

# HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme 2024

Guidance Notes for Charities

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## Guidance Notes

Key Dates & Times	
Charities Open Calls	June 2023 onwards
Charities Internal Application Deadline	20 October 2023*
HRB Application Deadline	27 March 2024 @13:00

*\*suggested date to allow maximum time for peer reviewer search*

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

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## 1 Introduction

- Any charity submitting applications to the HRB must have been approved as a co-funding partner under the HRCI-HRB Co-funding Policy. The policy and a short application form are part of the set of documents forwarded to charities at the launch of the call. In the application form, the charity needs to nominate a main contact person within their organisation with whom the HRB will liaise throughout the process.
- Only one application per Lead Applicant to this scheme will be considered.
- Each HRCI-registered charity can submit one more application than they can afford to fund up to the limit of four in total.
- Each charity can have a maximum of three applications funded. Should the charity have submitted one more application than they can afford to fund and all are recommended for funding at joint Panel stage, the lowest ranking application as judged by the committee will not be funded.
- Charities with an annual gross income of less than €150,000 can request up to 75% co-funding from HRB, while charities with an annual gross income of €150,000 or above can request 50% co-funding. Charities qualifying for 75% funding will have to provide further information within the application forms. They should note that the HRCI levy on the HRB portion of funding will be payable on 75% of project costs, should they select this option.
- Co-funding of a single project between up to four charities with common interests is allowed. In this scenario the combined charity contribution will be 50% of the project cost regardless of the charities' gross annual income. Charities will agree themselves the division of funding contributed by their organisations. All charities will be partners in the multi-party contract, if successful. Each co-funding agreement may include arrangements where Irish charities co-fund with international charities which are not a member of HRCI. All Irish charity partners must be HRCI members.
- If co-funding applications involving more than one charity, the charities will nominate one contact point for the HRB. This contact point will coordinate any communication with the other charities co-funders in a timely manner.
- A standard **APPLICATION FORM** has been developed for this round of the Joint Funding Scheme. Only applications submitted on this form will be considered by the Joint Panel.
- Applications must be submitted via the HRB's online Grant E-Management System (GEMS). Applications submitted via email to the HRB will be deemed ineligible.

**For the purposes of this call each charity must adopt the HRB “Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Policy” and sign the confidentiality and conflict of interest declaration ([Appendix I](#))**

## 2 Aim and Objectives

HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme aims to fund researchers and research teams to conduct internationally competitive and innovative research in **areas of strategic relevance to each individual charity**.

The objectives are to:

- Fund research that addresses the strategic aims of the individual charities
- Support high quality, internationally relevant research
- Create new knowledge and evidence of benefit to health and social care

## 3 Scope of Call

This scheme provides funding for clearly defined research projects in areas of strategic relevance to each individual charity. It allows for co-funding of a single project by either up to four Irish HRCI charities or by one Irish HRCI charity and an international charity.

## 4 Funding Available, Duration and Start Date

The HRCI-HRB Joint Funding scheme will provide funding for projects up to a maximum of **€300,000 (exclusive of overheads)** per award. The award will offer research related costs including salary for research staff, running costs, PPI costs, FAIR data management costs, equipment and dissemination costs, and overheads contributions. Overheads of 30% of Total Direct Modifiable Costs will be added to the portion of the research funded by the HRB.

The HRB plans to commit in the region of €3.1M (HRB contribution of €1.75M and charities contribution of €1.35M). Quality permitting it is expected that a minimum of 11 awards will be funded. Awards will have a duration of between **12 and 36 months**.

**Note: The HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme will not fund the salary and related costs of tenured academic staff within research institutions (including buy-out from teaching time etc.).**

The budget requested and the award duration **must** reflect the scale and nature of the proposed research, and reviewers will thoroughly assess the level of funds and timeframe requested when reviewing the application.

**The earliest start date of the Grant is 01 October 2024.**

## 5 Phase 1 – Charity Call, Review Process and Assessment Criteria

**Phase 1** is managed by the relevant co-funding Charity and **Phase 2** is managed by the HRB.

### 5.1 Charity Call

The 2024 call is formally open from **06 September 2023**. Charities have the option to launch calls in advance of this during July and August.

Any charities interested in participating in this round **must contact HRCI to receive all relevant documents**. These include:

- Instructions for Charities (this document)
- Instructions for Applicants
- HRCI-HRB Co-funding Policy
- HRCI-HRB Co-funding Partner Application form
- **Part A1** Charity endorsement (completed online on GEMs, see section 4 below)
- **Part A2** Charity overview
- **Part B1** Application form
- **Part B2** Gantt Chart (for researcher applicants)
- **Part B3** Figures (for researcher applicants)
- **Part C1** Collaboration Agreement Form
- **Part C2** Infrastructure Agreement Form
- **Part C3** - Letter(s) of support regarding contract status
- **Part D1** Signature page for Lead Applicant
- **Part D2** Signature page for host institution
- **Part E** Peer Review form
- **Part F** Applicant Response
- **Part G** Charity Selection Panel Signature form

As per previous years participating charities will run their own call based on their own strategic priorities but using the standard application guidance and forms provided. It is recommended calls close by October 20<sup>th</sup> 2023 to allow sufficient time for peer review.

### 5.2 International Peer Review

**International peer review:**

Each charity carries out a peer review of all of the applications they have received. Peer Reviewers will focus on the following assessment criteria.

