Applied Programme Grants (APRO) 2023
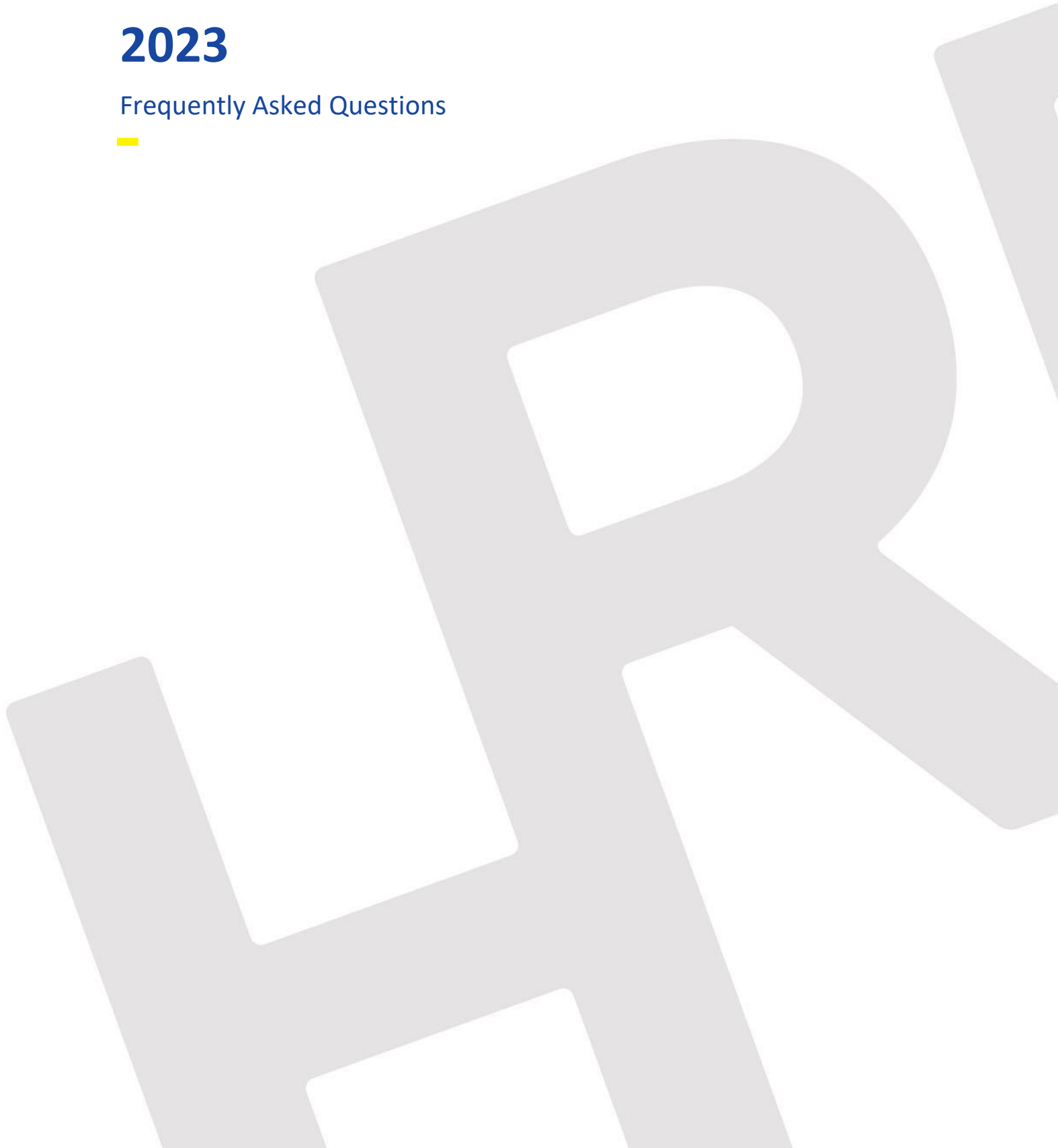
Frequently Asked Questions

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General

How do I apply for the Applied Programme Grants?

Only registered users of the GEMS system can apply for grants. In order to submit an online application to the HRB, applicants are required to register at the following address: https://grants.hrb.ie.

