HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme 2026

Guidance Notes for Applicants

Guidance Notes

Key Dates & Times	
Charities Open Calls	July 2025 onwards
Application Opens on GEMS	01 September 2025
Application Closing Date*	26 November 2025 @13:00**

Applications must be completed and submitted through the HRB online Grant E-Management System (GEMS) (https://grants.hrb.ie), and this system will close automatically at the stated deadline and timeline listed above.

** Note, individual charities may have an earlier closing date. Please submit your application before the relevant charity closing date.*

*** Prior to final submission to the HRB and relevant charity, all applications must first be reviewed and approved within GEMS by the authorized approver at the Host Institution as listed in the application form. It is critical therefore that applicants leave sufficient time in the process for the Research Office (or equivalent) in their nominated Host Institution to review, seek clarifications and approve applications prior to the final submission date. This may involve being aware of and complying with any internal Host Institution deadlines for review and approval, distinct from the HRB deadline.*

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1 Introduction

The HRB is the lead agency in Ireland supporting research linked to health and social care. During the period of the Strategic Business Plan 2021-2025[1], the HRB will continue to work in partnership with others to fund strategically relevant health research projects to to create new knowledge that, over time, will help to address major health challenges in society and have an impact on tomorrow's healthcare.

Health Research Charities Ireland (HRCI) is the national umbrella organisation of over 45 charities engaged in health, medical and social care research, collectively representing over 2 million people in Ireland. They champion their members' interests, to enhance the environment for health research in Ireland. They empower members to realise their shared vision of improving lives through impactful research.

HRCI's members have an important role in health research. In addition to providing funding, they increase the quality and quantity of research in a myriad of ways, including through ensuring its relevance to patients, hosting research conferences, supporting research infrastructure such as patient registries, helping to ensure patient impact from research and communicating research developments to the public.

Since 2006, the work of HRCI and its members has been supported by the Health Research Board (HRB) through co-funding of research projects. The level of funding is currently at €1,000,000 per annum.

This innovative joint funding scheme allows members of HRCI to support research addressing their research strategy, where they might otherwise not be in a position to finance the full cost of that research. To date, 165 projects have been jointly funded by member charities and the HRB in twelve rounds. While no differentiation is made between charities or disease areas, the scheme has been particularly beneficial for rare diseases where research being undertaken internationally may be limited and where charities wishing to contribute to the research agenda need to fund research projects led from outside Ireland.

HRCI and HRB have developed guidelines for competitive peer review to ensure that high quality and innovative research projects receive funding through this scheme. The partnership with the HRB supports the building of research funding capacity in Irish research charities and ensures that all elements of this research funding programme are operated at the highest standards of best international practices.

The HRCI member charities and the HRB are now inviting applications for the 2026 call of the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme.

[1] https://www.hrb.ie/about/strategy-2025/

2 Aim and Objectives

The HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme aims to fund researchers and research teams to conduct internationally competitive and innovative research in **areas of strategic relevance to each individual charity**.

The objectives are to:

- Fund research that addresses the strategic aims of the individual charities
- Support high quality, internationally relevant research
- Create new knowledge and evidence of benefit to health and social care.

3 Major changes since the last round

- The assessment criteria weightings have been adjusted. In recognition of the importance of the potential impact of HRB funded research, the weighting for impact has increased from 20% to 35%. This aligns with the HRB Investigator Led Project Grants scheme that will open in August 2025. The definition of impact has been broadened to capture short- or longer-term impacts on patients, public and/or the healthcare system.
- In previous rounds, applications were completed in Microsoft Word and submitted to the relevant charity. For the 2026 round, applications must be completed and submitted to the relevant charity and HRB through the HRB online Grant E-Management System (GEMS) (https://grants.hrb.ie). Charities will have complete read access to applications relevant to them.

4 Scope of Call

This scheme provides funding for clearly defined research projects of strategic importance to participating charities.

