These FAQs have been approved by the NIHR Central Commissioning Facility (CCF), NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC) and the NIHR Trainees Coordinating Centre (TCC).

*In addition, the Policy Research Programme (PRP) and the Health Innovation Challenge Fund (HICF) have approved the use of this guidance document. When the guidance document refers to NIHR, please assume this includes PRP and HICF.
FAQs - Applicants

All questions and answers are relevant to all programmes within NETSCC, CCF and TCC unless stated otherwise.

DIRECT COSTS

1. What are the Direct Costs?
   These are costs that are specific to the research, which will be charged as the amount actually spent and can be supported by an audit record. Direct costs may include the following:
   - salaries
   - travel, subsistence & conference fees
   - equipment
   - consumables
   - patient and public involvement
   - other costs (such as consultancy, study specific training, computer licensing, open access publishing, etc.)

   More information about how the direct costs should be calculated can be found in the Guidance Notes for each individual programme.

2. How accurate do you expect my costs to be?
   Applicants should note that it is in their interests to undertake a thorough, realistic and accurate costing of their application. All Programmes expect that the costs identified should not differ between application stage(s). Any differences must be clearly explained and fully justified. The Committee / Panel will scrutinise any increases.

Staff Costs

3. Can I include all applicants’ costs’?
   Programmes fully support the principle of full economic costing (unless stated otherwise in the programme guidance), and award research funds on this basis to research based in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Under the terms of this, all applicants are allowed to charge for the proportion of their time that will be spent working on any funded application. However applicants should be aware that although all Programmes fund on the basis of the scientific merit of the research, applications are also assessed on value for money. The total cost of any application should therefore be carefully considered.

4. I am one of the applicants on a research study and am employed full time by a University/NHS Trust. Can my salary be included in the costings?
   Yes, we will reimburse your employer for the proportion of your salary relating to the time you will spend working on the NIHR Programme research activity.

5. Can a PhD student be included as part of the costings?
   NIHR only funds PhD studentships through its training programmes. NIHR's main training opportunities can be accessed at http://www.nihrtcc.nhs.uk

   It is possible, however, for a researcher employed on an NIHR award to register for a PhD based on the funded research, though NIHR will not reimburse student fees.
6. **How is yearly salary calculated?**
   The amount per year is calculated by multiplying the gross annual salary by the % of time spent on the research per year. This needs to be done by your finance department (as it is not an automatic calculation) for each year that the person is working on the research. If the person is spending different percentages of time on the research in each year, then list this person with the relevant percentages on separate lines and explain this in the justification of costs section.

7. **Can we include local or national discretionary payments that proposed co-applicants or collaborators are in receipt of (e.g. Silver/Gold/Platinum merit awards for applicants with NHS contracts, 'market force' supplements over and above standard spine scales for University employees) etc. in salary costings?**
   If the co-applicants or collaborators are already in receipt of these awards/supplements then yes they can be included in the costings. If they are only anticipated then they should not be included. Please note however that only those payments which the employing institution itself is required to fund should be included, not any for which separate national funding is made available.

8. **We are an HEI but will be funding clinical time/research nurses. How will this time be funded?**
   If the clinical time/research nurses are employed by the NHS and are not subject to indirect costs then we will pay 100% of costs, but we will not fund any indirect costs for these employees.

**Travel, Subsistence and Conference Costs and Fees**

9. **What sort of travel costs can I include as part of research costs?**
   Where applicable you will need to include the travel and subsistence of your Research Advisory Group, Steering Committee, Data Monitoring & Ethics Committee; researchers’ travel and patients’ travel.

   Patient travel and subsistence that relate to the delivery of treatment should be classified as a NHS Treatment Cost.

10. **Do you fund travel by first class?**
    We do not fund first class travel. The most economic method of transport should be used when calculating travel costs.

11. **Should we include costs for HTA / PHR / HS&DR Monitoring Welcome meetings?**
    The HTA programme only invites Primary Research applicants to attend Welcome meetings at NETSCC, HTA in Southampton (but not if the staff have been to a previous welcome meeting or it is a feasibility study). There are no Welcome meetings for HTA Secondary Research applicants.

    Most PHR and HS&DR applicants are invited to attend welcome meetings, regardless of whether they are primary or secondary research applications.

    Travel expenses for attendance of these meetings should be included in the application as part of research costs.
Equipment

12. What do I do if a piece of equipment costs more than £5,000 to purchase but the leasing costs are greater than the purchase price?
   NIHR is unable to fund pieces of equipment costing more than £5,000 which will be purchased and owned by an NHS organisation. Pieces of equipment costing more than £5,000 to purchase will usually need to be leased. Where applicants are leasing equipment with a purchase price of more than £5,000 a comparison of leasing versus purchasing costs must be provided.

