



## **Health Research Board Research Methodology Support Centre**

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The Health Research Board recognises the need to strengthen research within the health sector in Ireland. A number of initiatives are under way to remove barriers to world-class health research which will benefit patient care. For example, the HRB is building up a cohort of clinician scientist; seven awards have been made so far. Initiatives to support research in the health services include Health Research Centres; and advanced clinical research will be carried out in the new Clinical Research Facilities. The HRB now invites applications for a Research Methodology Support Centre. The purpose of this award is:

- 1. to provide health and social care practitioners and academic colleagues with methodological advice and support to strengthen quality in health services, primary care and clinical research**
- 2. to support innovative multidisciplinary and multi-method solutions to research questions**
- 3. to provide appropriate training and education in research methodologies as a contribution to professional learning and continued professional development of a wide group of health and social care professionals and researchers**

### **1. Scope of the call**

The Research Methodology Support Centre will provide support for health services, primary care and clinical research on a national basis, across the health service in all its settings, academic institutions, and non-profit research institutes or organisations. Ease of access to the national Centre from all these settings is fundamental and is part of the evaluation criteria for applications. The Centre will strengthen research quality through provision of advice, consultancy, training and other support services.

High quality research relevant to the health services requires the combination and integration of skills and insights from a wide variety of perspectives. Two important guiding principles for this Centre should be multidisciplinary access and a focus on health services, primary care clinical research. The Centre will strengthen research quality by providing advice, consultancy, training and education in research methodologies (both qualitative and quantitative), study design, project management, analysis, reporting, appropriate dissemination to inform practice and other support services. Training of health and social care professionals and researchers, including web-based training, should form an important part of the activities. Staff in the Centre should demonstrate a track record and expertise in areas such as critical appraisal of the literature, qualitative research, statistics, epidemiology, health economics and clinical trials.

The HRB are seeking applications which demonstrate a cohesive approach to providing the activities outlined above (and other activities, where justified). Applications which cover only one aspect/activity will not be considered. It is envisaged that one award will be made to a single team, if merited.

Applicants may propose that the Centre be led from a single site, or that it operate from a number of collaborating sites, but the Centre will serve an inter-institutional function including all settings of health care. National access for researchers and an ability to respond in a timely and efficient manner must be demonstrated.

## **2. Eligibility**

Applications should be submitted by a Principal Applicant on behalf of a team. Only one application per principal applicant is permitted.

Principal applicants for the Research Methodology Support Centre must:

- Be employed by a recognised research institution in the Republic of Ireland;
- Have an excellent track record in health-related research covering relevant methodologies;
- Be able to demonstrate credibility in acting as advisor to other researchers.

Co-applicants for the Research Methodology Support Centre may come from a wider range of backgrounds, including health service providers in the community holding a service contract with a health agency, but must also have an established track record in research, research methodologies and training. Co-applicants may come from Northern Ireland and outside of the island of Ireland.

It is envisaged that the Centre will also participate in research and have its own research portfolio. This is important for consulting staff as it helps to attract excellent candidates, maintains their research skills and ensures credibility in acting as advisors to other researchers. Funding for the conduct of research projects, however, must derive from outside of this grant.

The HRB reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet the criteria of the call or is not of a sufficiently high standard to merit consideration.

## **3. Value of awards**

Funding is envisaged to be in the region of €5 million over an initial period of five years. This may be used for:

- Salary and salary-related costs
- Infrastructure costs including ICT and communication costs
- Training and education costs
- Travel and subsistence
- Consultancy-related costs
- Dissemination costs
- A contribution towards overheads of 30 per cent of non-equipment costs.

Funding will be awarded annually to the principal grant holder through the host institution.

Applications must be supported by the Dean of Research, CEO, or equivalent, of the institution or institutions which will contribute to the Research Methodology Support Centre.

#### **4. Reporting and evaluation**

It will be a condition of the award that annual reports are provided to the HRB for the period of the grant. An external advisory board must be set up to direct the development of the Research Methodology Support Centre. An interim review of the Centre, including a site visit, will be carried out. Further information may be requested by the HRB from time to time during the period of the award or at any time after for evaluation purposes.

#### **5. Application and assessment process including criteria for assessment**

Application and assessment will take place in two stages:

Stage 1: Call for 'expressions of interest';

Stage 2: Invitation to short-listed applicants to submit full applications.