We expect that applicants reference evidence supporting the case for the project that has been gathered systematically, i.e., as systematic reviews or other evidence synthesis formats. Simple literature overviews are not sufficient. Evidence synthesised systematically should include evidence of (1) a systematic identification of previous work, (2) critical appraisal, (3) synthesis of the evidence and (4) interpretation of findings.

Applications can include trials methodology research or can propose work to develop a healthcare intervention. Such work may include some initial testing of the intervention in order to generate proof of concept data and thus have the basis for developing a feasibility study. This would mean that applicants could then apply to HRB or another funder to support a feasibility study as a next step. In such cases applicants must consult with the appropriate clinical research infrastructure supports (such as the Clinical Research Facilities/Centres or the HRB Trial Methodology Research Network), to ensure that the work done will allow them to develop a feasibility study subsequent to the HRCI-HRB-funded research.

You should note that in this scheme the HRB will **not fund**:

- Applications planning to include PhD researchers.
- Applications which are solely literature reviews, audits, surveys, needs assessments or technology development (although these elements may be part of an integrated research study)
- Studies aimed at evaluating a full scale, definitive intervention to provide evidence on the efficacy, effectiveness, cost and broad impact of the intervention, and stand-alone feasibility studies[2] conducted in preparation for a future definitive intervention. Such studies are supported through the HRB Investigator-Led Clinical Trials programme (ILCT).
- Applications which are solely **or** predominately developing the infrastructure for biobanking, databases or patient registers without a predominant research element
- Applications which are solely **or** predominately health service developments or implementation of an intervention without a predominant research element. The HRB will not fund the cost of providing the service or intervention itself, only the research element
- Research intended to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer
- Applications from individuals applying for, holding, or employed under funding received from the tobacco industry[3];
- Applications from individuals applying for, holding, or employed under funding received from the alcohol industry and related actors[4]

Where an application is outside the scope of the scheme, the application may be deemed ineligible by the HRB at initial eligibility review or the review panel at the panel meeting.

5 Funding Available, Duration and Start Date

The HRCI-HRB Joint Funding scheme will provide funding for projects up to a maximum of **€300,000** (exclusive of overheads) per grant. Note, individual charities may have a lower maximum limit which will be detailed in their call. The overall funding available for this round is approximately €3.1 million (HRB contribution of €1.75 million and charities contribution of €1.35 million). Quality permitting it is expected that a minimum of 11 awards will be funded. Awards will have a duration of between **12 and 36 months**.

[2] *Sandra M. Eldridge et al. Defining Feasibility and Pilot studies in preparation for Randomised Controlled Trials: Development of a conceptual Framework. PLoS ONE 11(3): e0150205*

[3] Any company, entity, or organisation involved in the development, production, promotion, marketing, or sale of tobacco in any country of the world. The term also includes any companies that are a subsidiary or a holding company or affiliate of the above. This also includes e-cigarette companies and non-tobacco related companies which are fully or partially owned by the tobacco industry.

[4] Including social aspects/public relations organisations (SAPROs) funded by alcohol companies or trade associations in which such companies are members.

The grant will provide support for research-related costs including salary for research staff, running costs, PPI, FAIR data management, equipment and dissemination costs. Overheads of up to 30% of Total Direct Modifiable Costs will be added to the portion of the research funded by the HRB during contracting stage.

Note: The grant will not fund the salary and related costs of tenured academic staff within research institutions (including buy-out from teaching time etc.).

The budget requested and the grant duration **must** reflect the scale and nature of the proposed research, and reviewers will thoroughly assess the level of funds and timeframe requested when reviewing the application.

The earliest start date of the Grant is 01 October 2026.

6 Application Details and Eligibility

6.1 Applicant Team

Applications should be made on behalf of a team made up of researchers and PPI contributors and where appropriate knowledge user(s) and data processors/controllers.

Co-applicants and Collaborators from outside the Republic of Ireland are welcome where their participation clearly adds value to the project.

6.1.1 Lead Applicant

The **Lead Applicant** will serve as the primary point of contact for the HRB during the review process and on the grant, if successful. The Lead Applicant will be responsible for the scientific and technical direction of the research programme. They have primary fiduciary responsibility and accountability for carrying out the research within the funding limits awarded and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the HRB.

