

## Pre Apps Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

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- **When completing the application form, can the supporting statement from my employer be a separate document or does it have to be included on the application form?**

It is essential that senior line manager support is indicated via a signature on the application form. Should you wish to include a further, more detailed supporting statement then this is allowed but not essential.

- **What happens if an applicant initially specifies a duration of say 6 months for their development activities but due to unforeseen circumstances needs an additional couple of weeks to complete a project? Will they be granted an extension in this instance?**

Unfortunately, not, which is why it's important to make your application as feasible, as realistic as possible. We've got a very, very limited amount of funding for this opportunity. Unfortunately, there's not any availability there to extend.

- **What is the difference between salary and employment costs – is employment like pension, NI etc?**

Employment costs are the costs that your employer incurs from employing you. This is the PAYE, NI, superannuation. We are only paying out the salary portion of that to buy out your time.

- **Are we then just to put the salary costs on the application form?**

Please just include salary costs. We will not consider any employment costs at all. Employment costs will remain with your employers, they'll have to release you from the time

- **What's the expected start date/end date for the award?**

It is expected that the majority of awards will begin in April/May 2026, with a latest possible start date being September 2026. If your planned start date is later than May 2026 please provide details to support this request.

- **Does this include funding for PhD that focuses on healthcare and the environment?**

This isn't funding to complete a PhD. You can apply to buy out your time to write an application towards a doctoral fellowship application that focused on healthcare and the environment as long as that sat under the remit and comes under improving sort of patient safety outcomes. Just to stress, this isn't funding for a PhD. It would be very much around sort of developing the application for one or specifically fellowship funding application for a PhD.

- **Would the 'timeline' portion also include the PSRC support sessions etc.?**

We would be expecting you to be coming to those as part of your time with us. There is no need to put those on your application because the expectation is there that you'll be taking part in that activity. If you want to include it, you're more than welcome to, but there is very much an expectation that you'll be attending those sessions. We understand that sometimes different professional commitments get in the way.

- **If committing 1-2 days per week to the development activities, how many hours would be considered a day's commitment, would it be about 7-8 hours per day?**

The answer to that would be what your contracted hours are in your employment. That would be what would constitute a day per week.

- **Would holding this award mean that we can't apply for a central NIHR pre-application support fund in the future if the fellowship application is unsuccessful for example?**

There is no stipulation regarding your eligibility to apply for any centrally funded NIHR awards regardless of the outcome of your application for this award.

- **The application needs to contain a named scheme from an identifiable funder - what kind of detail is needed for this? Part of the reason I want to apply is to learn more about the possible funding sources that are available for my proposed research.**

Ideally, what we want is just the name of an identifiable source. So, for example. an NIHR advanced fellowship or an NIHR pre-doctoral fellowship will suffice.

If you have more of an idea of potential timelines, that is that's also really helpful. If you're a bit further on in your journey that helps us to establish if the timelines presented in your in your application are realistic. So, for example, if you were successful, you want to go for a doctoral fellowship, and you started with us in April of this year, the rounds for the doctoral fellowships closed in July, and you timed in one day every other week. That would probably seem quite unrealistic, and we'd probably go for a future opportunity. So if you know that information that's really helpful.

If you're looking at possible funding sources, that is something that this time can be used for. And it might be that you work with us. We would encourage getting in touch with our colleagues at the Newcastle Health Research Partnership Academy. If that pivots to something that's more appropriate, or we suggest going for a different award. Again, that is all about increasing your chances of success in the next stage of your journey.

This is for those individuals who want to go on and do some sort of fellowship application. If you're not sure what that is or if you want to go, then there are obviously other opportunities around like internships. There's a whole lot of other opportunities to learn more about research and to have support. The Newcastle Health Research Partnership are great about helping to guide support individuals.

You've got to have a really clear idea and vision that's got to be realistic about what that is. If you're not sure yet, there are lots of opportunities available explore. This isn't the only one. Please get in touch with us if you're not sure. But don't put an application in unless you know you want to go for a pre-doctoral, doctoral or post-doctoral fellowship, because otherwise, unfortunately, you just wouldn't be competitive for this for this kind of award.

