Joint Health Systems Research Initiative

How to apply and assessment criteria; Outline proposals

Research grants are focused projects usually up to 3 years' duration with a maximum of 5 years duration. There are no set budget limits; small and larger-scale projects are invited. As a guide, applicants should note that approximately £4m is available for Research Grants under this call and the funders would like to fund 5-10 projects. Value for money is an important part of the assessment criteria.

Funding for projects awarded under this call for proposals is jointly provided by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Wellcome Trust (WT).

MRC administer the call for proposals on behalf of the funders and so all applications should be submitted to the MRC and will be awarded according to MRC Terms and Conditions.

General information about how to apply to the MRC can be found in the MRC Guidance for Applicants and Award Holders
http://www.mrc.ac.uk/documents/pdf/guidance-for-applicants-and-award-holders/

Where guidance in the present document differs from that in the MRC Guidance for Applicants and Award Holders, you should follow the direction in this present, scheme specific, document.

The first submission deadline for both application types is 16:00 Greenwich Mean Time on **Thursday 5ᵗʰ February 2015**.

What are the timescales for the start date of an outline research grant?

Those invited to submit a full proposal will have until June 2015 in readiness for the final panel meeting in October. Invited applicants will receive feedback from the review panel for them to consider when preparing their full application. The invited full proposals will be sent out to external peer reviewers and applicants will be given the opportunity to respond to those external peer review comments before the panel considers their proposal in October 2015.

Queries should be sent to:
Mandy Brown, MRC Global Health Funding Officer,
mandy.brown@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk

Who can apply:

Principal Investigators (PIs)
This call differs from the standard MRC rules as for this call Principal Investigators can be based either in the UK (as per usual MRC rules) or in a low- or middle-income country (LMIC).

Eligibility of UK-based PIs is covered in the Guidance to Applicants and Award Holders. The PI must be employed by an institution that is legally registered in the UK or LMIC. Principal Investigators cannot be based in a high income country outside the UK.

For researchers based in low- or middle-income countries, eligible institutions include higher education institutions and non-profit research institutions. Funding for non-UK research institutions that have not previously received funding from one of the funding partners will be dependent on further eligibility and financial checks, to be conducted if the proposal is selected for funding. Please see annex I for further details regarding the registration of overseas applicants. For further advice on eligibility, please contact mandy.brown@headoffice.co.uk

All LMIC PIs can claim 100% of their direct costs and 20% of indirect costs as exceptional costs.

It is not permitted for the same person to be Principal Investigator on any more than two proposals submitted to this call.

While there is formally only one PI, you can make it clear in your Case for Support that the scientific leadership is shared and that in this respect, the applicants listed are co-principle investigators.

Co-investigators (Co-Is)
Co-investigators can be based in the UK as per usual MRC funding rules.

Co-investigators can be based in low- and middle-income countries as per usual MRC funding rules. They can claim 100% of their direct costs and up to 20% of costs as indirect costs.

Co-investigators can be based in high-income countries outside of the UK as per usual MRC funding rules. They can claim 100% of their direct costs but no indirect costs. However, as the scheme is intended to fund work in low- and middle-income countries, high-income country applicants are advised to keep their costs claimed to a minimum.

All co-investigators should be registered and added to the application. There is a delay between registration and the investigator being available on the online system to add to the application, so please ensure that registration is completed well in advance of the submission deadline.

A Co-investigator cannot be a Project Partner. A Project Partner is an organisation or individual who is providing substantial contribution to the project and will not take any funds out of the project.

Important Information for Lead applicants (UK or Overseas) regarding the inclusion of Overseas Investigators within the Je-S application

JHSRI Call 2 Guidance for outline proposals for health systems research grants

All lead applicants (UK or Overseas Lead), MUST ensure that each investigators overseas research organisation has been successfully added to the Je-S database, to allow each overseas investigator to create the required level of Je-S account.

Please see Annex 1 for further details

Eligible Countries
The scheme funds research in low and middle income countries. Please refer to the World Bank country classifications to check whether your country is eligible.

http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups

If your project is based in a middle income country (both lower-middle and upper-middle income countries are eligible), then it will be important to clarify that the target population of the proposed research will be the most vulnerable populations and those living in low-resource settings within LMICs.

Applications can focus on either a single or multi-country assessment as long as the key aims of the call are met through the proposal and all of the countries in which the research takes place are LMIC's.

