HSC Public Health Agency
Research and Development

HRB Health Research Board

Capacity Building for Evidence Synthesis (CBES) 2025

Guidance Notes

Guidance Notes

Key Dates & Times	
Application Open	27 February 2025
Application Closing Date	11 April 2025 @13:00

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.

**Prior to final submission to the HRB, all applications must first be reviewed and approved within GEMS by the authorised approver at the Host Institution as listed in the application form. It is critical therefore that 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.*

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1 Introduction

The Health Research Board (HRB) Strategy (2021-2025)[1] sets out a lead role for the HRB to promote and support national and international evidence review and synthesis activities in order to build capacity, address knowledge gaps, inform guidelines and provide guidance to policy-makers and practitioners relevant to health and social care. The Strategy for Health & Social Care Research in Northern Ireland (2016-2025) prioritises support for the use of evidence from research to improve the quality of health and social care and for better policy-making.

Recognising the important role of evidence synthesis for health care decision making, the HRB, in collaboration with the HSC Research and Development (R&D) Division in Northern Ireland, has played a leading role for more than 20 years in promoting, supporting and realising benefits from evidence synthesis capacity on the island of Ireland. Since 2018, HRB together with HSC R&D has co-funded Evidence Synthesis Ireland (ESI) to build capacity in evidence synthesis, making evidence syntheses more usable in every sense of the word – better designed, conducted and reported, more useable for decision-makers and more useable within health care policy and clinical practice decision making across the island of Ireland and beyond[2].

In addition to the longstanding investments in external capacity building, including via ESI, the HRB also established its own HRB Evidence Centre to conduct rapid reviews, evidence briefs and scoping reviews on policy topics prioritised annually by the Department of Health. The HRB also funds, on behalf of the Department, the Centre in Ireland for Clinical guideline support and Evidence Reviews (CICER) to conduct systematic reviews and budget impact analysis to inform prioritised *National Clinical Guidelines*. In its other grant funding schemes, HRB places an explicit focus on driving demand for evidence syntheses through our grant scheme requirements (e.g., DIFA scheme Applicants are required to specify the systematically gathered evidence base for the proposed trial or intervention). In Northern Ireland, HSC R&D contributes funding to the NIHR Evidence Synthesis programme[3] (which includes the Aberdeen Belfast Evidence Collaboration) in addition to its funding of capacity building through ESI.

The global evidence synthesis landscape is undergoing an unprecedented transformation[4], marked by significant international investments aimed at enhancing infrastructure, capacity, and methodologies. These developments are in response to a growing consensus by global evidence synthesis networks, decision makers and funders that there is a need to harmonise efforts globally, stand up living evidence syntheses quickly, make the most of modern technology, especially AI, enhance trusted decision making and provide better value for money for decision-makers and for research funders. This has resulted in recent significant announcements by key funders (including Wellcome and ESRC) and statements of commitment from leading organisations in the evidence synthesis space (Cochrane Collaboration, Campbell Collaboration, JBI Publications, Global

[1] https://www.hrb.ie/strategy-2025/

[2] https://evidencesynthesisireland.ie/

[3] Evidence Synthesis Programme (NIHR) | HSCR&D

[4] Global Commission on Evidence to Address Societal Challenges. Global Evidence Commission update 2025

Commission on Evidence, the Alliance of Living Evidence (ALIVE)[5], the Future Evidence Foundation[6] and WHO).

The need to ensure continued capacity building and support for evidence synthesis is as strong as ever, perhaps even more so with rapidly evolving methodologies, tools and infrastructures. There is now an opportunity for Ireland to strategically position itself to effectively interface with these international efforts to continue to build capacity, foster international collaborations, and ensure that Ireland remains at the forefront of evidence-informed health policy and practice.

The current call aims to build on the investment by HRB/HSC R&D in capacity building in evidence synthesis to date, most recently through ESI, and the core objectives of that investment, while adapting to and taking advantage of the changes in the global and national landscape. These activities will balance national needs with international engagement to maximise impact and ensure alignment with the HRB/HSC R&D strategic goals of funding excellence, fostering leadership, and enabling impactful research environments.

1.1 Aim and Objectives

Continued capacity building is essential to meet the increasing demand for high-quality evidence in healthcare decision-making and to ensure that Ireland has the expertise to contribute to and benefit from international collaborations.

The overarching **aim** of the award is to build on the investment by HRB/HSC R&D in capacity building in evidence synthesis and contribute to the development of a global infrastructure that provides the most up to date and reliable evidence to policy-makers and other evidence users.

Objectives include:

- Delivery, on an all-island basis, of a range of training* and educational activities to promote and support capacity building for evidence synthesis, thereby developing a larger pool of skilled evidence synthesis practitioners, and users of evidence synthesis products.
- Build capability amongst policy-makers on the island of Ireland to apply evidence-synthesis in policy-making and develop innovative approaches to communicating evidence synthesis findings so that they can be more easily understood and used effectively for decision making.
- Advance innovations in evidence synthesis methodologies, addressing identified gaps, and promoting best practice, with a particular focus on AI and its potential to produce faster, more relevant and more cost-effective evidence syntheses. This includes approaches to building capability amongst researchers in use of AI in evidence synthesis.
- Build new and deepen existing partnerships with organisations** on the island of Ireland and internationally to effectively interface with global evidence synthesis initiatives.

