

# **APPLIED PARTNERSHIP AWARDS – Women’s Health (APA-WH) 2026 – Turning Research into Action**

Frequently Asked Questions



## General

### How do I apply for the Applied Partnership Awards?

All applications must be made using the HRB online Grant E-Management System (GEMS).

Applicants are strongly advised to carefully read the Guidance Notes in full before starting the application.

### Does there have to be two Lead Applicants to apply?

Yes, for an application to be eligible there must be two distinct Lead Applicants, one from the researcher team and one from the knowledge user team.

For both Lead Applicants to have access to the GEMS application form, the Lead Applicant-Researcher must create the application form on the system and then add the Lead Applicant-Knowledge User. Once the Lead Applicant-Knowledge User has confirmed their participation and updated their profile on GEMS, they will have edit access to the form.

### How does the submission process work on GEMS?

Prior to final submission to the HRB, all applications must first be reviewed and approved within GEMS by the authorised signatory in the Research Office (or equivalent) at the nominated HRB recognised Host Institution. The Lead Applicant-Researcher will be asked in their GEMS application form to select the **Dean of Research or equivalent authorised person** who can endorse research grant applications for their Host Institution and this person will be responsible for reviewing, approving, and submitting the application on behalf of the applicant team.

Once the authorised signatory is selected in GEMS, an automatic email will be sent to them informing them that their approval is requested. If a signatory rejects the application the Lead Applicant-Researcher will be notified, along with any feedback the signatory has supplied. The application can then be amended and re-submitted; it will be returned to the signatory who made the rejection and continues through the approval process as before.

When the signatory approves an application, it will be sent automatically to the HRB to be considered for funding, a grant application number will be assigned to the application and a confirmation email will be sent to the Lead Applicant-Researcher.

It is critical that Lead Applicants leave sufficient time for the Host Institution Research Office (or equivalent) to review, seek clarifications and approve applications prior to the final submission date. This may involve being aware of, and complying with, any internal Host Institution deadlines for review and approval, distinct from the HRB deadline.

### What is the closing date for submission of applications?

If you want to apply, your application must have a status on GEMS of 'Submitted' before the deadline of the **27<sup>th</sup> March 2026 @ 1pm**.

Please remember to save your application regularly as you work on it to avoid losing content.

## Scope

### Which areas of health research are eligible for this call?

The Applied Partnership Awards – Women’s Health scheme 2026 aims to support applied research projects focused on women’s health. The objective of the targeted call is to support applied research proposals in women’s health research, between 12-24 months in duration, where the findings from the research will have a direct impact on the decision making of the knowledge user’s organisation/s. The proposed research should be explicitly linked to the **publicly documented evidence needs** of the knowledge user organisation/s.

A dedicated budget for women’s health research is being provided by the Department of Health as part of the Women’s Health Fund to support projects in women’s health in Ireland through this targeted Applied Partnership Awards call.

### Proposals in all areas of research into women’s health are eligible for funding under this call.

Aligned to research gaps identified by the Women’s Health Taskforce, where it is known that there are gaps in the evidence base for policy and practice **applications are particularly welcome in the following four areas:**

- Post-Partum Mental Health, with a particular focus on traumatic births;
- Endometriosis;
- Menstruation;
- Culturally Sensitive Healthcare/Intersectional impacts on Women’s Health.

Full details are provided in the Guidance Notes

### I’m unsure as to what is meant by ‘documented evidence needs’. Can you be more specific?

Documented evidence needs relate to the research priorities or needs of the Knowledge User’s organisation. It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant – Knowledge User to clearly document in the application why the research issue being addressed is an unmet need within their organisation and how the findings will be used to influence/impact on the decision making within their organisation.

In this scheme, documented evidence needs may be national needs as set out in strategies or policies, or can be documented within relevant knowledge user organisations in **the general area of women’s health**, or in more specific areas that relate to the aforementioned (Post-Partum Mental Health, with a particular focus on traumatic births; Endometriosis; Menstruation; and Culturally Sensitive Healthcare/Intersectional impacts on Women’s Health).

### I’m wondering if it is only ‘decision making’ of the knowledge user organisation that can be the focus of the project or can the project address (other) challenges that are not specifically related to decision making?