The Lead Applicant **must**:

- Hold a post (permanent or a contract that covers the duration of the grant) in the Host Institution as an independent investigator. For clinicians, an adjunct position in a HRB recognised Host Institution is acceptable.

  OR

- Be an individual who will be recognised by the Host Institution upon receipt of a grant as an independent investigator who will have a dedicated office and research space for the duration of grant, for which they will be fully responsible. The Lead Applicant does not necessarily need to be employed by the Host Institution at the time of the application submission.

They **must** show evidence of achievement as an independent researcher in their chosen research field by:

a) Demonstrating a record of research output, with at least three publications of original research in peer reviewed journals. Where appropriate, they should also provide evidence of other outputs (e.g., published book chapters, reports to government, research data and datasets, research materials, databases, audio/video products, national and/or international reports, patents, models and protocols, software production, evidence of influence on health policy and practice, outreach and/or knowledge translation activities, media coverage or other relevant activities) and/or any other relevant outputs that have resulted in a significant impact in their field.

b) Demonstrating record of independence by showing that they have secured at least one peer-reviewed research grant for a research project/s, as either the Lead Applicant or a Co-Applicant. Funding received for travel to seminars/conferences and/or small personal bursaries will not be considered in this regard.

c) That they possess the capability and authority to manage and supervise the research team.

Only one application per Lead Applicant to this scheme can be submitted.

Where a Lead applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria, the application will be deemed ineligible and will not be accepted for review. The HRB will contact the Lead Applicant in the event that this situation arises.

6.1.2 Co-Applicants

Co-Applicants will be asked to select whether they are a **Researcher, Knowledge User**[5] **or PPI contributor** co-applicant for the purpose of the proposed research. Up to a maximum of **6 Co-Applicants** can be included.

A Co-Applicant has a well-defined, critical, and substantial role in the conduct and steering of the proposed research. Co-Applicants from outside the island of Ireland are welcome where this is appropriately justified in terms of added value for the project. A Co-Applicant may receive funding for items such as running costs and personnel but will not receive support towards their own salary if they are in salaried positions. However, researchers in contract positions/independent investigators, knowledge user and PPI contributor Co-Applicants can request their own salary, depending on their role and percentage of time dedicated to the research for the duration of the grant.

Each Co-Applicant must confirm their participation and is invited to view the application form online. The terms of any co-application should be determined early, and relevant agreements should be in place by the onset of the project. The HRB advise that consideration should be given to issues such as

[5] A **Knowledge User** is defined as one in a position of authority to influence and/or make decisions about health policy or the delivery of services and can act to ensure that the findings of the research will be translated to influence decision making and change within their (or other) organisations. This is typically managers, policy makers, clinicians, health professionals or others who are in a position to make significant changes to policy or practice. Knowledge User organisations may be government departments, HSE, other agencies, hospitals or hospital groups, community healthcare organisations, local government, voluntary organisations, research charities, patient/consumer groups or other organisations involved in making decisions regarding the management, structuring and/or delivery of practice or policy in the Irish health and social care system.

relative responsibilities, governance arrangements, intellectual property rights, reporting and access to data and samples when working up co-application agreements.

6.1.3 Collaborators

A Collaborator is an individual or an organisation who will have an integral and discrete role in the proposed research and is eligible to request funding from the grant when properly justified. Named collaborators may include investigators or organisations from outside the Republic of Ireland, but an individual or organisation should **only** be named as Collaborator if they are providing specific contributions (either direct or indirect) to the activities. A collaborator may provide training, supply samples or kits, provide access to specific equipment, specialist staff time, staff placements, access to data and/or patients, instruments or protocols, industry know-how, or may act in an advisory capacity. Collaborators can come from a range of backgrounds such as academia, the private sector, a healthcare organisation, the charity sector, or a patient group (**up to a maximum of 10 Collaborators can be listed)**.

Profile details **must** be provided for ALL collaborators. In addition, each collaborator **must** complete a **Collaboration Agreement Form**. A template Collaborator Agreement form will be made available on GEMS for download.