### **Scientific Quality and Innovation (50%)**

- Evidence supports need for proposed project
- Design and methodology appropriate
- Project plan and risk mitigation for project delivery

### **Research Team and Environment (30%)**

- Applicant team expertise and experience relevant for project
- Supports, infrastructure, environment
- Project staffing and funding

### **Impact (20%)**

- Potential impact on patients, public and/or healthcare system
- Planned knowledge dissemination and translation

At least **three international peer reviewers** are required for each application.

For the purpose of this call an international reviewer is an active researcher (not e.g. a charity administrator) based outside of the Republic of Ireland. The potential reviewer **must not**:

- Have co-published with the lead applicant or co-applicants in the past 5 years.
- Currently or recently been working in the same organisation/department as any member of the applicant team.
- Be industry employees or have any apparent links with the pharmaceutical industry or commercial organisation.

Further guidance on selection of peer reviewers can be found in [Appendix II](#). Email templates which can be used when contacting prospective peer reviewers can be found in [Appendix IV](#).

**An exception to the requirement of peer reviewers being based outside of Ireland applies where the Host Institution for the research project is based outside of Ireland. In this case peer reviewers based in Ireland may be used. All other peer review selection criteria must still be met.**

Peer reviewer comments must be captured on the standard peer reviewer feedback form provided (part E). The HRB policy on Confidentiality and Conflict of interest must be provided to and adopted by the international peer reviewers ([Appendix I](#)).

Peer reviewers should explicitly disclose whether they have a conflict of interest or not on the reviewers' form. Those that declare a conflict of interest should not take further part in the review process.

**Charities must submit all peer reviewers with completed Conflict of Interest check to HRB for validation of Conflict of Interest by 12<sup>th</sup> Jan 2024. Peer reviewers selected after this date will be checked prior to the Joint Selection Panel stage. Where a Conflict of interest is identified the review will not be shared with the Joint Selection Panel.**

### 5.2.1 Short-listing Applications

Charities should short-list applications based on the average peer review scores received. The maximum number of applications that can be funded per charity is three however, there is an option to submit one additional application up to a maximum of four.

**Applications must receive an average peer review score above 6 to be eligible to be put forward to the joint selection committee. Where the average peer review score has been skewed by an outlier these applications can be brought forward as well. In this scenario the HRB should be contacted to confirm the application meets the scoring threshold. All peer reviews received must be considered.**

For an average score to be considered skewed all but one of the scores should be above 6 and an individual outlier is bringing the average down below 6. An outlier score is defined as a score that is two scores or more below the next lowest score, removal of which will bring the average above the threshold of 6.

### 5.2.2 Applicant Response

Applicant teams of shortlisted applications will be provided with a time-limited opportunity to respond to peer review comments (see [Section 8 Timeframe](#)).

Once notified that the application is short-listed by the charity; the peer review comments should be made available to the Lead Applicant. The Lead Applicant will have 10 working days only to submit their response to the Charity, and the response has a **maximum word count of 2000 words total for the peer review response.** No figures can be uploaded. The response can be used by the Charity Selection Panel to inform their process and will be provided to members of the Review Panel, in advance of the Panel meeting, along with the application, the peer comments and rating.

Further guidance on the applicant response can be found in [Appendix V](#).

## 5.3 Charity Selection Panel

Each charity will have its own final selection or endorsement step (e.g. bring to their research committee for approval or hold a charity selection panel meeting) to agree the applications which will be submitted to the HRCI-HRB Joint Selection Panel. Charities will be asked how many applications in total they have received, and how many they have put forward to the HRCI-HRB Joint Selection Panel. The charity committee or panel must adopt the HRCI-HRB Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement in advance of any discussions and must disclose if any conflict arises and how the conflict was dealt with. **Charities are encouraged to include the perspective of the public and patients as relevant into their selection process.**

**Applications must receive an average peer review score above 6 to be eligible to be put forward to the joint selection committee. All peer reviews received must be considered.**



**Note:** see the HRCI research governance guide<sup>1</sup> for health research charities, if you require guidance on how to manage this.

When the applications have been selected by the charities, the final full applications are submitted to the HRB via GEMs for consideration by the Joint Selection Panel.

**Please note that relevance has been excluded as an assessment criterion for peer reviewers in the HRCI-HRB 2024 round, as it is considered that charities will endorse research proposals that are relevant to the populations that they represent.**

## 5.4 Suggestions for potential Panel Members to the HRB

To facilitate an efficient search for panel members, charities who intend to participate in this round should confirm this via email and include the **title of all applications that they have received to the HRB when requested to do so by email (mid Jan 2024)**. The HRB fully acknowledges that this does not represent any commitment from the charity to submit these applications and appreciates that the strategic review in the charity will go on beyond this time point.

Whilst the HRB aims to secure panel members who are generalists, we also need to have a sense of the balance of research expertise necessary to cover the spectrum of applications. All participating HRCI charities will be given an option to propose appropriate panel members to the HRB.

## 6 Submission of Applications

**The deadline for submission of selected applications to the HRB will be 27 March 2024 at 13:00.**

*Please note that the HRB will not follow up any supporting documentation related to the application, such as Host Institution's Letters of Support, Collaborator Agreement Form, Gantt charts etc. It is the responsibility of the Charity to **upload** all supporting documentation prior to submission. If the documentation is not received by the HRB on time, in the correct format or is not properly signed or submitted, the application will be deemed ineligible without further review.*

The HRB reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet the terms of this call. The HRB's Policy on Appeals on funding decisions is available at <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/all-grant-policies/hrb-policy-on-appeals/>.