Once logged in to GEMS applicants are taken directly to the Home page which is the starting point to create a new Grant application. Lead Applicant will be asked to complete a check list of mandatory questions. In order to access the application form, the Lead Applicant must satisfy the conditions of this check list.

Submission process using GEMS

Prior to final submission to the HRB, all applications must first be reviewed and approved within GEMS by the signatory approver at the research office (or equivalent) at the Host Institution. It is critical therefore that Lead Applicants leave sufficient time in the process for the Research Office (or equivalent) in their nominated Host Institution to review, seek clarifications and approve applications prior to the final submission date. This may involve being aware of and complying with any internal Host Institution deadlines for review and approval, distinct from the HRB deadline.

What is the closing date for submission of applications?

All applications must be submitted to the HRB by using HRB GEMS by **06 April 2023 at 13:00**.

Applicant Team/Eligibility

Can a Lead Applicant submit more than one application?

No, only one application per Lead Applicant will be considered in this round. However, the Lead Applicants can be a Co-Applicant or Collaborator in another application provided they have the time commitment to fulfil both roles, should the applications be successful.

Does a Lead Applicant need to have last author publications?

Not necessarily, however, Lead Applicants must have at least three or more peer-reviewed original research publications.

Does a Lead Applicant have to have previous peer reviewed funding?

Yes, the Lead Applicant must demonstrate research independence through securing at least one peer-reviewed research grant for a research project/s as the lead applicant or co-applicant. Funding received for travel to seminars/conferences and/or small personal bursaries will not be considered in this regard.

Can a Lead Applicant in a tenured academic post request a salary?

No, the salary or benefits of academic staff within research institutions (including buy out from teaching time etc.) that are already in receipt of salary or benefits will not be funded. If a Lead Applicants who is in an academic post request salary, the application will be deemed ineligible.

Can a contract researcher be a Lead Applicant and apply for their own salary?

Yes, a contract researcher acting as Lead Applicant can apply for their salary. A Host Institution Letter of Support is required for all contract researchers acting as Lead Applicants.

If an applicant has a joint contract with the HSE and an academic institution, can they still apply?

Yes, applicants with a joint contract with the HSE and an academic institution are eligible to apply.

Can I be Lead Applicant on one application and Co-Applicant on another?

Yes, it is worth bearing in mind however that should both applications reach review Panel stage, the amount of time you are spending on both will be scrutinised so this should be realistic.

Can I add a Co-Lead Applicant on this application?

No, for this call you can apply with one Lead Applicant only. Co-Applicants who are leading a work package should be included as part of the Leadership Team.

Who needs to be part of the Applicant Team?

Applications should be made on behalf of a team made up of <u>Researchers, Knowledge User(s) and PPI Contributors</u>:

- The researchers in each team <u>should</u> come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. The inclusion of researchers from relevant disciplines not regularly involved in health research (such as mathematics, business, social sciences, and others) is particularly welcome.

- Knowledge users <u>must</u> be included as part of the applicant team as Co-Applicants or official Collaborators depending on their role within the programme.

- PPI Contributors <u>should</u> be included as part of the applicant team as Co-Applicants or official Collaborators as appropriate. See Appendix II of the Guidance Notes regarding the role of PPI Contributor.

What are the requirements of the Leadership Team?

The Lead Applicant is part of a Leadership Team, who jointly and collaboratively will oversee the delivery of the programme. The Leadership Team should include all work package leads and others as appropriate. The Leadership Team must jointly demonstrate:

- Complementarity of disciplines, skills and expertise as relevant to the proposed research programme.

- Strong collaborative and networking expertise.

- Strong track record demonstrated by contribution to knowledge, a broad range of research outputs and expertise in accelerating the transfer and application of research evidence into policy and practice.

- Substantial experience of research management.

The HRB would welcome the inclusion of knowledge users and/or PPI contributors as well as talented early career researchers in the Leadership Team as appropriate and feasible.

What is a Knowledge User?

A knowledge user is defined as one in a position of authority to influence and/or make decisions about health policy or the delivery of services and can act to ensure that the findings of the research will be translated to influence decision making and change within their (or other) organisations. This is typically managers, policy makers, clinicians, health professionals or others who are in a position to make significant changes to policy or practice. Knowledge user organisations may be Government departments, HSE, other agencies, hospitals or hospital groups, community healthcare organisations, local government, voluntary organisations, research charities, patient/consumer groups or other organisations involved in making decisions regarding the management, structuring and/or delivery of practice or policy in the Irish health and social care system.