If access to samples, vulnerable population groups, healthy volunteers or patients, data, databases, or a link to an existing national or international study (e.g., an existing cohort or longitudinal study) are an integral part of the proposed project, evidence of commitment and access must be demonstrated by having the Data Controller[6] or key Gatekeeper of a study included as a Collaborator.

The applicant team will be asked to describe any relevant agreements that they have entered into to facilitate their partnership working. The terms of any collaboration should be determined early, and relevant agreements should be in place by the onset of the project. The HRB advise that consideration should be given to issues such as relative responsibilities, governance arrangements, ownership and copyright, access and sharing of data and samples etc. when working up Partnership proposals.

6.1.4 Funded Personnel

Applicants must demonstrate that the level, expertise, and experience of proposed research personnel matches the ambition and scale of the project and that they possess the necessary breadth and skills in all methodological areas required to deliver the proposed programme of work. Alignment between personnel requested and the proposed project should be demonstrated. Roles and responsibilities of funded personnel must be differentiated and clear.

[6] A '**data controller**' refers to a person, company, or other body that decides how and why a data subject's personal data are processed. If two or more persons or entities decide how and why personal data are processed, they may be 'joint controllers', and they would both share responsibility for the data processing obligations[6]. Data Controllers from the provider organisation should be named as Co-applicants where justified by their level of involvement.

This scheme is not framed as a training initiative and PhD researchers **must not** make up part of the research team. Where candidates for a Masters degree are proposed to work on projects, Lead Applicants must carefully consider:

- The complexity, scale, objectives, and dependencies of the project.
- The suitability of such project in terms of delivering a clearly identifiable original research project or the potential difficulties in clustering various pieces of work packages for a Masters thesis.
- The skills, expertise and experience level required to carry it out.
- Any requirements and/or restriction relating to the Masters researcher's registration with the Host Institution, and this should be accounted for when determining the start date of the grant.

7 Host Institution

This call is open to HRB Host Institutions from Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and funding outside the island of Ireland **is allowable** where there is no established research capacity in Ireland (e.g. for the case of rare diseases).

A HRB Host Institution is a research-performing organisation approved by the HRB for the purpose of receiving and administering HRB grant funding and is responsible for compliance with all general and specific terms and conditions of grants. The **Host Institution for the grant** is normally that of the **Lead Applicant** but it may be another organisation/institution designated by the research team, where it is clearly justified.

In order to be eligible to apply for funding, a Host Institution **on the island of Ireland** must be an **approved** HRB Host Institution no later than two calendar months before the closing date of a call. A list of currently approved HRB Host Institutions and information on the application process for research performing organisations to be approved as HRB Host Institutions can be found on the HRB website[7].

A Host Institution **outside of the island of Ireland** is not required to be an approved HRB Host Institution but if successful will be required to complete and submit a form detailing their Financial Management and Governance processes as well as providing signed audited financial statements before contracting can be finalised.

The **Host Institution** will be required to confirm for **(1) all Lead Applicants in a contract position and (2) Co-Applicants in a contract position who are seeking their own salary** that (i) they will be recognized by the host institution upon receipt of the HRB HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme 2026 grant as a contract researcher; (ii) they will have an independent office and research space/facilities for which they is fully responsible for at least the duration of the grant, and (iii) they have the capability and authority to mentor and supervise the research team.

8 Application, Review Process and Assessment Criteria

[7] https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/HRB-Policy-on-Approval-of-Host-Institutions.pdf

8.1 Application

Pre-application Stage

Co-funding charities may run a pre-application stage. See relevant charity call details.

Full Application Stage

Applications must be completed and submitted through the HRB online Grant E-Management System (GEMS) (https://grants.hrb.ie/). It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant to ensure that applications are completed in full, and all necessary documentation is received by the HRB on, or before, the closing dates indicated.

The applicant must select the relevant co-funding charity in their application form. This will create an invite to the charity with read only access to the application. Charities reserve the right to reject an application at this stage and will notify the Lead Applicant and HRB providing justification in such instances.