##### Stage 1: Call for 'expressions of interest'

Prospective applicants must submit an 'expression of interest' using the HRB's eGrants applications system. This form requests:

1. Information on the principal applicant and co-applicants (biographical details and publication records)
2. A short description of the proposed structure of the Research Methodology Support Centre
3. A short description of the proposed range of expertise and activities within the centre
4. An indicative budget, and a description of the facilities / infrastructure that the host institution(s) will need to provide to support the Centre

'Expressions of interest' will be assessed by a panel of international and national reviewers. Each application will be scored out of 100. Criteria for assessment will include:

- The fit with the objectives of the call (score 40)
- The applicants' track record and expertise in relevant research methodologies, and prior involvement in a support or consultant role in other researcher's projects (score 30)
- The appropriateness of the proposed structure of the Research Methodology Support Centre (score 20)
- Value for money (score 10)

Following this assessment process, a limited number of applicants will be invited to submit full proposals.

##### Stage 2: Submitting full applications

Applications will be subject to international peer review, after which an international review panel will recommend the best quality application. Following this review process, the panel will put forward their recommendations to the Board of the HRB, which will make the final decision on funding.

The criteria for assessment will include:

- The breadth of methods supported, the level to which they will be supported and the ease of access for researchers nationwide;
- The track record and past productivity of the principal applicant and co-applicants, including prior involvement in a support or consultant role in other researcher's projects;

- Evidence that the Centre will be well managed;
- Evidence that institutional infrastructure and support is available to support the Centre.

## **6. Feedback**

Feedback will not be provided to applicants who are unsuccessful at the expressions of interest stage.

Detailed feedback will be provided to applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, who submit full applications.

## **7. How to submit an application**

### Expressions of interest

Applications must be made using the HRB's eGrants application system, which can be accessed through the HRB website [www.hrb.ie](http://www.hrb.ie). The closing date is **23 June 2007**.

The HRB reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet the criteria for the call or is not of a sufficiently high standard to merit consideration.

Applicants who are successful at this stage will be invited to submit full applications.

### Full Applications

Applicants who are invited to submit full applications will be sent details of the applications process. The closing date for submission of full applications is likely to be in September.

### **For further information, please contact**

Dr. Anne Cody

Head of Unit

Research Infrastructure and Special Initiatives Unit

e: [acody@hrb.ie](mailto:acody@hrb.ie)

t: 01-2345138

*The HRB reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet the terms of this call. Canvassing of panel members will result in the disqualification of the applicant. The decision of the Board in respect of any grant application is final and cannot be appealed or reviewed.*

The deadline for submission of applications is **5.00pm on Friday 22 June 2007**. Please note that the system will be taken off-line at 5.00pm.

While we have made every effort to make the online application as straightforward as possible, if you are not familiar with online systems this procedure will take longer than the conventional hard-copy system. For this reason we suggest you allow extra time to complete your application.

Please use the following notes for reference when completing the application form.

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#### Computer Requirements

You will need:

- A PC (personal computer) or Mac

The eGrants system has been optimised to work on Internet Explorer version 6 on a PC.

- Connection to the internet

The eGrants system can be accessed on Internet Explorer/Netscape version 4 or higher. If you have an older version of either browser, you can download a more recent version free of charge at:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/downloads/default.asp> for Internet Explorer.

<http://wp.netscape.com/download/> for Netscape.

**NOTE:** Please note the Web Editor tool is only available if you are using a PC with Internet Explorer version 6 and upward. Please follow the steps above to download the most recent version of Internet explorer if you have an older version.

- An email address
- Adobe Acrobat Reader, version 5

This may be downloaded from:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

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#### Registration

In order to submit an online application with the HRB, you are required to register at the following address:

<http://egrantsproduction.imaxan.ie/>

**Step 1:** Click on 'Register Yourself' on the left-hand menu. Please supply the details of the Principal Investigator/Fellowship Applicant on this screen. The name and address details will appear at the top of your application form. All mandatory fields are marked with an asterisk \*.

**Step 2:** When you have submitted your registration, you will receive an email. Follow the instructions in the email to confirm your registration. The email also contains your username, password and researcher ID. You will need your username and password for logging in to the eGrants site and you will need your researcher ID for all future correspondence with the HRB.

#### Tools

When you are filling out your application form, there are a number of useful tools in a menu on the left-hand side of the computer screen. They are:

- User Home
- Edit Profile
- Email Us
- View Application Layout
- Guidelines
- View Form

- Print Form
- Form Headings

**User Home:** This button will return you to your unique user homepage, which gives details of your project title, its submission status, and the number of days to the submission deadline.

**Edit Profile:** This button allows you to update your personal details, which you entered for your registration.

**Email Us:** You may email the HRB helpdesk ([help@hrb.ie](mailto:help@hrb.ie)) for assistance and your query will be answered within 24-hours Monday to Friday.

**View Application Layout:** This button opens another window that contains a list of all the questions on the form. Use this to skip to whichever question you wish to fill in. This is a useful tool to navigate through sections of the form.