*It is expected that the successful team will deliver a broad suite of training courses and other initiatives (e.g. placements in evidence review and synthesis centres or other innovative training initiatives) that will support evidence synthesis employing a range of methodologies.

[5] https://www.aliveevidence.org/#purpose

[6] https://www.futureevidence.org/

**In Ireland/ Northern Ireland this includes the HRB Evidence Centre, ESI, CICER, RCPI, HSE, Campbell UK & Ireland, Aberdeen Belfast Evidence Collaboration. Internationally, this includes continuing and/or developing collaborations with bodies and networks like Cochrane, the NIHR Evidence Synthesis Program (in particular, the nine NIHR Evidence Synthesis Units), the Global Evidence Commission, the Alliance of Living Evidence (ALIVE), the WHO and participating in international initiative and projects (e.g. the Wellcome Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative, the DESTINY project).

2 Scope of Call

The proposal should bring together the appropriate mix of expertise in evidence synthesis and related activities to effectively deliver the objectives set out above.

Applications should be made by a team that includes a **range of skills and experience**, including but not limited to internationally recognised experts in evidence synthesis methodology, expertise in the innovative use of AI in evidence synthesis, and expertise in translating evidence to policy.

As well as setting out how **training and education activities** will be delivered, the application should include detailed plans for how the applicants will interact with and **collaborate with emerging key global initiatives** including but not limited to the Wellcome Evidence Collaborative. Plans should describe how these collaborations will help address the evidence needs of policy and decision makers on the island of Ireland and beyond. Demonstrator projects are welcome.

Applicants will be expected to propose an **operating and governance model** that enables them (as a central coordinating body on behalf of distributed capacity/centres across the island of Ireland) to seek, and take advantage of, opportunities to take on additional funding, including from stakeholders and additional partners, and to be agile in responding to technological advancements and changes.

This scheme will not fund[7]:

- Applications from individuals applying for, holding, or employed under funding received from the tobacco industry*;
- Applications from individuals applying for, holding, or employed under funding received from the alcohol industry and related actors**;

*Any company, entity, or organisation involved in the development, production, promotion, marketing, or sale of tobacco in any country of the world. The term also includes any companies that are a subsidiary or a holding company or affiliate of the above. This also includes e-cigarette companies and non-tobacco related companies which are fully or partially owned by the tobacco industry

**Including social aspects/public relations organisations (SAPROs) funded by alcohol companies or trade associations in which such companies are members.

[7] https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/HRB-Position-Statement-on-Tobacco-and-Alcohol-industry-funding-1.pdf

3 Funding Available, Duration and Start Date

Applicants may apply for funding up to a maximum of **€6 million** (inclusive of overheads).

Quality permitting a single award will be funded for a duration of **60 months**.

Eligible costs include salaries, running costs, PPI costs, equipment and dissemination costs, and overheads contribution.

Note: The award will not fund the salary and related costs of tenured academic staff within research institutions.

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

The earliest start date of the Grant is December 2025.

4 Eligibility Criteria

4.1 Applicant Team

Applications should be made on behalf of an interdisciplinary team of researchers with the necessary knowledge, expertise and experience to deliver on the objectives. The team should include a range of skills and experience, including but not limited to internationally recognised experts in evidence synthesis methodology, expertise in the innovative use of AI in evidence synthesis, and expertise in translating evidence to policy. The award will be co-funded by the HRB and the HSC R&D Division Northern Ireland and as such will be expected to deliver for the island of Ireland. The applicant team must include a nominated lead (co-applicant) for Northern Ireland.

Co-applicants and/or collaborators from outside the island of Ireland are expected.

4.1.1 Lead Applicant

The **Lead Applicant** will serve as the primary point of contact for the HRB during the review process and on the award, if successful. The Lead Applicant will be responsible for the scientific and technical direction of the programme. They have primary fiduciary responsibility and accountability for carrying out the activities within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the HRB.

The Lead Applicant **must**:

- Hold a post (permanent or a contract that covers the duration of the award) in a HRB recognised Host Institution in the Republic of Ireland (the “Host Institution”) as an independent investigator. For clinicians, an adjunct position in a HRB recognised Host Institution is acceptable. **OR**
- Be an individual who will be recognised by the Host Institution upon receipt of an award as an independent investigator who will have a dedicated office and research space for the duration of award, for which they will be fully responsible. The Lead Applicant does not necessarily need to be employed by the Host Institution at the time of the application submission.