In terms of decision making, the applicant team are expected to identify and demonstrate how the research findings of this APA project are likely to enable the healthcare services or policy sector to make informed decisions or valuable changes to its practice, expenditure and/or systems in the short term (within 2 years of the end of the project).

### **What sort of applications does this call support?**

This scheme will support **applied research proposals in all areas of Women's Health** in clinical and/or population health practice and/or for health services management. An important criterion, and what makes the APA scheme different to our support for investigator-led research projects, is that the findings of the research are expected to inform decision making within the knowledge user organisation within a relatively short time period (1-2 years). This may be to inform a change in clinical practice, or health service delivery, or a change in health policy for example.

The scheme is aimed at addressing timely, relevant and applicable research within the Irish health and social care system so the research question must meet this aim.

### **How close to application/adoption does the research need to be?**

Findings need to be amenable to adoption within the Irish health and social care system within 1-2 years of the end of the project, and the integrated knowledge translation approach is expected to support this. There should be a clear and short pathway from knowledge production and dissemination to changes in policy or practice.

Given this timeframe, early stage "discovery" research, or preliminary research aimed at knowledge generation, are not suitable for this scheme.

Similarly, studies aimed at generating pilot data, or feasibility studies which as a next step would have to proceed to clinical trials, would also not be suitable.

Clinical research in addition to being implementable within this timeframe, would also have to involve a knowledge user that meets the following definition:

*A knowledge user is defined as one in a position of authority to influence and/or make decisions about health policy or the delivery of services and can act to ensure that the findings of the research will be translated to influence decision making and change within their (or other) organisations.*

*This is typically a health-system manager, policymaker, health professional, clinician or other who is in a position to make significant changes to policy or practice. Knowledge user organisations may be Government departments, agencies, hospitals, local government, voluntary organisations, research charities, patient/consumer groups or other organisations involved in making decisions regarding the management, structuring and/or delivery of practice or policy in the Irish health and social care system.*

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

If after reading the APA-WH 2026 Guidance Notes and this FAQ you are still unsure, please contact the HRB team for further guidance; contact details are in the Guidance notes.

## Applicant/Eligibility

### **Can applicants submit more than one application for peer review?**

No, only one application per Lead Applicant-Researcher and Lead Applicant-Knowledge User will be considered. However, the Lead Applicants from one application can be a Co-Applicant or Collaborators in another application provided they have the time commitment to fulfil both roles should both applications be successful.

### **Does a Lead Applicant-Researcher need to have last author publications?**

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

### **Does a Lead Applicant-Researcher have to have previous peer reviewed funding?**

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

### **Can a Lead Applicant-Researcher in a tenured academic post request a salary?**

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

### **Can a contract researcher be a Lead Applicant-Researcher and apply for their own salary?**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Can a Lead Applicant-Knowledge User request a salary through the award?**

Yes, salary-related funding may be requested to enable the release time for Lead Applicant - Knowledge Users. A letter of release time approval support from the Lead Applicant-Knowledge User organisation must be provided if the Lead Applicant-Knowledge User is requesting salary-related costs. They will also need to meet the criteria outlined in the Guidance Notes.

### **Is there a limit on how much salary can be requested for the Lead Applicant-Knowledge User on the award?**

Release time for knowledge users is a unique feature of this scheme in that it will allow up to €20,000 of HRB funding per year toward release time for the knowledge user(s). The cap of €20,000

applies to HRB funding only and may be supplemented by a release time contribution from the knowledge user organisation in accordance with the criteria detailed on page 8 of the Guidance Notes. The €20,000 per year release time funding provided by HRB can be used in full (if required) to fund one knowledge user applicant/co-applicant or it can be allocated between the knowledge user applicant and a number of knowledge user co-applicants if required.

## Knowledge User Organisation Co-Funders

### **Can there be more than one knowledge user organisation involved in the proposed research?**

Yes, there may be one or more knowledge user organisations involved in the proposed research. The co-funding may come from one or more knowledge user organisations. It will be up to the Lead Applicant- Knowledge User to coordinate the proposal from the knowledge user organisations.

