

Frequently Asked Questions

“Confidence in Global Nutrition and Health Research” and “Confidence in Global Mental Health Research” Funding Calls

Updated on: 06/09/2017 (previous versions: 11/08/17 and 28/07/17).

GCRF and ODA, country eligibility

What is Official Development Assistance (ODA)?

ODA is an international definition owned by the OECD and is not a RCUK or UK government term:

The OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines Official Development Assistance (ODA) as “flows to countries and territories” which are on the [DAC’s list of ODA recipients¹](#), provided by official agencies to promote the economic development and welfare of countries on the list. It is expected that funding streams eligible for allocation from the UK’s ODA budget demonstrate how they aim to contribute to reducing poverty and increasing sustainable development. ODA is highly relevant to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which 17 goals have been described as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including zero hunger and good health and well-being.

How does my research meet the ODA criteria for the Call?

Generic guidance cannot be provided; you will need to demonstrate that the primary purpose of your project is the economic development and welfare of LMIC(s) (listed [here](#))¹. To achieve this, you should consider the following aspects when preparing your application:

- Your proposed research should investigate a specific problem or seek a specific outcome which will impact on the economic development and welfare of LMIC(s) in the immediate or longer-term;
- You should articulate a clear and specific case for the benefit and relevance of the proposed research to the LMIC(s);
- Consider the pathway to realising the development impact (even if outside the timeframe of the project).

Any applications that do not address the ODA criteria will not be accepted.

¹ Please note that Antigua and Barbuda, Seychelles, Chile and Uruguay are likely to graduate from the DAC list, if you wish to include these countries as partners, please contact MRC.

What is the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)?

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is a 5-year £1.5 billion resource funding stream, announced as part of the 2015 Spending Review, to ensure that UK research plays a key role in addressing global challenges and issues faced by developing countries. The GCRF demonstrates the UK government's pledge to allocate 0.7% of Gross National Income to ODA. The remit of GCRF spans across multiple disciplines including social, biological, the environment and health. Therefore, the GCRF investment is of high relevance to all seven Research Councils, who are the primary partners to deliver the Fund.

For more information, please see the [RCUK GCRF webpage](#).

Which countries are eligible for partnering with for the "Confidence in Global Nutrition and Health Research" and "Confidence in Global Mental Health Research"?

The OECD Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) list of Official Development Assistance recipients is available [here](#). This is the list of ODA recipient countries categorised by population income. More information can be found at www.oecd.org. Researchers based in any of the countries in this list are eligible co-applicants. Please note that Antigua and Barbuda, Seychelles, Chile and Uruguay are likely to graduate from the DAC list, if you wish to include these countries as partners, please consult MRC.

Note that you do not have to work with specific partners from the DAC list however you do need to demonstrate how your research proposal will deliver primary benefits to Lower and Middle Income Countries (LMIC) in the long-term, and how you will deliver this pathway to impact.

Are middle income countries eligible to be partnered with? What if my partner country is taken off the DAC list?

Yes, middle income countries are eligible for partnering - if the country is named on the DAC list your application will be accepted.

If any other countries currently on the "Upper Middle Income Range" are taken off the list before the end of your project, the project will continue through to completion but will be ineligible for any future awards.

Can my research also benefit the UK?

LMICs should be the primary beneficiaries. However, we expect that the research will also benefit the UK, in terms of the wider impacts such as new scientific knowledge, publications and training etc.

Institutions' eligibility

Which institutions are eligible to lead on applications?

Only UK-based research institutions are allowed to lead on applications. Researchers from other UK or LMIC research institutions may be co-applicants.

Can LMIC partners be included as Co-Investigators? (Updated 11 August 2017)

Yes, it is strongly encouraged for applications to include LMIC partners, but this is not an essential call criterion. Partnerships may be aspirational and developed during the course of the project.

Please note, the work undertaken under the proposal must fulfil ODA criteria i.e., must be shown to be primarily relevant to the benefit of health and prosperity of people in LMIC settings.

International research organisations cannot lead on this call. Applications must be led by UK-based research organizations. Standard MRC eligibility rules apply, as set out in [Section 1.3 of the MRC Guidance for Applicants](#).

Which LMIC-based institutions are eligible to apply as co-applicants? (updated 6 September 2017)

LMIC research institutions may include higher education institutions, non-profit research institutions or non-governmental organisations. Please note that LMIC-based research institutions must be registered on [Je-S](#). Please contact the Je-S helpdesk (JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk) providing details of the relevant research organization (name, address, weblink). Je-S helpdesk will advise you as to whether the research organization is already on the system or whether it needs to be registered. Note that you will be allowed to submit the application even if the Je-S accounts are not fully verified (as the verification may take some time), but you must start the registration process for all the ROs before submitting.