They **must** show evidence of achievement as an independent researcher in their chosen research field by:

a) Demonstrating a record of research output, with at least three publications of original research in peer reviewed journals. Where appropriate, they should also provide evidence of other outputs (e.g., published book chapters, reports to government, research data and datasets, research materials, databases, audio/video products, national and/or international reports, patents, models and protocols, software production, evidence of influence on health policy and practice, outreach and/or knowledge exchange activities, media coverage or other relevant activities) and/or any other relevant outputs that have resulted in a significant impact in their field.

b) Demonstrating record of independence by showing that they have secured at least one peer-reviewed research grant for a research project/s, as either the Lead Applicant or a Co-Applicant. Funding received for travel to seminars/conferences and/or small personal bursaries will not be considered in this regard.

c) Show evidence that they possess the capability and authority to manage and supervise the programme team.

As signatory of the DORA Declaration[8], the HRB is committed to supporting a research environment where importance is placed on the intrinsic value and relevance of research and its potential impact in society (HRB – Responsible Research Assessment).

4.1.2 Co-Applicants

A Co-Applicant has a well-defined, critical, and substantial role in the conduct and steering of the proposed research programme. A Co-Applicant may receive funding for items such as running costs and personnel but will not receive support towards their own salary if they are in salaried positions. However, researchers in contract positions can request their own salary, depending on their role and percentage of time dedicated to the research for the duration of the award (**up to a maximum of 10 Co-Applicants can be listed).**

Each Co-Applicant must confirm their participation and is invited to view the application form online. The terms of any co-application should be determined early, and relevant agreements should be in place by the onset of the project. The HRB advise that consideration should be given to issues such as relative responsibilities, governance arrangements, intellectual property rights, reporting and access to data when working up co-application agreements.

4.1.3 Collaborators

An official Collaborator is an individual or an organisation who will have an integral and discrete role in the proposed programme and is eligible to request funding from the award when properly justified. Named collaborators may include investigators or organisations from outside the island of Ireland, but an individual or organisation should **only** be named as Collaborator if they are providing specific contributions (either direct or indirect) to the activities. A collaborator may provide training, specialist staff time, staff placements, access to data and/or participants, instruments or protocols, industry know-how, or may act in an advisory capacity. Collaborators can come from a range of

[8] Home | DORA (sfdora.org)

backgrounds such as academia, the private sector, a healthcare organisation, the charity sector, or a patient group (**up to a maximum of 10 Collaborators can be listed)**.

Profile details **must** be provided for ALL official collaborators. In addition, each official collaborator **must** complete a **Collaboration Agreement Form**. A template Collaborator Agreement form will be made available on GEMS for download.

The terms of any collaboration should be determined early, and relevant agreements should be in place by the onset of the project. The HRB advise that consideration should be given to issues such as relative responsibilities, governance arrangements, ownership and copyright, access and sharing of data etc. when working up collaboration agreements.

4.1.4 Funded Personnel

Applicants must demonstrate that the level, expertise, and experience of proposed research personnel matches the ambition and scale of the proposed activities and that they possess the necessary breadth and skills in all methodological/other areas required to deliver the proposed programme of work. Alignment between personnel requested and the proposed activities should be demonstrated. Roles and responsibilities of funded personnel must be differentiated and clear.

5 Host Institution

A HRB Host Institution is a research-performing organisation that is approved by the HRB for the purpose of receiving and administering HRB grant funding and is responsible for compliance with all general and specific terms and conditions of awards. HRB Host Institution status is a requirement to submit an application under all HRB award schemes. The **Host Institution for the award is normally that of the Lead Applicant** but it may be another organisation/institution designated by the research team, where it is clearly justified.

To be eligible to apply for funding, an Institution must be an approved HRB Host Institution no later than two calendar months before the closing date of a call. A list of currently approved HRB Host Institutions and information on the application process for research performing organisations to be approved as HRB Host Institutions can be found on the HRB website[9].

Host Institution Letters of Support must be provided for **(1) all Lead Applicants in a contract position and (2) Co-Applicants in a contract position who are seeking their own salary.** The formal letter on headed notepaper, dated and signed by the Head of School/Research Centre/Hospital must include the following information; [*Host Institution - insert name*] which is the host institution of [*applicant - insert name*] confirms that [*applicant - insert name*]: (i) holds an employment contract which extends until [*insert date*] or will be recognised by the host institution upon receipt of the CBES 2025 grant as a contract researcher; (ii) has an independent office and research space/facilities for which they is fully responsible for at least the duration of the award, and (iii) has the capability and authority to mentor and supervise the research team. Electronic signatures are acceptable for letters that are uploaded on the HRB GEMS system.

[9] http://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/all-grant-policies/hrb-policy-on-approval-of-host-institutions/

It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant 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 Application, Review Process and Assessment Criteria

6.1 Grant E-Management System (GEMS)

Applications must be completed and submitted through the HRB online Grant E-Management System (GEMS) (https://grants.hrb.ie/).

The application must have been reviewed and approved by the signatory approver at the research office (or equivalent) in the Host Institution before it is submitted to the HRB. Therefore, applicants should ensure that they give the signatory approver sufficient time before the scheme closing date to review the application and approve it on GEMS. Please note that many host institutions specify internal deadlines for this procedure.

The HRB is committed to an open and competitive process underpinned by international peer review. To ensure the integrity of the assessment process, conflict of interest and confidentiality are applied rigorously in each stage of the process.