### 6.1.1 Grant E-Management System (GEMS)

Applications must be completed and submitted through the HRB online Grant E-Management System (GEMS) (<https://grants.hrb.ie/>) and the system will open on **28<sup>th</sup> February 2024**.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://bit.ly/HRCI\\_ResearchGovernanceGuide](https://bit.ly/HRCI_ResearchGovernanceGuide)

Detailed guidance on using this system will be provided both at the HRCI-HRB workshop in September and via a GEMS guidance document which will be circulated. All documentation must be submitted via GEMS by **the 27 March 2024**.

Applications sent to the HRB via email will not be accepted and will be deemed ineligible.

It is the responsibility of the charity contact point to ensure that applications are completed in full, and all necessary documentation is received by the HRB on, or before, the closing dates indicated.

### 6.1.2 Create GEMS Account

The GEMS system will allow Charities to create an account which will capture Charity details. Where charities are co-funding an award, the coordinating Charity partner will create an account and there will be the opportunity to add details of co-funding charity partners within each application. Each application from Charities to the HRB will be submitted individually.

Charities will be asked to tick a box to agree to each of the following statements prior to commencing the application process via GEMS.

- On behalf of my organisation, I agree that if this project is successfully funded we will pay HRCI a 5% levy on the amount of funding contributed to the project by the HRB (excluding the HRB overhead contribution), payment of which will be required in Q1 of 2025.
- I acknowledge that failure to pay this levy or a significant delay to payment, not agreed to by HRCI, will exclude my organisation from future participation in the JFS.
- Charities with an annual income of less than €150,000 and reserves of less than €150,000, are eligible for 75% project funding from the HRB. On behalf of my organisation, I agree that the decision on whether or not we are eligible for the 75% HRB funding is based on the income and reserves detailed in my organisation's most recent statutory accounts, which we will provide to HRCI, regardless of the sources or purposes for these funds.
- On behalf of my organisation, and based on our income/reserves, I select to fund this project through:
  - 50% funding from the HRB (HRCI levy on 5% of HRB contribution)
  - 75% funding from the HRB (HRCI levy on 5% of HRB contribution)
- I acknowledge that as a co-manager of this scheme, HRCI will have full, confidential access to this application and all related documents.

### 6.1.3 Complete Charity Endorsement and upload documentation for each application

For each application to the HRCI-HRB 2024 Funding Scheme, Charities will complete **Part A1 - Charity Endorsement** on GEMS and upload all documentation including the application form and supporting documentation, as detailed below.

- Part A1 - Charity Endorsement of Application (completed on GEMs)
- GEMs Uploads:
  - Part A2: Charity Overview
  - Part B1 - Application
  - Part B2 – Gantt Chart
  - Part B3 - Figures
  - Part C - Additional forms (e.g. C1 Collaboration Agreement, C2 Infrastructure Agreement)
  - Part D - Signature pages D1 Lead Applicant and D2 host institution
  - Part E - Peer Review forms
  - Part F - Applicant Response form
  - Part G - Charity Selection Committee/ Panel Form

**Note: Please do not add any logos to the application form, reviewer form, collaborator agreement form or signature page.** This is to ensure that file sizes do not exceed 2 MB. At time of publication the HRB is investigating the possibility of an upload function for Charity logos, as this is a technical requirement, we will require further time to confirm if this is a possibility.

#### **Further details of documentation to be submitted to HRCI-HRB**

##### **Charity Details: captured when creating GEMs account.**

Please provide the Charity name and contact details. For projects involving more than one charity, the coordinating charity should complete this GEMs account information, and details of co-funding charities can subsequently be added within each individual application.

##### **Part A1: Charity Endorsement of Application (on GEMs)**

A brief justification for the selection of each individual application as it relates to the strategic aims of the charity is requested as detailed in Q1-5 below. This information will be critical to inform the Joint Selection Panel reviewers as to the importance of each individual project, from the point of view of the endorsing charity. Where charities are co-funding an award, charity details and a justification which reflects the strategic priorities of the charity partnership is requested. The coordinating Charity partner will submit details to GEMs on behalf of co-funding charity partners.

##### **Q.1 Charity Background Information**

Please provide an overview of the charity or charities to include the charity profile, main objectives and key activities. The word limit is **400 words**. For projects involving more than one charity the word limit is **800 words**.

##### **Q.2 Charity Strategic Research Priorities**

Please outline the charity or charities strategic research priorities. Any PPI which helped shape the charity research priorities and/or the charity funding call can be outlined here. For projects involving

more than one charity please outline the rationale behind the decision to co-fund. The word limit is **300 words**.

### **Q.3 Application details**

Provide Application code, Lead Applicant, Application title, abstract, duration, budget and name of research institution.

### **Q.4 Strategic Relevance for Application**

Based on the charities own selection process please provide justification as to how this application fits with the strategic aims of the charity or charities and why it has been put forward for consideration by the Joint Selection Panel. The word limit is **300 words**.

### **Q.5. Public Review of Applications received by Charity**

Outline, if used, any Public and Patient PPI involvement in the charity review process used to inform selection or endorsement of applications for submission to this call. The word limit is **300 words**.

### **Q.6 Yes/No**

I confirm that the Charity has been approved by the HRB as a co-funding partner under the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme. I have read this application and the relevant Guidance notes, and I confirm that this application has undergone peer review and selection in accordance with HRCI-HRB policy and the strategic aims of the charity. I confirm that the charity is in a position to co-fund the award if successful and is willing to enter into a multi-party agreement between the HRB and the Host Institution, if successful.

### **Part A2-G: GEMs uploads:**

The following documentation must be uploaded to GEMs for each application.

Please note: where a number of charities are co-funding an award, please use the charity initials of the coordinating charity in the labelling throughout.

### **Part A2: Charity details**

This form will capture information regarding the Charity background and peer review process.

