Ageing research development awards

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	UK Research and Innovation, **Medical Research Council (MRC)**, **Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)**, **Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)**, **Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)**, **Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)**, **Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)**, **Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)**
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£3,500,000
Maximum award:	£400,000
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Last updated: 3 January 2023

Apply for funding to develop tractable areas of interdisciplinary research to secure better health and wellbeing for individuals as they age.

You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding.

Successful projects will sit at the interface of council remits, drawing on interdisciplinary teams to develop proof of concept. Awards should link understanding of ageing pathways with wider determinants of health.

The full economic cost of your project can be up to £400,000. UKRI will fund 80% of the full economic cost.

Awards will be for up to 24 months.

Who can apply

Lead applicants must:

- be a researcher based in the UK and employed by an eligible research organisation or be based in an overseas MRC unit
- usually have at least a postgraduate degree, although we expect most applicants to have a PhD or equivalent
- meet the standard eligibility criteria, as per the **guidance for applicants**
- show that they will direct the project and be responsible for its delivery, and direct research to address the remit of the opportunity

Check if you are eligible for research and innovation funding.

We encourage the inclusion of relevant investigators across the entire breadth of UKRI's remit. While administered by MRC, applications to this opportunity are welcomed from across the UKRI research community.

Proposals that seek to address a biomedical question are therefore welcomed, but this is not a pre-requisite for funding.

Recognising the cross-disciplinary nature of the challenge, interdisciplinary teams must be formed to maximise impact.

Applications linked to existing **BBSRC and MRC ageing across the lifecourse interdisciplinary research networks** are welcomed, but this is not a requirement for funding.

Investigators

1 principal investigator must act as the project lead. 1 or more co-investigators should be included to facilitate interdisciplinary research.

You may be the principal investigator of no more than 1 application to this funding opportunity. There is no limit to the number of applications on which you can be a co-investigator or collaborator, provided you have the capacity to meet these commitments.

It will be permissible to include researchers who would not normally be eligible to receive funding as a research co-investigator on the proposal, in line with standard **MRC guidance** for this investigator status.

International investigators

International co-investigators are permissible where established expertise is not available within the UK. The inclusion of international co-investigators and associated costs must be fully justified and must be discussed with UKRI staff in advance (see 'Contact details' section).

Requests for costs for international co-investigators must adhere to existing **MRC overseas costs guidance**.

All investigator costs should be appropriately balanced against the remaining budget to support research development activity.

Private sector partners

UKRI welcomes applications that include 1 or more relevant private sector project partners (for example, industrial or commercial partners), where their inclusion is fully justified and essential for project delivery and exploitation.

No funding can be directly awarded to private sector stakeholders or investigators.

Applications with private sector project partners must adhere to existing **MRC Industry Collaboration Framework guidelines**. The inclusion of non-academic and non-private sector stakeholders is welcomed (where appropriate) and such stakeholders should be declared as project partners, with an accompanying letter of support.

Collaborators who are not seeking to obtain financial remuneration but who are providing essential resource or expertise to an application can be included. Collaborators should provide a letter of support that fully describes their contribution to the project.

Who cannot apply

Researchers who do not satisfy standard UKRI eligibility criteria are not eligible to apply for this opportunity as principal investigator.

Researchers who are not based at UK research organisations (except for investigators based at overseas MRC units) are not eligible to apply for this opportunity as principal investigator. However, they can participate as co-investigators, project partners or collaborators in line with the guidance in the 'Who can apply' section.

Applications for organisations or individuals that are not eligible will be rejected without reference to the review panel.

What we're looking for

Ageing Research Development Awards will develop tractable areas of interdisciplinary research to secure better health and wellbeing for individuals as they age. Research Development Awards will develop areas of ageing research

across the breadth of UKRI's remit, enabling the development of interventions to reduce time spent in poor health in later life.

Successful projects will sit at the interface of council remits, drawing on interdisciplinary teams to develop proof of concept.

Award requirements

Development awards must:

- link understanding of ageing pathways with wider determinants of health (for example: environmental, economic, social, or cultural)
- clearly define the challenge that they aim to address, focusing on novel avenues of investigation
- take an interdisciplinary approach towards addressing the challenge, supported by an interdisciplinary team
- clearly describe the intended target demographic for potential interventions, explaining how the research would improve health equity across communities
- consider public and patient engagement where appropriate
- strengthen evidence to de-risk further development and implementation of potential interventions. This could include:
  - further developing the basic principles underpinning an approach
  - strengthening pilot data
  - establishing proof-of-concept
  - testing the feasibility and acceptability of a potential intervention
- have a clear line of sight towards benefiting the health and wellbeing of older people, or as individuals age. Results arising from the awards do not have to be immediately translatable, but applications must clearly define how results would be taken forward for exploitation

UKRI broadly defines an intervention as any approach, tool, technology, or treatment that has the potential to positively impact the lives of ageing individuals or positively alter ageing trajectories throughout life. This definition does not extend to clinical trials or population health-level interventions, which will not be supported through this opportunity.