**Guidelines:** This document.

**View Form:** You may use this button at any stage to see the layout of the form, and the content you have entered to date.

**Print Form:** Click here to view your form in print layout and to print off your application form.

**Form Headings:** This button allows you to view each section of the form individually.

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Helpdesk

If you require help with the eGrants system please contact the HRB helpdesk:

Email: [help@hrb.ie](mailto:help@hrb.ie)

Telephone: +353 1 6761176 ext 122

All queries will be dealt with within 24 hours, Monday to Friday.

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#### **Timeout and Saving Information**

Please ensure that you save your information at least once every 50 minutes. The system will automatically log you out after 60 minutes if you do not save your information and you may lose whatever you have entered. This protects your private information and saves valuable system resources.

We recommend that you complete any large sections offline (in MS Word, for example) and copy and paste it into the relevant sections.

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#### **Web Editor**

The Web Editor is only available if you are using a PC with Internet Explorer version 6 and upwards. A Web Editor is software that allows you to format your text and to include symbols. For this scheme, it is available for entering your Research Programme.

If you are not using a PC with Internet Explorer, your Research Programme can be uploaded via a word document.

To use the Web Editor

Click on **Please click here to edit** on the screen. Once you have entered and formatted your text click on the 'save' button.

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Uploading an image file

You cannot use the Web Editor or Text Box for images. This means that your images will appear separately on your application so please ensure that they are referenced in the text of your Research Programme.

You have the option of uploading 2 files to support your research programme.

### **How to upload your file**

1) Make sure your image is in one of these formats:

Joint Photographic Experts Group (.jpeg or .jpg)

Graphic Interchange Format (.gif)

Portable Network Graphics Format (.png)

Please ensure that the file name they are saved under includes no spaces.

2) Create a single document for your image(s) by copying and pasting into one of these formats:

MS Word (.doc)

Adobe PDF (.pdf)

Rich Text Format (.rtf)

Powerpoint (.ppt)

MS Excel (.xls)

MS Publisher (.pub)

3) Check the size of the file (click on properties under File menu). If the file is smaller than 1,440 KB upload it by clicking on the first 'browse' button.

4) If your file is larger than 1,440 KB, you have the option of uploading a second file it by clicking on the second 'browse' button.

5) If the two documents exceed 1,440 KB each (or 2,880 KB in total), the size of the file can be reduced by decreasing the size of the original image and then converting and saving it following the steps above.

**Gantt Charts** in MS Project format (.mpp,.mpt and .mpx) can also be uploaded. Gantt charts can be created in any of the following formats, MS Word (.doc), Adobe PDF (.pdf), Rich Text Format (.rtf), Powerpoint (.ppt), MS Excel (.xls) and MS Publisher (.pub). These files can then be uploaded but must not exceed 1,440 KB in size.

**NOTE:** Please be patient when uploading your file as it may take some time if using a normal telephone line. Do not interrupt transfer unless you see no progress after five or six minutes.

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Filling out your Application Form

Log in to your eGrants home page at:

<http://egrantsproduction.imaxan.ie/>

Please log in using your unique username (email) and password, and select New Application under the heading **Research Methodology Support Centre 2007**.

You can login and logout as often as you wish to fill in the form and you can make changes to any section before you submit your application. After filling in a question, you must click on **Next(Save)** to save the information you have entered. Once you have submitted your application, you will not be able to make changes to it.

You will first be asked to enter your **Project Title**. The title should not exceed 200 characters. Please note that only plain text may be used in entering the project title.

The **Important** notice coming up asks you if you have read the Guidance Notes for this scheme. Choose **'Yes'** in the drop down menu.

**NAVIGATION:** Once you have passed the first question Project Title, on the application form, the option **'View Application Layout'** will appear on the left hand side menu, which contains a list of all the questions on the form. Use this to skip to whichever question you wish to fill in. This is a useful tool to navigate through sections of the form.

## **Application layout**

*Please note that the Expression of Interest stage skips a number of questions which will appear in the full application. The numbering of questions at this stage is not consecutive. This will allow short listed applicants to retain the information already entered when completing the full application form.*

### **Section 1: Details of application and applicants**

#### **1. Applicant's details**

The next screen will show you the details you entered for registration. You can edit these details at any time using the **Edit Profile** button (see 'Tools' above).

#### **2. Co-applicants**

Please choose a Host institution from the drop down list.

List up to seven co-applicants with current posts and contact details

#### **3. Good research practice (not at expression of interest stage)**

Does your institution have in place published standards of good research practice including a formal written procedure for the investigation of allegations of scientific fraud?

#### **4. Summary of the proposal (not at expression of interest stage)**

Include key objectives and explain how multiple parts of the project fit together (max 500 words).

