

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council Health Technologies Connectivity Awards

Questions asked and answered in the webinar on 25 June 2024

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Core team	
Is it possible to request a research assistant (RA) and/or post-doctoral research assistant (PDRA) to work on some/all work packages?	<p>This scheme is open for teams as well as individuals to apply.</p> <p>You can list the key members of your team and assign them roles from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - project lead (PL) - project co-lead (UK) (PcL) - project co-lead (international) (PcL (I)) - specialist - grant manager - professional enabling staff - research and innovation associate - technician - visiting researcher - researcher co-lead (RcL) <p>Only list one individual as project lead.</p> <p>Find out more about UKRI's core team roles in funding applications.</p>
Can a new post-doctoral research assistant (PDRA) be recruited to help deliver some of the research component in the project?	<p>Requesting funds to hire new staff is allowed. However, please note that Career Development is one of the assessment criteria.</p>
Just for clarity, only Norwegian researchers can participate in the call as an international applicant, be it individual or in a team?	<p>As per UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Research Council of Norway Money Follows Cooperation agreement, a 'project co-lead (international)' can be based in a Norwegian institution.</p> <p>Salaries of international collaborators from outside Norway cannot be costed on this grant.</p>
What career stage of researchers can apply for this award or how will this award support the researchers' career development?	<p>Standard eligibility applies - project leads must be academic employees – lecturer or equivalent – of an eligible organisation and must be resident in the UK, except under specific conditions.</p> <p>This scheme is open to all career stages.</p>
My research team consists of 4 faculty members from Engineering backgrounds working with an NHS research centre. Is it allowed to cost more than one researcher to have a short stay in the NHS?	<p>Yes, this scheme is open for teams as well as individuals to apply. If you choose to apply as a team, then we would expect you to describe how each of the team members will benefit from this award.</p>
Can researcher co-leads be post-doctoral research assistants (PDRAs)?	<p>Standard eligibility and roles apply including researcher co-leads. Please find more details here.</p>



<p>Is this funding opportunity open to any career stage?</p>	<p>Standard eligibility applies to this opportunity. Project leads must be academic employees – lecturer or equivalent – of an eligible organisation and must be resident in the UK, except under specific conditions. Please find more details here.</p>
<p>Working Pattern</p>	
<p>Is there a minimum % of time project lead (PL) is expected to work on the project?</p>	<p>There is no minimum % of time a project lead is expected to work on the project; however, we expect applicants to immerse themselves in the new environment (provided by the host organisation) for time appropriate to their specific training needs and pilot project(s).</p> <p>Pattern of work can vary and can change during the duration of the grant. This means, you can for example, work with your collaborator part time for several months and then switch to full time for some time and so on.</p>
<p>Can you request to work full-time (fully embedded) within the host organisation (a different department in the same university as my home department) for up to 3 years?</p>	<p>Yes, the working pattern is flexible. Please note your working pattern will have to be supported by both home and host organisations (see assessment criterion: Home and host organisations support).</p>
<p>Remit, scope, and pilot project(s)</p>	
<p>Does the project have to deliver something novel?</p>	<p>Novel engineering and physical sciences (EPS) research contributing to the delivery of the health technologies strategy must comprise a proportion of the placement.</p> <p>Any of the pilot project(s) proposed in your application need to be within EPSRC Health Technologies remit. Research projects should address one or more of the three challenges listed in the health technologies strategy. We are particularly interested in projects which address our ‘population health and prevention’ challenge.</p> <p>Details about the EPSRC remit can be found here: EPSRC remit – EPSRC – UKRI</p>
<p>What TRL level is expected from the proposal?</p>	<p>EPSRC funds up to about proof of concept. Please find more information here.</p>