How do I represent a large network of Knowledge Users?

While there may be a lot of Knowledge Users across different institutions, the Knowledge Users on the research team should be in a position of authority to influence and/or make decisions about health policy or the delivery of services and can act to ensure that the findings of the research will be translated to influence decision making and change within their (or other) organisations. It will be up to the Lead Applicant to select the best team and then to use the activities under the knowledge translation plan to connect with a wider network of Knowledge Users.

What is Public, Patient and Carer Involvement (PPI)?

PPI represents an active partnership between members of the public, patients and carers and researchers in the research process. This can include, for example, involvement in the choice of research topics, assisting in the design, advising throughout or at particular decision points of the research work or in carrying out the research.

Co-Applicants and Collaborators

Can a Co-Applicant receive payment for their role in the programme?

Co-Applicants can request their own salary, depending on their role and percentage of time dedicated to the research for the duration of the award if they are contract/independent investigators. A Host Institution Letter of Support is required for co-applicants in contract positions and are seeking their own salary. Please note the HRB does not fund the salary or benefits of academic staff within research institutions (including buy out from teaching time etc.). A Co-Applicant may also receive funding for items such as running costs and personnel.

Can a post doctorate researcher be a Co-Applicant?

Yes, a post doctorate researcher may be a Co-Applicant.

Does a Co-Applicant's contract have to cover the duration of the award?

There are no requirements for the duration of a Co-Applicant's contract. However, where a Co-Applicant is applying for salary, their contract must cover the duration of the award, or the Host Institution must be willing to issue/extend a contract should the award be successful; this should be contained in the Co-Applicants letter of support.

How many Co-Applicants can I have?

The maximum number of co-applicants allowed is 15. Co-Applicants include the members of the Leadership Team and others as justified by their role and contribution to the programme. It is not mandatory to have 15 Co-Applicants, but this is to allow for flexibility should this seem appropriate.

Do Co-Applicants need to have support letters?

Co-Applicant letters of support are only required where Co-Applicants are contract researchers applying for their own salary.

Can a Co-applicant/Collaborator be from outside Ireland?

Yes, Co-applicants/Collaborators from outside the Republic of Ireland are welcome where the nature of the research renders this necessary and is appropriately justified in terms of added value for the programme. This is not intended to displace researchers based in Ireland, but to recognise that the Lead Applicant should assemble the best team to tackle the research question.

Will the HRB pay for visits from or to Co-applicants/Collaborators?

Yes, visits to or from Co-Applicants/Collaborators where justified may be included under running costs.

Is a Collaborator agreement form needed?

Yes, a Collaborator Agreement Form must be signed by each Collaborator and uploaded with your application. You can download the form on GEMS.

Can a Collaborator be from private enterprise?

Yes, a Collaborator may be from private enterprise. Applications from a private enterprise are encouraged where they add value to the programme for example in terms of access to expertise, technologies, or reagents. The HRB does not have the capacity to broker these arrangements. The terms of the collaboration should be determined early, and relevant agreements must be in place by the onset of the programme. Consideration should be given to issues such as relative responsibilities, governance arrangements, ownership and copyright, access and sharing of data/materials/samples etc when working up Partnership proposals.

Can a Collaborator receive payment for their role in the programme?

Yes, collaborators are eligible to receive funding from the award when properly detailed and justified in the application.

Will PPI play a large role in this grant call?

In the application, you are asked to describe any public involvement in your research throughout the various stages of identifying and prioritising the research question, the research design, conduct,

analysis, and knowledge translation. Depending on the role in delivering the research activities, PPI contributors can be included as Co-Applicants or Collaborators.

We strongly advise that you consult with your Host Institution who may be able to provide guidance and support on PPI in research.

Scope

I am not sure if my application fits with the scope of the call.

Applied health and social care research for the purposes of this scheme is defined as research with an emphasis on providing evidence that will impact healthcare policy and practice leading to better health outcomes.