Application process for Non HEI or IRO UK Organisations

UK Organisations that are not a Higher Education Institution can apply to be an IRO (Independent Research Organisation) if they possess an existing in-house capacity to carry out research that materially extends and enhances the national research base and are able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and lead research programmes E.G. All NHS Trusts, Hospitals, Boards, Primary Care Trust & GP Practices.

Information for IROs on how to apply for eligibility

Any organisation wishing to apply for IRO status should contact the Je-S helpdesk in the first instance. The Je-S helpdesk will then advise you of the process and send the appropriate documentation to be completed. When e-mailing the helpdesk for this purpose please include "Application for IRO Status" in the subject heading and provide the full name and postal address of your organisation.

Contact the Je-S Helpdesk JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk +44 (0) 1793 44 4164.

How to apply for an Outline Joint Health Systems Research Grant

Applying for an outline research project grant is a **two-stage process**. You will therefore firstly (stage one), need to submit an outline proposal (the second stage of the process is for successful outline applicants, who will be notified by the end of April 2015). Your proposal should include:

A1.   **The online Je-S form (see A1 guidance Pg4-14)**
A2.   **Outline Case for Support (see A2 guidance Pg14-17)**
A3.   **CVs and Publications of investigators (see A3 guidance Pg17-19)**

When completing all of these documents, please refer to **Section A4 assessment criteria** for this scheme.

At this outline stage you do **not** need to submit a Justification for Resources, a Pathways to Impact statement or a Data Management Plan, these will only be required to be completed by successful outline applicants, when they submit to stage two of the call during 2015.

Letters of support are not needed from co-investigators or other organisations requesting funding from the grant. Letters of support are needed for any organisations entered on the Je-S form as 'Project Partners'. A Project Partner is an organisation which contributes in cash or in kind to the project but which is not requesting any money from the project.

Your proposal should be submitted by 16:00 Greenwich Mean Time on Thursday 5th February 2015.

The assessment panel will meet late March 2015. You will receive notification of whether you are invited to submit a full proposal within a fortnight of that meeting.

If you are invited to submit a full application you will be provided with a guidance document for completion of your full application. You may also be provided with panel feedback notes for you to take into consideration when preparing your full application.

A1.   The online Je-S form

The online Je-S form requests information such as administrative details of the investigators, financial information and summaries of your research. We recommend that applicants access the Je-S form well in advance of the deadline so that they can see the specific information that they will need to enter and can ensure that they and their co-investigators are registered on the system.

The online Je-S form and guidance can be accessed here: https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Je-S2WebLoginSite/Login.aspx

If you do not already have a Je-S account, you will need to create one and a minimum of 2 working days should be allowed for the account creation. It should be noted that each applicant creating a Je-S account has to be able to select their organisation when they create their Je-S account. Please refer to **annex 1** for further instructions on the registration process.

How to apply – Health Systems Research Initiative 2 Outline Feb 2015

Please login to your Je-S account via https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Logout.aspx, using the username and password you have chosen when you set-up your Je-S account.

Please note, if you do not have a Je-S account please see Annex 1 for further information. If you have forgotten your Je-S user name or password, please click here to request an automatic reminder is sent to you.

https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Forgot.aspx

- When you have successfully completed login to your Je-S account, please select '**Documents**' from the left hand menu list from your Je-S account home page

Creating your Je-S application:

Please note, the below '**Call/Type/Mode**' can only be selected when the call opening date has been reached (until the advertised closing date*). Should you require any further information regarding the availability of the below call, please contact RFPD@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk.

Please note that all MRC funding calls close at 4pm (16:00 GMT), on the advertised closing date.

- Select Council: **MRC**

- Select Document Type: **Outline Proposal**

- Select Scheme: **MRC Jointly Funded Initiatives Outlines**

- Select Call/Type/Mode (optional): **Health Systems Research Initiative 2 Outline Feb 2015**

- Select **'Create Document'** option

Je-S users having problems successfully completing login to their Je-S account: Retrieve User Name / Password

Please telephone Je-S Helpdesk 01793 444164 should you require any assistance with the Je-S System.

Completing and submitting your online Je-S Outline application to MRC

When you have followed the before detailed process to create your MRC Je-S Outline, you will automatically be given access to the application, which will appear as per the screen shot below:

You will then see a number of sections that require completion, these are indicated by the Red icon's ⊗, the options that are not mandatory (but can be completed by the applicant), are indicated by the paper and pen icon 📝 .