### **How do we represent a large network of knowledge users?**

While there may be a lot of knowledge users across different institutions, the knowledge users on the research team are the leaders in that area and who have the responsibility for leading and driving change within their organisation. They should be in a position of authority allowing them act on the findings from the research. It will be up to the Lead Applicants to select the best team and then to use the activities under the knowledge translation plan to include a wider network of knowledge users.

### **Can knowledge user organisations contribute to more than one application in this scheme?**

Yes, a knowledge user organisation can be on more than one application, but they would need to provide evidence that they can actively contribute to both if successful.

## Co-Applicants and Collaborators

### **Can a Researcher Co-Applicant receive payment for their role in the project?**

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

A Co-Applicant may also receive funding for items such as Running Costs and Salaries.

### **Can a post doctorate researcher be a Co-Applicant?**

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

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

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

### **How many Co-Applicants can I have?**

The maximum number of Co-Applicants allowed is 10. It is not mandatory to have 10 Co-Applicants, but this is to allow for flexibility should this seem appropriate.

### **Is there a limit to how many of the Co-Applicants should be researcher/knowledge user Co-Applicants?**

No. It will be up to the Lead Applicants to decide on the balance of researchers, knowledge users, and PPI contributors that will make up the research team.

### **Do Co-Applicants need to have support letters?**

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

If a Knowledge User Co-Applicant is requesting funding for release time, a letter of release time approval from the relevant knowledge user organisation must be provided.

### **Can a Co-Applicant/Collaborator be from outside Ireland?**

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

### **Will the HRB pay for visits from or to Co-Applicants/Collaborators?**

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

### **Is a Collaborator Agreement Form needed?**

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

### **Can a Collaborator be from private enterprise?**

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

### **Can a Collaborator receive payment for their role in the project?**

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

### **What is 'Public and Patient Involvement, including Lived Experience Experts' (PPI)?**

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

## **Should PPI play a large role in this grant application?**

In the application, you are asked to describe any PPI involvement in your research throughout the various stages of identifying and prioritising the research question, the research design, conduct, analysis, and dissemination. Depending on the role in delivering the research activities, PPI contributors can be included as Co-Applicants or Collaborators.

For this call, the inclusion of Lived Experience Experts is strongly recommended.

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

## **Funding**

### **How much can I apply for?**

The maximum amount that can be requested from the HRB per application is €200,000 (inclusive of overheads) per award.

For applications to be eligible in the Applied Partnership Awards- Women's Health scheme, there is a requirement for co-funding commitments from the knowledge user organisation(s) in addition to HRB funding. The level of co-funding commitment counted for this purpose must be equivalent to a minimum of 10% of the total amount requested from the HRB.

The co-funding commitment must be a cash contribution from the knowledge user(s) organisations that will be used to contribute to the costs of the research.

In addition to the minimum co-funding cash contribution, additional in-kind or indirect contributions to the project are encouraged and welcome.

### **We're requesting the maximum HRB budget of €200,000, should this include the €20,000 co-funding commitment?**

No, if you are requesting the maximum HRB budget of €200,000 then you will also require the minimum 10% of the total award grant requested from the HRB or €20,000 co-funding commitment in addition to the €200,000. You will have a total budget of €220,000.

### **What does cash contribution mean for knowledge users co-funding commitment?**

#### **Does this include the allocation of a specified amount of personnel time to the project from people already employed in those organisations, for example?**

The HRB will expect to see a cash contribution from the knowledge user(s) organisations that will be used to contribute to the costs of the research. This may be used to employ someone within the award or go towards other required costs. As part of this 10% minimum commitment, the HRB cannot accept in-kind contributions such as a person's time who is already employed in the organisation, unless this person is being purposefully replaced for the period of time that they are working on the research project. If they are not being replaced, this would not be considered a cash contribution.

### **Does the knowledge user organisation need to provide the co-funding contribution upfront as a lump sum before the study commences or can they commit to the relevant amount per year?**



While the knowledge user organisation needs to commit the full amount of co-funding for the duration of the award, it doesn't need to be paid upfront at the start of the award and a suitable payment schedule can be set as part of the agreement between the knowledge user organisation and the Host Institution.

### **Where should the knowledge user co-funding contribution be added in the GEMS budget section?**

The full amount of co-funding should be added under the budget heading 'Knowledge User(s) Co-Funding Contribution' only. It must be itemised with relevant justification.

