

Notes for applicants

Improvement Science Fellowships

April 2016

The Health Foundation
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www.health.org.uk

About the Health Foundation

The Health Foundation is an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and health care for people in the UK.

Our aim is a healthier population, supported by high quality health care that can be equitably accessed. We learn what works to make people's lives healthier and improve the health care system. From giving grants to those working at the front line, to carrying out research and policy analysis, we shine a light on how to make successful change happen.

We make links between the knowledge we gain from working with those delivering health and health care and our research and analysis. Our aspiration is to create a virtuous circle, using what we know works on the ground to inform effective policy-making and vice versa.

We believe good health and health care are key to a flourishing society. Through sharing what we learn, collaborating with others and building people's skills and knowledge, we aim to make a difference and contribute to a healthier population.

Further details about the organisation can be found at www.health.org.uk.

Programme summary

The Health Foundation offers a unique development opportunity for future leaders in improvement science through our senior fellowship programme. Our aim is to develop the future leaders of improvement science research and practice in health care by funding fellowships for original, applied research dedicated to improving health care in the UK.

These senior fellowships offer a unique personal development opportunity for outstanding individuals who want to make a difference to the quality, safety and value of health care. We are seeking to support up to five Fellows and are keen to encourage applications from mid-career clinicians who wish to combine research into improvement with continuing clinical practice.

The Improvement Science Fellowships will run from early 2017 through to the end of 2019 and offer full salary funding together with:

- a tailored leadership development programme involving group sessions, action learning and individual coaching
- funding for research costs
- mentoring support from a group of leading academics and practitioners in improvement science.

At the end of the fellowship, Improvement Science Fellows will have:

- developed essential leadership skills to run major research and implementation programmes in improvement in health care
- an awareness of approaches to manage transformational change in services
- made links with others engaged in this work around the UK and internationally, with opportunities for joint publications and presentations to advance the field of improvement science.

Background information

Improvement science comprises the application of a range of basic and applied sciences, delivered through a partnership of researchers and those who work in and use health services, with the aim of creating new knowledge and promoting strategies for the implementation of evidence-based health care, leading to improved health care processes and improved health outcomes for patients and populations.

Improvement science requires a systematic, scientifically rigorous approach to close the gap between current and best practice. The field of improvement science embraces disciplines across health services research, from sociology to statistics, psychology to health economics. Ultimately, to help build practical knowledge about what works to improve the quality, safety and value of health care, we need to understand a range of complex dynamics: from how patients view their care, to how attitudes, processes and different approaches to delivering health services can impact on outcomes.

In 2010 the Health Foundation began its investment in developing the field of improvement science with the desire to:

- establish a multi-disciplinary approach to the knowledge and theory of improvement of quality in health care, drawing in learning from a range of academic disciplines and the 'know how' of improvement practice
- develop scholarship and evidence of approaches that are effective in improving the quality of care and methods that can evaluate whether quality of care has improved
- build strong links between researchers specialising in quality improvement methodologies and expert practitioners in the field, to deepen knowledge of what works and to accelerate spread in the NHS
- create the future leaders of improvement science research and improvement practice in health care.

We are now seeking to recruit our fourth cohort for this senior fellowship with the aptitude to maximise the unique development opportunities. We are seeking up to five Fellows to develop original applied research which has the potential to make a difference to improving health care in the UK and contribute to the knowledge base of what works to improve health care.

Aims and objectives

By funding the Improvement Science Fellowships, the Health Foundation aims to:

- support the development of the improvement science field
- build capacity within a dedicated programme of improvement science research
- facilitate translation of research into practice that has a tangible impact in improving the quality, safety and/or value of health care services
- contribute to the development of world-leading research and scholarship into improvement in health care.

The Health Foundation is currently scoping the next major development in improvement science, the establishment of an improvement research institute. Options are currently being considered for the institute, with the intention that it will be established by 2017. The plan is that the institute will have responsibility for the Improvement Science Fellowships.

Selection criteria and assessment

Through the fellowships we want to support original research that aligns with the Health Foundation's priorities to improve health service delivery. Fellowship research proposals must demonstrate how the work will make a significant contribution to improving service delivery in the area where the research is situated.