Also, APRO requires that research proposals are submitted under a high-level thematic area as set out below:

- Health, wellbeing and keeping populations healthy and independent throughout life

- Mental health and/or disability

- Social Care and the future of community care

- Non-communicable diseases

- Resilient and sustainable healthcare systems

- Pandemic preparedness and/or antimicrobial resistance

- Digital health and/or personalised medicine

Only applications within these thematic areas will be funded in this round.

Detailed guidance on the scope of this call can be found in <u>Section 3 – Scope of Call</u> of the APRO Guidance notes. If after reading this you are still unsure, please contact the HRB for further guidance.

Can my application cover more than one theme from this list?

Yes, in this case select the theme where the greater emphasis lies.

Does APRO fund programmes of research that include the use secondary data from clinical trials?

Yes, applications using secondary data from trials are eligible. However, APRO will not fund applications seeking to evaluate a definitive intervention or a stand-alone feasibility study for a definitive intervention as such studies are supported through the HRB Definitive Intervention and Feasibility Awards (DIFA) scheme instead.

Does APRO fund programmes of research that include trials methodology research?

Yes, applications can include trials methodology research. However, APRO will not fund applications seeking to evaluate a definitive intervention or a stand-alone feasibility study for a definitive

intervention as such studies are supported through the HRB Definitive Intervention and Feasibility Awards (DIFA) scheme instead.

Programme Description

Do I need to write a systematic review as part of this application?

No, in section 3.1 - Current Knowledge, Background to the Area, Relevance and Knowledge Gap you should describe the background to the research application and detail the size and nature of the issue to be addressed, and support this with evidence gathered systematically prior to this application. This can include referencing of (1) a systematic identification of previous work, (2) critical appraisal, (3) synthesis of the evidence and (4) interpretation of findings. Where available, include a description of any pilot work, professional and consumer consensus studies already undertaken.

How many work packages can I add to this programme of research?

There are no limits to the number of work packages you can include on this application. As a guide, we would anticipate each programme to have between three and seven work packages.

What level of detail is being requested in section 3.3 – Research Programme?

In section 3.3 - Research Programme you should outline the proposed research including each work packages that will form the programme of research. This should include a description of and the objectives and deliverables for each work package. In addition to this how each work package contributes to the overall programme of research should be included. Please note that the 2000-word limit refers to the overall word count for describing all the work packages of the research programme.

There is no maximum word count for describing the Research Design and Methodological Approach. What level of detail should be included in this section?

We have left the word count in section 3.4 - Research Design and Methodological Approach without a limit, given the complexity a programme of research and the variation in number of work packages there may be between applications. This section should be used to detail in more depth the general experimental approaches, study designs and techniques that will be used in each work package. Please aim to pitch the level of detail so that reviewers can understand what you are aiming to do, without listing every single detail.

Funding

How much can I apply for?

The maximum amount that can be requested from the HRB per application is **€2.5M** (inclusive of overheads) per award, for a duration between 48 and 60 months.

How do I determine what gross salary to pay?

Applicants should use the IUA website scales for the most up-to-date recommended salary scales for academic researchers (http://www.iua.ie/research-innovation/researcher-salary-scales/). Pay scales

used and the level and point on the scale must be stated and justified. Applicants should include annual pay increments for staff and related costs (pension contribution, employer's PRSI contribution, and overhead contribution) in the budget.

For employees who are not academic researchers the relevant pay scales should be used for their profession. Please note employee pension contribution of 5% has already been incorporated into the IUA gross salary figure.

Salaried researchers who are registered for a PhD degree (e.g., clinical fellows) are expected to have a contribution to gross salary costs (inclusive of employee's pension contribution) up to a maximum amount of Level 3, Point 1 of the most up to date IUA scale.

In line with the proposed new pay agreement for State employees please apply a salary contingency of 3% from 1st October 2024 onwards. Please note this contingency should be applied cumulatively year on year.

Does the HRB pay pension contributions?

Pension provision up to a maximum of 20% of gross salary will be paid to the Host Institution to enable compliance with the Employment Control Framework (an additional 5% employee contribution is part of the salary). The level of employer contribution should be in accordance with the model adopted by the Host Institution.

If applicable, state the amount of employer contribution based on the pro rata salary and note the % of pro rata salary used to calculate this for reference.