Please note that the Notes and Comments section (at the very bottom of the list of document menu items), is **NOT** part of the application and will **NOT** be received by the MRC. Notes and comments are useful when there are multiple individuals collaborating on the completion of the Je-S form, allowing everyone to leave comments/information for others to see and again comment on if required.

Please note that only **ONE** person can edit the form at any one time, therefore if you can only View the form and not edit it, this is probably the reason. Should you require any further assistance, please contact the Je-S Helpdesk.

Project Details

Note: Please ensure that this Project Details section is completed first.

Please select the underlined on screen **Select Organisation** option.

This action will generate a pop-up window (Je-S Organisation Search), which will allow you to search the Je-S System database for the project lead organisation.

Please type the name of your organisation in the box and select search. You should then receive the results of the search and (hopefully), see the details of the research organisation that you can then select.

Note: If you search has not brought you the result you wish to see, please input a new search shortening the search criteria to the country your organisation is within and then search again. If you still encounter problems locating your organisation, please see Annex 1 of this document. Alternatively the Je-S Helpdesk will be able to assist you further.

When you have successfully added both the lead Organisation and Department to the Project Details page, please complete the remaining sections of the page:

Your Reference: Is for any reference number that your research organisation might have assigned to your application for the applicants/organisations own administrative purposes. If your organisation does not have a reference system for applications, please select your own **short** reference E.G. **HSRI 2 Outline**.

Project title: The title you select for your project must not exceed 150 characters (including spaces).

Proposal Call: Please ensure that the correct outline call has been selected.

Start Date and Duration: Please indicate the proposed start date of your project. Please note that the earliest start date indicated should be following the funding decision date which will be after the meeting date, expected to be after October 2015.

The duration of the project should usually be 3-4 years for an outline research project grant submitted to this scheme but can be up to 5 years. Please note that the Je-S form requires that you indicate the duration in Months E.G. 3 year project would be **36** months.

Your reference:

CHOSEN by Applicant

Project Title

Type your Project Title here. Please note that the title cannot exceed the 150 charcter maximum (including spaces).

35 character(s) remaining (maximum 150), including spaces
To check character counts, or edit longer text to the character limit, use the character count test page (opens in a new window)

Proposal Call
Proposal call:

Health Systems Research Initiative 2 Outline Feb 2015

**Start Date and Duration**
Start date:

01/08/2015

Duration:

36   months

When you have completed all the required project Details sections, please select the 'Save' button.

Home: Documents: Document List: Not Submitted

Document Actions   Cancel   Prev   Save   Next

Information regarding Document Submission Path of your Je-S application: All Overseas Lead applicants are advised to check the electronic submission path of their application, once they have completed the 'Project Details' section of the Je-S form.

Hover your mouse over the document actions option and select the option 'Show Submission Path'.
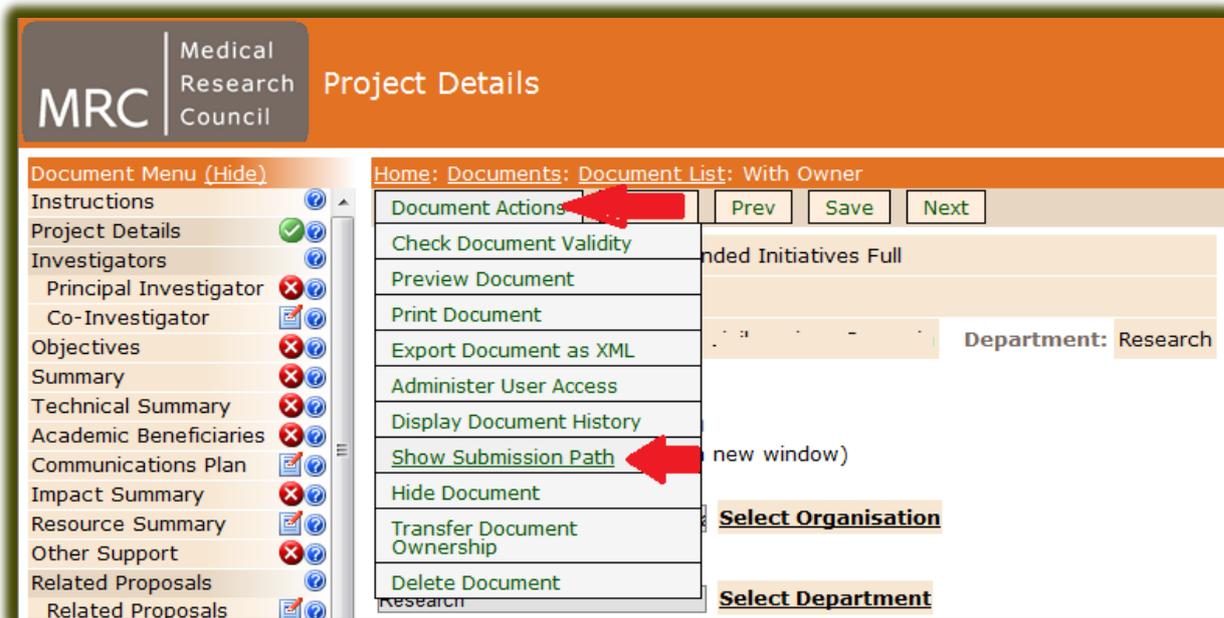
You will then see one of two submission paths:

1. If you organisation is 'Self Registered', then the submission will be direct from applicant to Council (MRC), following the completion of all mandatory sections of the Je-S form and then the applicant completing the final submission to MRC.
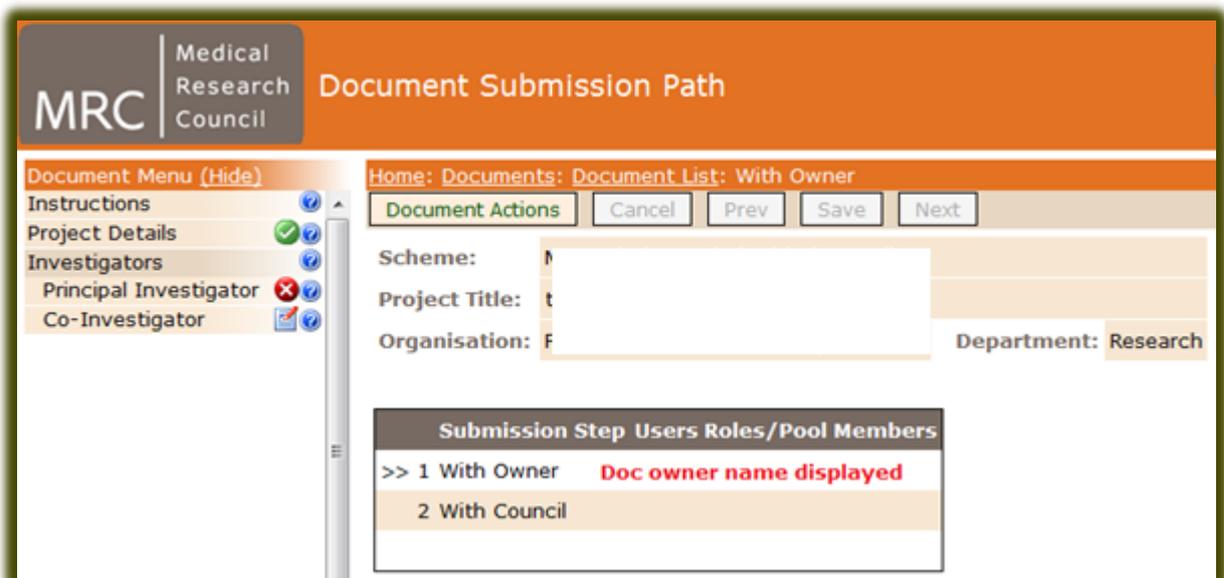

2. If your organisation has an electronic pool structure, then following the selection of 'View Submission Path', you will see something like the following, with a list of submitter pool members.
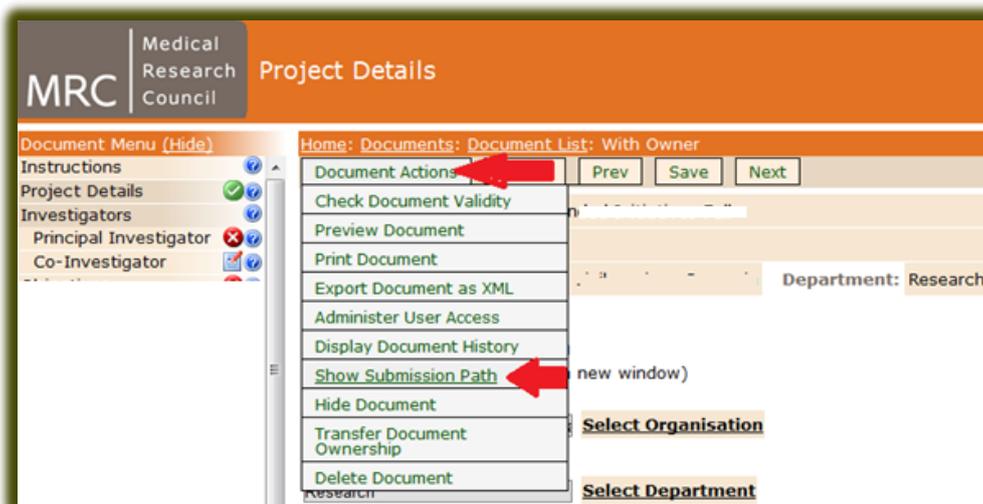
Selecting View submission path will detail the Submitter pool members at your research organisation. One of these people will be required to complete the application submission process ensuring that the application reaches MRC before the advertised deadline. Please ensure to contact the submitters to ensure someone will be available at the time of submission.