The charity must indicate how many applications they received in total, and how many were shortlisted for submission to the HRB and specify who participated in the discussion and selection of applications.

Charities requesting 75% funding are asked to provide additional details on how the scale of the research funding commitment is appropriate to the scale of their business activities, including if there

are any other projects currently ongoing. This preceding information will not be included to the Panel reviewers as part of the application.

## **Part B1**

### **Application form:**

Uploaded electronically via GEMs as a single file labelled with the charity name/initials, year e.g. Faber Association-2024-1 Part B1

## **Part B2**

### **Gantt Chart:**

Outlining the project plan. Uploaded electronically via GEMs as a single **word or pdf file** labelled with the charity name/initials, year e.g. Faber Association-2024-1 Part B2

## **Part B3**

### **Figures:**

To support the proposal. Uploaded electronically via GEMs as **single word or pdf** file labelled with charity name/initials, year e.g. Faber Association-2024-1 Part B3

## **Part C**

### **Where applicable, Additional forms:**

#### **C1 - Collaboration Agreement Forms:**

Must be submitted for all collaborators. Uploaded electronically via GEMs Collated as a **single pdf file** labelled with the charity name/initials, year e.g. Faber Association-2024-1 Part C1

#### **C2 - Research Infrastructure Agreement Forms:**

Must be submitted for applications using the services of a clinical research facility/centre or similar Unit. Collated and uploaded electronically via GEMs as a **single pdf file** labelled with the charity name/initials, year e.g. Faber Association-2022-1 Part C2

#### **C3 - Letter(s) of support regarding contract status:**

Research Institution Letter of Support must be provided for (1) all Principal Investigators in a contract position and (2) Co-Applicants in a contract position who are seeking their own salary (see Instructions to Applicant notes for further details).

Letter(s) must be uploaded electronically via GEMs as a **single pdf** file and be labelled with the charity name/initials, year e.g. Faber Association-2024-1 Part C3

## Part D

### Signature pages:

Collated and submitted as a **single pdf file** and be labelled with the charity name, year e.g. Faber Association-2024-1 Part D

#### D1 – Lead Applicant Signature:

Must be signed by the Lead Applicant who completed the application

#### D2 – Host Institution Signature:

Must be completed by the Dean of Research at the host institution or the equivalent person authorised to endorse research applications.

## Part E – Peer Review Form:

This must be completed by the three international peer reviewers selected by the charity. The peer reviewers must indicate on the form that they have read and understood the HRCI-HRB Confidentiality and Conflict of interest Policy. The three peer review forms should be collated and submitted as a **single pdf file** labelled with the charity name/initial, year e.g. Faber Association-2024-1 Part E

## Part F – Applicant Response Form:

This should be submitted as a **single pdf file** labelled with the charity name/initials, year e.g. Faber Association-2024-1 Part F

## Part G – Charity Selection Form:

Each charity must adhere to the HRCI-HRB Confidentiality and Conflict of interest Policy. This form must be signed and submitted as a **single pdf file** and be labelled with the charity name/initials, year e.g. Faber Association-2024-1 Part G

## 6.2 Checklist for submission

For all applications	
Part B1 Application form	
Part B2 Gantt chart	
Part B3 Figures supporting project description (1 document)	
Part D1 Signature pages for Lead Applicant	
Part D2 Signature pages for Host Institution	

Where applicable	
Part C1 Collaboration Agreement Form	
Part C2 Infrastructure Agreement Form	
Part C3 Letters of support	

### 6.2.1 Eligibility Criteria

The following criteria will be assessed by the HRB upon receipt of applications via GEMS.

**Should an application not meet all eligibility criteria it will automatically be deemed ineligible.**

#### Lead Applicant and Team Eligibility

- Lead Applicant holds or will hold a post that covers duration of award
- Lead Applicant has the required funding and publication record

*Please refer to the Instructions for Applicants for a detailed explanation of Lead Applicant requirements*

#### Duration and Funding Eligibility

- Project duration is between 12 and 36 months
- Total maximum budget requested is €300,000
- Charity has been approved as a co-funding partner under the HRCI-HRB Co-funding Policy
- Charity is in a position to co-fund all submitted applications or in the case that an additional highly rated application has been submitted the charity is in a position to fund any combination of applications except one.

#### Documentation

The following documents complete and submitted in the correct format for each application:

- Part A - Charity Overview
- Part B1 - Application
- Part B2 - Gantt Chart
- Part B3 - Figures
- Part C - Additional forms (e.g. Infrastructure Agreement, Collaboration Agreement)
- Part D - Signature pages for lead Applicant and host institution
- Part E - Peer Review form
- Part F - Applicant Response form
- Part G - Charity Selection Panel Form

#### Peer Review

- Minimum of 3 peer reviews per application. All peer reviews received should be included.
- Peer reviewers based outside of Ireland. An exception to the requirement of peer reviewers being based outside of Ireland applies where the Host Institution for the research project is based outside of Ireland. In this case peer reviewers based in Ireland may be used. All other peer review selection criteria must still be met.
- All peer reviewers signed HRCI-HRB conflict of interest policy, and no conflicts of interest declared or existing.<sup>2</sup>

**Once an application has been deemed to be eligible and complete with all required documents, it will move to Phase 2 detailed below.**

## 7 Phase 2 - Panel Review Process and Assessment Criteria

The charities' endorsement or selection of applications and strategic plan will be forwarded alongside the nominated applications to a HRCI-HRB Joint Selection Panel. This Panel will include broad scientific expertise, as well as PPI Panel members and will consider applications from across all the charities. Each application will be reviewed by a lead and secondary scientific panel member and by two PPI panel members.