   Include guidance for HEI applicants.

13. What costs can we include for computers, IT support and software?
   Costs for computers/laptops up to £650 excluding VAT can be costed in the application. Printers and specialist software should be shown separately. For HEIs common office software and standard IT support and training should be covered by indirect costs. However, software and IT support and training that is specific to the research can be costed for separately in the application form under the equipment section in direct costs.

14. Should I account for VAT on equipment?
   Equipment must exclude VAT but if your organisation cannot recover VAT on a piece of equipment then the VAT can be reclaimed on the application form. Please consult your finance team about whether or not VAT can be re-claimed.

Consumables

15. Can consumables be included as part of research costs?
   Only research specific items, and not general office costs, can be claimed for HEIs. General consumables should be covered by an institution’s indirect costs.

16. Can I include stationery and phone costs in the application costs?
   We will cover the estimated cost of phone calls to participants if significant (e.g. for telephone surveys), and paper and printing of questionnaires and trial publicity material or information for participants, but for HEIs we will not cover general office costs as these should be covered by indirect costs.

Other Costs

17. Can we include training costs?
   Whilst training which is specific to the research should be costed in the application, for HEIs more general training such as use of common IT packages should be funded through the indirect costs element of the award so should not be included in the costing. Please note that if the training is in connection with delivering the intervention under consideration then it may be a treatment cost or NHS support cost, please see: http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/05/attributing-the-costs-of-health-social-care-research-development-acord/. Applicants to NIHR TCC Fellowships and Personal awards must include costs and justification for a training package tailored to the needs of the individual and the research.

18. Can we include costs for NHS consultants?
   The allocation of NHS clinical consultants’ time and costs can be quite complicated. The first step is to identify whether it is an NHS Support Cost, an NHS Treatment Cost or a research cost. If their role is to do with patient care it may be an NHS support or treatment cost. Guidance on how to attribute costs is provided by DH at
19. Can we include payments to Project Advisory Groups, Steering Committee and Data Monitoring Ethics Committee members?
We would usually pay reasonable travel costs; however, we do not pay consultancy costs or reimburse their time unless they are a public contributor.

20. Will you pay a sponsorship fee to a Trust?
We will pay MHRA, CTA annual renewal fees and Trial registration fees as research costs. We will not fund other types of sponsorship fees. However, if specific costs of sponsoring a specific piece of research can be identified then we will consider them along with all the other research costs.

INDIRECT COST AND ESTATE CHARGES
Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) use the TRansparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology to calculate Full Economic Cost (FEC) of applications, which accounts for indirect costs and overheads. Not all NIHR programmes pay FEC and applicants are advised to refer to specific programme guidance.

21. Can overheads or indirect costs be included for NHS bodies?
NIHR does not fund NHS overheads through its research awards. NHS organisations in receipt of Research Capability Funding may use this funding to help meet overheads/indirect costs.

Commercial/Other Partner Organisations can claim indirect costs which are the costs of resources used by the research that are shared by other activities. Please seek advice from your finance department about the appropriate cost for this section. Total Commercial/Other Partner Organisation indirect costs must be fully justified.

For further information on Research Capability Funding please see http://www.nihr.ac.uk/infrastructure/Pages/research_capability_funding.aspx

22. The host institution is an NHS Trust but we have some HEI staff on the team. Can we include indirect costs for these people?
Yes, indirect costs can be paid for HEI staff, at their institution's rate and we will fund their direct and indirect costs at the agreed FEC rate.

23. What do non-NHS indirect costs cover?
Broadly speaking non-NHS indirect costs cover the costs of running the organisation. This includes all centrally provided services such as payroll, finance, security, IT support etc. as well as normal office costs such as widely used office software (although not trial specific software), consumables, stationery and phone calls (although not those items directly arising from the research such as patient information literature and telephone surveys), general IT training (not training specifically related to the intervention under consideration), staff recruitment costs, parental leave and sick leave costs. This is not an exhaustive list and we are happy to answer queries on specific items.

GENERAL QUESTIONS APPLICANTS

24. What is the difference between HEI and non-HEI costs?
HEI costs are Higher Education Institution costs – those costs which arise at and are paid by the University. FEC will be applied to these costs at the appropriate rate.
25. Can research funds be used to recruit a foreign national (based overseas) including international travel expenses and working visa?
Subject to the research organisation meeting all limits set out in the contract, and providing a clear justification as to why the research could not be conducted by a UK national, the research organisation is free to administer the funds within the terms of the contract.

If there are UK indirect costs associated with this person we would pay at the appropriate rate for the Programme.

