**NIPHRN Seed Funding Guidance Notes**

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# Introduction

1.1 The Northern Ireland Public Health Research Network (NIPHRN) would like to welcome bids for this year’s Research Seed funding award. NIPHRN seed funding awards are intended to support the development of a grant application to a nationally competitive funder for public health intervention research.

1.2 The maximum value of an award will be **£5000**, and awards will only be made where sufficient funds are available within each financial year. The processing and evaluation of seed funding is carried out on an on-going basis. There is no deadline for applications. We aim to provide a response within six to eight weeks, including some outline feedback on your proposal.

1.3 The awards are tailored to assist interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral teams to develop competitive research funding proposals. The seed funding process is seen as part of our ongoing support to develop Research Development Groups. We therefore expect applicants to have contacted the NIPHRN team in advance of applying for seed funding. All inquiries and correspondence relating to applications should be addressed to [info@niphrn.org.uk](mailto:info@niphrn.org.uk)

# Eligibility

2.1 The scheme is open to Northern Ireland-based investigators working in public health research. Applicants must be employed within health or social care services, voluntary/not-for-profit organisations providing health or social care, or within a higher education institution in Northern Ireland.

2.2 It is expected that applications will come from teams with an appropriate mix of investigators across disciplines and sectors, and that the role of each co-investigator should be fully justified. Priority will be given to applications from teams representing more than one sector.

2.3 There will be a limit of one seed funding award per chief-investigator within a year.

2.4 For the purpose of monitoring the allocation of seed funding and to facilitate the NIPHRN reporting to the HSC R&D Division, awardees will be required to inform the NIPHRN of progress with any subsequent related research funding application.

# Scope

3.1 Seed awards are intended to support research teams develop novel ideas that will go on to form part of a larger grant application for **public health intervention research**. We adopt the NIHR’s definition of public health intervention research as research to generate evidence to inform the delivery of non-NHS interventions, intended to improve the health of the public, and reduce inequalities in health.

3.2 Applications for funding may include:

* small feasibility studies
* exploration of participant recruitment and/or retention issues
* evaluation and/or development of a research instrument
* evaluation and/or development of an intervention, including consideration of targeted primary outcomes
* gathering preliminary/baseline data
* constructing and developing an appropriate research team

This list is not exhaustive and applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3.3 The scheme cannot be used to purchase of large pieces of equipment or for stand-alone studies and the award would not incur full economic costing. Directly incurred costs should be fully justified for the delivery of the project. If small pieces of equipment are specifically required for the completion of your proposed project, we will consider these on a case-by-case basis. Please discuss this with the NIPHRN team before applying. IT equipment, such as laptops, and staff recruitment costs are not eligible in this seed funding.

3.4 Applicants are also asked to describe PPIE (Personal and Public Involvement and Engagement) in the planning, design and application of the project. For more information involving the public in research, please read the NIHR briefing notes: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/briefing-notes-for-researchers-public-involvement-in-nhs-health-and-social-care-research/27371>. We expect your PPIE plan to comply with the UK Standards for Public Involvement in research: <https://sites.google.com/nihr.ac.uk/pi-standards/home>. Other useful resources are available on the HSC R&D Division website: <https://research.hscni.net/personal-and-public-involvement-ppi-research>.

# Application Process

4.1 Seed funding awards are intended to support the development of research proposals, through NIPHRN Research Development Groups. The submission process is on a rolling basis, dependant on sufficient funds being available within the financial year.

4.2 Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis on their merits against the specified eligibility criteria. These will be assessed by network staff and an independent panel. Applicants are advised to contact the NIPHRN in advance of making an application to this scheme to discuss their eligibility for funding. A maximum of one award will be made to a Chief Investigator within a financial year.

4.3 The Chief Investigator must hold a substantive post within their organisation. Eachbid must be signedby the Chief Investigator, and submitted using the attached application form outlining the study background, aim(s) and methodology, and include a detailed account of how the money will be spent.