Exceptions apply where Circular letter 6/2007 applies. Circular Letter 6/2007 states that the pensions contribution of all Public Health Service employees who, on or after 1 June 2007, are granted secondments or periods of special leave with pay to enable them take up appointments with other organisations, including other Public Health Sector organisations, will be increased to 25% of gross pensionable pay. The rate of 25% of gross pensionable pay referred to in this context is the pension contributions to be paid by the body to which the employee is seconded – it does not include any pension contributions which employees make themselves. Where no such arrangements are in place, the HRB will not be liable for costs.

Are overheads included within the €2.5M threshold?

Yes, overheads are included within these limits.

Are pension costs included within the €2.5M threshold?

Yes, pension costs are included within these limits.

How is the overhead contribution calculated?

The overhead payment is 30% of Total Direct Modified Costs (TDMC excludes student fees, equipment, and capital building costs) for laboratory or clinically based research and 25% of Total Direct Modified Costs if desk-based research excluding student fees, equipment and capital building costs.

Note: Overheads will only be paid on the costs requested from the HRB only.

What costs are included in the overhead contribution?

The following costs are included in the overhead contribution: recruitment costs, bench fees, office space, software, contribution to gases, bacteriological media preparation fees, waste fees, bioinformatics access. Therefore, these should not be included in the budget as direct costs. A copy of the HRB overheads policy can be found at the following link: Health Research Board: Use of Research Overheads.

I would like to hire a salaried researcher to carry out research work on this programme and they would like to register for a PhD; will the HRB pay their fees?

Only personnel in receipt of a stipend as set by the Host Institution are eligible to receive a student fee contribution.

How does the HRB contribute to fees?

HRB will pay a contribution to fees based on the fee level for the first year of entry, and each year payable. No increments are allowed for fees.

Can I hire a consultant to carry out part of the programme?

Yes, this cost should be included under running costs.

Can Co-Applicants who are based in another institute/organisation receive part of the budget/overheads?

The HRB will pay the award directly to the Host Institution. The Host Institution may provide running costs/overheads to a Co-Applicant's institute and the arrangements for this should be agreed between the two institutes.

Where a co-funding contribution is being made where should the co-funding contribution be added in the GEMS budget section?

Where a co-funding contribution is being made as part of the application, this should be added under the co-funding budget heading only. The other budget headings including overheads are only for the breakdown of the HRB contribution.

Does HRB support costs related to FAIR Data Management?

Yes, you should include costs related to data-related and data management activities in line with best practice of data management and stewardship and the FAIR principles incurred during the lifetime of the programme.

What type of FAIR Data Management costs can be included?

The HRB will support costs with:

- People – staff time per hour for data collection, anonymisation, management/ stewardship support, training, etc.

- Storage and computation – cloud storage, domain hosting charge

- Data access – secondary data access, costs for preparing data for sharing (e.g., anonymisation)

- Deposition and reuse – costs for depositing research data and metadata in an open access data repository, defining semantic models, making data linkable, choosing the licence, defining metadata for dataset, deploying/publishing

- Others – when properly justified

Note that the HRB is currently not covering the cost of long-term preservation of data, and that this list is not exhaustive and aims to provide examples only of eligible costs.

Personnel

Can I hire a PhD student to carry out research work on this programme?

Yes, however please note applicants must demonstrate clearly that the level, expertise, and experience of proposed research personnel matches the ambition and scale of the research and that they possess the necessary breadth and skills in all methodological areas required to deliver the proposed programme of work. Unlike the HRB's career development awards, this scheme is not framed as a training initiative. Where junior personnel registered for a higher degree are proposed to work on the programme, Lead Applicants must carefully consider the complexity, scale, objectives and dependencies of the research and the skills, expertise and experience level required to carry it out, especially if involving one or more PhD student(s). In such instances, Lead Applicants must carefully consider the suitability of such research for PhD students, in terms of delivering a clearly identifiable original research project or the potential difficulties in clustering various pieces of work packages for a PhD thesis. The HRB strongly encourages four-year support for PhD candidates in line with other HRB-funded doctoral training programmes such as SPHeRE[1], ICAT[2] and Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDA).

Should a PhD student be registered on a structured programme?