6.2 Review Process

International Peer/Panel Reviewers play a vital role for the HRB in setting standards and in benchmarking our scientific community to enable them to operate in a global context.

An international Grant Review Panel will be convened to review applications. The Panel will be comprised of a Chair and at least three international experts with expertise related to evidence synthesis, such as evidence synthesis methodology, expertise in the innovative use of AI in evidence synthesis, and expertise in translating evidence to policy.

Step 1 – Written assessment

The HRB will seek written feedback from the Panel Reviewers and from two Public Reviewers.

Peer/Panel Reviewers will focus on the stated assessment criteria for the call and will provide comments as well as a score.

Public Reviewers will only assess the quality of PPI in the application and will provide comments and an overall rating which will be shared with the panel. Public reviewers will not provide a score.

Public Reviewers are asked to comment on:

- The Plain English Summary (Lay Summary)
- Public and Patient Involvement as relevant to the proposal

Both peer and public review comments will not include any reference to the reviewer's identity or their submitted scores or rating.

Step 2 - Applicant Response

Applicant teams will be provided with a time-limited opportunity to respond to peer and public review comments.

Peer review and public review comments will be made available to the Lead Applicant on their GEMS personal page. The Lead Applicant will have 10 working days only to submit their response through GEMS, and the response will be provided to members of the Grant Review Panel, in advance of the Panel meeting, along with the application, the peer/panel and public review comments and rating.

Step 3 - Panel Meeting

The international Grant Review Panel will meet to discuss the application. Panel members have access to the application, peer/panel and public reviews and the applicant's response. HRB 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. Key members of the applicant team may be invited to attend part of the meeting to be interviewed by the Panel, addressing any outstanding queries the Panel may have.

The Panel will review the strengths and weaknesses of the application relative to the assessment criteria detailed below. Successful applicants are expected to score well in all assessment criteria. While PPI is not a stand-alone assessment criterion, it may influence scores under any criterion as relevant to the application.

At the end of the panel meeting, a consensus funding recommendation will be collectively agreed by the Panel.

The Panel may suggest items that require follow up by the applicant team prior to making their final recommendation. Once any outstanding issues have been addressed the Panel recommendation will be submitted to the Board of the HRB and to HSC R&D for consideration. A summary of Panel Member's comments will be issued to the Lead Applicant following the conclusion of the review process.

6.3 Assessment Criteria

The following assessment criteria will be used to assess the application **by Panel Reviewers**. A successful application will be expected to **rate highly in all criteria**.

The **Criteria for Assessment** of the application are:

- **Relevance and Importance**
  - Clear articulation of place within the development of a transformative global infrastructure
  - Clear justification for investment, in the context of previous HRB and HSC R&D investments
  - Objectives clear and appropriate, aligned with those set out by HRB/HSC R&D Division.
- **Team:**
  - Expertise, track record and appropriate skill mix
  - Access to diversity of skills and expertise
  - Evidence of ability to work with a wide variety of stakeholders
  - Demonstrated agility and responsiveness to changing priorities and opportunities.
- **Approach and activities:**
  - Quality and appropriateness of proposed activities

  - Approach to delivering training and building capacity for researchers, clinicians, the public and policy-makers
  - Approach to continuous advancement/innovation in evidence synthesis methodologies
  - Approach to enhancing capacity and supporting innovation in use of AI in evidence synthesis.
- **Broader impact:**
  - Strategies for maximising awareness and engagement amongst all stakeholders
  - Innovation and potential for impact of approaches to enhance evidence informed decision making
  - Approach to engagement and leadership, including plans to establish new/strengthen existing collaborations, and contribute to initiatives on the Island of Ireland and internationally.
- **Governance and management**
  - Leadership operating and governance model aligned with scope
  - Appropriate governance and oversight structures
  - Approach to day-to-day management of programme, operations and resources
  - Feasibility and coherence of work packages
  - Level of institutional support, suitability of environment.

Each assessment criterion is weighted equally.

7 Timeframe

Date	
27 February 2025	Call Opening
11 April 2025	Call Closing
April - May	Scientific and public review
Early June	Applicant response
Mid June	Panel Review Meeting
September	HRB Board Decision
September - October	Budget negotiations and contracting
December 2025	Earliest start date

8 Contacts

For further information on **Capacity Building for Evidence synthesis 2025** contact:

Mahnaz Sharafkhani, PhD

Project Officer: International Cooperation, Evaluation & Targeted Programmes
Research Strategy and Funding

Health Research Board

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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: Detailed Guidance on the Application Form

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

*Please refer to the **GEMS Technical Guidance Note**[10], available on the left-hand column of your GEMS profile homepage, for further information.*

The **Lead Applicant** must create the application, but it can then be jointly completed with named co-applicants.

Lead Applicants can register on GEMS and they will receive an email to confirm their registration and log in details. The Lead Applicant can then add information on their contact and CV details in 'Manage My Details' section of GEMS.