This Panel will have access to the original applications, charity background information on work and strategic research priorities, international peer reviewer comments, applicant's response to reviewers' comments and the charities' endorsement. HRB and HRCI staff members are present at the meeting to clarify any procedural aspects for the Chair or Panel members and to take notes for the feedback process.

The panel will review the strengths and weaknesses of the application relating to the assessment criteria detailed below. Successful applicants are expected to score well in all review criteria.

Scientific Panel members will review the strengths and weaknesses of the application on the stated assessment criteria for the call and will provide comments as well as **a score**. PPI panel members will only assess the quality of PPI in the application. They will review each application, provide comments, and assign **a rating** (see [Appendix III](#)) according to the appropriate level of PPI for the proposed research.

The PPI rating will be used to adjust the consensus scientific score, by applying a correction to it.

At the end of the panel meeting, a final score is collectively agreed for each application and then they will be ranked according to score. To prioritise between applications with the same score around the funding cut off in the Panel ranking list, the gender balance of Lead Applicants recommended for funding may be considered.

The recommendations of the Review Panel will be presented for approval at the next scheduled HRB Board meeting. When the Board of the HRB has approved the process and recommendations, HRB staff will contact the Lead Applicants and Host Institutions to notify them of the outcome. A

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<sup>2</sup> If you are uncertain whether a selected peer reviewer has a conflict of interest as defined by the HRCI/HRB Conflict of Interest Policy, **please contact** the HRB for clarification at the earliest opportunity and prior to application submission



summary of Panel Member's comments and the panel discussion comments will be issued to the Lead Applicant following the Board approval stage.

Host Institutions of successful applications will be offered multi-party contracts between the HRB, the HRCI charities(s), the Host Institution setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of the parties and governing the research project. The HRB Terms and Conditions will govern the award in its entirety. Additional special conditions may apply.

## 7.1 Assessment Criteria

The following assessment criteria, which have equal weight, will be used by the **Scientific Panel Members** to assess applications. Successful applications will be expected to **rate highly in all criteria**.

Scientific Panel members will focus on the following assessment criteria:

### **Scientific Quality and Innovation (50%)**

- Important research question
- Evidence supports need for proposed project
- Design and methodology appropriate
- Project plan and risk mitigation for project delivery

### **Research Team and Environment (30%)**

- Applicant team expertise and experience relevant for project
- Supports, infrastructure, environment
- Project staffing and funding

### **Impact (20%)**

- Potential impact on patients, public and/or healthcare system
- Planned knowledge dissemination and translation

Panel members will be advised to take PPI approaches into consideration under any of the assessment criteria if considered relevant.

**Public Panel Members will be asked to comment on the following to assess applications.**

Successful applications will be expected to **rate highly in all criteria**.

- The Plain English Summary (Lay Summary)
- Relevance of the Proposed Research Question
- PPI in development of and throughout the project

- Making it straightforward for research participants
- Dissemination of the Proposed Work

Their grading will inform the consensus Panel score, applying a correction to the consensus score and therefore impacting the final ranking and recommendation for funding.

## 8 Timeframe

The overall call duration is aligned to the academic year. Charities still have flexibility to open and close calls on dates of their choosing while being cognisant of the call timeline. Most dates are meant to guide charities in setting their own timetable; however, those in *purple italics* (dates to be confirmed) have been agreed with HRB and **may not be missed** if you wish to participate in the call.

Activity	Date
Charity Call Open	Varies (from Summer 2023)
HRB Call Opening	06 Sept 2023
Charity workshop	11 Sept 2023
Charity Peer Review (suggested dates)	20 Oct – 26 Jan 2024
<i>Submission of Peer Review Conflict of Interest check to HRB</i>	<i>20 Oct – 12 Jan 2024</i>
<i>Charities forward abstracts of all applications to HRB for finding panel members</i>	<i>By Mid Jan 2024</i>
Applicant Response (suggested dates)	29 Jan – 09 Feb 2024
Charity Selection Panel (suggested dates)	09 -28 Feb 2024
HRB GEMS system open for submission of Charity Applications	28 Feb 2024
<i>HRB Application Deadline</i>	<i>27 Mar 2024</i>
Joint Funding Committee Meeting	Late May 2024
HRB Board Meeting	June 2024
Applicant Notification	July 2024
Contracts Issued	Sep/Oct 2024
Earliest Research Project Start Date	October 2024

## 9 Contacts

For further information on the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme 2024, contact:

Sarah Delaney

Research Support Coordinator

HRCI

[sarah@hrci.ie](mailto:sarah@hrci.ie)

Research Strategy and Funding

Health Research Board

[hrci-hrbjfs@hrb.ie](mailto:hrci-hrbjfs@hrb.ie)

The HRB reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet the terms of this call. The HRB's Policy on Appeals on funding decisions is available at <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/all-grant-policies/hrb-policy-on-appeals/>.

## **Appendix I: HRB Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Policy for International Peer Reviewers**

### **HRB Policy on Conflicts of Interest for External Reviewers**

#### **Introduction**

In the context of this policy, external reviewers are defined as everybody except HRB staff who reviews funding applications or interim review documentation on behalf of the HRB. This includes expert reviewers, public reviewers, knowledge user reviewers and other reviewers.

Independent external review of applications/interim review reports prior to any funding decision is a cornerstone of HRB decision making processes. A potential conflict of interest by anybody involved in these decisions which is not declared and managed may result in undue influence or bias and put the credibility of the HRB and external reviewers at risk. Disclosing and managing conflicts of interest protects the fairness and impartiality of the review process and the public interest.

