

Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme: Outline Application Stage

Guidelines for applicants



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Abbreviations

AcoRD:	Attributing the cost of health and social care Research and Development
Col:	Co-Investigator
CRN:	Clinical Research Network
CSO:	Chief Scientist Office
CTU:	Clinical Trials Unit
FTE:	Full Time Equivalent
GBP:	Great British Pounds
HEI:	UK Higher Education Institution
HRA:	Health Research Authority
MND:	Motor Neurone Disease
NHS:	National Health Service
NIHR:	National Institute for Health Research
NRES:	National Research Ethics Service
PeolcPSP:	Palliative and end of life care Priority Setting Partnership
PI:	Principal Investigator
PPI:	Patient and Public Involvement
RDS:	Research Design Service

1. Introduction

Marie Curie in partnership with Chief Scientist Office (CSO) in Scotland, the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association and The Brain Tumour Charity is making available over £1.5 million this year through the Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme to fund high quality research that aims to improve the quality of life of people with terminal illnesses and their families, friends, carers and communities. Marie Curie is using an outline application stage in the application process followed by a full application stage for successful outline proposals.

1.1. Timeline of the Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme

12 th May 2017	Launch of research call
7 th July 2017	Deadline of receiving outline applications
September 2017	Outline application panel meeting
October 2017	Successful outline applicants invited to full application stage
December 2017	Deadline for full applications
April 2018	Research Funding Committee meeting
May 2018	Applicants notified of outcome

1.2. Contact information

If you have any administrative and financial queries regarding your application, please contact:

Jane Farrington
 Tel: 020 7091 4186
 Email: Research.Info@mariecurie.org.uk

2. Guidelines for the Outline Application Stage of the Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme

This section provides guidelines for preparing your outline research proposal for the Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme.

2.1. Description of the process

The outline stage of the application process involves the submission of an abstract, a lay abstract and a short form.

The form will assess the eligibility of applicant(s), the fit of the application with the scope of the funding scheme and how well an application addresses a number of funding criteria that are published with the call. The funding criteria are based on Marie Curie's strategic aims, as well as on advice given to applicants by the Marie Curie Research Funding Committee.

A finance summary will also be required, which does not, at this stage, have to be signed-off by a University/National Health Service (NHS) Trust Research Office.

Outline applications will be assessed by an Outline Application Panel, which includes the Chair and members of the Marie Curie Research Funding Committee and Marie Curie service users.

As the panel includes service users, it is particularly important to tailor your lay abstract and impact statement to a lay audience. Applicants are also encouraged to involve service users from the early stages of an application and as members of the research team if appropriate.

Marie Curie aims to provide feedback on all applications. However, applicants are reminded that the decisions of the Outline Application Panel are final and that it will not be possible to enter into any correspondence with regards to their feedback.

Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full application, and candidates should address the feedback when preparing their full application.

For unsuccessful outline applicants, there will be opportunity to reapply in future research calls, as Marie Curie does consider amendments to previous proposals provided that they (1) fit with the research theme(s) of the call and (2) the feedback from the Marie Curie Research Funding Committee has been taken into account when preparing the amended proposal.

2.2. Joint funding

The 2017 call of the Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme is a joint call where funding will be available from four sources:

- Marie Curie
- MND Association with Marie Curie
- The Brian Tumour Charity with Marie Curie.
- CSO with Marie Curie

2.2.1. Themes of the call

Please read the *Themes of call* document for more information regarding the scope of the call, which is available for download from the Marie Curie website.

It should be noted that proposals are not limited to palliative and end of life care in the context of cancer, but are applicable to the care of all people with terminal illnesses and their families, friends, carers and communities.

2.2.2. Eligibility and funding

Outline applications are invited from lead applicants at recognised Universities, NHS hospitals, hospices or research institutes within the UK. The lead applicant must have a post which covers the entire duration of the proposed study. The Marie Curie Research Funding Committee strongly discourages applications with commercial interests/applicants, unless fully justified.

Collaborative applications are welcome and named academic/clinical collaborators are permitted – although, if successful, the contracted grant (and associated funding arrangements) will be with the lead applicant's institution in the UK. Applications involving trials are also strongly advised to involve a Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) from the outset. Applications from lone investigators are strongly discouraged to ensure that the research team has adequate expertise.

Applicants are strongly advised to determine if their proposal is 'research' as defined by the National Research Ethics Service (NRES). Proposals focussing on pure service evaluation and audits will **NOT** be accepted. The HRA leaflet '[Defining Research](#)' would be helpful to provide further guidance.

Public health research (e.g. epidemiology, health promotion, health education, community development, etc.) and implementation studies will be considered.