Lead Applicants previously registered on GEMS can login to GEMS and update any information regarding their contact and CV details in 'Manage my details'.

Once logged in to GEMS applicants are taken directly to the Home page which is the starting point to create a new Grant application.

The Applicant will be asked to complete a check list of mandatory questions. To access the application form, the Lead Applicant must satisfy the conditions of this check list:

Lead Applicant Eligibility	
I have read the Guidance Notes for the CBES 2025 call	☑
I am clear about the role of the authorised signatory in the nominated Host Institution**,** and I am aware that I need to build sufficient time into the application process for the Host Institution to access, review and approve my final application for submission to the HRB through the GEMS system.	☑

Consent	
By submitting this application, I consent to (a) sharing of my data outside of the European Economic Area (EEA) for the purpose of international peer review, and (b) the use of my data for assessment of my application; monitoring of successful awards; and evaluation of HRB's approach to funding and investment in research, in line with HRB policies and as detailed in the CBES 2025 Call Guidance Notes.	☑

The Lead Applicant will be then able to start the application. Further details for completing each of the main sections of the application form are provided below:

[10] https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2020/05/CCGT-Grant-Application-System-Technical-Guidance-Notes.pdf

Host Institution

For the purposes of contracting, payment, and management of the award, HRB funds can only be awarded to HRB approved Host Institutions. The Host Institution for the award is normally that of the **Lead Applicant**, but it may be another organisation/institution designated by the research team, where it is clearly justified. In GEMS you will be asked to identify a Host Institution (from this list) and type it in full (do not use acronyms such as UCD, TCD, NUIG). Once you have entered the first 3-4 characters of the Host Institution, you will be assisted with auto-select options. It is important that the Host Institution name is entered accurately and in full as an incorrect entry may result in delays in attaining Host Institution approvals.

If you wish to propose a Host Institution which is not on the HRB list, you are advised to contact the HRB at gemshelp@hrb.ie.

Note: To be eligible to apply for funding, an Institution must have been approved as a HRB Host Institution no later than two calendar months before the closing date of a call, only pre-approved Host Institutions will appear in this list.

Signatory Notification (within Host Institution)

Once the **Host Institution** is selected at the initial stages of application creation, this will allow the Lead applicant to notify the authorised signatory (Dean of Research or equivalent person authorised to endorse research grant applications for the Host Institution) in that Host Institution of the Lead Applicant's intention to submit an application. The signatory's details are pre-populated in the system, so the applicant just needs to click 'NOTIFY' within GEMS. We recommend that **you notify the Host Institution signatory** of your intention to apply as soon as possible in the application process. The signatory will receive an email from GEMS with the name and email details of the Lead Applicant and if they have any queries or clarifications, they can engage directly to resolve them with the Lead Applicant. The Host Institution signatory must confirm their willingness to participate as Host Institution for the application through GEMS and once they do this a PDF of the application will be available for them to review with a view to them ultimately approving the final version for submission to the HRB.

Team

1 Lead Applicant's Details

Details are requested about the **Lead Applicant** including their position and status (contract or permanent), and any relevant additional experience or expertise. Please note that a **letter of support from the HI** must be provided if the LA is on a contract position.

The LA's **contact and CV** details (Name, institution, present position, employment history, profession, and ORCID iD) are managed in 'manage my details' section of GEMS and **are automatically included in any application created involving that individual.** You are asked to select your 5 most relevant publications for this application.

Note: The HRB is now an ORCID member. Lead applicants are encouraged to include an ORCID iD by updating their GEMS profile under 'Manage my Details' and this will feed automatically into the

application form. You have also the option to import your publication record from ORCID iD in addition to PubMed. Please note this is not a mandatory field for submitting your application. For more information and to register please see https://orcid.org/.

Publications and Funding Record

You are asked to include your **5 most relevant publications** to this application.

Publications are automatically included in any application created involving the Lead Applicant Researcher. To update this information, edit the 'My Research Outputs' section on the Home page of GEMS. You can then use the Publication selection tool in the relevant section of the application form to select your 5 most relevant publications for this application.

You should also include your **5 most relevant funding awards** as Principal Investigator or Co-Applicant.

For the purpose of this application form, Funding Record details should be added directly on to the application form and will not be pulled through from the 'manage my details' section of GEMS.

Additional evidence of experience and expertise relevant to this application

The Lead Applicant can describe any additional experience or expertise that will provide evidence of their ability to successfully lead the proposal. Please use this opportunity to describe any career gaps in your CV. The word limit is **400 words**.

