

NIHR Applied Research Collaboration West Midlands

Pre-Application Support Fund

Guidance Notes 2025-26

Applications are welcome from staff working in health and care, local authority or academic settings in the West Midlands region

Closing date for applications: Wednesday 30th April 2025

1. Aim

The NIHR Infrastructure/School Pre-Application Support Funds have been established to complement the national [NIHR Pre-Application Support Fund](#), which is open three times per year.

The funding on offer in this scheme is administered locally in the West Midlands, providing individuals the opportunity to join existing supportive research environments catering for local research training needs, as well as working with your own supervision team. The aim is to support those who otherwise may not have sufficient opportunity to develop and submit a competitive application to an NIHR career development scheme.

In the West Midlands Region, there are two funds available, from the [NIHR Applied Research Collaboration West Midlands](#) (ARCWM) and from the [NIHR Birmingham Biomedical Research Centre](#) (BRC). Applicants should consider which fund is most relevant to their background and research ambitions. The funds offer different opportunities.

2. Background

NIHR ARCWM has received funding from the NIHR Academy to administer a regional Pre-Application Support Fund in the West Midlands. The purpose of the fund is to provide extra support to those who need it to prepare a future application for NIHR career development award. Applicants to this fund must be intending to apply to one of the NIHR career development schemes listed in Section 7.

Whilst this is an open competition, we are particularly keen to support individuals from groups and professions underrepresented in NIHR. This includes, but is not limited to:

- registered healthcare professionals (e.g. nurses, midwives, allied health professionals, pharmacists and healthcare scientists)
- social work and public health professionals
- researchers in methodology
- researchers based in local authority settings

3. Eligibility criteria and funding priorities

Funding for this round is available to support up to six awards (maximum £18,000 per award and depending on budget available).

To be eligible for this award, **you must:**

- undertake the entire award between 1st July 2025 and 31st March 2026, and this must be agreed by your employing organisation
- demonstrate the intention to submit an application for one of the NIHR career development fellowships outlined in Section 7.

In the case of receiving more high-quality applications than we are able to fund, priority will be given to:

- individuals from groups and professions underrepresented in NIHR, as outlined above
- support to apply for pre-doctoral and doctoral fellowships, as we have identified that there is a particular need at this level in the West Midlands
- people working in the ARCWM [geographical footprint](#).

The funds should not be used purely as bridging funding between the submission of an application and the start of an award for NIHR career development funding.

Please note, a successful Pre-Application Support Fund application does not guarantee eligibility for the NIHR Career Development Scheme to which you are applying. Please ensure your project proposal is within the [NIHR Remit for Personal Awards](#). If you have any questions about the remit of your proposal, please contact the programme team responsible for the NIHR Career Development Scheme you plan to apply to by emailing academy-awards@nihr.ac.uk.

4. Provision within the award

Successful applicants to the Pre-Applicant Support Fund will receive:

- buy out of time on current salary to allow an individual to spend protected time to work up a research idea ready for fellowship application within 12 months of the award end. This can either be funded as salary support, whereby the employer would backfill the position, or as additional funded employment for those that are not currently fulltime
- funding to support patient and public involvement and engagement activities, including funding for honoraria for public contributors
- conference attendance and training costs that will enhance the application
- supervisor costs, anticipating that supervisors will be senior researchers and will commit to providing dedicated time to support the awardee
- a training needs analysis
- sign-posting to an extended supervisory team and mentorship, as appropriate
- sign-posting to institutional resources, including inclusive staff networks, as appropriate
- bespoke training and supervision as needed including patient and public involvement and engagement, relevant methodologies, study design and data analysis, working across professional boundaries
- pitch-to-peer sessions to develop ideas and improve applications, with access to expert academics
- critical appraisal of draft applications and mock interview preparation.

Where appropriate and justified, additional funding is available to cover costs associated with accessibility and any reasonable adjustments required to support the development of an application, because of a health condition or disability, or caring responsibilities (beyond usual care costs).

5. Selection criteria

Applications to the NIHR Pre-Application Support Fund will be assessed against the following criteria:

- a clear explanation as to why additional support is required to submit an application and why now is the right time for this support
- a clearly articulated plan for how the funds will be used to enhance an application for an NIHR career development scheme
- the likelihood that the requested support will enable the applicant to prepare a competitive application for NIHR career development award and that this will further develop their career in research within the NIHR's remit
- appropriateness of the proposed support and mentorship and the provision of a strong research environment
- value for money.

Priority will be given to people working in the ARCWM [geographical footprint](#).

6. Selection process

- If any sections of your application form exceed the word limit stated on the form, the selection panel will not consider text beyond the word limit.
- If any signatures are missing from the application form your application will not be considered. Please get in touch with ARCWM if you have issues obtaining signatures.
- Following submission, a selection panel will take place. The panel's decision will be final. All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application.

7. Admissible NIHR fellowship schemes

Predoctoral level

- Pre Doctoral Fellowship (for methodologists only) (PF)
- Pre Doctoral Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowship (PCAF)
- Pre Doctoral Local Authority Fellowship Scheme (PLAF)
- In-Practice Fellowship (IPF)

Doctoral Level

- Doctoral Fellowship (DF)
- Doctoral Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowship (DCAF)
- Doctoral Local Authority Fellowship (DLAF)

Postdoctoral Level Development and Skills Enhancement (DSE) Award

- Advanced Fellowship (AF)
- Advanced Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowship (ACAF)

- Advanced Local Authority Fellowship (ALAF)
- Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) and Advanced Fellowship (EME-AF)
- Population Health Career Scientist Award (PHCSA)
- Senior Clinical and Practitioner Research Award (SCPRA)
- Research Professorship (RP)
- Senior Investigators (SI)

Other career development awards

- Clinical Academic Research Partnerships (CARP)

The PF, PLAF, PCAF, IPF, DSE and SCPRA all include support to prepare a further application for funding, and therefore if planning an application to one of these schemes, please provide a clear justification to explain why you are not applying directly to that scheme.

8. Justifiable costs

Requested support should not exceed £18,000.

It is envisaged that the majority of the requested funds will be allocated to the applicant's salary costs. Relevant training and PPIE costs should also be included at an appropriate level. Please consider what training is required at this stage and what training would be more appropriately costed into the future career development award for which to intend to apply. It is permissible to allocate costs to supervisors and mentors to ensure dedicated supervision time.

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement should be appropriately costed. The NIHR require plans for public involvement in grant applications should align to the UK Standards for Public Involvement. Public contributors should be acknowledged and recognised for their time and contributions to research and honoraria for public contributors should align to NIHR guidance.

Reasonable adjustment and additional support should be costed where appropriate. There is no set limit for these costs in an individual application, but we are working to a budget within the overall Pre-Application Support Fund in the West Midlands. Should you request these costs, we will contact you to discuss them and how best to support you should your application be successful. Requests for this funding will not influence the likelihood of the success of your application.

Overheads and publication costs are not eligible costs for the Pre-Application Support Fund award.

If you have any questions, please contact mds-c-arcwm@adf.bham.ac.uk

Please send your completed and signed (electronic signature) application form to mds-c-arcwm@adf.bham.ac.uk by 5pm on Wednesday 30th April 2025.