The HRB strongly encourages four-year support for PhD candidates in line with other HRB funded doctoral training programmes such as SPHeRE, ICAT and Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDA). If the programme is within the Population Health Sciences or Health Services Research (PHHSR) areas and the Lead Applicant is requesting a PhD candidate, the HRB strongly recommends that the Lead Applicant provide some training through the SPHeRE PhD programme, which is Ireland's national research training programme for PHHSR. It is not necessary to have a candidate identified at this early stage, however, please note that identified/nominated candidates will need to apply officially to the SPHeRE programme (usually around March) and have to be interviewed by the SPHeRE Directors in collaborations with the Lead Applicant (usually at the end of May). No additional fees (in addition to the student fees) accrue to the SPHeRE programme for the inclusion of a self-funded Scholar. Please also note that the purchase of some or all SPHeRE training modules (six in total) in year 1 may be another option to provide a more structured training to the PhD candidate through SPHeRE. Please contact the Programme Manager Katherine Walsh (katherinewalsh@rsci.com) for details of the SPHeRE programme.

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[1] Structured Population and Health Services Research Education Programme **http://www.sphereprogramme.ie/**

[2] Irish Clinical Academic Training Programme **https://icatprogramme.org/**

Can I hire more than one person to carry out research work on this programme?

Yes, please note the type and number of research personnel hired should be the most appropriate to successfully carry out the proposed research.

Supporting Documents

What documents should be uploaded with my application form?

You must upload the following documents:

- Host Institution Letters of Support, if applicable

- Gantt chart

- Governance Model Figure

- Infrastructure Agreement Forms, if applicable

- Programme Description Figures: Two documents with a maximum of 5 figures each (optional)

- Copy of Research Ethics Committee Approval (if available)

- Collaborator agreement forms, if applicable (required for all collaborators)

Who needs to provide Host Institution Letters of Support?

Host Institution Letters of Support need to be provided for (1) all Lead Applicants in a contract position and (2) Researcher Co-Applicants in a contract position who are seeking their own salary.

Do Co-Applicants have to sign-off the application?

Each Co-Applicant is invited to view the application form online and approve content prior to submission.

Do I need to contact the Dean of Research to sign off on my application?

As part of the online application process, you will be asked to select the **Dean of Research or equivalent person** authorised to endorse research grant applications for your Host Institution. Their approval is necessary to allow the application to be submitted to the HRB. **Please note that as part of the online system the Host Institutions will approve and submit each application on behalf of the applicant.**

When the application is submitted for approval online, emails are sent to the selected signatory informing them that their approval is requested. If a signatory rejects the application the Lead Applicant will be notified, along with any feedback the signatory has supplied. The application can then be amended and re-submitted; it will be returned to the signatory who made the rejection and continues through the approval process as before.

When signatories approve the application, it will be sent automatically to the HRB to be considered for funding, a grant application number will be assigned to the application and a confirmation email will be sent to the Lead Applicant.

Do I need to provide an infrastructure agreement forms (IAF)?

Applications availing of the advice, research design, data management services and/or other forms of support from a Clinical Research Facility/Centre (CRF/CRC), other infrastructure (e.g., HRB-TMRN, Centre for Applied Medical Imaging, CAMI, Centre for Support and Training in Analysis and Research (CSTAR) or **a biobank** are required to provide additional information detailing the scope and nature of the engagement. Please note, if your **only** research infrastructure for this research programme is a biobank, and you have already provided details of this in Section 3.13 and completed an IAF, you do not need to fill this information in again in Section 4.2.

Submission

How will I know that my application has been successfully submitted?

Once the HI endorses your application it will be sent automatically to the HRB to be considered for funding, a grant application number will be assigned to the application, and you will receive a confirmation email.

I have submitted my application but have just realised I have amendments to make; can I amend the application?

No. Once you have submitted your application, you cannot edit or unsubmit it.

Review Process

Will public review be part of the review process?

Yes, public reviewers will be included to assess the quality of PPI in the proposal. They will provide comments and a rating but not a score. For shortlisted applications, the public review comments and rating will be shared with the review panel for discussion. PPI will not be a standalone assessment criteria, but the review panel will be asked to consider PPI as relates to any of the assessment criteria.