Example research areas

UKRI encourages the research community to be ambitious and to submit their best ideas for consideration. While UKRI will not pre-prescribe any priority areas of focus, awards must be interdisciplinary and could align with 1 or more of the following example areas:

- enhancing mechanistic understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic ageing pathways
- understanding the impact of the external environment on health and wellbeing as individuals age
- use of cultural, creative, and natural environment assets to support health and wellbeing as individuals age
- use of national scientific infrastructures to support improved understanding of ageing

- improving risk prediction and intervention approaches to inform behavioural solutions
- target identification, biomarkers, sensing technologies or novel computational methods to support better health and wellbeing in later life
- co-design of health and care interventions for communities
- systems approaches to developing cost-effective tools and interventions

Exclusion criteria

We will not fund applications that are:

- not focused on developing research with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of individuals as they age
- focused on specific age-related diseases or conditions (for example, cancer, cardiovascular disease), that could be supported through existing grant funding mechanisms
- focused on the definitive implementation and evaluation of interventions
- focused on enabling population health improvement interventions
- focused on a single discipline

Funding available

You can apply for up to £400,000 in funding and UKRI will typically fund 80% of the full economic cost of the award. All costs must be fully described and justified in the justification of resources attachment.

Eligible costs

Eligible costs are outlined:

- investigator salary contributions
- research personnel costs
- direct research costs
- equipment costs
- estates and indirect costs

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider whether it would be appropriate to leverage existing national ageing research resources (for example, longitudinal population study data, biobanks and other repositories) for secondary data analysis, as opposed to new data collection.

Ineligible costs

You cannot request:

- costs for private sector partners
- publication costs
- costs for PhD students

The list of eligible and ineligible costs is indicative and not exhaustive. Please see the **guidance for applicants** for further information.

How to apply

Outline applications

Before submitting a full application to this funding opportunity, you must first send UKRI an outline summary of the work (no more than 2 sides A4) for consideration.

This outline summary must include:

- a description of the hypothesis and the ageing challenge area to be addressed, including details around specific aims and objectives and the methodologies to be deployed to address these
- a description of the types of interventions that the work could enable, and how this would benefit the lives of individuals as they age
- details of the research team to be assembled, drawing particular attention to its interdisciplinarity. Details on private sector partners or international co-investigators should also be included
- estimated total cost and a high-level breakdown of costs requested

Intentions to submit must be sent to **ageing@mrc.ukri.org** no later than 17 February 2023 5:00pm UK time.

Full applications that have been submitted without first indicating an intention to submit will not be referenced to the review panel and will be rejected.

Intentions to submit that are not in scope will not be considered at the full application stage and applicants will be informed of this by 3 March 2023.

Full applications

Full applications must be made using the **Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system**.

You can find advice on completing your application in:

- the **Je-S handbook**
- the **guidance for applicants**

We recommend you start your application early.

Your host organisation will also be able to provide advice and guidance.

Submitting your application

Before starting an application, you will need to log in or create an account in Je-S.

All investigators involved in the project need to be registered on Je-S.

Any investigators who do not have a Je-S account must register for one at least 7 working days before the opportunity deadline.

When applying:

1. Select 'documents', then 'new document'.
2. Select 'call search'.
3. To find the opportunity, search for: Ageing Research Development Awards Apr 2023.

This will populate:

- council: MRC
- document type: Standard Proposal
- scheme: Research Grant
- call/type/mode: Ageing Research Development Awards Apr 2023

Once you have completed your application, make sure you 'submit document'.

You can save completed details in Je-S at any time and return to continue your application later.

Deadline

MRC must receive your application by 18 April 2023 at 4:00pm UK time.

You will not be able to apply after this time. Please leave enough time for your proposal to pass through your organisation's Je-S submission route before this date.

You should ensure you are aware of and follow any internal institutional deadlines that may be in place.

Attachments

Your application must also include the following attachments.

Applicants should note that under no circumstances should their application exceed the page limits described. Any submissions which exceed the stipulated page limits will be withdrawn.

Information on how to complete the following documentation is available in the **guidance for applicants**.

Case for support

The case for support must not exceed 8 sides of A4 (references, figures etc. must be included within this page limit).

Justification for resources

A narrative description of the justification of all requested resources should be included as an attachment to this proposal (maximum 2 sides of A4). All items requested in the Je-S form must be justified in this attachment.

Data management plan

As per standard guidance, all applications must be accompanied by a data management plan (DMP) as an attachment to the application on Je-S.

The DMP should comply with MRC's policy on research data sharing.

The DMP should demonstrate how the research will meet expectations for research data quality, sharing, and security. It should refer to any institutional and study data policies, systems and procedures and be regularly reviewed throughout the research cycle.