# Guidance for Completion of the Application Form

5.1 The application form and a short narrative CV for the team must be completed in Arial font size 11. Handwritten applications will not be accepted. Applications that exceed the relevant word limit will be treated as invalid and automatically excluded.

5.2 We have adopted the UKRI template for the narrative CV, and this should be completed (Annex A of the application form). This is a flexible template that allows showcasing of the relevant skills and experience of the team that relate to the proposal. General guidance on filling out a narrative CV can be found on the UKRI website (<https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/how-to-apply/resume-for-research-and-innovation-r4ri-guidance/>). Primarily, you should focus on evidencing your ability and potential to carry out the proposal. This could mean using examples of previous outputs to demonstrate how you have been successful before or that you have expertise in a critical methodology. When referring to outputs such as publications, please provide these as a digital object identifier (DOI) which can be hyperlinked to the publication where possible. Applicants should submit a single narrative CV for the team (not individual ones for each applicant) when applying.

5.3 Costs are at 100%FEC. Only directly incurred costs are eligible. Overheads and indirect costs will not be funded. Funds awarded under this bid must be spent within six months of the award letter, otherwise the award will be lost.

5.4 Successful applicants will be required to complete an end of study report to summarise the final outcome of their project (*see Annex B of application form*). Success stories will be celebrated in the NIPHRN newsletter and website.

# Evaluation

6.1 All applications will be validated by a member of the NIPHRN team. Any invalid applications will not go forward for further evaluation. Applicants will be notified in writing if an application is deemed invalid.

6.2 All valid applications will be evaluated by a panel including the Director of the NIPHRN, a Programme Manager in the HSC R&D Division of the Public Health Agency with responsibility for Public Health and a member of the NIPHRN Steering Committee. If a suitable individual from the NIPHRN Steering Committee is not available, another individual will be sought by the Director of the NIPHRN.

6.3 Evaluations will be conducted on a monthly basis. The number of awards made will depend on the quality of the applications and the funding available.

6.4 The Evaluation Panel will shortlist and evaluate applications based on a number of criteria including:

*Knowledge of area and understanding of the key issues*

* Do the applicants demonstrate adequate knowledge of their chosen area?
* Do the applicants demonstrate adequate knowledge of the key issues?

*Innovation and Novelty of the proposed research*

* Does the research proposed for the main study make a relevant contribution to the existing knowledge base?
* Do the activities described for the seed funding award make a relevant contribution to the main study application?

*Track record/experience of the team and suitability of environment*

* Do the applicants have relevant experience in the chosen area?
* Do the applicants have a suitable track record?
* Is the level of collaboration between sectors and organisations appropriate?

*Relevance of the research to Northern Ireland & UK public health priorities*

* Has the expected impact of the main study application been described in terms of prevention, health gain etc?
* Is the proposed research relevant to the strategic goals of the Public Health Agency?

*Quality of the plan*

* Are the aims and objectives/research questions to be addressed by the seed funding proposal clearly stated?
* Are the proposed methodologies to be applied in the seed funding proposal adequate and appropriate?
* Are the overall project planning and timelines adequate, appropriate and realistic?
* Is the proposal at the right stage for support through seed funding?
* Is the envisaged outcome of the seed funding likely to be achieved?
* Is the contribution of the seed funding to the future research study clearly detailed?

*Personal and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE)*

* Has the applicant demonstrated that they have sought to involve service users or the public, from appropriate groups, including in a partnership role in the research process rather than solely as research participants?
* Is the level of PPIE appropriate and justified?

# Notification

7.1 Each applicant will be notified of the outcome of their application by the NIPHRN team using the correspondence details specified on the application form. This will include some brief feedback from the evaluation.

7.2 Unsuccessful applicants may reapply to the NIPHRN seed funding scheme. We expect to receive a reapplication within six months of the date of the notification letter. However, it is a requirement that they indicate this within the application form and outline the changes that they have made since their previous application in a cover letter.