The application must have been reviewed and approved by the signatory approver at the research office (or equivalent) in the Host Institution before it is submitted to the HRB. Therefore, applicants should ensure that they give the signatory approver sufficient time before the scheme closing date to review the application and approve it on GEMS. Please note that many host institutions specify internal deadlines for this procedure.

The HRB is committed to an open and competitive process underpinned by international peer review. To ensure the integrity of the assessment process, conflict of interest and confidentiality are applied rigorously in each stage of the process.

8.2 Review Process

Applications will be initially checked for eligibility by HRB staff members. Following the initial eligibility check, each eligible application submitted to this scheme will undergo a two-phase review process.

The HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme 2026 will use a three-stage review process consisting of:

Stage 1 – Peer Review and Applicant Response

Stage 2 – Charity endorsement and shortlisting

Stage 3 - Panel Review

Stage 1

In line with international good practice, applications are peer reviewed, and applicant teams have an opportunity to respond.

International Peer Review

For this scheme, suitable international peer reviewers for each application are identified and invited. Peer reviewers who accept the invitation will be asked to submit reviews via HRBs grant

management system, GEMS. For each application, we aim to receive written feedback from at least three international peer reviewers.

International peer reviewers play a vital role for the HRB in setting standards and in benchmarking our scientific community to enable them to operate in a global context. Peer reviewers are asked to focus on the stated assessment criteria for the call and will provide comments as well as a score which is visible to the co-funding charity, the HRB and to panel members.

Applicant Response

Where applications score on average 'very good' i.e. 6 or above[8] in peer review, the application will be eligible to go forward to review stage 2 – Charity Endorsement and Shortlisting. Applicant teams will be provided with a time-limited opportunity to respond to peer review comments (see Section 9 Timeframe). Peer review comments won't include any reference to the reviewer's identity.

Peer review comments will be made available to the Lead Applicant on their GEMS personal page. The Lead Applicant will have 10 working days only to submit their response through GEMS, and the response has a **maximum word count of 2000 words only for the peer review response** (including references). No figures can be uploaded. The response will be provided to the charity for final charity endorsement step.

Stage 2 - Charity Endorsement and Shortlisting

Each charity can put forward a maximum of 4 proposals to panel review stage and the maximum number of applications that can be funded by the charity through this scheme is 3. The charity will conduct a final selection or endorsement step and shortlist applications to go forward to panel. This will be based on the relevance of the application in addressing their strategic priorities, the peer review comments and scores, the applicant response to peer review comments, and the funding the charity has available. This may include a charity PPI review process. Charities will advise the HRB which applications have been selected to go forward for panel review. Where an application is rejected by the charity, the charity will notify the applicant and HRB.

Stage 3 – Panel Review

A grant selection panel will be convened by HRB and HRCI consisting of international scientific panel members and national public panel members. Panel members will have access to the application, peer reviews and scores and the applicants' response. HRB and HRCI staff members are present at the meeting to clarify any procedural aspects for the Chair or Panel members and to take notes for

[8] Applications must receive an **average peer review score above 6 to be eligible to be put forward to the joint selection committee**. Where the average peer review score has been skewed by an outlier these applications can be brought forward as well. For an average score to be considered skewed all but one of the scores should be above 6 and an individual outlier is bringing the average down below 6. An outlier score is defined as a score that is two scores or more below the next lowest score, removal of which will bring the average above the threshold of 6. All peer reviews received must be considered.

the feedback process. Representatives of the co-funding charities will also be present in an observer capacity.

Scientific Panel members

Scientific panel members are selected based on the range of applications received and the expertise and skillset needed (e.g., research area and methodological and analytical approaches, knowledge translation/applied health research etc.). Panel members are assigned as lead and secondary reviewers to specific applications.

The scientific panel will review the strengths and weaknesses of the application relating to the assessment criteria detailed below. Successful applicants are expected to score well in all review criteria. While PPI is not a stand-alone assessment criterion, it may influence scores under any criterion as relevant to the application.