- To be eligible for MND Association joint funding, proposals must address the MND themes of the call and £400,000 is the maximum which any individual application can request.
- To be eligible for The Brain Tumour Charity joint funding, proposals must address the brain tumour themes of the call and £600,000 is the maximum which any individual application can request.
- To be eligible for CSO joint funding, projects must address the themes of the call and be led by Principal Investigator(s) (PIs) who are based in Scotland. £140,000 is the maximum which any individual application can request.

- PIs must address the themes of the call and can apply from anywhere in the UK for the remainder of the funds, provided by Marie Curie. £400,000 is the maximum which any individual application can request.

The figures provided above for each part of the scheme represent the upper limits of the funding available. However, applicants should keep the overall funding envelope in mind when applying to the scheme.

Applicants are strongly advised to enter ONE outline application per call, though a maximum of two applications per PI may be considered.

2.3. Funding criteria

Applicants will also be expected to outline how their application will address the following funding criteria for this call (within the defined word limits):

- 1) The potential to improve palliative and end of life care for people with a terminal illness and/or their families, friends, carers and communities
- 2) Evidence of a demonstrable need for research in this area. Please highlight any relevant systematic reviews and/or all past/current trials, if applicable
- 3) The potential national/international impact of the proposed research
- 4) The active engagement of Patient & Public Involvement (PPI) principles and processes in all stages of the research from planning through to dissemination
- 5) The potential of study results or interventions to be generalisable and applicable throughout the UK
- 6) A clear research plan and description of methodology to be employed. For feasibility studies, include the outcome measures and describe how and from whom the full trial could be funded (e.g. the National Institute for Health Research)
- 7) The suitability of the PI(s), research team and collaborators to carry out the proposed research, including their track record and expertise. Please also include the involvement of any Clinical Trials Unit(s), if applicable
- 8) Dissemination and knowledge transfer plan, including and beyond peer reviewed publications

2.4. Costs

Marie Curie will only pay the directly incurred costs of research.

Marie Curie will not pay either directly allocated (including estate costs) or indirect costs on individual research awards. Awards are provided on the understanding that the host institution will meet directly allocated and indirect costs (previously referred to as overhead costs) including lighting, heating, central support staff salaries, costs of equipment maintenance, telephones, office furniture, use of library facilities and general laboratory and office equipment. Where institutions operate a policy of access charges to equipment, Marie Curie will consider payment of an access charge in lieu of consideration of maintenance costs.

2.4.1. Staff salary

Grant applications may include requests for the salaries of staff at post-doctoral, clinical or technical level or on administrative scales. Staff salaries requested in an application should not be fully funded by another source. If Marie Curie funding a post would result in it receiving greater than 100% FTE, then it should not be included in the application. Costs for CoI and collaborators' salaries should not be included in the application.

Please note that requests for PhD studentships and Clinical Research Training Fellowships on project grants are NOT considered by the Marie Curie Research Funding Committee.

Applications are encouraged from early-stage researchers and applicants may request their own full or substantial salary (not small percentages as with regard to full economic costing), as long as they are within 8 years from obtaining their doctoral degree, or equivalent qualification.

Funding is provided for salary, the employer's national insurance contribution and an employer's pension contribution which will be no higher than the rate used by the USS or NHS scheme and may not be used to offset any prior under-funding of the pension scheme. Costs of recruiting staff to posts will not be funded by Marie Curie. If the grant is awarded, the amount provided to fund each post will be stated in the Grant Award Letter and this amount should include provision for relevant increases in pay grade/scale/spine point and inflation if necessary. Marie Curie does not meet the cost of NHS merit awards or clinical excellence awards or any other supplement or enhancement earned in the course of providing patient care to NHS patients.

2.4.2. Running expenses

Running expenses may include contributions to the use of central facilities or charges for use of specialised equipment where these are required for the research project. Any equipment that is less than £5,000 should be listed as a running expense rather than an equipment cost. In addition, computer costs should be capped at £600 per person over the duration of the grant, unless fully justified.

Requests for travel expenses to attend conferences and meetings will be considered as part of the grant application. Costs for travel forming an integral part of the proposed study (such as travel between collaborating centres or steering group meeting expenses) can also be included. Costs for staff training relating to the project will also be considered.

Marie Curie expects that publications resulting from its research funding are made Open Access in accordance with its [Open Access Policy](#). Therefore, Marie Curie will consider requests for Open Access publication fees within grant applications (either as article processing charges for fully Open Access journals, or fees paid to non-Open Access journals to make a particular article publicly available).

2.4.3. Equipment

Marie Curie assumes a basic level of equipment provision by the host institution and applications should be limited to items required specifically for the research proposed. Applications should contain the equipment requirements for the full duration of the award at the time of application, since further equipment requests will not be considered in subsequent years of the award. Equipment requests in applications should not exceed £15,000.