#### **5. Budget summary**

Please fill in the table. To calculate the budget click 'Save/Recalculate Totals' at the bottom of the budget. You must click on 'Save/Recalculate Totals' each time you add details into a new row, or information may be lost.

#### **6. Project description**

The application is expected to address a) the proposed range of expertise and activities within the Centre; b) how national access for a broad spectrum of health and social care practitioners and researchers will be ensured; c) the management structure of the Centre; d) details of any collaborations on which the success of the proposal will depend.

**For PC users:** Please enter your research programme using Web Editor. Please ensure your version of Internet Explorer is 6 or higher. Please click on the URL below to download the most recent version of Internet explorer if you have an older version

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/downloads/default.asp>

To insert symbols, please click on third drop down list entitled font name and choose symbol, the last option on the list. Keystrokes will be entered as symbols. Commonly used symbols and their corresponding keystrokes include:

A  $\alpha$

B  $\beta$

D  $\delta$

G  $\gamma$

P  $\pi$

S  $\sigma$

**For Macintosh users:** Please attach your research programme using the file upload option.

At expression of interest stage, a limit of 1,000 words applies. For the full application, the limit will be 8,000 words. Please be aware that it is responsibility of the applicant to check the word count, since the online system will not automatically enforce it in this section. **The HRB reserves the right not to process applications exceeding the word limit.**

#### **7. References**

A maximum of 10 references relating to the project description can be uploaded by entering their PubMed ID Number or through free text. For the full application, this will be extended to 30 references. Please click on the relevant link.

#### **8. Other research grants (not at expression of interest stage)**

Please list mayor grants awarded to the applicants over the last five years (€500,000 or more).

How will researchers from health care settings and institutions other than the proposed host institution be attracted to access the services of the Methodology Support Centre? (500 words)

#### **9. CVs**

of all applicants: Title, First name, surname, DOB, post, date of appointment, expected end of employment, employer, brief CV including scientific career, posts held and prior experience in consultancy or advisory roles (200 words), publications (five most important)

### **Section 2: Governance and management**

#### **10. Governance and management (not at expression of interest stage)**

Please provide a description of the proposed governance and management structure for the Centre (word limit 1,000)

### **Section 3: Equipment and enabling technologies**

#### **11. Equipment and enabling technologies (not at expression of interest stage)**

Please upload a spreadsheet in Excel or pdf format with the details of budget requested for equipment and enabling technologies, including equipment running and miscellaneous costs. Justify these costs, and explain how the equipment / enabling technologies will be supported regarding technical expertise and infrastructure?

### **Section 4: Personnel**

#### **12. Personnel (not at expression of interest stage)**

Please give the following details for contributors and staff working in the Centre: Post, name if known, start date, % of full time, salary at time of appointment.  
Justify the personnel costs as detailed in the budget section and in the personnel section.  
Please upload a Gantt chart showing timelines for each post, and activities linked to it.

### **Section 5: Institutional support**

#### **13. Institutional support (not at expression of interest stage)**

Please upload a letter of support from the host institution.  
Detail how this initiative fits with the research strategy of the host institution (500 words).

### **Section 6: Financial Strategy**

#### **14. Financial strategy (not at expression of interest stage)**

Financial management and planning: Explain your proposal for the financial management and planning of the facility (500 words).  
Sustainability: Explain the strategic approach for funding the facility after the end of the grant and provide evidence of the institution's commitment to this initiative (300 words).

### **Section 7: Collaborators**

#### **15. Collaborators (not at expression of interest stage)**

Please give the name and contact details of collaborators, the name of the grant applicant they collaborate with, and nature and extend of the collaboration (inc indication of time spent on collaboration and type of input into the Centre; maximum 100 words per collaborator).

#### **16. Research Classification**

Please fill in the three tiers of the HRBs research classification system.

#### **17. External referees**

Please indicate if there are any external referees you would not wish to review your application

#### **18. Where did you hear about this call?**

Please fill in this section so that we can target future dissemination of upcoming calls.

#### **19. Signature pages**

This application needs to be accompanied by two signature pages: one for the host institution and applicants, and one for the collaborators. Please ensure that you send your two signature pages to reach the HRB by 29 June 2007 at 5pm. Applications without signature pages are incomplete and will not be processed.

### **Checklist and Submission**

Please ensure that you have completed all the relevant sections of the application form. Click **Next** and you will be returned to your homepage. To submit your application use **Click to submit** under the heading **Status**. Upon submission, you will receive a submission key as proof of submission. Once you have submitted your application, you cannot edit or unsubmit it.  
The eGrants system automatically generates an email confirming receipt of applications. Please contact help@hrb.ie if you do not receive an email within 24 hours.