from a wide distribution of geographical locations.

Confidentiality

The proposal and any additional details submitted will be forwarded 'in confidence' to the Expert Review Panel. While assessing proposals, our experts may sometimes need to consult with colleagues, in confidence, about individual applications.

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 Medical Research Foundation Terms and Conditions. The Medical Research Foundation Terms and Conditions spell out the responsibilities of the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator and the Lead Research Organisation(s). The Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator and the Lead Research Organisation(s) 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.

Key Dates

- Deadline for Submission: 15:00 Wednesday 13 November 2024
- Funding Decision: March 2025
- Feedback on funding decision: March 2025

Application guidance notes

The information provided in this section provides guidance on completing the application form online grants management system (https://medicalresearchfoundation.flexigrant.com/). Guidance is provided within the system itself and this additional guidance is also available on our website.

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

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

Completing the online CV section

The 'Principal Investigator' (sub-Saharan Africa) is required to submit a CV using the Medical Research Foundation narrative CV questions. This is available in the 'My CV' section of the Lead Applicants' user profile that is created once they have registered for an account with Flexi-Grant.

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

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 is much as possible through our grantmaking policies and practices, 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 'My CV' form, to detail how your career progression has been impacted by COVID-19. Additionally, guidance will be given to our Expert Review Panel 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 of Experts 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 is 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 progress 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 corporate 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. It can be used to highlight positive stakeholder feedback, inclusion of patients in processes and clinical trials, and other impacts across research, policy, practice and business. It can be used to mention efforts to collaborate with particular societal or patient groups. It can be used 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 and 2: Applicant details

Each application should have a Principal investigator (PI; the sub-Saharan African applicant) and a Co-Investigator (Co-I; the UK collaborator that will host the SSA applicant). The PI should provide their personal details and details of their Employing Research Organisation in SSA.

The UK researcher that hosts the PI should be listed as the Co-I. Any other individuals, either from SSA or UK, involved in the application can be listed as collaborators. At least one Co-I should be included.

The Co-I should submit a signed declaration on letter-headed paper confirming that they have consented to host the PI for the duration of the grant and co-operate in the planned development and skills sharing activities.

The Co-I should outline how they will contribute to the collaboration, including support that will be provided during the visit, planned activities, and their role in the project and any relevant experience. and.

The Co-I is required to submit a standard format CV with a maximum length of two pages.

Section 3: Grant Proposal

Please note, the applicant is advised not to plan travel to the UK until after June 2025 to allow time for Due Diligence checks to be completed.

Case for Support

Please provide a detailed plan for the proposed use of the Meade Collaboration Travel Grant funds.

This should include:

- **An overall description of the proposed visit, and how this relates to your experience and skills to date**
- **Plans to develop a sustainable and equitable partnership**
- **How you will advance your epidemiological research skills, including any courses or training you will undertake and any new epidemiological techniques you will learn.**
- **Plans for the development or nurturing of collaborative networks**
- **Details of any short collaborative project in epidemiology planned, where necessary.**
- **Any soft skills training you will undertake at the host institute**

All proposed work needs to be in the field of epidemiology and should complement the applicant's current or planned research but represent a clear and distinct development.

The Case for Support should not exceed **2 A4 pages PDF format.**

Collaborators

Please provide details of any additional collaborators on the project, if applicable. This does not include the UK Co-I.

Gender dimension of research

The Medical Research Foundation expects that applicants will consider the sex and gender dimension of their research proposal. For these Grants, this question should only be completed if the Grant will support a research project.

Sex and gender dimension in this instance refers to the sex and gender component of the experimental design that involves human participants, animal studies, human and animal tissues, and cell lines.

Sex refers to the biological attributes of humans and animals, such as genes, chromosomes, hormone levels and reproductive organs. Sex can be referred to as male, female and intersex in humans or hermaphrodite in animals.

Gender refers to the social and cultural attributes of human behaviour. How individuals refer to gender will vary depending on social and cultural context and this can also vary over time.

Applicants should include the following information:

1. How the biological variable of sex will be taken into account in the experimental design with regards to research methods, data analysis and interpretation, and dissemination of findings.
2. How the socio-cultural variable of gender will be taken into account in the experimental design with regards to research methods, data analysis and interpretation, and dissemination of findings.
3. How the impact of the findings may affect different sex and genders differently.

If sex and or gender do not need to be taken into account, applicants will need to justify why this is the case. For instance, the Medical Research Foundation expects that both sexes of animals will be used in animal experiments as the default, and that cost or previous published data are not sufficient justifications to use only one sex.