2.4.4. NHS Treatment and Support Costs for Randomised Controlled Trials

If your proposed research involves patients and/or will be conducted within the confines of the NHS, it is expected that the Department of Health/NHS will support the research by meeting associated patient care costs. Applicants should refer to 'Attributing the cost of health and social care Research and Development' (AcoRD) guidance when attributing costs payable by Marie Curie: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-attributing-the-costs-of-health-and-social-care-research>. Only costs covered by Part A of Annex A are eligible. Ineligible costs will be removed by the Marie Curie Office.

In addition, grants that meet certain criteria may be eligible for additional support from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Clinical Research Network (CRN) Portfolio, part of the UKCRN Portfolio. Further information can be found here: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-and-impact/nihr-clinical-research-network-portfolio/how-to-apply-for-nihr-crn-support.htm>

If your outline application is successful and goes through to the full application stage, applicants have a duty to inform the relevant NHS Trust Research & Design office(s) of the possible NHS support implications of proposed research projects at the earliest opportunity and MUST indicate within the full application that the relevant provider(s) have been notified and provide an update on the status of such discussions within the full application.

3. Outline application form

Please complete in Arial, font size 11 and forward completed application forms (saved as a Word document under the full name of the PI(s)) to Research.Info@mariecurie.org.uk

3.1. Section 1

Please write your full title, forename, surname and name of the institution/affiliation for the PI(s), co-investigator(s) (Cols), collaborators and named research staff (in that order and as appropriate). Please note that applications with joint leads are accepted and there is no limit on total number of co-investigators.

Expected time commitment for each applicant for your proposed research project should be stated in hours per week in the specified column.

Please mention the role of each applicant in this section (e.g. PI, Col, collaborator, named research staff or any other roles).

For PIs and Cols only, it is important for us to know whether your current employment covers the entire duration of the proposed study. Therefore, please answer 'yes' if your employment contract is permanent or ends after the end date of the proposed project, or 'no' if your employment contract ends before the end date of the proposed project.

For PIs and Cols only, please do let us know whether you are within 8 years of your PhD or equivalent qualification (and see Section 2.4.1 above for more information).

It should be noted that only one institution can be listed as administering the award. If the grant is awarded, this will be the institution that will accept Marie Curie's Terms and Conditions and responsibility for all legal and regulatory requirements.

Please provide any additional information requested.

3.2. Section 2

Please state clearly the project title and the type of the project that best describes the proposal (e.g. trial, feasibility study, systematic review etc.).

Proposed start date: please note that the start date of your proposal should be after the conclusion of the full application stage (as outlined in Section 1.1 above).

Proposed duration: funding can be requested for up to 36 months (apart from trials, where longer time frames will be considered).

Total support requested should be in British Pounds (£ GBP). See Section 2.2 above regarding the levels of funding available for each part of the scheme.

3.3. Section 3

This section refers to the funding source you are applying to and how you heard about the call – please select the appropriate box(es) and provide any additional information requested. See Section 2.2 above for more information.

3.4. Section 4

Please define clearly how your research proposal fits the remit of the call (in 500 words or less). Please explain how the proposed study relates to palliative and end of life care and the themes of the call. In particular, please detail which of the PeolcPSP research question and/or research recommendations are addressed by the proposal and how they are addressed. Please refer to the *Themes of call* document for more information regarding the scope of the call.

3.5. Section 5

Please list up to 6 keywords that best describes and categorises the proposed study.

3.6. Section 6

The research abstract provides a succinct summary of the proposal (in 700 words or less), including, but not limited to, the background/scope of the study, its aim/research question(s), the methodology employed and its proposed findings.

3.7. Section 7

Marie Curie is increasing the involvement of patient and public representatives in the work of the charity and its research funding. Therefore, please include a paragraph providing a lay summary of your research proposal. This paragraph should summarise the research project in a manner that is understandable for the general public and must be no longer than 300 words.

3.8. Section 8

Please provide a brief lay summary of how your proposed research is likely to impact patients with terminal illnesses and/or their carers/communities/families/friends, and the potential timeframe to benefit, both within and beyond the lifetime of the study. For example, how would the proposal have the potential to impact the work of Marie Curie etc. (in 250 words or less)

3.9. Section 9

Please complete this section if your application follows on from a previously funded Marie Curie award or is a resubmission of any part of an application to the Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme.

Marie Curie will consider amendments to previous proposals provided that they (1) fit with the research theme(s) of the call and (2) the feedback from the Marie Curie Research Funding Committee has been taken into account when preparing the amended proposal.

3.10. Section 10

Marie Curie has a number of funding criteria (as outlined in Section 2.3 above), which are used to assess the strategic fit of an outline research proposal with the aims of the charity. Applicants MUST provide an explanation of how their proposal fits with each funding criteria (within the specified word limits).