- **Would this funding end when I apply for a fellowship, or would there also be support with interviews, etc.?**

It would depend on the timelines for those sorts of things. I know that some of our current award holders, have got a bit of costing in for after the submission of a fellowship application to buy out their time for that preparation. Getting in touch with Newcastle health research partnership, who could also support with mock interviews would be advisable. We would, strongly encourage practice interviews wherever possible, because they are incredibly helpful one to get the feedback to really hone and refine your application and the delivery of the information within it. It does increase your chances of success when it comes to the main event.

- **Could you signpost examples of the kind of training opportunities that we might be able to take advantage of during the program?**

This is individual to what you are would be apply for. To give you some examples of things that other award holders have applied for, somebody has done a short course on statistics because they've had no experience before, and that would give them some and give them gave them a heads up in developing their application. But again, that's directly feeding to what they're going on to do.

Somebody applied for support for PPIE training, because that's going to be a core component of their onward funding application.

With regards to the other opportunities in the faculty of medical sciences that would kind of be up to you to explore, to see what would meet your needs. But we can support you with those discussions, and bounce any ideas off of that.

- **Do we need to include costs for training opportunities?**

Yes, it is essential to include any training you're considering doing, please provide costings for that. Please be realistic in the training you're expecting to do and that it is feasible to fit that within the timeframe of your award period with us.

- **When you say there's a small training fund available, is there a specific budget that we need to adhere to? Also, would travel for this training be part of these costs?**

Training opportunities will be assessed on an individual basis as we're doing shortlisting. Our operations manager is very keen that we do not limit people but I would be saying that the majority of your time in your application should be buying your time out to write.

We are not supporting travel costs as part of the Pre-application support fund. There might be some funding available within the wider PSRC. Budget to support some small training travel costs. But again, this has to be realistic. Within that, we've got a tight budget for this, and it's very easy for our budgets to be eaten up in this pot of money for travel and sort of accommodation, and all those sorts of costs, so there might be some costs available for travel within the wider PSRC budget, but not within this funding opportunity.

- **Approx how many awards will be made if you have this info?**

We are hoping in the region of 3 to 5 awards, however, it all depends on the quality and scale of the applications we receive.

- **I am currently undertaking a PhD do I need to have submitted my thesis by the time of application, and be ready to start in by the advertised dates or is there flexibility on this?**

To be eligible for the call currently open, you would need to have your PhD submitted by the closing date of the application scheme (13th March).

There may be other PSRC funding calls further down the line so please keep this in mind for the future. In the meantime, the NIHR's own pre-application support funding (Pre-Application Support Fund | NIHR) may be an option as I believe they advertise these three times a year.

- **Are there are stipulations around what could be included? For example: PPIE costs.**

Please include the costings for your PPIE costs, it might not be that they directly come from this fund specifically, but they might be something we look for you to access. It is really helpful if you could provide all the costings for your PPIE activities, and what you're expecting to use them on. Please be mindful and pragmatic about how much PPIE activity people are planning to do in the award period so that it's realistic and achievable.

- **Networking and conferences can be quite important. As this award doesn't cover conference fees, if I was successful in this award is there another source of funding to support the attendance at conferences?**

The NIHR Newcastle PSRC Operations team always consider requests on a case by case basis. NIHR Newcastle PSRC is part of the NIHR infrastructure, which is well networked and connected to other infrastructures, if you are connected to the NIHR infrastructure you are connected to over 25,000 people, so there plenty of networking opportunities through the PSRC and thinking clearly who or what expertise you want to connect to is the key.

Phil's experience as a previous NIHR fellowship applicant was that he didn't not need to attend conferences to network with people as part of his personal network to develop the applications. Not attending conferences did not negatively impact on his submission to the fellowship itself.

The fund is primarily to give support, mentoring and training and the time to develop that onward funding application. As you are not doing research withing that, you won't be expected to attend conferences to disseminate research, which is why conference fees are not included in this fund. Conferences would be written into the onward application.

- **What is the time scale for a start date?**

We will consider start dates up to the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2026, anything later than that needs have very clear rational for this delayed start date.

**We recommend if you have identified potential supervisors have discussions with them prior to submitting your application for this award.**