



**National Institute for
Health Research**

BEST RESEARCH FOR BEST HEALTH

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 6.5 (established)

NIHR PROGRAMME GRANTS FOR APPLIED RESEARCH

*Best Research for Best Health*¹ set out a 5-year Research and Development Strategy for the NHS in England. This Implementation Plan provides more details on one of the key components of that strategy: PROGRAMME GRANTS FOR APPLIED RESEARCH.

The Programme Grants for Applied Research plan has been fully implemented.

Gateway Reference: 6050

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Aims

- The NIHR Programme Grants for Applied Research will provide evidence to improve health outcomes in England through promotion of health, prevention of ill health, and optimal disease management (including safety and quality), with particular emphasis on conditions causing significant disease burden, where other research funders may not be focused, or there is insufficient funding available.
- Programme grants will be prestigious awards supporting teams of leading researchers, from the NHS and academia working together, who can demonstrate an impressive track-record of achievement in applied health research.
- These grants will allow some stability of funding to support the long-term development of top quality research groups working in the NHS.

Purpose

- Programme grants support a series of high quality related projects, and associated infrastructure, which form a coherent theme in an area of priority or need for the NHS.
- These grants support applied health research, and the programme's infrastructure needs, including: health services research; public health research; behavioural research; health economics; and modelling.

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

- These grants replace, in part, programmes of research currently supported by the Priorities and Needs (PNF) component of NHS R&D Support Funding for NHS Providers.

Funding

- The NIHR will allocate funds of £75 million per year to this scheme when it reaches full capacity.
- The funding will increase over the three years of the NHS R&D transition period.
- Individual awards are for a maximum of £2m over a period of up to five years (*i.e.* an average of no more than £400k per annum). The amount of funding awarded is, however, determined by the scale and nature of the research activity to be conducted.
- In all cases, funding will be awarded to an NHS organisation.
- Funding must only be used to support the recurrent costs of patient- and population-focused applied health research.
- Eligible costs include:
 - research staff (clinical and non-clinical, including the relevant salary costs of all applicants, whether employed by the NHS or an academic partner);
 - research support staff (clinical and non-clinical);
 - other direct research costs, including infrastructure, essential to deliver the programme;
 - a reasonable programme overhead to cover indirect costs incurred in the NHS (this funding scheme will not, however, meet indirect costs incurred by an academic partner).
- Service Support Costs and Treatment costs are not covered by this scheme (see Implementation Plan 5.1a).

Eligibility

- All NHS organisations and other providers of NHS services in England may propose programmes, in collaboration with an appropriate academic partner or partners. Bids may be submitted by consortia including more than one NHS organisation. Bids may include support for patient/consumer groups leading or participating in programmes of research.

Selection Process

- There are two national competitions each year.
- The NIHR Central Commissioning Facility (CCF) manages the scheme.
- Application is a two-stage process. Potential applicants are required to submit to the NIHR CCF a brief outline of their proposal and a short CV of the principal applicant. The NIHR CCF will then invite a full application from those who meet the criteria below and are short-listed
- In order to ensure a controlled transition from the present R&D funding system to the new system, the areas in which programme grants were awarded in the first round were limited to the following:
 - Mental health
 - Medicines for children
 - Diabetes

- Stroke
- Dementias, neurodegenerative diseases and neurology

In subsequent funding rounds (starting April 2007) NIHR will accept outline applications in all areas of research.

- All applications go through a rigorous peer review process by a Selection Panel that includes a broad range of expertise in applied health services research.
- A series of expert Sub-Panels have been convened to assist the Selection Panel by reviewing proposals in specific topic areas.
- Regular progress reports will be submitted to the NIHR CCF who will monitor the use of funds and ensure that continued funding is justified.
- As a condition of funding, all awardees will be required to submit an 'end of programme report'.

Selection Criteria

- The specific selection criteria at the outline and full application stages are:
 - The strength of the research team, including the relevant expertise and track-record of the applicants in conducting high-quality applied health research;
 - The relevance of the proposed research to the priorities and needs of the NHS;
 - The likelihood of significant benefit to the NHS and patients within a three to five year timescale;
 - The quality of the outline proposal.
 - The value for money provided by the proposal.

Implementation Timetable

- 25th January 2006 – R&D strategy published confirming intention to establish the Programmes Grants for Applied Research scheme.
- May 2006 – call for outline applications through the NIHR CCF.
- July/August 2006 – short-listing and call for full proposals.
- October 2006 – deadline for receipt of full proposals.
- January 2006 – first Panel meetings.
- February 2007 – first awards confirmed.
- April 2007 – first awards commence.
- April 2007 – call for second round of applications.
- July 2007 – call for third round of applications.

Further Information

Further information on the Programme Grants for Applied Research funding scheme is available on the NIHR website at

<http://www.nihr-ccf.org.uk/site/programmes/programmegrants/default.cfm>.

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