Are Non-Governmental Organizations eligible to lead on applications? (updated 11 August 2017)

No. NGOs are not eligible as main applicants. UK or LMIC-based NGOs are eligible as co-applicants. Note that co-applicants must be registered on Je-S.

Are UK partnerships required? (updated 11 August 2017)

No. UK partnerships are allowed, but not required.

Are MRC Units eligible?

MRC Units that have transferred to Universities are not eligible to submit individual applications, i.e. MRC Units should apply as part of an application led by their respective host institutions.

Please note that the "MRC Unit The Gambia" and MRC/UVRI Uganda Research Unit on AIDS are eligible to lead on applications as they are independent and have not transferred to a University.

Can LMIC-based private companies be recipients of funding? (updated 6 September 2017)

No. Industrial or other private sector collaborators (LMIC or UK-based) are welcomed but it should be noted that they cannot be recipients of funding. The role of industrial or other private partners must be clearly explained and justified, with special emphasis on the anticipated benefit to the health and prosperity of LMICs. If industrial collaborations are in place, a [MICA form](#) is required and must be submitted with the application.

Can non-LMIC international partners be co-applicants?

International researchers from high income countries may be included as co-investigators in the application, **in exceptional circumstances**. For example if they provide expertise not available in the UK. The inclusion of co-applicants from high income countries should be approved by MRC in advance of submitting your application. Applicants would be expected to clearly justify the contribution of the non-LMIC international co-applicants in the case for support.

Who should be Principal Investigator (PI) on the institutional application?

These are institutional awards and all funding is to be managed through the recipient organisation.

The principal investigator (PI) must be a senior member of the institution. The PI should have demonstrated scientific leadership and relevant scientific expertise to lead the application, and should be well-placed to lead and coordinate activities within the institution if successful. An institutional letter of support must be included in the application.

Applications may include additional co-investigators from UK research organisation and LMIC partners. Their roles on the application should be clearly justified. CVs for the PI and Co-Is should be included in the application.

Can I apply as an individual PI?

No. These are institutional awards. Funding will be managed through the recipient organisation.

Please bear in mind that ODA-eligible research projects can be funded through normal MRC response mode funding mechanisms. For example, if you have a proposal for a research project in global mental health or global nutrition, if it is sufficiently well developed you could consider applying through the normal MRC Board route for funding. Please contact the MRC to discuss your proposal and check eligibility and remit.

Can a research institution apply for both the “Confidence in Global Mental Health Research” AND “Confidence in Global Nutrition and Health Research”? Does this preclude any other applications for GCRF funding? (updated 11 August 2017)

Yes. These are two separate funding calls; research institutions can lead on one application per funding call (one for mental health and one for nutrition). Applying for either of these calls or both does not preclude ROs from applying to any other GCRF or MRC funding.

What if a given proposal is focused on nutrition AND mental health?

In cases where the application has a focus on nutrition and mental health, the most appropriate scheme should be defined by the balance between the two research areas. Please contact the MRC Head Office prior to submitting your application if you would like to clarify eligibility.

Staff:

Can funds be used to appoint new staff? (updated 11 August 2017)

No new staff can be appointed under these funds, including full-time or part-time positions. This applies to both UK and LMIC-based institutions. Due to the short duration of the awards, recruiting and training new staff would present challenges, and providing continuity of employment and career development opportunities for new staff would be limited.

Funds may support salary costs for existing research staff in the UK or LMIC, where staff can be shown to be making a clear and important contribution to the development of proposed activities. For example, funds can be used to cover salary costs of existing staff, including postdoctoral researchers or administrative staff who are currently employed by the research organization, provided they play a key role in the delivery of projects or activities within the awards.

Can funds be used toward the salary of the PI or Co-I?

No. Requests to use the funds for salary costs of PI or Co-Is should not be part of the proposal unless in exceptional circumstances. Any such requests should be approved by MRC in advance of submitting your application.

Submitting an application

The guidance suggests that “Applicants should provide up to four example vignettes outlining activities to be undertaken under this scheme.” Does this relate to different projects or different types of activities within the same project? (updated 11 August 2017)

Vignettes should reflect examples of the work to be undertaken under these awards in order to develop institutional strategies. Whether the vignettes are focused on particular research projects or activities will depend on the overall strategy of the proposal.