#### **Policy**

This document sets out the policy for identifying, disclosing and handling conflicts of interests irrespective of the medium used (such as written only, face to face meeting or virtual meeting). The policy applies to all external reviewers engaged in the HRB's funding processes. It ensures transparency and consistency in the way conflicts of interest are handled and promotes public trust and a positive research culture.

#### **1. The HRB requires all external reviewers to:**

- Confirm on GEMS\* absence of a conflict of interest before accessing an application.
- Sign a declaration confirming no conflict or identifying potential conflicts of interest if acting as a panel member tasked with making a funding or interim review outcome recommendation to the HRB.

#### **2. The HRB requires an external reviewer who has a conflict of interest to:**

- Disclose to the HRB the nature of their interest in advance of any review.
- Alert the HRB at the earliest opportunity should it become clear that a potential conflict arises upon accessing an application.
- Take no part in any consideration of the application and withdraw from the meeting for when the application is being discussed.
- Refrain from influencing or seeking to influence a decision in relation to an application where a conflict exists.

3. A disqualifying conflict of interest exists if an external reviewer:

- Was involved in the preparation of the application.
- Stands to benefit directly should the proposal be accepted or rejected.
- Is in some way related to the applicant, co-applicant, collaborator or sponsors (where applicable) at a personal or professional level.
- Is a former supervisor of the applicant, co-applicant or sponsor (up to 5 years previously) or is a collaborator of the applicant (up to 5 years previously). There may be exceptions in the case of joint publications from large collaborative teams/consortia where neither reviewer nor applicant, co-applicant or sponsor were the senior or corresponding author.
- May benefit financially should the proposal be accepted or rejected (for example if involved with a company acting as a project partner, or involved with a competitor).

4. A potential conflict of interest may exist in some cases that are not covered by the disqualifying conflict of interest rules indicated above. In particular external reviewers with close links to industry should carefully consider any potential for conflict of interest/perceived commercial interest that may exist.

5. A person will not be regarded as having a conflict of interest if the interest is so remote or insignificant that it cannot reasonably be regarded as likely to influence a person in considering, discussing or in voting on, any question relating to the application.

6. If an external reviewer is in doubt as to whether a conflict of interest exists, they should consult with HRB staff. Typically, the decision whether something constitutes a conflict of interest is made by a HRB Programme Manager. The Chair of a panel will be briefed about any disclosed conflicts of interest of panel members ahead of the meeting and plays an active role in supporting HRB staff to manage conflict of interest.

7. A separate Conflict of Interest policy exists for HRB staff and Conflicts of Interest of members of the HRB Board are dealt with in the HRB's Governance Handbook.

**\*Peer reviewers in the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme 2024 will be asked to sign a declaration stating they have no conflict of interest on their written review form, in lieu of creating a GEMS account.**

## Appendix II: Guidance for identification of Peer Reviewers

### 1. International Peer Review Criteria

The potential reviewer **should**:

- Be an expert in the application topic or have some expertise relevant to the application (for example if it is a multidisciplinary application)
- Have a strong publication record and be either a **senior author** (i.e. last author) or co-published a sufficient number of articles (~6) in the area of interest in the last 2 years. They may also have written books, book chapters, reports or any other health-related publications. In the areas of Health Services Research and Population Health Sciences Research a minimum of 3 publications in the last 2 years is sufficient.
- Be associated with a respectable research institution outside of Ireland. S/he may be an active researcher, a lecturer, research fellow etc in the specialty area of interest.
- Have an institutional email address

The potential reviewer **should not**:

- Have co-published with the lead applicant or co-applicant in the past 5 years. PubMed has useful features to investigate this.

-Go to the 'Advanced Search' tab in PubMed.

-Set the Search Builder to 'Author' and 'OR'

-Add each member of the applicant team in the following format 'Surname Initial' e.g. 'Moore A'. Click 'Add to search box' until this is complete for each member of the applicant team. Remove individual brackets and insert brackets around entire team and add 'AND'

-Insert the potential reviewer's name – 'Surname Initial'

-Finally, click search! This action will bring up any publications an applicant team member and the potential reviewer have been involved in. If no results are found, you can be reasonably confident in this person as a potential reviewer. You can copy the code in the search section and save it to your spreadsheet and use this as a template for checking other possible reviewers.

- Currently or recently been working in the same organisation/department as any member of the applicant team.
- Be industry employees or have any apparent links with the pharmaceutical industry or commercial organisation.

### 2. Steps for each application

1. Make a list of all members in the applicant team (Lead Applicant, Co-Applicants, and Collaborators) and their host institutions.
2. Read through the application to get a sense of what the applicant team proposes to do. The project abstract and project lay summary are especially helpful for this.

3. Look at the keywords suggested by the applicant team. These should provide a snapshot of the area of research.
4. Look at the bibliography/reference section of the proposal. This will allow you to identify other people working in this area of research.
5. Note Universities/hospitals/organisations where the applicant team have studied and worked to avoid asking reviewers from the same place, especially those with whom the applicant was recently connected.
6. Identify and ask at least **8 potential reviewers for each application**. This will help to secure at 3 peer reviewers.

Where to look for reviewers/Check their Suitability

The following websites are very useful in identifying potential reviewers:

- PubMed: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/>
- Cochrane Library: <http://www.cochrane.org/>
- Biomed Experts: <http://www.biomedexperts.com/>
- Google

## Appendix III: PPI Rating

The consensus PPI rating will be used to apply a correction to the consensus scientific score as per the Table below.