<p>In terms of the new skills the funding scheme will support the researchers to develop, how different the new skills should be comparing to the researchers' current discipline? For example, if a researcher has been working on biological signal processing, can she/he apply the funding to develop skills in the discipline of physiology or computational modelling which is also in the field of Engineering?</p>	<p>As long as you can justify why you cannot gain these particular skills in your current environment and why you need to go into your host's environment, then we would consider this to be sufficiently different environment. Different department within your home organisation can also be an eligible host organisation.</p>
<p>Engagement with clinicians to shape technological solutions better to address unmet clinical needs is a key aim of the call. How formed should the solution be at this stage considering a key aim is better understanding of unmet clinical need? Is there a risk of putting a square peg in a round hole? Is there flexibility to adapt things within the call as successful applicants understand the clinical need better?</p>	<p>The solution does not need to be formed at this stage. One of the purposes of the award is to understand that unmet clinical need and understand that clinical environment. So, this award is an opportunity for you to start investigating these topics and to obtain some preliminary data to see whether it's worth exploring further or not. We would also expect you to identify potential risks and outline how you would mitigate these.</p>
<p>Could you say a little more about the balance between skills development for the project lead and novel research. Of course, we might expect those to overlap, but one could imagine scenarios where they may point in separate directions.</p>	<p>The focus of this scheme is on the skills and collaborations development. However, we do not impose any limits on how much time should be spent on research and how much on the skills development as this will be individual to each proposal. We expect that you will develop new skills which you will be able to use independently at the end of the award in order to work on your pilot project but also beyond the duration of this award. Therefore, it would be understandable that you would for example, spend more time on skills development at the beginning of the project and more on research towards the end of the project. However, the split in between skills development and research will be individual to each proposal and it will depend on how well you will justify your approach.</p>
<p>Can the new skills and knowledge acquired be less academically relevant but more industrially relevant? This may help with translational potential.</p>	<p>Yes, the skills and knowledge can be industrially relevant. However, please note that the proposal will need to be within EPSRC remit, and you should clearly address the health technologies strategy in your proposal.</p>
<p>Award will support (1) person in EPSRC field going to non EPSRC field and (2) non-EPSRC field to EPSRC. Do you prioritise one option over the other?</p>	<p>No, we don't prioritize either option over the other. Both options will be equally assessed against the assessment criteria.</p>

<p>When you say skills development, is it meant to be technical skills development or could it also be "softer" more translational skills such as patient engagement, medical device regulation, human factors etc. that expedite translation?</p>	<p>Yes, skills such as public and patient involvement and engagement, medical device regulation, translation etc. can be developed as part of this award. We will also welcome involvement of social sciences, health economics, and similar areas.</p>
<p>As you mentioned, this award is mainly targeted at preliminary data collection. Is in-depth analysis of data that are already collected acceptable? The skills to be acquired is more on how to translate the potential findings into practice.</p>	<p>As long as the proposal is within EPSRC remit and you address the EPSRC health technologies strategy, then this should be acceptable. We would also expect you to justify why these new skills are not available to you in your current environment and why you need to move into different environment.</p>
<p>The page on funding finder states " We are particularly interested in projects which address our 'population health and prevention' challenge" - is this a priority for this call would early detection or other challenges be equally considered</p>	<p>The reason why we highlighted Population health and prevention is that this portfolio is currently underrepresented. We would like to inspire people to apply within this area. But we will assess proposals in all three challenges equally. There isn't any assessment criterion which prioritises Population health and prevention challenge. Please find more details on each of the three challenges in the EPSRC health technologies strategy.</p>
<p>We have filed some patents on some novel concepts of surgical robots. Can we use this call to validate these concepts in the patents?</p>	<p>If you've already patented the technology, then this sounds like a higher technology readiness level than EPSRC would normally fund. Therefore, this proposal may not be within remit for this scheme. But please do reach out to us – you can email us at healthcare@epsrc.ukri.org and give us more detail on your idea. We will have a look at the remit of your application and if it's not relevant to our scheme, we can share it with other research councils and see if there's a relevant opportunity that you can apply to.</p>
<p>Is Brain Computer interface research domain fine for this call?</p>	<p>Yes, as this domain is within EPSRC remit. However, please note that your proposal needs to address the assessment criteria and that it needs to align with the EPSRC health technologies strategy.</p>
<p>Is it desirable or undesirable for the project lead to have previously had EPSRC grant on the core technology?</p>	<p>We will not prioritise one option over the other. However, please note that if you already hold any EPSRC or other grant on the core technology, your proposal to this scheme must be substantially different as we cannot double fund you.</p>
<p>Is using ToF cameras and AI identification for use in virtual wards within the scope of this call?</p>	<p>This sounds like it would be within EPSRC health technologies remit and therefore within remit of this scheme. However, please email us at healthcare@epsrc.ukri.org with more details if you need further advice on the remit.</p>