3.11. Section 11

Please provide a finance summary for the entire proposed duration of the project (limited to one A4 page). This should include staff posts, staff costs and FTE% for each staff and running expenses including equipment and publication costs for each year. Please provide a brief justification of cost for each item.

If a worker is to be employed part-time, the appropriate percentage must be included. Staff posts that are only for part of the year should be entered as a percentage full time equivalent (e.g. a full time post for 3 months should be entered as 25% full time equivalent). It should then be made clear in the justification for support section that this staff post is only for part of the year.

See Section 2.4 above for more information regarding eligible costs.

3.12. Section 12

Please include any references cited within the application. Please give the citation in full, including the title and all authors. Shortened references will not be accepted. Please note that the references will not contribute to any stipulated word counts.

3.13. Section 13

The signature(s) of PI(s) and date are mandatory. Signature, date and affiliation details of the Head of the Department are also mandatory. Applications without these signatures and date will not be considered by Marie Curie. Electronic signatures will be accepted.

4. Advice from the Marie Curie Research Funding Committee

The Marie Curie Research Funding Committee has provided their feedback on a number of actions to improve the quality of research proposals submitted to the Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme and has advised on how to avoid some of the weaknesses commonly seen in applications:

- Applications from lone investigators are strongly discouraged to ensure that the research team has adequate expertise.
- Early stage researchers are actively encouraged to apply to the Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme. Early stage researchers are eligible to apply for their own full or substantial salary provided they are within 8 years from obtaining their doctoral degree, or equivalent qualification. See section 2.4.1 for more information.
- Applications are welcome from hospices providing they are able to comply with all clauses within the Marie Curie Terms and Conditions. In addition, it is essential that hospices form links with an academic institution or NHS partner organisation to build collaborations and obtain support and guidance when preparing their applications.
- A definitive research question should be proposed by the applicants within the outline application.
- Researchers who fail to make reference to the national and international literature in their chosen research area, including relevant systematic reviews and past/current clinical trials, are unlikely to be funded. Proposals must demonstrate that the lead applicant understands the background of research on which the proposal is built and is aware of other research going on both nationally and internationally in the general area of the application.
- Proposals should contain sufficient detail in the description of the research methods to convince the Committee that the project is appropriately designed and feasible. Methodological rigour is one of the criteria that the Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme calls for and one of the criteria for decision-making by the Research Funding Committee.
- In particular, applications for a study that is qualitative and/or participatory in nature should have a clearly articulated methodology that takes account of the methodological complexity involved and that describes the data collection and analysis techniques/methods that are consistent with the chosen methodology.
- For feasibility studies, applicants should pay particular attention to potential missing data and potential gate-keeping.
- When an intervention is developed/proposed as part of a project, information should be provided on how data will be synthesised to inform said intervention and the potential next steps.
- Projects should have the potential to be generalisable and applicable to different settings across the UK. If a study claims to be a UK study then it should involve the countries of the

UK. If this is not possible/appropriate then strategies for ensuring applicability across the UK should be clearly explained.

- Applicants should consider whether their proposal represents value for money, particularly with respect to the impact and new knowledge their research project will contribute. Where relevant, they should consider the wider context of developing and implementing an intervention.
- Applicants are welcome to involve the relevant Clinical Studies Group where appropriate.
- Applications for a clinical trial or study involving the recruitment of participants **MUST** demonstrate the close involvement of a Clinical Trials Unit. This involvement is expected to have started at the development phase of the proposal and to continue, as appropriate, throughout the duration of the proposed project. Trials without CTU involvement are likely to be rejected.
- Applications including a health economics component are encouraged. However, applicants should ensure that a suitably qualified co-investigator is included and their support and input into the health economics aspect of the project from the start is demonstrated, in the same way as for other methodologies where relevant including statistics and qualitative methods.
- The NIHR Clinical Research Network (NIHR-CRN) provides infrastructure and supports researchers in developing, setting up and delivering high quality clinical research to time and target in the NHS in England. The following link might be useful for applicants to find out how the CRN can help:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-and-impact/nihr-clinical-research-network-portfolio/how-to-apply-for-nihr-crn-support.htm>

- A very useful resource is the NIHR Research Design Service (RDS) that can be accessed by any researcher to develop and design high quality research proposals for submission to any peer reviewed funding scheme, such as the Marie Curie Research Grants Scheme. Contact details for your local RDS are available here:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-are-managed/our-structure/research/research-design-service/>

- Applicants might find the guidance from the Medical Research Council on developing and evaluating complex interventions, and the accompanying British Medical Journal article, helpful when developing proposals:

<https://www.mrc.ac.uk/documents/pdf/complex-interventions-guidance/>

<http://www.bmj.com/content/337/bmj.a1655.full>