Rating	Description	Correction applied to the consensus scientific score
Excellent	You are very satisfied with the quality of the public and patient involvement in the application. PPI is evident from the early planning stages and throughout the lifetime of the award (if successful), including in decision-making at management level. Methods of involvement are innovative and maximise benefits. Planned PPI activities seem appropriately resourced in the budget.	0.5
Good	You are satisfied with the quality of the public and patient involvement in the application; some additional clarifications would have been helpful. PPI may not have started at the earliest stage of research planning OR included in decision-making at management level, but is well embedded in the application (if successful) at stages throughout its lifetime. Methods of involvement are tailored to the research. Planned PPI activities seem appropriately resourced in the budget.	0.25
Appropriate	You are reasonably satisfied with the quality of the public and patient involvement in the application. Methods of involvement are generic, some additional clarifications would have been helpful and/or PPI could potentially have been included to a greater extent from planning phase. Planned PPI activities seem appropriately resourced in the budget.	0
Fair	You are satisfied with some of the public and patient involvement provided in the application. PPI could potentially have been included at other stages throughout the lifetime of the award (if successful), methods of involvement are generic and/or planned PPI activities seem to be under resourced in the budget.	-0.25
Poor	You are not satisfied with the public and patient involvement in the application because important information seems to be lacking. PPI does not appear to have been a significant part of the planning for the award (if successful). Planned PPI activities seem to be under resourced in the budget.	-0.5



## Appendix IV: Email templates

### Peer reviewer invitation

#### Reviewer Salutation

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Health Research Charities Ireland (HRCI) supports charities in Ireland to increase both the quality and quantity of healthcare research. Since 2006, HRCI has collaborated with the Health Research Board Ireland (HRB) in co-funding of research projects of particular strategic relevance to the medical research charities. We are currently engaged in an international peer-review process under this Joint Funding Scheme. Following a detailed survey of the literature, it has come to our attention that you have expertise relevant to the following proposal:

**Lead Applicant:**

**Grant Title:**

We would be grateful if you would be willing to review this application. Your review would be instrumental in determining whether the application is short-listed to the second review phase for analysis by a specially convened Joint Selection Panel. Any feedback you provide would also be made available to the applicant team in an anonymised format.

Can you please confirm whether you are willing to review this application? I would appreciate if you could respond to this invite before [due date]. If you are able to review the application, we will send you the application, peer review guidelines and a form for your review. The final review will be required by [Review Due Date – typically approx. 3 weeks].

If you are unable to review on this occasion, we would be grateful if you could suggest a suitable colleague or other expert in the field who may be able to do so. Please forward an email address and other relevant contact details, if available.

The charity would like to thank you in advance for your assistance and we look forward to hearing from you. If you have any queries on this process, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards

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### Dispatch Email

**Subject: Grant Reference - Peer Review Request**

**Email:**

Dear **Reviewer Name**

Thank you very much for agreeing to review this application for us. Please find attached the following documentation:

- Application
- Peer review form (including guidance)
- Strategy of the charity

Finally, when you access the proposal, we ask you to let us know if any **conflict of interest** issues arise as a result of your reviewing this proposal on our behalf. A disqualifying conflict of interest exists if a peer-reviewer:

- (a) has published with the lead applicant or co-applicants in the past 5 years
- (b) is based in the Republic of Ireland
- (c) was involved in the preparation of the application;
- (d) stands to benefit directly should the proposal be accepted or rejected;
- (e) is in some way related to the applicant or co-applicant at a personal or professional level;
- (f) is a former supervisor of the applicant;
- (g) is a collaborator of the applicant (up to 5 years previously)

A potential conflict of interest may exist in some cases not covered by the disqualifying conflict of interest rules indicated above. In particular reviewers with close links to industry should carefully consider any potential for conflict of interest/perceived commercial interest that may exist.

If this is the case or you have any questions regarding a potential conflict of interest, please contact me for further clarification.

Where a conflict of interest exists, we ask you to inform us as this precludes you from taking part in the review of the application.

I would be grateful if you could submit your review by **DAY DATE YEAR** as suggested in my initial email. If you anticipate any difficulty in meeting this deadline, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you again for your assistance to the charity in this process.

Kind regards

## Reminder Email – 1 week before deadline

**SUBJECT:** GRANT REFERENCE - Peer Review Reminder

Dear **Reviewer Name**

I am emailing you to follow up on recent correspondence with regard to the review of a grant application for the HRCI/HRB Joint Funding scheme 2022.

If you recall, you kindly agreed to complete the review on our behalf and planned to submit your review via email by **DAY DATE YEAR**.

I hope you have had a chance to look at the proposal in the meantime. In advance of the deadline, we would like to confirm with you that you will still be able to complete the review as agreed.

I appreciate how difficult it can be to find time in a busy schedule to complete a review and we are very grateful to you for your assistance in this process.

Kind regards

## Acknowledgement of review received

Dear **Reviewer Name**

This email has been sent to confirm receipt of your peer review of Application: {Application Title} by PI.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this review. We are very grateful to you for your assistance in this process.

Kind regards

## Close Review Email

**Subject: Grant Reference - Health Research Board – Thank you**

Dear **Reviewer Name**

Thank you for considering our recent invitation.

We completely understand that you are not in a position to take on the review on this occasion.

Perhaps we might have the opportunity to work with you in the future.

Kind regards

## Appendix V: Guidance for applicant response

### Introduction

The applicant response step is a valuable addition to the peer review process as it gives applicants the chance to address any factual inaccuracies and questions raised by the peer reviewers. Any response is submitted in confidence to the final Joint Selection Panel (and the charity selection committee/panel) and is not returned to the peer reviewers\*. Examples of issues which might be addressed:

- Where insufficient detail is provided on a particular aspect of the project e.g. patient numbers, methods.
- Address any misunderstandings/misinterpretations made by the reviewer.
- Confirm that the applicant is willing and, in a position, to incorporate suggestions of experts (or not, as appropriate).