2 Co-Applicants

The Lead Applicant can add up to 10 Co-Applicants to an application by entering their name on GEMS. If the Co-Applicant is already registered on GEMS, the system will find them and will allow the Lead Applicant to select them. Alternatively, a Co-Applicant can be added manually by entering their name and email details. GEMS will send them an email with login details for completing the registration process and will inform them that they have been invited by the Lead Applicant to participate on the application as a Co-Applicant. **Registered Co-Applicants** can decide whether to accept or reject their participation and **must consent to the application being submitted jointly in their name**. If a Co-Applicant rejects participation on an application the Lead Applicant is informed and may revise the application accordingly. Co-Applicants who accept participation in an application will be able to edit the application. **The system will flag if another user is working on the application form at the same time via a pop-up warning. A member of the applicant team may choose to over-ride this pop-up message and continue to enter data, but it is advisable that they contact the other person directly to avoid losing data when applying the override function.**

Each Co-Applicant can manage their **contact and CV details** (Name, contact information, institution or organisation, present position, employment history, profession, membership details of professional bodies, and ORCID iD) under 'Manage my Details' section of GEMS and this information will be automatically included in any application that involves this individual.

Researcher co-applicants will be asked to provide additional information in the application form, including their **5 most relevant publications** in peer-reviewed journals, their **relevant funding record** (past or current grants held, including HRB grants).

They will also be asked to describe any additional experience or expertise relevant to the application (**400 words)**.

Non-researcher co-applicants (e.g., PPI co-applicants) will not be required to complete publication/funding record however, they will be asked to provide some information regarding their experience and expertise relevant to this application. For example, they may wish to include relevant experience as a service user or carer, relevant experience from their personal lives, prior experience in PPI or any other useful background information (Word limit is **400 words)**.

Host Institution Letters of Support must be provided for **Co-Applicants in a contract position who are seeking their own salary.**

3 Official Collaborators

The Lead Applicant can add up to 10 collaborators per application. Unlike Co-Applicants, the information for Collaborators is not automatically drawn from the 'Manage my Details' section of GEMS but must be entered by the Lead Applicant. The LA must enter **contact and CV details** for all Collaborators including name, contact information, institution or organisation, present position, employment history, profession and membership details of professional bodies, **Publications and Funding Record** (if applicable) (**5 most relevant** publications in peer-reviewed journals and details of any past or current grants held, including HRB grants, relevant to this application where the Collaborator has acted as Principal Investigator or Co-Applicant).

In addition, for each Collaborator a signed **Collaboration Agreement Form** must be provided. A template Collaboration Agreement Form is available for downloaded from GEMS. Forms must be completed, signed, dated, and uploaded where indicated on HRB GEMS. Please label each form with the name of the relevant Collaborator. Electronic signatures are acceptable on letters/forms that are uploaded on GEMS.

4 Details of the research team

You are asked to provide an overview of how you will ensure your Programme team will consist of a suitable mix of people with the appropriate expertise and experience required and how they will work together to achieve the objectives of the proposal.

Q1. Describe the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of all applicant team members including lead applicant, co-applicants and collaborators in delivering the programme. **500 words**

Q2. Describe the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of all team members for whom you are requesting salary from the award. Describe how all objectives can be adequately addressed through a team of this composition. **500 words**

Q3. Describe any other in-kind or institutional expertise and supports available not covered by the applicant team, salaried team members e.g., administrative, ICT etc. **400 words**

5 Programme Description

5.1 Programme Title

Please insert a title that accurately reflects the programme of research/activities that you will deliver.

There is a **200 characters** maximum limit.

5.2 Lay Summary

In the lay summary you are asked to describe what you propose to do, say why you think it is important to do so and how you are going to go about it. It needs to be written as **a plain English summary** such that it is clear, easy to understand, and is easily accessible to a lay audience. It should not be copied and pasted from elsewhere in the application. The lay summary may be used when providing information to the public with regards to the variety of research and initiatives funded by the HRB and may be posted on the HRB website. A well-written lay summary will enable reviewers and Panel members to have a better understanding of your application.

The word limit is **300 words**.

5.3 Keywords

Please enter up to **5 keywords** that specifically describe the proposal.

5.4 Background and context

Please describe the context for your proposal, both national and international. Outline your vision, and explain why what you are proposing is both important and timely. Describe how your proposal intends to build on, or complement, any prior initiatives in capacity building for evidence synthesis on the island of Ireland. Justify the need for continued investment in capacity building in evidence synthesis, identify any remaining gaps, and describe how activities you propose will add value to prior investments by HRB and HSC R&D Office.

Be aware that the peer reviewers reading your application are based outside of Ireland, so it is important to describe the policy/evidence user context in Ireland when discussing issues such applying evidence to policy and practice and in describing needs, relevance, timeliness, and feasibility.

The word limit is **2000 words**.

5.5 Programme Description

Please ensure that your application is focused, and that sufficient evidence is provided to enable the international panel reviewers to reach a considered judgement as to the quality of your proposal, its merit, potential impact, and its feasibility.

Describe the proposed **plan to deliver the objectives of the programme set out in the Guidance Notes.**

Provide descriptions of individual work packages or activity areas, and how they integrate to form a coherent research application.

For each objective or WP/activity area, list a subset of deliverables which will be used to monitor progress throughout the lifetime of the award if successful.

Objectives/deliverables should be mapped against estimated completion timelines in a **Gantt chart**, and any milestones highlighted.

The word limit is **4000 words**.

5.6 Engagement and Impact

Within your programme description above, you should have described how you will prioritise and phase engagement with national and international partners and stakeholders to ensure maximum benefit and impact.

