Applied Programme Grants (APRO) 2023 Provisional information

12 December 2022

Please note that this information is meant to encourage potential applicant teams to start conversations. It does not represent the full guidance notes for the call and is subject to being updated before the call goes live.

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| Key Dates & Times | |
| Application Open | XX January 2023 |
| Application Closing Date | XX April 2023 @13:00 |

*Applications must be completed and submitted through the HRB online Grant E-Management System (GEMS) (*[*https://grants.hrb.ie*](https://grants.hrb.ie)*), and this system will close automatically at the stated deadline and timeline listed above.*

1. Introduction

The Health Research Board (HRB) Strategy (2021-2025)[[1]](#footnote-2) sets out a lead role of the HRB to invest in research that delivers value for health, the health system, society, and the economy. The HRB Strategy aims to invest in research that informs the decisions and actions of [knowledge users](#Knowledge_User) in the Irish health and social care system by supporting applied research projects. The HRB supports research across the broad range of health and social care through a mix of investigator-initiated and targeted research and across a variety of time horizons. We believe that having knowledge users involved in key stages of the research will lead to improved research outcomes which are more likely to be applied in practice and deliver the greatest benefit.

Programme awards provide support for the long-term development of a health research field by a group of established investigators with an outstanding track record of achievement. Programmes generally comprise a number of high-quality interrelated projects, usually described in separate work packages, that form a coherent theme, where added value is gained from the combination of the various strands of research. Collaboration between research groups and institutions is encouraged. Programme grants focus on specific research objectives that deliver outputs and outcomes with a pathway to impact, rather than inputs.

The HRB Applied Programme grants scheme is a researcher-led scheme aimed at supporting research programmes of up to five years’ duration and up to a maximum level of €2.5 million over 5 years. APRO complements other investigator led research supported through the Investigator Led Projects (ILP) and applied projects supported through the Applied Partnership Awards (APA). The APRO supports research of a greater scale and ambition compared to these two schemes, aiming to support the area rather than one specific project within the area.

1. Aim and Objectives

The Applied Programme Grants aims to support a strategic programme of applied research in health and social care that will have an impact on the health and social care of individuals, population health and the health system in Ireland and beyond.

The objectives are to

* address stated national/EU/global priorities in health, public health or social care under the broad thematic areas listed below
* Support high-quality and team-based research which is likely to lead to a step change in practice and/or in outcomes to the health system, population health, or to service users and carers
* Tackle an identified problem from a variety of perspectives with a collaborative, complementary and multidisciplinary approach
* Use a range of multidisciplinary and methodological approaches
* Develop collaborations between researchers and knowledge users with a view to making outputs useable for implementation or informing policy and decision making
* Clearly demonstrate how patients, service users and/or carers have been involved and engaged with the programme
* Include clear plans for implementation, knowledge mobilisation and dissemination

1. Scope of 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.

While the call announcement does not specify specific research topics or specific diseases, APRO requires that research proposals are submitted as appropriate under a number of high-level thematic areas as set out below. These reflect broad health and social care challenges nationally and internationally and include areas that cause significant burden or emerging areas where there is a need for increased capacity and additional long-term commitment of funds. These themes also reflect the Mission and the current Strategy of the HRB. Research programmes that include work-packages in any and or areas of the HRB remit – patient-oriented research, health services research, population health research- are welcome.

Applications should be submitted under one of the following Thematic Areas:

* Health, wellbeing and keeping populations healthy and independent throughout life
* Mental health and disability
* Social Care and the future of community care
* Non-communicable Diseases
* Resilient and sustainable healthcare systems
* Pandemic preparedness and antimicrobial resistance
* Digital health and personalised medicine

Programmes seeking to address the integration of health and social care to improve patient, service user and carer outcomes, and those that include work packages aimed at tackling the social care dimension of healthcare problems, are particularly welcome.

It is expected that diverse methodological approaches are adopted and work packages aimed at addressing specific methodological issues in health and social care research can be included.

Note: Programme Grants are not intended to support exploratory research with no likelihood of significant benefit to health and social care services users, carers and the wider public throughout the programme.

This scheme will support teams of researchers from a broad range of disciplines to work with knowledge users and PPI contributors on a programme of applied health and social care research.

Work programmes must:

* Address research question(s) in the thematic areas above and be explicitly linked to documented evidence needs of knowledge user organisation(s)
* Have a number of related research strands which together constitute a broad and coherent work programme
* Clearly demonstrate the value which will be gained from the combinations of the various strands of research
* Clearly demonstrate the potential for influencing policy or practice.

Given the scale and breadth of the Applied Research Programmes, it is expected (but not mandatory) that applications include a number of institutions and organisations.

We expect that evidence supporting the case for the research programme has been gathered systematically, i.e., as systematic reviews or other evidence synthesis formats. Simple literature overviews are not sufficient. Evidence synthesised systematically should include evidence of (1) a systematic identification of previous work, (2) critical appraisal, (3) synthesis of the evidence and (4) interpretation of findings.

**Where an application is outside the scope of the scheme, the application will be deemed ineligible and will not be accepted for review.**

1. Funding Available, Duration and Start Date

The APRO 2023 scheme will provide funding for projects up to a maximum of **€2.5M** (inclusive of overheads) per award. Funding will be available for Programmes of between 48 – 60 months. The amount awarded and the length of the funding period will depend on the nature of the proposed work, up to a maximum level of €2.5 million over 5 years. Programmes using novel designs which facilitate shorter, more efficient programmes with earlier results are welcome

Quality permitting, the HRB anticipates making a minimum of 5 awards. All applications will be assessed competitively using the same scoring criteria. Successful awards will be made based on excellence. The themes are solely a vehicle to bring some focus to applications in this round.

The award will offer research related costs including salary for research staff, running costs, administrative and programme management costs, FAIR data management costs, equipment and dissemination costs, and overheads contributions. Where required, time or backfill for the contribution of knowledge users may be charged.

**Programmes should start on or as close as possible to 1 November 2023.**

1. Eligibility Criteria

This call is not open to Host Institutions from Northern Ireland.

* 1. Applicant Team

Applications should be made on behalf of a team made up of **researchers, knowledge user(s) and PPI contributors**.

* The researchers in each team should 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 **must** be included as part of the applicant team as Co-Applicants or official Collaborators depending on their role within the project.
* PPI Contributors **should** be included as part of the applicant team as appropriate. See [Appendix II](#AppendixIII) regarding the role of PPI Contributor.
  + 1. 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.

1. Timeframe

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| Date |  |
| DD January 2023 | Call Opening |
| DD April 2023 @13:00 | Call Closing |
| DD May/June 2023 | Scientific and public review |
| DD July 2023 | Applicant response |
| DD September 2023 | Panel Review Meeting |
| DD September 2023 | HRB Board Decision |
| DD October/November 2023 | Budget negotiations and contracting |
| DD November 2023 | Earliest start date |

1. <https://www.hrb.ie/strategy-2025/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)