It is possible for applicants to envisage an internal open competition for funding if successful; vignettes may be used to outline the types of activities and/or research that might be supported.

What sections are required in the 10-page case for support? (updated 11 August 2017)

The Justification of Resources and Pathways to Impact should be included within the 10-page limit. References should also be included within the 10-page limit.

Please note that for the Confidence in Global Mental Health call, there is a separate section of the application form to upload the Pathways to Impact document, which does not need to be duplicated in the 10-page Case for Support.

Which CVs are required to be submitted in the application? (updated 11 August 2017)

You should include the CVs of the PI, Co-Is and any other named researchers, including LMIC partners. Please see section 2.2.1 of the MRC Guidance for applicants document for information about CV format and what to include. <https://www.mrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/>

Is Calibri acceptable as a typeface? (updated 11 August 2017)

Yes, Calibri is an acceptable sans serif typeface.

Is a MICA form required to be submitted with the application if applicants are working with Industry partners? (updated 11 August 2017)

Yes, a MICA form should be completed if there are industrial partners, and this should be submitted along with the application.

Is the MRC expecting an institutional contribution to support /match the £200k funding? (updated 11 August 2017)

Institutional support by in-kind or cash contributions is welcome but not required. Please note that standard guidance on full economic costing for UK and LMIC research organisations applies.

What project partner letters of support are required? (updated 6 September 2017)

We only require letters of support from project partners that will play an important role in the activities described in the proposal, and/or will contribute to the development of the institutional strategy.

Je-S submission

I cannot find/select the “Confidence in Global Nutrition and Health Research 2017” or “Confidence in Global Mental Health Research 2017” call in the options available when I select the dropdown arrow of the Proposal Call section. (updated 6 September 2017)

Please make sure you selected the correct MRC Scheme: “Rapid Response Research Grants”.

How should the applications be costed on Je-S? (updated 6 September 2017)

Please input costs under the following headings:

- Directly incurred: staff; travel and subsistence; other.
- Directly incurred/ Exceptional (LMIC) costs: staff; travel and subsistence; other.

Note that directly allocated costs are only allowed in exceptional circumstances (ie, when salary contributions for UK-based PI or CoIs have been pre-approved by headoffice).

**What information should be included in the “other support section”?
(updated 6 September 2017)**

PIs and CoIs should list their grant funding in areas relevant to the calls.

For any other queries regarding submitting your application on Je-S please contact the Je-S helpdesk.

**Questions specific to the “Confidence in Global Mental Health Research”
Funding Call**

Is dementia included in the call?

Dementia is not a focus of this call, rather it is focussed on understanding how challenges to early brain development affect mental illness and cognition, in particular in childhood and adolescence.

However, if you have ideas for the development of research projects for dementia in a LMIC setting, if they are sufficiently well developed you could consider applying through the [MRC Neurosciences and Mental Health Board](#) route for funding. Please contact the Neurosciences and Mental Health team to discuss your proposal and check eligibility and remit.

**Are disciplines from the arts and humanities eligible for this call?
(updated 11 August 2017)**

Applications should be within the MRC's remit and mission to support research to improve human health and make a real difference to clinical practice and the health of the population, as well as demonstrating that the proposed research is primarily relevant and benefit to the health or prosperity of low and middle income countries (LMIC). Applicants from arts and humanities disciplines may be eligible if they fulfil the criteria above. Please contact the MRC to confirm eligibility.

Questions specific to the “Confidence in Global Nutrition and Health Research” Funding Call

Should institutional submissions include a range of projects relevant to multiple priority areas outlined in the call, or is it expected that the proposal will be more targeted, addressing a small number of the priority areas? (updated 11 August 2017)

It is entirely up to institutions to decide how broad or targeted their proposals should be. ROs are expected to lay-out their long-term/overarching global nutrition research strategies and align the activities proposed under the “Confidence in Global Nutrition and Health Research” with such long-term plans. Also, the priority areas outlined in the call text are non-prescriptive, and applicants are welcome to focus on other nutrition and health subject areas provided that they make a compelling case in the case for support.

Having had a look at the scope for the call, there seem to be a number of areas that do not directly sit within the MRC funding remit e.g. effects of conflicts, migration, natural disasters; the food production and supply chain area. Is there any guidance as to how much of any proposal should fall within the MRC remit? (updated 11 August 2017)

The aim of this funding call is to promote a holistic view of nutrition research that encompasses potential factors affecting human health and wellbeing. Proposals focused on understanding the links between nutrition and human health (including factors determining dietary patterns), and with outcomes directly relevant to human health fit the remit of our call.