Important: Please allow sufficient time (before the call closes), E.G. 3-4 hours, to allow them time to login to their Je-S account, allocate the document to their own account and then complete the submission process. Should you require any assistance with the submission process, please contact the Je-S Helpdesk.
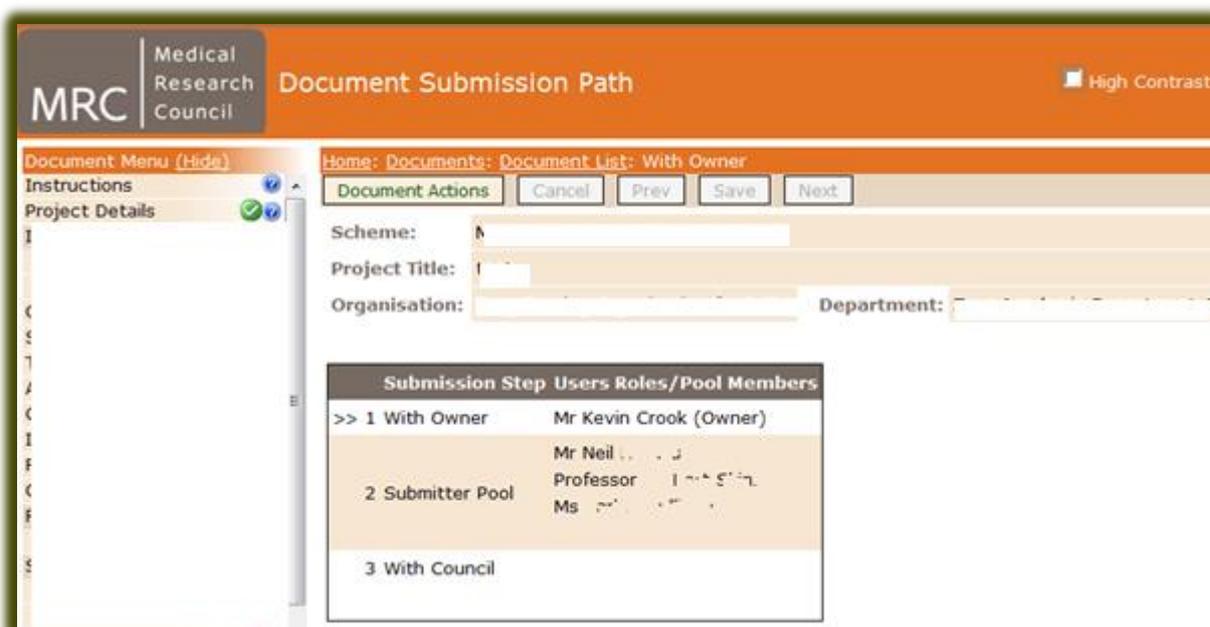
Please complete the administrative, summary and financial information as requested by the online Je-S form. Some points to note are:
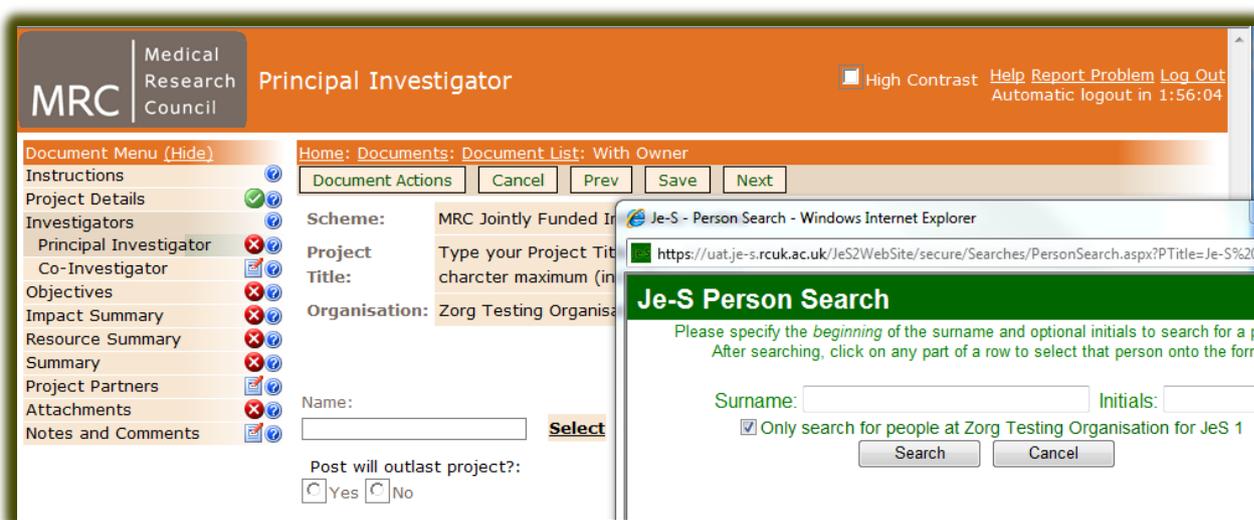
Investigators

