

Guidance for Grant Funding Applicants

Thank you for your interest in applying to our grant funding round.

Before submitting your application, please review the following guidance carefully to ensure your research proposal meets the required standards. Our aim is to make the process clear, transparent, and accessible for all applicants.

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Communication Plan

We have a responsibility to ensure that all of our funded research findings are appropriately shared with those able to use and benefit from it. Your communication plan therefore needs to include details of how the research findings will be communicated to the:

- The scientific community.
- The general public, including people affected by meningitis.
- If applicable, study participants during and after the study is completed.
- Stakeholders who may use the data and evidence from your research to inform practice and policy.

The Final Report required at the end of your grant will ask for specific details of communication activities, so please track these throughout your grant according to your communication plan.

Things that we would like to see in your Communications Plan

Why: Simple and measurable communication objectives

Who: Your key audiences within the stakeholder groups outlined above

How:

- Suggested ways to reach your target audiences, such as specific conferences or meetings, and channels to reach the public.
- A brief description of intended outputs beyond scientific publications.
- Inclusion of a budget for this in your overall study budget.

When: A timeline including the anticipated key moments **during** your study for raising awareness of the need for the research and/or sharing preliminary results and how you will communicate the findings when the **study has finished**

Reaching the public:

We actively encourage applicants to propose novel ways of sharing research findings with the public (such as through social media, video and blog posts). Our Communications and Engagement team can offer advice on how best to achieve this. To help us amplify your research, please let us know specific timelines for your dissemination plans as soon as possible – for example, when a paper has been accepted at a journal, or when you contribute to a new piece.

Open-access publishing:

Grant holders are expected to publish their protocols and findings in Open Access peer-reviewed journals as soon as possible, even where results do not support the initial hypothesis. We can support the costs of Open Access publishing for one publication per grant. These costs **should not** be included in your grant application. Please apply to us separately at the time you submit to a journal.

Acknowledgements:

Meningitis Research Foundation must be acknowledged in all publications, presentations, posters and public communication that includes any element of the research we have funded.

Involvement of people with lived experience

We define people with lived experience as:

- Anyone who has had meningitis (due to any cause), or
- Anyone who provides or has provided close personal support to someone with meningitis. For example, parents, siblings, close family and friends, and unpaid carers.

We don't include health and social care professionals under "providing close **personal** support" where this is delivered as part of their job. Engaging with health and social care professionals at any level is still strongly encouraged in the design, delivery and dissemination of the research and should be outlined in your proposal. The inclusion of lived experience in the design of research studies has been shown to improve the relevance, reach and impact of research. So we encourage all applicants to consider how individuals with lived experience of meningitis can be involved in shaping the research study from beginning to end, **beyond** being involved as participants.

In this section please outline:

- How you will ensure that different stages of your research study (conception, design, delivery, dissemination, impact) are influenced by the relevant lived experience and needs of diverse people and communities who will be affected by or benefit from your research
- Who will be involved and why: please specify whether at the application stage this is a **goal** or whether you already have lived experience collaborators (individuals or community representatives)
- Whether people and/or communities have shaped this proposal so far
- How your approach is appropriate and proportionate for this specific research study.

If lived experience involvement is not currently part of your project, we encourage you to use this space in the application form to outline potential future opportunities or explain any limitations.

Further information and support on public involvement, published by the National Institute of Health and Social Care Research, can be found here: [Briefing notes for researchers - public involvement in NHS, health and social care research](#)

Writing in plain English

The plain English summary of your research will be reviewed by our Lived Experience Advisors, who may not have a scientific background. Their scores will contribute to the overall funding recommendation made by our Scientific Advisory Panel.

If your application is successful, we may use your plain English summary, or quotes from your plain English summary, in our communications about the research we fund. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Our website.
- Social media.
- Newsletters.
- Internal and expert reports on our funding.
- Information packs.

In your application, you will be asked to complete the following sections:

- Title in plain language
- Summary of the research in plain English
- Social media summary

All content should:

- Be written in plain English with simple sentences that are short and to the point
- Be understandable to someone without a scientific background.
- Avoid jargon and not use any acronyms
- Clearly describe the need for the proposed research and its expected benefits for those affected by meningitis.

For further support, see the [NIHR's guide to plain English summaries](#).

We also recommend putting your lay summary into [Hemmingway Editor](#) and aiming for a Grade 9 or lower.

Artificial intelligence (AI) can also be used to write and improve lay summaries. Please refer to our [position statement on the use of AI in grant applications](#). If you use AI, please include a brief description of how it was used in the AI section of your application.

Support requested (£)

Please ensure that accurate costings are requested when applying for funding. No-cost/time-only extensions to awarded grants may be agreed in some circumstances, but we're unable to offer supplementary funding.

Grants are intended to cover all the direct costs attributed to a research project apart from premises costs and the costs of established academic staff. Please note that amounts should be indicated in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound.

Alongside the costs requested, you must provide a detailed justification for support. The particular type of support requested – such as equipment, travel or staff – should be justified in relation to the demands of the work. Sufficient detail is essential so that the Scientific Advisory Panel can assess the suitability of the financial support requested.

Costs you can and cannot claim:

| Category | Costs You Can Claim | Costs You Cannot Claim |
|--|---|--|
| Staff Costs: Salaries for research, technical and/or other staff to work full-time or part-time on the research. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salaries for research, technical, or other staff (full-time or part-time) Basic salary Expected salary increments Employer contributions (e.g., National Insurance, pension) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment costs |
| Consumables: required to carry out the research including laboratory materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laboratory materials required for research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>(No exclusions listed beyond general rules)</i> |
| Equipment Costs: including computers and software. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase, delivery, and installation Import duties (if applicable) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insurance costs (host institution responsibility) VAT (except delivery costs if specified) Equipment not used for the research |
| Travel & Subsistence: or working visits for scientific collaboration on a specific project or | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working visits for collaboration or learning techniques Essential travel by most carbon- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business class flights Travel to conferences |

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| the learning of special techniques are acceptable. | <p>efficient and class of transport mode</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy class air travel if unavoidable • Carbon offsetting for unavoidable travel | |
| Animal Costs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs for animals required for research | <i>(No exclusions listed beyond general rules)</i> |
| Open Access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not include in application; up to 2 papers can be funded separately after acceptance | |
| <p>Exceptional Items: These refer to costs which do not fall under any of the above headings and incur outside the scope of the project.</p> | <i>Generally not funded</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of established academic staff • General premises costs unless these are itemised under overheads for eligible institutions only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Construction and maintenance of a building. ○ Animal houses and glass houses. ○ Land purchase/lease ○ Refurbishment/renovation/adaptation. ○ Basic services and utilities. ○ Office furnishings. ○ Lease/rent/rates. ○ Insurance. ○ Cleaning/portering/security/safety. • Unspecified research work • Work already done or writing up • Undergraduate remuneration (except allowed vacation work) • Host facilities normally free • Removal costs • Overseas PhD tuition fees (Home/EU may be eligible if justified) |
| Matched Funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding leveraged or in-kind contributions • Sustainability initiatives; can be listed as in-kind support • Supervision time | |
| Overheads | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 15% of direct research costs, supporting funded activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything exceeding 15% of direct research costs cap |