

Frequently asked questions

COVID-19 Research Programme

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Applications are being considered on a rolling basis.

All applications should be submitted via email using the COVID-19 Research Programme application form. An application form can be requested by emailing covidresearch@health.org.uk

We advise all potential applicants to familiarise themselves as early as possible with the application process.

Please ensure that you have read this ***Frequently asked questions*** document, the ***Notes for applicants*** document and ***Application form guidance*** document before completing and submitting the application form.

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Eligibility

Q1. Who is allowed to submit an application? Is it just universities?

Any organisation that can demonstrate the necessary skills and experience to carry out high quality research within the remit of the programme can submit an application. This includes non-universities, such as research charities. A sample of our standard award agreement is available online; applicants are asked to ensure their organisations are happy with the terms set out in this agreement prior to submitting an application.

However, we will only fund the directly incurred and directly allocated costs of the research. We do not fund overheads.

Q2. Does the lead applicant need to be UK-based?

Yes, the lead applicant must be from a UK-based organisation. However, we will accept proposals which include collaborations with non-UK based researchers, providing sufficient justification is given for the international collaboration.

Q3. Can my proposal have partner organisations?

Yes, applicants can collaborate (or subcontract), where appropriate, with other organisations. Please specify what role any partners will have and indicate the current level of progress in developing the collaboration in your application.

Q4. Does my proposal need to have a service provider as a partner?

We are keen to support strong, multi-professional teams. In your application, please identify the partner organisations you will be working with on the project and any key stakeholders. We are more likely to fund projects which (where appropriate) engage strongly with key partners and stakeholders. Proposals that demonstrate clearly how partnership working will add value to their project may be looked upon more favourably than those that do not.

Q5. Can two individuals, working for separate institutions, act as co-principal investigators?

We welcome applications from multidisciplinary, multi-professional and multi-site teams with one or more co-principal investigator(s). However, for the purposes of the application form and our award contracting processes, we require you to have only **one** named primary/lead contact, and that person must be ultimately responsible for the delivery of the research.

Q6. Are we eligible to apply if the proposal we (intend to) submit is similar to the one we have already submitted elsewhere?

We do not encourage applicants to submit the same research proposal if it has already been submitted elsewhere for funding.

Q7. As this programme call is open on a rolling basis, if my application is rejected, can I apply again to the same call at a later date?

We will only accept applications that are demonstrably different from a previously submitted application.

Q8. I already hold a grant for research from the Health Foundation – can I apply?

Researchers who are currently in receipt of a Health Foundation award should contact their grant manager in the first instance to discuss varying their existing award, instead of applying for funding via this call.

If a variation to their existing award is not appropriate, applicants will need to demonstrate within their application that they have the capacity to work on both projects within the agreed timescales.

Budgeting and research costs

Funding

Q9. How long will the Health Foundation's funding last for this research?

Projects will last a maximum of 12 months. This is inclusive of a set-up phase (eg time for recruitment, finalising data access/linkage, gaining ethical approval).

If you anticipate your project may take slightly longer, please contact us to discuss this before applying. We may still welcome an application. In your application you should be explicit about why you need more time and what additional value it will bring.

Q10. Will the funding begin from grant announcement or from the start of the research programme?

Funding will begin once the research starts and upon signing of a mutually agreed award agreement. Awards will be paid 90% upfront, with 10% of the amount of the award retained until an end of award report is submitted.

Q11. What amount of funding can I apply for?

We are seeking to fund projects with budgets in the range of £100,000 to £200,000.

Budgeting

Q12. Will the Health Foundation fund overheads?

Please note that as a charity we will fund only the full directly incurred costs of the research. **We do not fund overheads.**

If this is likely to exclude you or your organisation from applying, please contact us directly to discuss this prior to submitting an application.

Q13. Can we include inflation in our costing?

All costs would need to be covered as part of the overall budget, including any inflationary increases. As a charity we ask that future inflationary increases be based on an appropriate inflation measure. Please confirm which inflation rate you have adopted in your budgeting.

Q14. Do you pay VAT?

No. The research will be supported as a charitable grant and, as such, is not liable for VAT.

Staffing

Q15. Can we include salary costs for academic staff working on the project, salary costs that are directly allocated not directly incurred?

We expect that the majority of funding will be spent on the direct costs of research such as covering academic and/or researcher time spent on projects, which can include staff who are already employed at the institution or new staff (directly allocated cost and directly incurred cost). However, we do not provide the funding for academic backfill or teaching replacement time in addition to the direct cost.