All costs incurred by low- and middle-income country investigators should be entered as 'Exceptions' and will be reimbursed at 100% if funded.

However, lead Investigator and Co-Investigators are required to have a verified level Je-S account, appropriate to their inclusion of the Je-S form as an Investigator. If a PI or Co-I has only just created their account there will be a delay before they can be selected as the account has to be manually processed. Please see Annex 1 for further details to ensure the overseas organisation is successfully registered on the Je-S system before any attempt is made by them to create a Je-S account.

Add the lead Investigator to the application by selecting the Principal Investigator option, then select **Add new....** Option and then choose the **Select** option (pop-up Je-S person search window will appear), and search for the Investigator from the Je-S System database. Select the investigator from the search results and then indicate yes or no if the Post will outlast the project. Then select the '**Save**' option.

Question, 'Post will outlast project?', if the Investigator has an existing post (contract), at the overseas RO, that will run until (as a minimum), the last day of the project, then the indicator adjacent to 'Yes' should be selected. Otherwise please select 'No'.

Please note that the search is restricted (ticked box), to those with Je-S accounts affiliated with the Lead organisation as detailed within the Project details page of the Je-S form. Therefore, if the Investigator (Co-Investigator), is from another organisation, please **UN-CHECK** the tick, which will then allow a search of the entire Je-S database for the person you are attempting to locate.

After you have successfully selected the Investigator from the Je-S System database, you can then complete the remainder of the required information (continued on page 7).

Please note that both the Lead Investigator (PI) and Co-Investigator salary costs for their work on the project should be included within the Resource Summary section as part of the total Exceptional costs.

Exceptions: Please note, you do not need to obtain additional approval from an MRC Programme Manager for the Exceptions costs that you claim; all proposals submitted to this scheme will need to request overseas costs.

Other Overseas Exceptional costs (paid at 100%): All other exceptional costs associated with the overseas organisation, should be claimed under the appropriate fund heading as '**Exceptions**' E.G. 'Other Directly Incurred Costs' consumables, consultancy fees, field work fees/subjects/informants, Equipment (under £10,000), sub-contracting costs https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/Index.htm#pages/GuidanceonCompletingaStandardG/OtherDirectlyIncurredCosts.htm

Please again add these to any Exceptional costs detailed for E.G. Overseas Investigators added to the application.

Costs incurred by UK institutions will be reimbursed from this scheme at 74% of Full Economic Costings, not 80%. This reflects the different costing regimes of the four funders.

Please select the 'Resource Summary' option, which will display the total costings (RC Contribution that you are applying for.

Objectives: List the main objectives of the proposed research in order of priority [up to 4000 characters including spaces]. https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/pages/OutlineProposals/ObjectivesSTFConly.htm

Impact Summary: Impact Summary [up to 4000 characters including spaces].
https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/pages/OutlineProposals/ImpactSummary.htm

Summary of Resources Required for Project: further to the information provided in section 5 of the MRC Guidance for Applications and Award Holders:

All costs incurred by low and middle income country investigators should be entered as 'Exceptions' and will be reimbursed at 100% if funded. You do not need to obtain additional approval from an MRC Programme Manager for the Exceptions costs that you claim; it is assumed that all proposals submitted to this scheme will need to request overseas costs. At the outline stage you do not need to provide a cover letter justifying your Exceptions costs.