<p>How is this scheme different than say an EPSRC fellowship?</p>	<p>This scheme is more about somebody trying to find new collaborations and trying to develop new skills. It's almost like the start of a research project journey. So, what we would expect as an outcome of this award is that you would develop or strengthen a collaboration and learn new skills and then you would be able to apply for bigger grants afterwards. Whereas an EPSRC fellowship is more for somebody who's already got an established research idea and established vision. And it's more about the individual that will be taking forward that research.</p>
<p>Does this mean the project does not necessarily need to lead to a novel outcome in terms of scientific/technological discovery?</p>	<p>Although the focus is on skills and collaborations development, novel engineering and physical sciences (EPS) research contributing to the delivery of the EPSRC health technologies strategy still must comprise a proportion of the placement.</p>
<p>Can we send synopsis to you to check if the proposal is within the scope?</p>	<p>Yes, please email us at healthcare@epsrc.ukri.org with brief summary and we will help you decide whether your proposal is within remit.</p>
<p>Is the skills development more important (more highly weighted in the assessment) in this funding scheme than the research work itself?</p>	<p>All assessment criteria are equally weighted in this funding opportunity.</p>
<p>Eligible costs</p>	
<p>What expenses can be claimed?</p>	<p>We will fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - salary of the core team - travel and subsistence while away from the home institution - training courses or development opportunities, including those for commercialisation and knowledge exchange - project co-lead(s) at the host institution to provide the necessary training and guidance, subject to EPSRC's eligibility for funding - consumables to carry out the research - spending on broadening the impact of the award and maximising collaborative work between other disciplines <p>If the host organisation is eligible to receive EPSRC funding, your host can be listed as project co-lead on the application.</p>
<p>Can home organisation overhead costs be covered?</p>	<p>Yes. standard grant arrangements apply. If your host(s) is based in an organisation which is eligible to receive funding from EPSRC, then they can be listed in your core team as project co-lead and their salary can be costed on your proposal. Please find more information here (see Estates costs and Indirect costs).</p>
<p>Can host organisation overhead costs be covered?</p>	<p>If the host organisation is eligible to receive EPSRC funding, then overhead costs can be costed for this organisation as well. Please find more information here (see Estates costs and Indirect costs).</p>
<p>What share of overhead is assigned to the host?</p>	<p>If the host organisation is eligible to receive EPSRC funding, you can request overhead costs necessary for your research project. Standard rules apply – please find more information here (see Estates costs and Indirect costs).</p>



Can project lead include % salary to cover teaching time?	One of the assessment criteria of this award is Home and host organisation support and as part of this question, we expect you to address how the home organisation will ensure your time commitment to the award is protected. Therefore, we would expect the project lead will form an agreement with the home organisation on how their teaching time will be covered.
Is there any split of funding constraint between home and host institution	There are no funding constraints from EPSRC for this. It depends how you justify what costs you need on your projects and how you will negotiate between the two organisations about how they will support you appropriately (what resources you need from each organisation to help you deliver your projects).
The host organisation has some equipment. Could similar equipment (~7k) be charged to the costing so that this equipment can also be used at the home organisation?	If you can fully justify this cost, then this should be permissible. Please note that the 'Resources and cost justification' is one of the assessment criteria.
Host organisation	
I work in School of Engineering. Is Medical School of the university I work at considered an eligible host?	Yes, different department in your organisation is also an eligible host.
Can the host be a different department within the same organisation?	In short - yes. Please bear in mind the criteria that it will be assessed against.
Can the industry partner (e.g., pharma) be a host?	We welcome applications with industrial host organisations. However, industrial organisations are not eligible to receive funding from EPSRC and therefore, they will need to be listed as project partners. You will need to provide a letter of support outlining your project partner's in-kind contributions to the project.
Is an NHS trust an eligible host, and can it receive funding?	Many NHS Trusts have completed the registration with UKRI for research grants are eligible - you might need to check with the relevant NHS trust whether they have completed this process. More information on NHS eligibility can be found here: Eligibility as an organisation – UKRI .
Is there a priority order in host organisation? Academic institution, NHS, industrial partner?	No - but do please look at the criteria and how you would address these in your proposal.
Are we expected to work with one partner organisation or, having selected an area of focus, working with multiple partners?	This scheme allows for multiple host organisations to be involved. These collaborations can feed into one or multiple pilot project(s). Please note, we expect applicants to immerse themselves in the new environment (provided by the host organisation) for time appropriate to their specific training needs and pilot project(s).