The other budget headings including Overheads are only for the breakdown of the funding being requested from HRB.

### **How do I determine what gross salary to pay?**

Applicants should use the IUA website scales for the most up-to-date recommended salary scales for academic researchers (<http://www.iua.ie/research-innovation/researcher-salary-scales/>). Pay scales used and the level and point on the scale must be stated and justified. For appointment of Research Fellows or Senior Research Fellows evidence of position must be provided at point of award.

Applicants should include annual pay increments for staff and related costs (pension contribution, employer's PRSI contribution, and overhead contribution) in the budget. For employees who are not academic researchers the relevant pay scales should be used for their profession. Please note employee pension contribution of 5% has already been incorporated into the IUA gross salary figure.

### **Does the HRB pay pension contributions?**

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

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

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

### **Are overheads included within the €200,000 threshold?**

Yes, overheads are included within these limits. Overheads will only be paid on the funding requested from HRB and cannot be requested on the Co-Funding Contribution.

### **How is the overhead contribution calculated?**

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 30% of Total Direct Modified Costs (TDMC excludes

student fees, equipment, and capital building costs) for laboratory or clinically based research and 25% of Total Direct Modified Costs for desk-based research.

### **What costs are included in the overhead contribution?**

The following costs are included in the overhead contribution: recruitment costs, bench fees, office space, software, contribution to gases, bacteriological media preparation fees, waste fees, bioinformatics access. A copy of the HRB overheads policy can be found at the following link: <https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/before-you-apply/all-grant-policies/hrb-policy-on-usage-of-research-overheads/>

### **Do all the overheads go to the Host Institution, or can they be shared with the knowledge user organisation?**

If your proposal is successful, the award contract will be between the HRB and the recognised Host Institution where the Host Institution are responsible for managing the funds. The allocation of overheads and all other aspects of running the project would then need to be agreed between the Host Institution and the knowledge user organisation.

### **Can I hire a consultant to carry out part of the project?**

Yes, this cost should be included under Running Costs.

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

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

### **Does HRB support costs related to FAIR Data Management?**

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

### **What type of FAIR Data Management costs can be included?**

The HRB will support costs with:

- People – staff time per hour for data collection, anonymisation, management/ stewardship support, training, etc.
- Storage and computation – cloud storage, domain hosting charge
- Data access – secondary data access, costs for preparing data for sharing (e.g. anonymisation)
- Deposition and reuse – costs for depositing research data and metadata in an open access data repository, defining semantic models, making data linkable, choosing the licence, defining metadata for dataset, deploying/publishing
- Others – when properly justified

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

## Personnel

### **Can I hire a PhD student to carry out the project?**

No, unlike the HRB's research career awards, the APA scheme is not framed as a training initiative and is not suitable for students in pursuit of a higher degree.

### **Can I hire more than one person to carry out this project?**

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

## Supporting Documents

### **What documents should be uploaded with my application form?**

You must upload the following documents:

- Objectives & Deliverables Gantt Chart
- Knowledge User(s) Co-Funding Commitment Letter
- Host Institution Letters of Support, if applicable (see question below)
- Release Times Letters of Support, if applicable (see question below)
- Collaborator Agreement Forms, if applicable (required for all collaborators)
- Infrastructure Agreement Form, if applicable

You may also upload an optional attachment to support your Project Description Figures: 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.

### **Who needs to provide Host Institution Letters of Support?**

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

### **Who needs to provide Release Time Letters of Support?**

A letter of release time approval support from the Lead Applicant-Knowledge User organisation must be provided if the Lead Applicant-Knowledge User is requesting salary-related costs. A letter of release time approval support from the Co-Applicant-Knowledge User organisation must be provided if the Co-Applicant -Knowledge User is requesting Release time costs.

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

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

### **Do I need to provide an Infrastructure Agreement Form (IAF)?**

Applications availing of the advice, research design, data management services and/or other forms of support from a Clinical Research Facility/Centre (CRF/CRC), other infrastructure beyond the personnel and capacity within the applicant team are required to provide additional information detailing the scope and nature of the engagement.

## Submission

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

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

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

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

## Review Process

### **Will public review be part of the review process?**

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