Q16. What proportion of the funds can be kept for staffing costs?

We do not stipulate how much you have to spend on any one portion of the grant. We anticipate the majority of funding will be spent on staff costs but please note, as a charity, we will only fund directly incurred and directly allocated costs of the research.

Q17. Can non-academic staff be included in staff costs (eg a project manager)?

You should include what you expect to be the items of direct expenditure required to carry out your research, which might include non-academic staff. For example, this may include a project manager who, as long as they are working on the specific research project, would be seen as a direct expenditure required to carry out your research.

Direct, indirect and other costs

Q18. What other kinds of costs can we request?

You should include what you expect is needed to carry out the research. Items commonly include travel costs for meetings, relevant conferences, data analysis support, transcription of interviews and focus groups, venue hire/refreshments for research meetings/focus groups, and travel costs for research participants. You can include honoraria for the involvement of patients, carers or service users and some backfill payments for health and social care staff to participate in specific research activities, but not where this would constitute covering the cost of the research team, or for any length of time beyond a few days.

Q19. Is it possible for the programme to fund part of more than one salary (as a percentage of full time equivalents (% FTEs)) as well as travel costs?

Yes. We expect direct costs will include academic and researcher time spent on projects, as well as items of direct expenditure required to carry out your research including travel costs for meetings.

Q20. We have a contract with a commercial company that supports us on a specific aspect of the project (eg data analytics) – can we use their time as part of this project, and would that cost be covered under this bid?

Applicants can subcontract, where appropriate. You would need to clearly specify what role any partner will have. Please note that we will only fund the fully directly incurred and directly allocated costs of the research. We do not fund overheads.

Q21. Is the cost of accessing certain data/datasets considered an acceptable expense among the research costs included in the requested grant?

This would be considered as an item of direct expenditure required to carry out your research.

Other

Q22. Would you be prepared to part-fund a research project?

Our preference is to fund standalone projects; however, we may consider co-funding projects or providing additional funding for an existing research project to incorporate relevant COVID-19 related work into its programme of activities. Please contact us to discuss this prior to submitting an application. If you wish to apply for additional funding, you should ensure:

- the overall project finishes within 12 months from when Health Foundation funding begins
- you fully justify why the project needs combined/additional funding, and why our Health Foundation funding is needed
- you provide written confirmation that the other funding body is happy with a co-funding model when applying to us.

Q23. Are proposals for grants required to be accompanied by matched funding contributions from service partners?

We welcome proposals that can demonstrate a strong commitment to the research from other partners, including a matched funding contribution. It is not, however, a requirement that all proposals have matched funding.

Scope and focus of the research

Q24. Should proposals be oriented towards theoretical/conceptual work?

No, for this call we will prioritise bids for highly applied research. The aim of the programme is to fund applied research (ie findings with direct relevance to policy and service delivery decisions) relating to the future of health, and health and care services, as we move through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q25. What are you looking for in terms of fit with other COVID-19 related work?

Proposals should aim – where possible – to dovetail with the broader research funding landscape (ie complement ongoing work and not duplicate effort). In your application you should make a compelling case for your project, addressing important emerging research and policy priorities.

Q26. Does my research need to address one of the research areas listed under the priority areas in the *Notes for applicants* document?

Yes.

Q27. Does it make a difference which priority area my proposal falls into?

No. Whichever priority area you select will not make a difference to how your application is assessed.

Q28. Do I need to have obtained ethical and data access approvals for my proposal prior to submitting my application?

No, not at the time of submitting your application. However, you should allow sufficient time to obtain the relevant approvals in your project timelines. The Health Foundation understands that some institutions are expediting approvals for COVID-19 related studies.

Q29. Are you looking to fund clinical research?

No, we do not fund clinical or drug efficacy research, including clinical trials.

The application process

Q30. What is the deadline for applications?

There is no formal deadline for this call, and we aim to provide applicants with a funding decision within 20–25 working days. We anticipate the call being open until September. We reserve the right to close the call early should we receive a high volume of applications.

As a funder, we are committed to inclusion, and would encourage applicants who think they may have barriers to applying to contact us to discuss their concerns.

Q31. What is the application process?

Applicants should carefully read all the information about this call available online. Once applicants are confident they wish to apply for funding via this scheme, they should contact the Health Foundation at covidresearch@health.org.uk to request an application form.