Responding to the reviewers' comments is an important part of the peer review process. Joint Selection Panel members consider the response carefully when discussing the issues raised by the reviewers, to see how applicants resolve them. A good response can make a competitive difference at the panel meeting. An applicant can choose not to respond to the reviewer comments although this may leave the panel with unresolved questions.

The response should be a maximum of **2,000 words total** (inclusive of any references, figures and footnotes) to respond to **all** peer reviews received

A template is provided for this purpose – Part F of the application pack. Text should be in Calibri font, or equivalent, with a minimum font size of 11, single line spacing and a minimum margin size of 2.54 cm.

\*In cases where peer review and final selection is carried out by the same group of international reviewers, both parties (reviewers and applicants) must be made aware that they will see each other's comments in the form of anonymised reviews and applicant response.

The steps involved in the Applicant Response are outlined below.

### Applicant Response Process

#### Advance Notice

Provide a minimum of 1 months' notice to the applicant (and research office) regarding the applicant response timeframe by email:

- Brief description of what is involved.

- Forward notice of the dates (three-week period) in which the response process will take place.
- Note that you will be contacting applicants on an individual basis as soon as a complete set of their reviews is returned and will, in normal circumstances, be sending their reviews very shortly after the initial contact.
- Note that applicants will be given **10 working days** (at some point within the specified three-week period) in which to return their response.
- Ensure applicants acknowledge receipt of this email.

A three-week window is set out to allow for staggered and/or late receipt of reviews (rather than setting the exact 10 working day period so far in advance). By flagging the three-week window when they can expect to receive the reviews more than a month in advance, the applicant is in a position to block out time in their calendar, or flag to you well in advance if there is any problem with the chosen dates.

### Receipt of reviews – confirmation of dates

Once a complete set of reviews has been received, the applicant should be contacted and informed as to when to expect the reviews.

*Example:*

‘.....confirm the three-week window when I will be sending you the reviews and would appreciate **confirmation that these dates are suitable for you:**

**Receive on:** Monday XX January 2024 at 12.00 a.m.

**Return by:** Monday XX February 2024 before 12.00 p.m.

This allows some flexibility within the 2-week timeframe already set out above, and an applicant may for example request that they be sent from Tuesday to Tuesday instead.

**The important point is that each applicant has exactly the same length of time to respond (10 working days).**

### Collation of reviews

Upon receipt of reviews, the reviews are edited to remove any inappropriate comments. Reviews are anonymised and collated into a single document which is sent by email to the applicant together with the instructions below.

## Sending reviews and Response instructions

Anonymised reviews are sent to the applicant along with instructions regarding response and confirmation of due date.

## Email Templates

### Advance Notice

Dear Applicants (& Research Offices)

As outlined in the HRCI/HRB/Charity documentation, all eligible applications received are sent out for international peer review. When all reviews have been received, they will be collated and forwarded to applicants who will then be given the opportunity to submit a response to the reviewer's comments (**maximum of 2,000 words, inclusive of any references**).

This e-mail is to give you forward notice of the dates in which the response process will take place:

**Wednesday X January to Tuesday X February (for example, three weeks)**

I will be contacting applicants on an individual basis as soon as a complete set of their reviews is returned and will, in normal circumstances, be sending their reviews very shortly after the initial contact. All applicants will be given **10 working days** (at some point within the above period) in which to return their response. If you are not at your normal e-mail during this period, I would be grateful if you could provide me with an alternative e-mail that you can be contacted on.

Responding to the reviewers' comments is an important part of the peer review process and it is strongly recommended that applicants respond to all issues raised by peer reviewers. Committee members consider the response carefully when discussing the issues raised by the reviewers, to see how applicants resolve them. A good response can make a competitive difference at the committee meeting.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email, and if you have any queries about the above, please do not hesitate to contact me at this e-mail address.

Regards

## Confirmation of dates

Dear Professor X

I am writing in relation to my e-mail below - I would now like to confirm the 10-working day window when I will be sending you the reviews and would appreciate confirmation that these dates are suitable for you:

**Receive on:** Monday XX January 2024 at 12.00 a.m.

**Return by:** Monday XX February 2024 before 12.00 p.m.

As outlined previously, the response should be a maximum of **2,000 words** (inclusive of any references) and must be returned on or before the date and time stated above. Text should be in Calibri font, or equivalent, with a minimum font size of 11, single line spacing and a minimum margin size of 2.54 cm.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me – I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Regards

## Reviews and Instructions

*Sent: Monday 24 January 2022. Attach Applicant Response form*

Dear Professor X

Further to my email earlier this week I am now sending a document containing the comments of the International Peer Reviewers on your application to the HRCI/HRB/Charity 2024 scheme.



As agreed, your response should be submitted **before 12 pm on Friday X February**.

Please find attached a template for your response. The response should be a maximum of **2,000 words** (inclusive of any references). Text should be in Calibri font, or equivalent, with a minimum font size of 11, single line spacing and a minimum margin size of 2.54 cm.

Responding to the reviewers' comments is an important part of the peer review process and it is strongly recommended that you respond to all issues raised by peer reviewers. Committee members consider these responses carefully when discussing the issues raised by the reviewers, to see how applicants resolve them. A good response which comprehensively addresses all the issues raised can make a competitive difference at the committee meeting.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Regards