- The **minimum** qualification to apply is a PhD, or professional doctorate, in a relevant area, or an MD. We will consider any discipline that supports scientific efforts to improve health care, including a clinical or health-related subject, social sciences or appropriate broader scientific fields.
- As this is a senior fellowship, applicants need to demonstrate significant experience in research and/or improvement in practice, in addition to the minimum academic qualification.
- Applicants may be pursuing a clinical, NHS management or academic career. We are particularly keen to encourage applications from mid-career clinicians who wish to combine research into improvement with continuing clinical practice. The Foundation will be flexible in accommodating requirements for clinical practice alongside a commitment to the research to be undertaken through the fellowship.
- Applicants must demonstrate existing leadership experience and the potential to develop these skills, including the ability to influence practice and policy.
- Applicants must demonstrate the experience and skills to:
 - build the field of improvement science by bringing researchers, clinicians, and patients closer together
 - build a knowledge base about what works best to improve health care
 - lead implementation of improvements that are supported by sound research knowledge.
- Research proposals must be well-developed and clearly explain how the applicant's proposal is relevant to the priorities of the Health Foundation, how it will improve health service delivery in the UK and how it will advance the field of improvement science.
 - the application must outline the research proposal, including the methodology, arrangements for working with NHS organisations, data sources to inform the research, advisory input, implementation of any practical aspects and dissemination plans
 - Research proposals should be grounded in appropriate research methods. These include, but are not limited to: health services research, statistics, operational research, clinical trials, epidemiology and ethnography.
- Applicants must be curious, passionate about improved health care and show a long-term commitment to the field.
- Applicants must provide contacts for referees that could comment on their skills and experience in improvement science.
- Applicants need to have established links with the academic centre where they wish to be based for the fellowship and must illustrate a strong level of support from the institution.
- The sponsoring academic institution must have:
 - strong links with health service organisations

- research interests that are contributing to the improvement of health services
- a commitment to working in the field of improvement science
- a member of staff who can supervise the Fellow
- a commitment to advancing the career of the Fellow.

Funding for the fellowship

The Health Foundation will fund the salary and associated study costs for up to five Fellows. Associated costs may include such expenses as: travel and subsistence, conferences and meetings, venue hire for focus groups, library and technical costs for research, etc. The budget for research costs should include travel to London for fifteen meetings over the duration of the fellowship.

The Health Foundation will **not** cover the cost of research assistants, additional staff, or general institutional overheads and these should not be included in your budgeted costs.

Applicants need to fully complete the application form and provide a rationale for the budgeted research costs. We recommend that applicants consult with the appropriate departments, including HR, to ensure that the salary information they submit is correct and includes all on-costs and incremental rises over the period of the fellowship.

Instructions for the application process

All candidates must complete an application form. Applications will be peer-reviewed by leading academics and practitioners in improvement science. Shortlisted candidates will be asked to participate in an assessment centre on **Monday 31 October 2016** as well as an in-person interview on either **Tuesday 1 or Wednesday 2 November 2016**. The assessment centre and interviews will take place in central London.

Applications for this round of Improvement Science Fellowships will be piloting our new online system, AIMS. Your application **must** be completed and submitted online and can be accessed at AIMS.health.org.uk

Full guidance on accessing, completing and submitting your application via AIMS can be found in the user manual which you can download on the above website. We recommend that you keep a copy of this manual to hand to refer to while you complete your application. We also want to particularly highlight the following:

- When registering for an account in AIMS please ensure you register as an **individual** rather than as an organisation. This will enable you to access the Improvement Science Fellowships application form. Please note that the email address you register and apply with will receive all communication regarding the application, so please ensure you enter an address to which you will have access throughout the application period, through to November 2016.
- The form does not need to be completed in one session. It is possible to save your progress and return to the form at a later date.
- Mandatory questions are indicated with a star at the end of the question. Unless the question guidance states otherwise, all sections or fields of this question will be

mandatory. If you try to submit your form without having completed all the mandatory questions then you will be prompted to return to one or more sections.

- Many questions have a character limit, for which we have provided an approximate word limit. Please adhere to the word limit. If you are unsure about the length of your response, we suggest drafting your answer in a word document or similar first so that you can check the count and make edits before pasting it into the application form.
- Applicants are required to provide a declaration from their head of department. This needs to be completed by them and should be uploaded as an external document in Section 8. The declaration template can be downloaded from the Health Foundation website: www.health.org.uk/isf
- You may find that the budget section is slow. This is due to the automated calculations that the form is making. Please be patient and do not attempt to reload or go back in case you lose the information.

Please complete the application as per the instructions on the form for each question.

The deadline for applications is **23.59 on Tuesday, 5 July 2016. We will not accept submissions after this date.**

As this will be one of the first times we have used the system, we would be interested to receive your feedback on how you found the process and if there are any areas for improvement. Please send your feedback to AIMS@health.org.uk

Frequently asked questions

A list of *Frequently Asked Questions* can be found at www.health.org.uk/isf

Additional questions regarding the application should be e-mailed to impsci@health.org.uk. Your email subject line should be '**Improvement Science Fellowship question**'. We will initially respond to your query by email.

Application key dates

Activity	Date
Open for applications	19 April 2016
Deadline for applications	5 July 2016, 23:59
Applicants informed of interview	14 October 2016
Assessment centre	31 October 2016
Interviews	1 or 2 November 2016
Applicants to be informed of final decision	8 November 2016