

# Notes for Applicants

## **Research award: Translating improvement skills from training to implementation**

**A Health Foundation call for research on identifying the barriers and facilitators for translating improvement skills and knowledge into front-line practice**

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September 2015

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The Health Foundation  
Tel 020 7257 8000  
[www.health.org.uk](http://www.health.org.uk)

## About the Health Foundation

The Health Foundation is an independent charity working to improve the quality of health care in the UK. We are here to support people working in health care practice and policy to make lasting improvements to health services.

We carry out research and in-depth policy analysis, fund improvement programmes to put ideas into practice in the NHS, support and develop leaders and share evidence to encourage wider change.

We want the UK to have a health care system of the highest possible quality – safe, effective, person-centred, timely, efficient and equitable.

Our research grants support leading research teams to produce knowledge and evidence on what works to improve the quality, accessibility, organisation and sustainability of health services in the UK.

Further details about the organisation can be found at [www.health.org.uk](http://www.health.org.uk).

## About this award

This is a call for proposals designed to support an original research project into identifying the barriers and facilitators for translating improvement skills and knowledge capability-building activities into implementation in front-line practice.

## Background and context

For more than ten years, the Health Foundation has been working with health care providers to deliver improvement through service development and capability-building activities for staff. Alongside supporting the development of services and staff, the Health Foundation has funded extensive research to build the evidence base and understand how best to build improvement-capabilities.

In March 2014, the Health Foundation published the findings of 'Skilled for Improvement', a research project that worked with improvement groups within two NHS sites to help them to learn collectively about proven improvement methods. The research found that there were three distinct types of improvement skills: 'technical', 'soft' and learning' skills and that leaders of improvement work needed to have all three in order to be successful. The report recommended that organisations should invest in staff development for all of these sets of improvement skills.

'Skilled for improvement' is just one example of the extensive evidence base exploring the skills and knowledge required for improvement and evaluating the capability-building activities used to deliver them.

The Health Foundation aims to use this current award to move this evidence base forward to look at barriers and facilitators for translating newly acquired improvement skills and knowledge into implementation in front-line practice.

## **Aims and objectives**

This award is designed to support original research into identifying the barriers and facilitators for translating improvement skills and knowledge capability- building activities into implementation in front-line practice.

The focus of this award is to understand what happens at the end of a capability-building activity when health care workers return to their roles with newly acquired skills and knowledge.

The award aims to explore topics such as how learning translates into action, which skills and approaches are most readily actioned, what the barriers are to overcome and how the implementation of new skills and knowledge can be facilitated

## **Selection criteria and eligibility**

Research proposals will be assessed against the following key criteria:

- strength of case that the proposed research can lead to an understanding of the barriers and facilitators for translating improvement skills and knowledge capability-building activities into implementation in front-line practice
- usefulness and applicability of anticipated findings
- robust and appropriate research methods
- appropriate project management approach including risk management and quality assurance
- value for money
- relevant experience and expertise of the research team and the strength of partnerships and collaborations.

## The budget and timeframe

The Health Foundation has up to £100,000 available for this award. We are expecting proposals for research projects designed to be completed within 12 months.

Please note that, as a charity, we will fund only the full directly-incurred costs of the research. We do not fund overheads. Furthermore, the research will be supported as a charitable grant and as such is not liable for VAT.

## Application and selection process

Applicants must complete a [research proposal application form](#). Please ensure that you adhere to any word limits set in the form. The application [budget template](#) is embedded within the proposal form. However, you can also download it from our website.

Please submit your completed form to [laura.harper@health.org.uk](mailto:laura.harper@health.org.uk)

The deadline to submit proposals is **12 noon Monday 26 October 2015**. We will not accept proposals submitted after this time.

Longlisting of proposals will be completed by Friday 30 October 2015. All longlisted proposals will then be externally peer reviewed.

We expect the process to complete and the successful applicants to be informed by Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

If you have queries about the application process which have not been answered in the FAQs below, please email Laura Harper, Research Manager, at [laura.harper@health.org.uk](mailto:laura.harper@health.org.uk).

## Key dates

Activity	Date
Deadline for applications	Monday 26 October 2015
Longlisting completed	Friday 30 October 2015
Peer review completed	Monday 16 November 2015
Applicants to be informed of final decision	Friday 27 November 2015

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Eligibility

### **Q 1. Who is allowed to submit proposals? Is it just universities?**

Anyone who can demonstrate that they can carry out high quality research can submit a proposal. However, applicants will need to demonstrate that those undertaking the research have the necessary expertise and experience to do so.

### **Q 2. Do I need to be UK-based?**

No, we will accept proposals from researchers based outside of the UK and for collaborations with non-UK based researchers. However, non-UK based applications would need to demonstrate applicability to the UK context and have clear communication processes in place to stay in touch with the Health Foundation.