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

Suggested and Excluded Reviewers

Please suggest up to three experts to review your 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 in the past five years; or, iv) previous mentors/supervisors of the lead applicant. We cannot guarantee that we will approach these experts for an assessment of the applications. We will consider reviewers from any location globally including SSA and the UK, but we especially encourage the nomination of SSA reviewers.

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

Data Management Plan

For these Grants, this question should only be completed if the Grant will support a research project.

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. Where applicable, 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 500 words long, for studies generating smaller amounts of data, DMPs will be short i.e. 250 words in total.

Applicants should structure their plan that is most appropriate for the proposed visit.

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.

Section 4: Use of Animals in Research

For these Grants, this question should only be completed if the Grant will support a research project.

The Medical Research Foundation expects that before work commences on any research, 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, 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.

If the project involves the use of animals in the UK, please provide confirmation of personal licences for all researchers involved in the proposed animal research. Also please include details of plans for the PI to obtain a personal licence during the visit, if this is applicable. In addition, please confirm the relevant project licence covers the proposed work. 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 5: Human participation and ethical approval

For these Grants, this question should only be completed if the Grant will support a research project.

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 Human Participants in Research for further direction on research involving human participants in countries outside of the UK.

Section 6: 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.

If intellectual property is likely to be generated, a letter of support signed by both the SSA and UK Organisation departmental IP Manager/Head of Technology Transfer Unit, will be required. We expect that IP arrangements will be made between the SSA and UK partners prior to the submission of the proposal and a fair and equitable agreement will be made.

Section 7: Use of Funds

We advise that for the pre-visit period (such as visa costs, flights, insurance etc) are awarded to the SSA Research Organisation and the cost incurred during the visit (such as subsistence, accommodation, research costs etc), which are likely to be the majority of the funding, are be awarded to the UK Research Organisation.

Each organisation will be responsible for the receipt and administration of the awarded funds.

In cases where all funding is sent to the SSA Research Organisation, additional currency conversion costs can be included in the SSA overhead section of the budget.

In cases where all funding is sent to the UK Research Organisation, the institute is responsible for ensuring sufficient protocols are in place to support the SSA PI to arrange their visit. This includes (but is not limited to) supporting travel booking, booking accommodation, and reimbursing expenses during the visit.

To ensure the budget is sufficiently costed, the PI should consult with the UK Co-I and the UK administrative authority to discuss their suggested costings for visiting researchers. The PI is also strongly advised to confirm the policies and booking processes at the organisation they are visiting, including any arrangements for provision of living costs.

The Medical Research Foundation will meet the full direct costs of research. Direct costs are those that will arise from the conduct of the planned activities and can be charged as the cash value spent and can be supported by an auditable record. Like all UK medical research charities, the Medical Research Foundation does not meet the indirect costs of research in the UK; we will however meet the indirect costs (overheads) of the research in the sub-Saharan African Research Organisation

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

Enter the funding requested using the Budget Table provided.

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

These awards are designed to be flexible. Use of funds may include (but are not limited to):

- Collection or pre-shipment preparation of samples & data
- Shipment of samples & data
- Purchase of travel & UK medical insurance and travel vaccinations
- Visa fee and cost of obtaining the visa

- Travel to the host country
- Indirect costs incurred at the SSA research organisation (indirect/overhead/administration costs up to 10% of the direct costs can be requested within the maximum award for the SSA research organisation)
- Accommodation during the UK visit
- Subsistence during the UK visit
- Travel within the UK for training and collaboration purposes
- Training and research consumables
- Short courses

Funds may **not** be used for:

- Salary for researchers during the visit
- Fees to advisors or UK co-investigators
- Residential or distance-learning Masters course fees or other examination or professional fees
- Unspecified research and training costs
- Conference Travel
- Public engagement in science
- Directly allocated costs at the UK research organisation
- Dissemination of research findings
- Studentship costs
- Overheads and other indirect costs at the UK research organisation

Sections 8: Authorisation and Declarations

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

- Principal Investigator
- UK Co-investigator
- UK Research Organisation Research Administrator
- UK Research Organisation Head of Department
- SSA Research Organisation Research Administrator
- SSA Research Organisation 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 the application 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.

Applicants

The PI is 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 Department

The Head of Department at the both the UK and SSA Research Organisations should be invited to approve the application.

It is the responsibility of the lead applicant to inform the Heads 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 Administrator

The Research Administrator at both the UK and SSA Research Organisations should be invited to approve the application ("Administrative Authority"). They must be someone with delegated authority at the Organisation and 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 Organisation responsible for the administration of funds. They will be contacted regarding financial arrangements and other contractual agreements, if the application is successful.