<p>Can we choose more than one host organisation? Can one be from the UK and one from outside the UK? Can these host organisations get funding?</p>	<p>Yes, this scheme allows for multiple host organisations to be involved. These collaborations can feed into one or multiple pilot project(s). Please note, we expect applicants to immerse themselves in the new environment (provided by the host organisation) for time appropriate to their specific training needs and pilot project(s).</p> <p>If the UK based organisation is eligible to receive funding from EPSRC, then costs can be requested for this host. Organisations outside the UK are eligible to receive funding from EPSRC only if they are Norwegian institutions under the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Research Council of Norway Money Follows Cooperation agreement. International institutions outside Norway cannot be costed on this grant.</p>
<p>Assessment process</p>	
<p>Could you please clarify what is the peer review/assessment process? How is this different to review process for common EPSRC grants such as standard grant?</p>	<p>We will build a panel of experts most suitable to assess the received proposals. These experts will first act as reviewers and provide you with the comments against the assessment criteria to which you will be able to reply in a project lead response. The same experts which will have provided you with the comments will then sit on a prioritisation panel. They will discuss your proposal and your project lead response and rank it alongside other applications.</p> <p>When compared to the assessment process for EPSRC standard grant, the main difference is in the fact that your proposals will be that the panellists act also as reviewers. This means the same experts who will provide you with the comments will also read your project lead response and then rank your proposal at the panel.</p>
<p>Will the panel be made of those with engineering and physical sciences expertise, or will it also include clinicians?</p>	<p>Based on the received applications, we will invite most suitable experts from multiple sectors such as academia, clinical practice, industry, etc. We will also include experts on training and collaborations development.</p>
<p>Intellectual assets</p>	
<p>Can the IP generated from the project stay with the host?</p>	<p>EPSRC makes no claim to the intellectual assets (IA) arising from the research and training that it supports. Since EPSRC has no research institutes of its own, responsibility for managing intellectual assets arising from the research and training that we support is delegated to the funded organisation.</p>



Start date of the award	
When would you be expected to start the project, after communications of outcomes in Jan-Feb 2025, if successful?	You can select a starting date which is most suitable for your project. This will be then shown on your Offer letter if successful. The Official Start Date may be delayed by up to 3 months from the start date shown in the Offer Letter; at UKRI's discretion the start of the Grant may precede the start date shown in the Offer Letter but must not be earlier than the issue date of the Offer Letter itself.
Current budget and future rounds	
Is it possible to know (roughly) the number of awards available?	We have currently a total budget of £4 million. Each of the award can be up to £500,000 (FEC). Therefore, we expect to fund at least 8 – 10 awards.
Will there be any future rounds for this scheme?	We hope that future rounds will be issued, depending on the outcomes of this pilot scheme and available budget.
Demand management of this opportunity	
Is there any limitation to how many individual applications a home institution can submit? Do you pose a limit to the number of applications from each host institution?	<p>We haven't imposed any limits on the number of applications. So, any number of applications can come from the same institution (both home and host).</p> <p>Please note that in the event of this funding opportunity being substantially oversubscribed as to be unmanageable, EPSRC reserve the right to modify the assessment process.</p>
Further information and help	
Will the slides and recording be shared?	Yes, but it may take a few days for it to appear on the website: under the "additional information" section of the funding opportunity.
Just to check, should the email be healthcare@epsrc.ukri.org (or 'epsr' as on slide shared in webinar)?	Sorry! Just a typo there – it's healthcare@epsrc.ukri.org .