Institutions based in low- or middle-income countries can claim indirect costs at a maximum of 20% of their direct costs. If your actual indirect costs are less than 20% of the direct costs, you should only claim the actual costs. The funders reserve the right to check indirect costs rates during the audit of a funded project.

Costs incurred by UK institutions will be reimbursed from this scheme at 74% of Full Economic Costings, not the MRC's usual 80%. This reflects the different costing regimes of the four funders.

There is no maximum ceiling for funding a research project grant, but costs will usually be between £100-200k per year. Please bear in mind that the £5m available for this call is intended to fund several projects.

For further Je-S guidance regarding the Resource Summary: https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/pages/OutlineProposals/ResourceSummary.htm

Summary: In simple terms please describe your proposed research in a way that it could be publicised to a general audience [up to 4000 characters, including spaces].
https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/pages/OutlineProposals/Summary.htm

Project Partners: Details should be given of project partners and their contributions. An organisation should only be named as a project partner if it is providing specific contributions (either direct or indirect) to the research project. https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/pages/OutlineProposals/ProjectPartners.htm

A2. Outline Case for Support

Your Case for Support is a document including your scientific proposal, details of the research environment, people involved and references. Your Case for Support should indicate how your proposal fits the call specification for this scheme.

The outline Case for Support **should not exceed three sides of A4** plus one additional page of references (four pages in total). Your Case for Support must be attached to your Je-S online application as a PDF. You will need to prepare the document using a PDF writer such as Adobe Acrobat.

Additional annexes are not permitted.

Please use:

- Arial font with a minimum size of 11pt (excluding text on diagrams and mathematical symbols)
- A minimum of single line spacing
- Standard character spacing
- Margins of no less than 2cm.

Please complete the proposal in English and use British Pounds Sterling for all costs.

Please number all pages of the Case for Support.

Your proposal cannot be supplemented with further information after the submission deadline.

If you plan to include unpublished data it must be included in the Case for Support. Manuscripts in press or submitted to journals should not be included.

When completing the Case for Support please consider that the assessment committee will have a copy of your Je-S proposal form which contains the Objectives, Summary and Impact Summary. You therefore do not need to repeat detail which is already contained in those sections.

Please use the following headings when preparing your outline Case for Support

1. Research Project summary information

Full title of the project (no more than 150 characters)

In which country(ies) will the project take place?

Duration in months

Total amount requested from this funding scheme

Principal health systems research question to be addressed

2. Project description

Please describe your proposed research project, ensuring that you cover the following points:

- Where will the research take place?
- Who will the research participants be and why?
- What questions will be addressed?
- What are your research plans to address those questions?
    - Give details of the methodological approaches, study design and techniques that will be used.
    - Enough detail must be given to show why the research is likely to be competitive in its field.
    - Particular care should be taken to explain any innovation in the methodology or where you intend to develop new methods.
    - Please describe why your proposed methodology is the most appropriate and innovative way of addressing the research question.
- What pilot or preliminary information do you have available to help the panel assess the feasibility of the proposed study?
- If you are testing delivery of an intervention, please be clear about what that intervention will consist of and why. How would delivery of the intervention relate to the broader health system and contribute to health systems strengthening.
- If the research involves data collection or acquisition you must demonstrate that you have carried out a datasets review, and explicitly state why currently available datasets are inadequate for the proposed research.
- What is the proposed timeline?
- How will you evaluate the outcomes of the study?

3. Importance: why is this study needed now and in this proposed location?

Please consider issues such as burden of disease and priority for the relevant local, regional and national health services.

What evidence is there that the answer to your research question is needed and wanted by relevant users, for instance, policy-makers.

4. How will the results of this study be used?

What changes might be implemented as a result of the study?

Who will make those changes happen and how?

Might the results be generalisable beyond the immediate research setting?

5. Research Project Team

How does the team of investigators incorporate the range of discipline and experience necessary to carry out the study?

6. Financial Information

Are other funding partners involved? Who are the partners and what is the status of the discussions?

In addition to the costings you have provided on Je-S, please provide a breakdown of the funding request per institution using the below table.