Applications should be completed in full and submitted to covidresearch@health.org.uk

Applications will be reviewed by Health Foundation staff and by a number of external experts. Please see the **Notes for applicants** document for further information regarding the criteria we will use to assess your application. We aim to provide you with a funding decision within 20–25 working days of you submitting your application. Please note that if we receive a high volume of applications, we may take longer to provide you with a decision.

Q32. In the application, what level of detail do we need to give for the budget?

In the application form itself, applicants will need to include a summary of the costs requested. We also request that applicants return a detailed budget request form (Excel sheet) alongside the PDF of their application form.

Q33. I'm having problems completing my application form – what should I do?

If you have queries about the call or the application process which have not been answered in these FAQs, please email covidresearch@health.org.uk and we will aim to reply within five working days.

Q34. Who should be the primary contact on the application?

The principal investigator on your application form will be the person who will receive all future communication and correspondence with regards to your application.

We are advising that irrespective of who submits the proposal, the primary contact (and their email address) should be the principal investigator. It is critical that this person has the capacity to check and respond to their emails in a timely fashion, as this is the way in which the Health Foundation will communicate the progress of the application.

Q35. Can I submit more than one proposal?

No.

Q36. Some of the questions have a word limit. Do these include or exclude references?

You do not need to include references in the application unless it is absolutely necessary.

Q37. Do you have a preferable referencing style?

The Health Foundation uses Vancouver style; however, you are free to use a style of your choice. Please ensure that it is clear which references relate to which copy.

Q38. Can we include additional material, such as consultation papers or toolkits, as an appendix?

We discourage applicants from submitting lengthy appendices. Applicants may wish to include letters of support from partner organisations as appendices. Application forms and any supplementary materials should be submitted as a single PDF emailed to covidresearch@health.org.uk

Q39. Can we include images/schemes in the application form? And if so, will this count towards the total word count?

You can include images/diagrams in the application form.

Q40. Will I be able to get feedback on my application if it has been unsuccessful?

We expect to receive a large number of applications and therefore we may not have the resources to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants. We believe feedback is really important and we will endeavour to provide this for applicants if we have capacity to do so.

Management and communication

Q41. If successful, when is it expected that research would begin, and when is the earliest that funds would be made available?

We expect projects funded through the call to begin as soon as possible. We will come to an agreement with each research team on the exact schedule of the award payments as part of the contracting process; usually, the first payment is made soon after the signing of the grant agreement.

Q42. What is the Health Foundation's approach to the management of the research grants, and requirements for reporting and engagement while the research is being carried out?

We are an engaged funder and are interested in working with the successful research teams to understand and support their work while it is ongoing. Staff from our Research Directorate and elsewhere in the organisation may be interested in meeting with the successful research teams and will be available to support and advise on the write-up of the findings. We encourage successful research teams to keep us updated on their progress. All grant holders must submit a final report at the end of the award.

Q43. Who owns the intellectual property rights from the research?

Our grant agreements are constructed so that you would own the rights to the intellectual property, but you would license the Health Foundation to be able to use the intellectual property. This is so that we can, in partnership with the researchers, help support dissemination of the research and maximise impact in line with our charitable objectives.

Q44. What are the Health Foundation's expectations regarding publication and dissemination of the findings from this research?

We urge applicants to read the Joint statement on sharing research data and findings relevant to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and adhere to its principles. We expect research funded through this programme to be widely disseminated both during and beyond the formal end of the award agreement. We would also encourage researchers to consider innovative methods of dissemination where appropriate.

We will be encouraging successful research teams to communicate the progress of their work throughout and will be actively seeking to build linkages and share information (where appropriate) between the teams funded through this programme.

The mandatory, formal output from each project will be an end of grant report. We expect grant holders to publish their work in leading peer review and academic journals and to present their work at meetings and conferences or through social media.

The Health Foundation has a policy of supporting open access publication. Open access costs are allocated on an individual basis and, as such, we ask that applicants do not include the cost of open access publishing in their proposals.

We anticipate the key audience for the findings of the research funded under this call being broad. It could include senior officials in government departments responsible for key areas of economic and social policy (DWP, DfE, HM Treasury and MHCLG), public health agencies (Public Health England, Public Health Wales, NHS Health Scotland, the Public Health Agency NI), clinical commissioners, NHS Trusts and Health Boards, national and local policy communities, academic research communities, and leaders at the front line of care delivery. The audiences for your research findings – and how you wish to engage with them – should be clearly stated in your application.