This section provides an opportunity to articulate how the sum of the activities in your programme description forms a coherent strategy to ensure maximum benefit and impact, including but not limited to:

- how you will maximise awareness and engagement amongst categories of evidence users, key policy and decision makers, general public.
- how you will build capability amongst policy-makers to apply evidence-synthesis in policy-making.
- how you will interact and collaborate with partners on the island of Ireland, the UK, and relevant EU and global partners (e.g. Wellcome Evidence Collaborative) and the anticipated benefits of same.
- how the team will avail of the latest tools and innovations and collaborate with relevant experts and initiatives to harness the potential of AI for evidence syntheses.
- how the operating and governance model (described in detail in the following section) enables the programme to deliver on its objectives.
- Your broader dissemination strategy to ensure your training programmes, tools, and other outputs can be accessed by diverse audiences (e.g. website, branding, approach to disseminating outputs).

The word limit is **1500 words**.

5.7 Governance and Oversight

Applicants are expected to propose an operating and governance model that enables it (as the central coordinating body on behalf of distributed capacity/centres across the island of Ireland) to seek, and take advantage of, opportunities to take on additional funding, including from stakeholders and additional partners, and to be agile in responding to technological advancements and changes.

Describe the governance and management structures, including any mechanisms for engaging with collaborators and partners or details of any planned advisory structures. List the roles and responsibilities of each governance group (e.g., steering, strategic oversight, advisory, other), and clearly describe how these groups fit together in a complementary way without overlap of duties. Details should be provided for how PPI will be included in the governance structures.

The word limit is **600 words**.

You are asked to upload **an organogram** to support your description.

5.8 Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) in the Programme

The HRB recognises that the nature and extent of meaningful public involvement is likely to vary depending on the context of the research/activities being carried out.

Where relevant, please describe proposed public and patient involvement as it relates specifically to the grant funded activities i.e., capacity building in evidence synthesis and related activities.

For each area of involvement please include the purpose of this involvement and where applicable how PPI has or is expected to influence activities/actions.

This section should be a **succinct summary** of public involvement activities.

Provide information on the individuals/groups and the ways in which they will be involved.

Where members of the public/patients are involved, they should be compensated for their time and contributions; this should be reflected in the project budget.

The word limit is **600 words**.

Please ensure to provide more detail in other sections as appropriate.

Important: The PPI section needs to be written as a plain English summary such that it is clear, easy to understand, and is easily accessible to a lay audience.

5.9 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Please describe how you will take EDI into account in a systematic way depending on the nature of the activities, for example:

- Governance and decision-making
- Selecting team members, collaborators and staff
- Approach to capacity building, in terms of reach and communications
- EDI considerations in evidence synthesis methodologies, and how these are taught.

The word limit is **600 words**.

5.10 Infrastructure and Support

Describe the infrastructure, facilities, and other support available at the Host Institution and/or at other sites associated with the Programme. Please include details of critical supports where this is being provided beyond the activities/expertise of members of the applicant team.

The word limit is **400 words.**

5.11 Support File

You may include an attachment to support your proposal. A maximum of **5 figures**, which can be a combination of images, graphs, tables, scales, instruments, or surveys, may be uploaded as a single document on HRB GEMS, **if they add value to the written description**. They must not be embedded within the text of the Programme Description. The maximum size is **2MB**.

5.12 References

A full description of the Publications cited in the Project Description should be provided. You can enter a maximum of **30 publications**. Please enter references in the same format.

For publications:

Gallagher PA, Shoemaker JA, Wei X, Brockhoff-Schwegel CA, Creed JT. Extraction and detection of arsenicals in seaweed via accelerated solvent extraction with ion chromatographic separation and ICP-MS detection. Fresenius J Anal. Chem. 2001 Jan 1;369(1):71-80. PMID: 11210234.

For book and printed source citations:

Farrell M, Gerada C and Marsden J (2000) *External review of drug services for the Eastern Health Board*. London: National Addiction Centre.

For data citations:

Authors, year, article title, journal, publisher, DOI

Author(s), year, dataset title, data repository or archive, version, global persistence identifier

6 Co-Funding/In-Kind Budget Commitment

You are asked to add details of any co-funding commitments secured.

Where co-funding has been secured, a Co-Funding Commitment Letter must be uploaded as part of this application. This letter should confirm that the funding contribution is in place, and that the grant funding does not replace or subvent existing funding during the term of the award.

If you have **any other financial support or in-kind support** for this proposal you are asked give details including the award title (if applicable), the organisation providing the additional support, the amount of support and the activities that it will support.

7 Programme Budget

Please provide a summary and justification of the costs and duration associated with the project.

A **full detailed breakdown** of **costings** and **justification for <u>all</u> funding** is required for items listed under each subheading within GEMS.

