NIHR | Clinical Research Network West Midlands

Improvement and Innovation Strategic Funding Opportunities 2023/24

1. Introduction

The overall remit of the Clinical Research Network (CRN) is to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of research that meets the eligibility criteria for the CRN Portfolio. This includes building capacity (the amount of research the region can deliver) as well as capability (the region's ability to deliver research).

Any applications for this funding must clearly relate to the remit of the CRN. Applications should be submitted in line with the agreed principles stated in this document, by no later than midday on 6th Jan 2023. Please submit your completed form as a PDF and email it to ideas.crn-west-midlands@nihr.ac.uk.

Access the project outline form here.

2. Funding Streams

In the past, we have had a number of additional funding streams beyond the CRN 'core' funding provided to Partner Organisations for the delivery of research. These have been mainly Research Scholar/Personal Development Award funding; and, Improvement and Innovation Strategic funding. In order to support our Partner organisations and cost pressures we aim to reduce the amount of funding provided to these initiatives in 2023/24. The purpose of these funding streams is outlined below (see section 2.1).

We are aware of the work and time that is required to complete the various application forms for these funding streams, and so we have attempted to streamline this process as much as possible. As always, we are keen to receive feedback as to how to improve this process if repeated in the future.

2.1 Research Scholars/Personal Development Awards

This is funding aimed at developing individuals to become Chief Investigators in the future. This is managed separately and more information can be found here. The deadline for 2023/24 applications is 15 January 2023.

2.2 Improvement and Innovation Strategic Funding

The purpose of this funding is to deliver collaborative projects that address the region's key strategic issues in relation to *increasing research capacity and capability across the West Midlands*, piloting new ways of working and innovations that can be scaled up and implemented more widely if successful, therefore benefiting the region's population. It is also a way of finding out if something does not work or has the intended outcome prior to being implemented more widely.

As of July 2022 the Health and Care Act came into play and already during 2022/23 we are seeing collaborative working across organisations within Integrated Care Systems (ICSs). Although this funding is not limited to ICS projects, we welcome applications from Integrated Care Boards and

their constituent organisations. For example, projects that seek to assist in the delivery of the reduction of healthcare inequalities, through research delivery or development, as set out in the [NHE England Core20PLUS5 project](#).

Below is a list of CRN West Midlands strategic priorities for 2023/24:

- Reaching underserved communities and increasing local engagement and participation in research generally (see NIHR Include project information and see Appendix 1);
- Further embedding a culture for research across the region;
- Joint working across organisations to improve the capacity and speed of the research study life-cycle (e.g. feasibility, approvals and set-up, delivery, follow-up, and close of studies);
- Increasing the equality, diversity, and inclusion within research (please see NIHR EDI strategy);
- Increasing the capacity and capability of designing and delivering research within social care;
- Ensuring WM researchers design research that meets the needs of the local population (the application must evidence that the area of work is a local health need);
- Addressing workforce needs to increase capacity and capability of delivering research in the area;
- Improving the delivery of commercial research (excluding funding of delivery posts) and strengthening a pipeline of studies;
- Ensuring that people with multi-morbidities have increased access to participate in research and research is designed in a way that provides opportunities for people with multi-morbidity to take part.

For examples of previously funded projects, please see [here](#).

3.0 Partnership working and networking

If we can help with developing your project team and you need support with linking you with potential partners please get in touch with Carly Craddock, Chief Operating Officer at carly.craddock@nihr.ac.uk.

4.0. Process

Please discuss your ideas with the person/people responsible for research within your organisation. We will check with the organisation that they are aware of the application once submitted and that the project(s) is/are supported by the organisation.

To simplify the process for 2023/24 we have developed a project outline form (see here). The project ideas will be reviewed by a project panel. Applications will be scored by individual funding panel members and then a group consensus will be reached.

Please ensure the application form does not exceed the stated word limit on the form, and overall should not exceed four pages in length. If it does exceed these we will come back to the applicant and ask them to refine and shorten it.

We have shortened the process to include only one stage.

If the panel agrees the project should be funded, the project lead/team will be asked to work with a CRN WM Lead to develop a full project brief and full costings.

5.0   Scoring

At the initial idea stage, each idea will be scored individually by panel members. Panels will be made up of CRNWM senior leadership staff and stakeholder representatives. Ideas will be scored out of 25 (five points for each of the sections below) and the panel will reach a consensus score:

- The potential that the idea has to address West Midlands strategic issues (these are set out in section 2.2)
- How much of a priority it is for 2023/24 (how urgent is it)
- The potential for scalability of the project (the extent it could be more widely implemented in the West Midlands region)
- The evidence of collaboration across settings/organisations
- Value for money

6.0   The Panel Members

- CRN WM Clinical Director
- CRN WM Chief Operating Officer
- CRN WM Deputy Chief Operating Officer
- CRN WM Clinical Research Lead
- AHSN Innovation representative
- Patient and Public representative
- Social Care representative
- 2 x NHS representatives (from R&D/Partnership Group)

7.0   Key Dates

22 November 2022 - open for applications
Nov-Dec 2022 - various dates/times to ask questions regarding this funding
https://doodle.com/meeting/participate/id/azvEqgZa
6 January 2023 (midday) - deadline for applications
18 January 2023 - deadline for panel members questions and initial scores
18-25 January 2023 - opportunity for applicants to answer panels queries
23-27 January 2023 - panel opportunity to amend scores
Week of 30 January 2023 - panel final decisions
Week of 6 February 2023 - applicants notified of decision and feedback

Priority Areas 2023-24-targeting research development and delivery within underserved communities and local health needs:

This strategic area within the CRN West Midlands will increase equitable access to research opportunities for the under-served communities, and those with major health needs, to meet the overarching national outputs of:

- Increased number of Participant Identification Centres (PICs) within community-based settings, and an understanding of whether a pre-aware plan and place service will provide greater access to research
- Development of research opportunities in under-served regions and communities
- Understanding how the roll-out of the Primary Care Strategy can support research in this area
- Increased research-readiness amongst under-served populations through the Research Ready Communities scheme
- Supporting national programmes driving forwards improving inclusion of under-served groups in research
- Design and delivery of local solutions against regional priorities relating to under-served groups, local health priorities and decreasing health inequalities

In turn, it is anticipated that these are likely, but not exclusively, to align with the following areas of priority focus:-
- Identifying target under-served communities using local information
- Support Participant Identification Centres (PICs) in areas of greater deprivation or disease burden
- Increase research visibility among communities with low levels of research activation through communications and local events
- Support collaborations between under-served communities and regional research infrastructure and institutions
- Supporting participant identification associated with these under-served communities
- Improving our understanding of the barriers and hurdles associated with under-served communities and people with high priority local health needs, working to improve access for such groupings
- Establishing Research Ready Communities to enable CPPR (Community Partnered Participatory Research) as identified within the NIHR-INCLUDE framework, thus outreach activities relating to the understanding of research and improving engagement across under-served groups
- Initiatives to better enable the recruitment of research participants from under-served communities and those people with identified local priority health needs
- Capacity development to enable more under-served/local health need aligned delivery
- Information and digital programmes to support better understanding and reporting on under-served communities

- Increased working with community settings and Integrated Care Systems that could further enable reaching under-served communities and help in developing new opportunities for a community-based workforce
- Delivery of the Primary Care Strategy will also potentially be well-aligned to under-served enablement