26. I work at an HEI but have consultancy charges from a charity. Are these a non-HEI cost?
Yes, because they do not originate at the university.

27. We are including a private clinic in our research. How do we include the costs for this?
Please include the costs the clinic has quoted under ‘Other Direct Costs’ and supply any documentary evidence of this.

28. Some of the research is going to be completed abroad how should we include these costs?
Where applicants are seeking to include overseas costs in their application such costs will need to be stated in GB £. Where this involves converting local currency into £, applicants should use the following website (http://uk.reuters.com/business/currencies) and state what rate they have used and the date of the conversion rate.

29. Some of our research activities are taking place in one or more of the Devolved Nations as well as England. How should we include these costs in our application?
Each of the Devolved Nations provides its own guidance on how to attribute and access NHS Support, Treatment and Research costs. Costs should be included in the application in accordance with this guidance, the guidance can be found at: Scotland – http://www.cso.scot.nhs.uk/SuppScience/AcoRD%20-%20Guidance%20Scotland.pdf

30. What are my obligations as a host institution?
The Host Institution has full responsibility for the award, for all funded activities, and for adherence by the Chief Investigator and the Team to the Conditions of the award. The Host Institution must ensure compliance (where applicable) to specific guidance that exists for the conduct of the research (including clinical trials) and be fully compliant with Data Protection requirements, human rights, The Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations and secure filing. For more details on these responsibilities refer to the Department of Health (DH) guidance “Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care: Second edition”.

31. What steps should an NHS host institution take before the research begins?

The NHS Host Institution MUST ensure that research will be conducted in accordance with the Department of Health (DH) guidance “Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care: Second edition” and, if relevant, in accordance with the DH guidance "Governance Arrangements for NHS Research Ethics Committees" or such other guidelines as may be issued from time to time by the DH. All research applicants must ensure that before any research involving human participants, their organs, tissue or data commences:

- there are adequate arrangements and resources to meet the standards set out in the Research Governance Framework\(^2\)
- the study has received favourable ethical opinion
- there is a Clinical Trial Authorisation (CTA)\(^3\), for the clinical trial of any medicine
- the allocation of responsibilities is agreed and documented
- appropriate contractual arrangements are in place including subcontracting arrangements
- agreements are in place with the Trust(s) and/or Clinical Research Networks to fund NHS Treatment and Support costs, respectively, if required by the research.

32. How will my application be assessed?

Each programme provides specific guidance on eligibility and how applications will be assessed by their Committee/Panel that can be accessed from individual programmes.

33. Where can I get help to write my application?

Applicants can get help from the Research Design Services (RDS) whose role is to support researchers to develop and design high quality research applications for submission to NIHR and other national, peer-reviewed funding competitions for applied health or social care research. Contacts for regional RDSs can be found via this link: http://www.ccf.nihr.ac.uk/Pages/RDSMap.aspx

34. An ideal candidate has been found to fill a post but his/her salary is higher than the amount costed for in our application. Will NIHR supplement the award to cover this cost?

Only in exceptional cases at the pre-contracting stage will this be considered (note that the request for additional funds must not take the research over the funding limit). Once an award has been finalised and the contract has been signed by all parties, the NIHR will not meet any additional costs if the cost of an appointment is different from the amount awarded for this post.

35. How much inflation uplift should be added to the research budget?

All costs must be provided at current prices, with no inflation included. An adjustment for inflation may be applied annually by the managing agent thereafter at rates set by the DH.


\(^3\) http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Howweregulate/Medicines/Licensingofmedicines/Clinicaltrials/UKclinicaltrialauthorisationassessmentperformance/index.htm
36. I have worked out the research costs for my application but have not included NHS Treatment and Support Costs. Will my application still be considered?

Applications that have failed to include either NHS Treatment or Support Costs, or a valid explanation for their omission will be questioned and a request to amend the finances may be made.

Applicants are reminded that Committee/Panel members make funding recommendations to the DH based on both scientific quality and value for money and the latter cannot be adequately assessed without all costs being included.

Where NHS Treatment and Support Costs are included in your application the research programme advises that the Chief Investigator (CI) engages with the NHS Trusts and NIHR Clinical Research Networks involved to ensure that these organisations are aware of the research and the finances that may be incurred.

37. We think there may be a possibility of getting additional funding from elsewhere. How should we reflect this in the application form?

Usually applicants should apply for the whole sum but they should also mention in their research description that there is the possibility of the other organisation funding £x. This allows the Panel/Committee to consider the ramifications of such joint funding as well as take it into account when looking at the amount being asked to fund. You will need to give details about the terms of the agreement (including commercial terms) with the other Party.

Please speak with the programme / finance team for further advice and explanation.