Note: You are <u>strongly advised</u> to seek guidance from the research office/finance office in the Host Institution before completing this section of the form. The HRB will not provide additional funding in the case of either under-estimates or over expenditure**.**

The total funding available will be €6M over 60 months. Allowable costs include:

1. Personnel costs	Must be listed for each salaried personnel under each of the following subheadings (a-c):
a) Salary	Gross Annual Salary (including 5% employee pension contribution) negotiated and agreed with Host Institution. 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/. Please note employee pension contribution of 5% has already been incorporated into the IUA gross salary figure. **Applicants <u>should</u> include annual pay increments for staff and related costs (pension contribution and employer's PRSI contribution) in the budget.** In line with the proposed new pay agreement for State employees please apply a salary contingency of 3% from 1st October 2026 onwards. Please note this contingency should be applied cumulatively year on year. **Note:** The HRB does not provide funding for the salary or benefits of academic staff within research institutions that are already in receipt of salary or benefits. The HRB does not provide salary or buy out time for collaborators.

b) Employer's PRSI	Employers' PRSI contributions are calculated at a % of gross salary. Please confirm the correct PRSI % rate with your institutional finance office.
c) Employer Pension Contribution	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). 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.
2. Running Costs	For all costs required to carry out the research programme including materials and consumables, survey costs, some travel costs including travel for participants, transcription costs, data access costs etc.

3. PPI Costs	Costs associated with public and patient involvement in research. Some examples are:
	• Compensating PPI contributors for their time (for example for time spent reviewing material/ participation in advisory groups). This can be as:
	  ○ a cost for their expertise, e.g. as hourly rate, under PPI costs or
	  ○ as salaries under personnel which should be labelled PPI contributors under salaries.
	• Travel expenses for PPI contributors.
	• Costs associated with PPI contributors attending conferences, workshops, or training.
	• PPI facilitator costs.
	• Compensation of public or patient organisations for their time.
	• Room hires for PPI events/meetings.
	• Hospitality for PPI events/meetings.
	• Companionship or childcare costs for PPI contributors while attending events, meetings, etc.
	• Training in PPI in research.
	PPI contributors supported by salaries as research staff or co-applicants, where applicable in a scheme, should be listed and justified under the personnel heading.
	
	All costs must be in line with the Host institutions policies, practices and HRB Terms and Conditions.

4. Equipment	Funding for suitably justified equipment can be included in this section. We do not expect equipment costs in excess of €10,000. Personal/Stand-alone computers will not be funded as these are considered a standard piece of office equipment, i.e., overhead. Dedicated laptops or similar equipment that is required specifically for the project because of the nature of the research, will be considered where appropriately justified, and should not exceed €1,200. All costs must be inclusive of VAT, where applicable.
5. Dissemination Costs	Costs associated with publication of results, seminar/conference attendance (provide details of name and location, where possible) and any other means of communicating/reporting research outcomes as detailed in the dissemination and knowledge translation plan, as well as costs related to data sharing. Please

	refer to the HRB policy on Open Access to Published Research[11]. Please list dissemination costs under the following categories: publications, conferences, other activities (expanded as necessary). **Publications:** The HRB support OA publications by: - Providing HRB Open Research (www.hrbopenresearch.org) which is a rapid, open peer-reviewed and open access publishing platform for all research outputs, with all publication charges covered centrally by the HRB at no expense to the grantee. And/or - Providing a contribution towards Open Access publication costs of €2,200 per publication. **Conferences:** We envisage that conference costs will be typically around €500 for national conference and €1,500 for international conference per person and year.
6. Overhead Contribution	In accordance with the HRB Policy on Overhead Usage, the HRB will contribute to the indirect costs of the research through an overhead payment of 25-30% of Total Direct Modified Costs.

8 Ethical Approval

Ethical approval is required for all research work funded by the HRB that involves human participants, and/or human material (including tissue). Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all necessary approvals are in place prior to the start of the research.

Applicants should allow sufficient time to obtain ethical and/or competent authority approval and/or animal licenses as a copy of such approvals must be submitted to the HRB before the initiation of the award. It is suggested that these are sought in parallel to the submission of the application to the HRB.

9 Supporting Documentation

The following documents must be uploaded to complete the application:

Mandatory documents:

- Gantt Chart
- Organogram

If applicable:

- Letter(s) of Support from the HI (For Lead Applicants in a contract position OR Co-Applicants in a contract position who are seeking their own salary).
- Collaboration Agreement Form(s) – required for all collaborators
- Project Description Support file - A maximum of 5 figures which can be a combination of images, graphs, tables, scales, instruments, or surveys

[11] https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/HRB-Open-Access-Policy-2025.pdf

- Co-Funding Commitment Letter

Submission of Applications

The deadline for submission of complete applications is 11 April 2025 at 13:00.

1. After successful validation, the Lead Applicant may submit the application. It will then be routed to the designated signatory at the Host Institution for their approval.
2. If a signatory rejects the application the Lead Applicant will be notified, along with any feedback the signatory has supplied.
3. The application can then be re-submitted; it will be returned to the signatory and will continue through the approval process as before.
4. On completion of the final approval by the Host Institution signatory, a grant application number is assigned to the application.
5. The application automatically gets submitted to the HRB through GEMS for consideration for funding.

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 Lead Applicant 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/.