CVs

The principal investigator and co-investigators should provide their CVs, highlighting relevant research outputs (maximum 2 sides per CV) in one combined PDF document.

Cover letter

A cover letter can be included, where relevant. This could describe any forerunning conversations you have had with UKRI, for example with respect to the inclusion of international co-investigators.

A cover letter could also indicate any potential conflicts of interests with panel members, who you may wish to exclude from reviewing your proposal.

UKRI reserves the right to judge whether this request should be upheld. Full details on panel membership will be published on this page in due course.

Letters of support

Letters of support must be provided under the following circumstances:

- where researcher co-investigators are included on an application, a signed letter of support must be provided from the principal investigator or senior authority within the host research organisation. The content of the letter should be in line with MRC guidance for this investigator status
- where private sector partners are included on an application, a signed letter of support must be provided that fully articulates their contributions and role within the project. Private sector partner contributions and expectations must fully align with the requirements of the MRC Industry Collaboration Framework. Private sector partners should also be described in the Je-S application form, as per standard guidance
- where collaborators are included on an application, who are not seeking to obtain financial remuneration but are providing essential resource or expertise to an application, a letter of support must be included. This should fully describe their contribution to the project

Generic letters of support must not be included in any application.

How we will assess your application

Ageing Research Development Awards will be assessed by an expert review panel of researchers in June 2023. The review panel will be comprised of experts spanning the breadth of UKRI's remit and interests, to ensure that due consideration has been given to interdisciplinary proposals.

Assessment criteria

The panel will consider the following assessment criteria:

- fit to the funding opportunity, including:
  - whether the proposal will develop tractable areas of novel research to secure better health and wellbeing for individuals as they age
  - whether the proposal will operate at the interfaces between UKRI council remits, taking an interdisciplinary approach
  - whether the proposal is of a suitable stage of maturity, in line with the research development ambitions of the opportunity
  - whether target communities have been appropriately identified

- research quality
- research environment and people
- potential for impact
- ethics, governance and management
- resources requested

Please note that applications proposing to use animals, tissues and (non-immortalised) cells must adhere to **MRC guidance** on considering biological sex within experimental design.

The panel will ensure that a good thematic spread and a nationally diverse portfolio of awards is funded.

Contact details

Get help with developing your proposal

For help and advice on costings and writing your proposal please contact your research office in the first instance, allowing sufficient time for your organisation's submission process.

Ask about this funding opportunity

MRC Ageing Research Team

Email: **ageing@mrc.ukri.org**

We aim to respond within 5 working days.

Get help with applying through Je-S

Email

jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org

Telephone

01793 444164

Opening times

Je-S helpdesk opening times

Additional info

Webinar

UKRI will host a webinar on 16 January 2023 (2:00pm to 3:30pm UK time) to provide more details on this opportunity and to take questions from the research community.

Please register in advance for this event on Zoom.

Why we are funding Ageing Research Development Awards

While life expectancy in the UK has continued to increase year on year, healthy life expectancy (the time an individual can expect to live in good health) has not kept pace.

People are living longer than ever before, but many of those extra years are spent in poor health with poor quality of life. This creates complex challenges for individuals, their carers and health and social care systems.

An additional challenge lies within the fact that people in the most deprived groups of UK society on average spend almost 20 years longer in poor health than those in the least deprived groups. Further action must now be taken if we are to improve health and quality of life in older age for all.

Central to addressing this challenge is strengthening the scientific evidence base underpinning ageing trajectories throughout life.

Building on our world-leading longitudinal population studies and infrastructure investments, as well as our strong portfolio of discovery and translational research, UKRI seeks to fund tractable areas of research to increase healthy life expectancy. An improved understanding of the intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of ageing will allow us to prioritise prevention and protection, as well as responding to illness through the life course.

Ageing Research Development Awards will focus on stimulating and developing avenues of research aimed towards developing interventions for the individual, supporting a personalised approach to prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Ageing Research Development Awards will advance the UKRI 'securing better health, ageing and wellbeing' strategic priority, an initiative driven forward by all UKRI research councils. Further funding opportunities that align under this strategic priority will be announced in due course.

Applications focused on population-level interventions should instead be submitted to the upcoming **population health improvement opportunity**.

Conditions of award

Start date

Awards should aim to have a start date of September 2023.

Timeline

○ **3 January 2023 9:00am**
Opening date

○ **16 January 2023 2:00pm**
Webinar

○ **17 February 2023 5:00pm**
Outline application deadline

○ **18 April 2023 4:00pm**
Closing date

○ **June 2023**
Funding decision meeting

○ **Within 10 days of funding meeting**
Applicants informed of outcome

○ **September 2023**
Awards start

Guidance on good research

Good research resource hub

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ageing-research-development-awards