

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH RESEARCH
BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CENTRES
INVITATION TO SUBMIT FULL APPLICATION

INTRODUCTION

*Best Research for Best Health*¹ set out a 5-year Research and Development Strategy for the NHS in England. This document sets out the **detailed process for the selection** of the NIHR Biomedical Research Centres and invites NHS/Academic partnerships shortlisted on the basis of a Pre-Qualifying Questionnaire to **submit a Full Application**.

BACKGROUND

The aims of the NIHR Biomedical Research Centres will be to:

- **drive innovation** in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of ill-health;
- **translate advances** in biomedical research into benefits for patients; and
- provide a key component of the NHS contribution to our nation's international competitiveness by **making the best centres even better**.

To achieve these aims we will:

- provide **substantial levels of sustained funding** to create an environment where scientific endeavour can thrive, attract the foremost talent and produce world-class outputs; and
- support a **critical mass of people and infrastructure** in Research Centres focused on **biomedical innovation** and **translational research** for the **benefit of patients**.

The key characteristics of NIHR Biomedical Research Centres will therefore be:

- existing **research excellence**; and
- existing **critical mass**.
- track record of excellence in **partnership** including that with industry

The selection criteria will therefore focus on:

- existing **research quality**; and
- existing **research capacity**.
- strong **forward plan**

¹ *Best Research for Best Health: A New National Health Research Strategy*. The NHS contribution to health research in England. Department of Health. 2006.

TYPES OF NIHR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CENTRES

Two types of NIHR Biomedical Research Centre will be established within our leading NHS/University partnerships:

- Centres which have very substantial portfolios of world-class biomedical research **across a range of clinical and research areas**; and
- Centres which have a substantial portfolio of world-class biomedical research **in a specific clinical or research area**. These may be either whole organisations that are focused on a single clinical or research area, or a specific clinical or research group within an organisation with a wider remit.

For clarity, we will refer to the first as “Comprehensive NIHR Biomedical Research Centres” and to the second as “Specialist NIHR Biomedical Research Centres”.

ELIGIBILITY

In order to ensure critical mass, focus, and clarity, the funding for each NIHR Biomedical Research Centre is expected to be awarded to a single NHS organisation working in partnership with a University².

In exceptional cases, where material evidence is provided of an impending merger between two or more NHS Trusts, we will accept a consortium proposal from these Trusts with their University partner.

NUMBER OF NIHR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CENTRES

The number of NIHR Biomedical Research Centres has not been determined in advance. It will be determined by the quality of the applications, in the light of the need not to spread the funding too thinly.

A preliminary analysis indicated that we expected to fund a total of ten Centres. A total of fourteen partnerships have been invited to proceed to the full application stage.

FUNDING

- The total amount of funding available will be fixed at £100 million per annum.
- The amount of funding allocated to each centre will be determined by the scale, nature and quality of the research activity to be conducted by that centre. Partnerships will be notified of a range of funding appropriate to the scale of activity undertaken, and will be asked to submit expenditure plans within this range. Partnerships should note that the funding available for this scheme is not sufficient to fund all applications at the top of this range. On average, it is sufficient to fund at the middle of the range.
- Funding will be awarded to the NHS partner, and is to be used to support the translation of excellent basic biomedical research (already being undertaken primarily in universities) into excellent clinical research (underway or to be undertaken within the NHS), for the benefit of patients. The expectation is therefore

² The term University is used here to include all Higher Education Institutions

that the scheme will fund the recurrent costs of patient- or people-based translational clinical research in the NHS³.

- Eligible costs include:
 - research staff engaged on patient- or people-focused translational clinical research in the NHS
 - research support staff supporting patient- or people-focused translational clinical research in the NHS
 - research training, leading to a higher degree by research (eg MPhil, MD, PhD), for staff, of all disciplines, engaged on patient- or people-focused translational clinical research in the NHS
 - NHS service support costs of patient- or people-focused translational clinical research (eg pharmacy, pathology, radiology)
 - other, legitimate and reasonable, indirect costs within the NHS (eg, accommodation, payroll, HR, finance)
- Treatment costs associated with research are not covered.
- Funding will not be provided for university laboratories or infrastructure which is located in the university, or to meet the costs of animal research, or other work which is not patient- or people-focused translational clinical research in the NHS
- In some cases, university research facilities (including laboratories) are located in the NHS. Where an applicant can demonstrate beyond doubt that such facilities are essential for the conduct of patient- or people-focused translational clinical research in the NHS, appropriate support for them may be requested.
- Only staff who are working on patient- or people-based translational research in the NHS will be supported.
- It is normally expected that the staff funded under this scheme will be employed by the NHS partner. However, where there is a local agreement for staff to be employed by the university partner, and where this does not attract additional costs over and above the normal costs of employment, this will be allowed (*ie* the cost of employer's contributions will be met, but the posts will not attract Full Economic Costs in the university).
- The award of funding to all centres will be phased with 50% funding in the first year (starting 1st April 2007) and full funding thereafter. Proposals from applicants should be costed to reflect this profile.
- This funding will be separate from, and additional to, any other NHS R&D funding received by the NHS organisation. This means that funding cannot be provided for the same item by the Biomedical Research Centre scheme and, for example, the Technology Platforms scheme.
- In all cases, the value for money of the proposal will be an important selection criterion.
- Once an award has been made, the Department of Health will require all successful partnerships to provide regular auditable financial statements regarding the use of funds provided under this scheme. The Department reserves the right to send a team of independent auditors to the partnership to confirm the actual use of funds.