### **Q 3. Can my proposal have partner organisations?**

Yes, applicants can collaborate or subcontract, where appropriate, with partner organisations. We believe that in many cases multidisciplinary research teams that work collaboratively with important stakeholders are best positioned to deliver the most impactful research. Please specify what role any partners will have and indicate in your application the current level of progress in developing the collaboration.

### **Q 4. Could two individuals, working for separate institutions, act as co-principal investigators?**

We encourage applications from multidisciplinary and multi-site teams with one or more co-principal investigator(s). However, for the purpose of contracting and project management, we will need one primary/lead contact for the application.

## Budgeting and research costs

### **Q 5. How long will the Health Foundation's funding last for this research?**

We anticipate making a grant for a research project that will complete within 12 months. If your research idea will take slightly longer, we still welcome you to apply. You will need to be explicit in your application about why you need more time and what additional value it would bring.

### **Q 6. 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 covering academic/researcher time spent on projects, which can include staff who are already employed at the institution or the new staff (directly allocated cost and directly incurred cost). However, we do not provide funding for academic backfill or teaching replacement time in addition to the direct cost.

### **Q 7. Is there a maximum day rate that the Health Foundation stipulates for research organisations/researchers that operate using a day rate business model?**

We expect that, for organisations which operate using a day rate business model, the weighted mean day rate is no more than £1,200 inclusive of all staff related expenses/costs

to the organisation. Please note that proposals will be assessed against 'value for money' criteria.

**Q 8. Will the Health Foundation fund overheads?**

No. As a charity we will fund only the full directly incurred and directly allocated costs of the research.

**Q 9. Do you pay VAT?**

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

**Q 10. What costs can be included as 'research costs'?**

You should include what you expect to be the items of direct expenditure required to carry out your research. Items commonly covered 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 patient and health and social care staff to attend focus groups. You can include 'honorarium' payments for patient participants and some backfill payments for health and social care staff to participate in specific research activities but not where this would constitute covering part of the research team, or for any length of time beyond a few days.

**Q 11. Would you be prepared to be a joint funder of a research project?**

Yes, we have no objection to joint funding with an existing project or joint funder. However, we would need an idea of when and from whom the rest of the funding is likely to be secured in your proposal. Prior to any funding decision we would need clarity about where responsibility lay contractually in terms of publication, intellectual property, research governance issues, etc.

**Q 12. Are proposals for grants required to be accompanied by matched funding contributions from service partners?**

We will favour proposals that can demonstrate a strong commitment to the research from service partners, including a matched funding contribution. However, it is not a requirement that all proposals have matched funding.

## **The application process**

**Q 13. The proposed programme of research section has a maximum of 2,400 words. Does this word limit include or exclude references?**

The word limit refers only to the programme design and excludes references. Please include references as a continuation sheet following from the proposed programme of research section. References will not count toward the word limit.

**Q 14. Do you have a preferable referencing style?**

The Health Foundation uses Vancouver style. However, you are free to use a style of your choice.

**Q 15. Will I be able to get feedback on my application if it has been unsuccessful?**

Proposals that are successful in progressing to the peer review stage of assessment will receive brief written feedback (including the anonymised peer reviewer feedback). Unfortunately, we cannot provide feedback to other unsuccessful proposals.

**Q 16. Can we include additional material, such as consultation papers or toolkits, as an appendix?**

No. In the interest of fairness, we discourage applicants from sending in applications of different volume and therefore no appendices are allowed. If you would like to include extracts or papers in full as a part of the programme design description, it will need to be within the 2,400 word limit.

**Q 17. Do I need to have obtained ethical approval for my proposed research?**

No, not at the time of submitting your application. However, you should factor the estimated time that ethical approval may take into your research plan and timetabling of outputs.

## **Management and communication**

**Q 18. If successful, when is it expected that research will begin, and when is the earliest funds would be made available?**

We expect the project to begin in early 2016. We will come to an agreement with the successful research team on the exact scheduling as part of the finalisation of the research protocol and contracting process. Part of this will also be agreeing the payment schedule for the project; in general, we would make the first payment upon signing the award agreement.

**Q 19. What is the Health Foundation's approach to the management of the research grant, 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 team and elsewhere in the organisation may be interested in meeting with the successful research team and will be available to support and advise on the write-up of the findings. We expect successful research teams to keep us updated on their progress.

**Q 20. Who owns the intellectual property rights from the research?**

Our award 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.

**Q 21. What are the Health Foundation's expectations regarding publication of the findings from this research?**

We would expect the outputs from this research to be widely disseminated both during and beyond the end of the formal grant agreement including through appropriate research journals and conferences. In some situations, the Health Foundation may also be interested in working with the research team to directly publish research findings. A decision on this would be made later in the project.