Organisation name	Total project costs (GBP)	Total cost requested from this scheme (GBP)*

* UK institution costs are calculated at 74% of the Full Economic Costs. Costs incurred outside of the UK are 'Exceptions' and can be claimed at 100%.

7.   Proposal history

Has an application for funding for this project been submitted previously to DFID, ESRC, MRC, the Wellcome Trust or another funding organisation?

If so, please indicate the status of the previous application.

A3.   CVs & Publications Lists

C.V. should be a maximum of 2 sides of A4.

Please include separate CV documents/attachments for each of the following:

- Principal Investigators
- Co-investigator
- Named individual research staff

The CV should cover:

- Employment History
- A description of your current post and the source(s) of funding for this post (inc. dates)
- List & description of previous posts (inc. previous dates)
- Educational Qualifications (inc. dates)
- Please also state whether you are:
- Clinically qualified
- Clinically active

List of Publications (Publications)

The publications list should highlight relevant and recent publications, which should fit on a maximum of one side of A4 in Arial 11-point font (or equivalent).

Please include separate a separate Publications list for each of the following:

- Principal Investigators
- Co-investigator
- Named individual research staff

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Please see Je-S Guidance: https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/Handbook/Index.htm#pages/GuidanceonCompletingaStandardG/CaseforSupportandAttachments/MRCSpecificGuidance.htm

Please include the documents in the same order as the investigators are listed on your Je-S application form. Each publication list should immediately follow its corresponding CV.

A4. Assessment Criteria for outline full-scale research project grants:

General information on the MRC's approach to peer review is provided in the MRC Guidance for Applicants document which can be found at:

http://www.mrc.ac.uk/documents/pdf/guidance-for-applicants-and-award-holders/

The assessment panel for this scheme will consider whether outline applications are of world-class standard (being intellectually innovative, well-focused and methodologically sound), and whether the research has the potential to make real improvement to health in low and middle income countries.

Peer reviewers will be asked to comment on the following criteria in assessing the outline proposals:

Research agenda:
Is there a real need for this study in the proposed location?

Is the research question important and appropriate?

Is an answer to the research question needed by policy-makers and other stakeholders beyond the academic community?

Project plans:
Is the proposed study feasible?

Is the proposed study innovative, internationally competitive, and methodologically sound?

Project team
Are the credentials of the investigators and host institutions appropriate to deliver the project?

Is there an understanding of and sufficient involvement of the local research context and decision-makers?

Does the proposed team of investigators possess the necessary range of expertise and experience to successfully carry out the proposed study?

Research impact:
Does the project have real potential to strengthen health systems in order to improve health outcomes?

Is there clarity as to how, and by whom, the research findings will be used?

Does the application demonstrate that there is demand for the research from policy-makers and other stakeholders beyond the academic community?

Ethics:
Is the work ethically acceptable?

Value for money:
Is the budget appropriate and reasonable for the proposed programme of work?

Annex 1: Guidance for Overseas Organisations to be registered on Je-S

All proposals submitted to this scheme are required to include investigators based in the low or middle income country where the research will take place.

All overseas researchers, investigators and their associated organisations that are included on your proposal, either as lead investigator or co-investigator, must be registered on the Je-S system.

You need to be aware that all Overseas Research Organisations/Institutes and individual applicants (Principal and Co-Investigators), are required to be registered on the Je-S system.

Therefore, both UK organisations and overseas organisations are encouraged to contact us at least two weeks before the call deadline of the 5th February 2015, so we can ensure that the overseas organisation (either Lead or Non-lead), has been correctly added to the Je-S System. Any delays could mean the proposal being rejected because of late submission.

Please email the following information to RFPD@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk. Our team will then liaise with the Je-S System Helpdesk to ensure the organisation is added to the database. This information is required for any overseas organisation/applicant that will be included within the Je-S application (Overseas Organisation enquiry form on Page 15):

1) The name of the overseas organisation/institute (in full)
2) Contact name and email address at overseas organisation/institute
3) The full postal address of the overseas institution
4) List the departments associated with the organisation. If the department structure is not known or there no department structure please state the department as 'Research'.
5) Please include a web link/URL for the overseas organisation/institution.
6) The full name's and organisation/institute email addresses of each overseas applicant to be included within the Je-S application

When the overseas organisation has been added to the Je-S database, this will then enable the overseas applicants (PI and/or Co-Is), to create their Je-S accounts.

Please note that each individual applicant (PI or Co-I), is required to create their own Je-S account, once their organisation has been added to the Je-s system.