³ The Biomedical Research Centres scheme will fund patient- or people-focused translational clinical research, the aim of which is to translate basic biomedical research into clinical research, for the benefit of patients. This differs from the research to be funded *via* the NIHR Programme Grants for Applied Research scheme, which aims to provide evidence to improve health outcomes, and is largely focused on the later stages of the research process, where research findings are expected to impact on healthcare within a three to five year timescale.

CAPITAL FUNDING

The Department of Health also has a capital expenditure budget available for disbursement within the 2006/07 financial year. Partnerships are therefore also invited to request items incurring capital expenditure (including equipment, building and refurbishment) which would support and enhance the work of the proposed Research Centre. This funding will be over and above the recurrent funding to be provided *via* the Research Centres funding scheme. The amount of capital available is £40m in total. The amount of any capital requested must be appropriate to the level of activity that the Biomedical Research Centre would conduct if successful. We do not want an undue focus on bids for capital to deflect partnerships from the main aim of their application, which is to present a strong, coherent case for the recurrent costs of a NIHR Biomedical Research Centre. Therefore, the delivery of the centre's proposed research strategy must not be dependent on the success of these capital bids.

Any capital awarded by the Department of Health under this scheme will be provided to the NHS Trust in the financial year 2006/07. The Department will require Government and NHS procurement guidelines to be followed.

SELECTION PROCESS

The NIHR Biomedical Research Centres will be selected by **open competition**. The timetable will be:

- May 2006: peer review panel identified a **shortlist** of those NHS/university partnerships which, on the basis of the Pre-qualifying Questionnaire, appeared to have the most substantial portfolios of truly world-class biomedical research in England, and were invited to submit a **full application**.
- 20th September 2006: deadline for **receipt of full applications**.
- 27 to 30 November 2006: **site visits** and/or **interviews** with shortlisted NHS/University partnerships.
- December 2006: **confirm** selected Research Centres.

Full applications will be considered by an **expert peer-review panel** with **international membership**.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE FULL APPLICATION STAGE

The selection criteria for this stage will be:

- the quality and volume of internationally-excellent biomedical and translational research and researchers
- the relevance of the research portfolio to the health of patients and the public
- the strength of the strategic partnerships including those with industry
- the strength of the forward plan
- value for money

INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED

Shortlisted NHS/University partnerships are asked to submit a **full application** setting out:

- An overview of the excellent basic biomedical research conducted locally by the NHS/university partnership, or through its engagement in wider research collaborations and partnerships.
- The NHS/university partnership's overall strategy for translating this basic biomedical research into excellent clinical research for the benefit of patients, including:
 - a description of current and proposed strategic partnerships, including with industry, and plans to develop these further
 - specific detailed examples of effective translation in the past.
- The specific research themes that will be pursued within the proposed Research Centre with funding from this scheme, including, for each theme:
 - its aims and objectives
 - its relevance to the health of patients and the public
 - the key researchers associated with it, including a proposed theme leader
 - the ten most important publications arising from this research area in the past five years
 - five examples over the last ten year period of how previous research findings in this area have translated into improvements in healthcare and public health
- A description of the resources that will be deployed on each of the above research themes, including:
 - a detailed breakdown of the cost to this funding scheme of those resources (using the funding template provided)
 - justification for the resources requested
 - the financial or other contribution from the NHS Trust and its partner university and other relevant partners, *eg* other research funders, Regional Development Agency
 - a statement of how funding provided to the Centre will build on DH investment *via* other funding schemes (*eg* Experimental Medicine Centres and Technology Platforms)
 - a statement of the relative priority attached to the research themes, and the work to be undertaken within them.
- The management arrangements for the Centre, including the arrangements for joint working between the NHS and University partners, a proposed Director, and the way in which the proposed research theme leaders fit into these arrangements.
- The partnership's strategy in relation to:
 - engaging health care users and the general public
 - engaging health care planners and policy makers, as appropriate
 - linking, as appropriate, with existing DH and NHS R&D programmes and institutions, including the HTA and SDO Programmes, CRD, Cochrane Centre and NIHCE
 - linking, as appropriate, with social scientists (economists, psychologists, management scientists, bioethicists etc) and social science institutions nationally (*eg* ESRC) or locally (in partner Universities).
- The Centre's strategies and plans for capacity development in the area of translational clinical research, and its track record in training researchers in this area.

Applicants are also invited to submit a bid for capital investment, using the form provided.

NHS/University partnerships should complete and submit the following documents:

- A full application (using the form provided)
- Details of each of the specific themes of work to be conducted with the funding provided through this scheme (using the form provided).
- A financial plan (using the two funding templates provided) for each specific research theme and for the Centre as a whole, within the funding range specified.
- *Curriculum vitae* for the proposed Director and research theme leaders (using the template provided).
- A bid for capital investment (using the template provided)

These documents should be attached to an email and sent to: david.king@dh.gsi.gov.uk.
No additional documentation should be submitted.

This is a major new scheme and we wish to ensure that short-listed partnerships fully understand what is needed in their applications before they submit them. We are therefore very happy to respond to requests for clarification from the Lead for each application or from a person nominated by him/her. We cannot, of course, provide advice on what a partnership should say or how they should say it. Members of the International Peer Review Panel are bound by confidentiality and are not able to discuss this scheme with short-listed partnerships. Any enquires should be sent to: david.king@dh.gsi.gov.uk.

The closing date for electronic submission of full applications is **Friday 13rd October 2006 at 5:00pm**. A signed copy of the Full Application form should be sent as soon as possible after this date to:

Dr David King
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