

Public Health Research Programme

Tips for success

A successful PHR project depends on many variables. This document aims to summarise the main areas on which our advisory committees have provided feedback to applicants, which can often contribute to a proposal being declined. These tips are not intended to replace the application guidance notes or supporting information and we would recommend that you consider the three documents in conjunction. *Please read as appropriate to your proposed study question and design.*

Research Plan - The information below aims to summarise 10 key areas which need to be clearly described in the 'Research Plan' section of your application form.

	Y/N
Research question – Have you clearly described your main research question?	
Population – Have you defined and described your target population?	
Intervention – Have you clearly defined and described the intervention being evaluated? Have you defined who the intervention will be delivered by? Have you defined where the intervention will be delivered 'the setting'?	
Comparator (if appropriate) – Is the comparator clearly defined and described?	
Outcome – Have you defined and described your primary health outcome? Proposed primary outcome measures should always be health related, unless otherwise specified in a commissioning brief.	
Aims and objectives - Have you included a list of your aims and objectives?	
Team – Does your team possess the appropriate range of skills to deliver the project? Are the roles and responsibilities of each member in relation to the project clearly described? Does your team include public representatives?	

Design – Is the overall study design clearly described?	
Sample Size – Have you provided justification for your proposed sample size?	
Inequalities – Have you described how your project will address and have an impact on health inequalities?	

FURTHER DETAILS:

1. Public health importance

The first stage in the assessment of your proposal will be on the public health importance of the research question – i.e. will your research provide the evidence needed by decision makers on a prominent public health issue, and will it reduce inequalities in health? If the Prioritisation Committee does not consider that it is of sufficient importance your proposal will be declined at this stage. Therefore it's important that you fully justify this aspect in your proposal.

2. Inequalities in health

Applications to the PHR programme should include evidence that you have considered the impact on health inequalities and details provided about how you plan to measure and report this.

3. Rationale and existing evidence

You will need to demonstrate to both the committees that there is a theoretical underpinning for your research project and that there is an evidence gap or deficiency that your project will aim to address. If you are proposing a systematic review and/or an evidence synthesis details regarding the size of the available literature base should be provided. If you are proposing primary research and have completed any pilot work please include details of this work and upload any supporting documentation.

4. Clearly describe the stage of your study

The Funding Committee will need to be able to clearly identify from your proposal the planned development of the intervention and what stage it has reached, i.e. whether it's a feasibility, pilot or definitive study. If you are proposing a definitive study, please demonstrate that there is sufficient evidence from preliminary studies to justify this. If you cannot, you may wish to apply to the PHR Programme for funding of a pilot or feasibility study. For applications citing pilot studies, information on how the pilot has informed the proposed study and details of all the available pilot data should be provided.

5. Generalisability and transferability

The PHR Programme aims to ensure that the findings from the research it funds benefits as many people as possible. The Funding Committee will therefore look for

evidence that the findings will be generalisable beyond the participant group for your study.

6. Clearly describe the intervention

Please succinctly describe the intervention being evaluated or developed. If there are alternative interventions which could have been evaluated, justify the reasons for selecting your particular intervention.

7. Intervention costs

The PHR Programme is able to fund research costs, i.e. the costs which relate to activities that are being undertaken to answer the research questions and which end when the research ends. The PHR Programme cannot, however, cover the costs of delivering the intervention being evaluated.

8. Sample size calculations

The Funding Committee consider the scientific quality of your proposal and look for evidence on how you have calculated your sample size (where appropriate to your study design) to satisfy itself that your study is sufficiently powered. Experience, to date, has found that the sample sizes have been under estimated and not well justified.

9. Recruitment methods and assumptions

Justify how you intend to recruit to your study. You should also consider potential retention and attrition issues, and how they might be addressed.

10. Methods of analysis of health economics assessment

You should include information about your proposed methods of performing a health economic analysis or analysing economic data

11. Possible adverse effects or ethical issues

The safety and welfare of study participants is paramount to any studies the PHR Programme funds. You should demonstrate that you have considered this aspect and, where any potential issues may arise, that you have a process in place to deal with them

12. Methodology

You should include specific details about your proposed methodology, and why you have chosen it over other possible methods; in particular you should ensure that sufficient details regarding any qualitative methods or realist synthesis methods you intend to use are provided.

13. The project team

Many projects require a multi-disciplinary team with appropriate skills and experience. The Funding Committee will review the composition of your project team to ensure that it meets the needs of your project e.g. a team might need to have subject experts, methodologists, practitioners and members of the public. The roles and responsibilities of each team member in relation to the project should be provided.

14. Public involvement

Consultation and involvement from members of the public is expected for all NIHR-funded projects. The Funding Committee will be looking for evidence that this is planned within the project in a way that will make an effective and meaningful contribution to the research. More information on public involvement in research can be found on the INVOLVE website - <http://www.invo.org.uk/>

15. Further help

- Contact us – We encourage potential applicants to call or email us with questions regarding their proposal – email: phr@nihr.ac.uk / 24 hour answer phone: +44 (0)23 8059 9697
- Research Design Service (RDS)– For applicants based in England, the RDS is funded by the Department of Health to provide high quality methodological support for researchers applying for NIHR funding
<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-are-managed/our-structure/research/research-design-service/rds-new.htm>
- We encourage you to watch a video from the Prioritisation Committee on ‘Engaging and responding to the public health community’ - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUVuDft0mal>
- We encourage you to watch a video from the Funding Committee on ‘Advice on applying for funding’ - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mFJ3nO8oxc>