Public Panel members

Public reviewers are selected by HRCI and from the HRB database of public reviewers. Public panel members will assess the quality of PPI in the application and will provide comments as well as a rating according to the level of PPI for the proposed research. **Please note that these are not people with lived experience in the topic areas of applications** but members of the general public**.**

Panel Recommendations to HRB Board

At the panel meeting, a scientific score is collectively agreed for each application (range 1-9). The final PPI rating is used to adjust the scientific score, by applying a correction to it (range from +0.5 for 'excellent' PPI rating to -0.5 for 'poor' PPI rating). The applications will then be ranked according to final score as recommendation to the HRB Board.

Gender balance of the Lead Applicant will be considered where required to prioritise proposals with the same scores in the panel ranking list.

The recommendations of the review panel will be presented for approval at the next scheduled HRB Board meeting. Following this, HRB staff will contact the Lead Applicants and Host Institutions to notify them of the outcome. A summary of Panel Member's comments and the panel discussion comments will be issued to the Lead Applicant following the Board approval stage.

8.3 Assessment Criteria

8.3.1 Scientific Assessment Criteria

The following assessment criteria will be used by international scientific **peer-reviewers and panel reviewers**. Successful applications will be expected to **rate highly in all criteria**.

Scientific Quality and Innovation (35%)

- Evidence supports need for proposed project
- Design and methodology appropriate
- Project plan and risk mitigation for project delivery

Potential Impact (35%)

- Potential short- or longer-term impact on patients, public and/or healthcare system
- Planned knowledge dissemination and translation

Research Team and Environment (30%)

- Applicant team expertise and experience relevant for project
- Supports, infrastructure, environment
- Project staffing and funding

Panel members will be advised to take PPI approaches into consideration under any of the assessment criteria if considered relevant.

8.3.2 Public Assessment Criteria

Public reviewers will assess the quality of PPI in the application and will provide comments and an overall rating (from poor – excellent). The rating will result in an addition/subtraction from the scientific score to reach a final score.

Public Reviewers are asked to comment on the following:

- The plain English summary (Lay Summary)
- PPI in development of and throughout the project
- Making it straightforward for research participants

The HRB will share the public review feedback with the PPI Ignite Network team in the Host Institution where applicable.

9 Timeframe

Date	
Varies (from July 2025)	Charity Calls Open
01 September 2025	HRB Call & GEMS Application Open
26 Nov 2025 @13:00	Final Application Deadline
26 February 2026	Peer Review Deadline
27 February – 13 March 2026	**Applicant Response**
03 April 2026	Charity Endorsement & Shortlisting Deadline
April-May 2026	Panel Review
Late May 2026	Panel Review Meeting
Late June 2026	HRB Board Decision
July 2026	Outcome Notification to Applicants, Host Institutions, Charities
July – September 2026	Contracting stage (subject to approval)
01 October 2026	Earliest start date

10 Contacts

For further information on the HRCI-HRB Joint Funding Scheme contact:

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Health Research Charities Ireland

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Patricia O'Byrne

Research Strategy and Funding

Health Research Board

Hrci-hrbjfs@hrb.ie

The HRB reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet the terms of this call. The HRB's Policy on Appeals on funding decisions is available at https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HRB-Policy-on-Appeals-2.pdf.

Appendix I: Application Form

To be completed.

Appendix II: HRB Funding Policies and Procedures & Useful Links

Access and support from research infrastructures

Applications availing of the advice, research design, data management services and/or other forms of support from a Clinical Research Facility/Centre (CRF/CRC), other infrastructure (e.g., Centre for Applied Medical Imaging, CAMI, Centre for Support and Training in Analysis and Research (CSTAR), HRB-Trials Methodology Research Network (HRB-TMRN), Cancer Groups, National clinical trials office (NCTO), CTNs or a biobank) are required to provide additional information detailing the scope and nature of the engagement (this includes national and international facilities, Units, and networks where justified).

An **Infrastructure Agreement form** will be requested as part of the application addressing the nature/scope of the service or collaboration, the rationale behind the choice of facility/centre/network and any costs associated with the project (including those provided as in-kind contributions). Applications proposing research with patients which do not detail advice and/or support from a CRF/CRC/CTU will be asked to justify why they have not done so.

Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) in Research

The HRB promotes the active involvement of members of the public and patients in the research that we fund[9]. Public and patient involvement in research means that the public and patients are involved in planning and doing research from start to finish and help tell the public about the results of research. PPI, as defined here, is distinct from and additional to activities which raise awareness, share knowledge, and create a dialogue with the public, and it is also distinct from recruitment of patients/members of the public as participants in research.

PPI represents an active partnership between members of the public and patients and researchers in the research process. This can include, for example, involvement in the selection of research topics, assisting in the design, advising throughout or at specific decision points of the research project or in carrying out the research.

PPI contributors should be actively involved and part of decision making. Involving members of the public in research can improve quality and relevance of research. It can:

- Provide a different perspective – even if you are an expert in your field, your knowledge and experience will be different to the experience of someone who is using the service or living with a health condition.
- Help to ensure that the research uses outcomes that are important to the public.
- Identify a wider set of research topics than if health or social care professionals had worked alone.

[9] https://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-schemes/public-and-patient-involvement-in-research/

- Make the language and content of information such as questionnaires and information leaflets clear and accessible.
- Help to ensure that the methods proposed for the study are acceptable and sensitive to the situations of potential research participants.
- Help you increase participation in your research by making it more acceptable to potential participants.

In addition to improving relevance and quality of research, it ensures that research is influenced by broader principles of citizenship, accountability, and transparency. PPI is an ethos as well as a practice. It should be context-specific and should aim to ensure that all voices are heard. Where members of the public or patients are involved, they must be compensated for their time and contributions.

In the application, you are asked to describe any public involvement in your research throughout the various stages of identifying and prioritising the research question, the research design, conduct, analysis, and dissemination. We recognise that the nature and extent of active public involvement is likely to vary depending on the context of each study or grant. PPI contributors should be named as Co-applicants where justified by their level of involvement.

For guidance and support on PPI in your research please consult with the PPI Ignite Network Ireland or your Host Institution. The PPI Ignite Network Ireland has offices located in the following seven Host Institutions: DCU, NUIG, RCSI, TCD, UCC, UCD, UL.

Open Access Publications

The HRB is committed to achieving Open Access (OA) to research outputs, aligned with best international standards.

Since 2014, the HRB has mandated OA for its publicly funded peer-reviewed research publications. In 2018 it established the HRB Open Research publishing platform[10]. The HRB has supported national OA initiatives under the National Open Research Forum[11] and as a member of Science Europe[12]. In January 2025 the HRB OA Policy was revised to require 'full and immediate OA', aligned with the existing 10 principles of Plan S[13]. The key changes include:

- The abolition of OA publication embargoes
- Authors or their institutions must retain copyright to their publications
- All articles must be published under a Creative Commons Attribution licence (CC BY), unless a more restrictive licence is exceptionally approved. This new requirement ensures that HRB-funded research can be freely reused for new discoveries.

[10] https://www.hrbopenresearch.org

[11] https://www.norf.ie

[12] https://scienceeurope.org/our-priorities/open-science/

[13] https://www.coalition-s.org/addendum-to-the-coalition-s-guidance-on-the-implementation-of-plan-s/principles-and-implementation/

- Disincentivising publication in hybrid journals by agreeing not to pay publication costs except where transition agreements to full OA journals have been agreed. We have reviewed OA contribution rates for Article Processing Charges (APCs) and benchmarked against other funders and prevailing rates.

FAIR Data Management and Stewardship

Data management/stewardship plans (DMP) are nowadays widely accepted as part of good research practice. The HRB is committed to Open Research and is driving the making of research data **FAIR** (**F**indable, **A**ccessible, **I**nteroperable and **R**e-usable) in order to benefit science by increasing the re-use of data and by promoting transparency and accountability.

FAIR data principles[14] provide a guideline for those wishing to enhance the re-usability of their data holdings: these principles put specific emphasis on enhancing the ability of machines to automatically find and use the data, in addition to supporting its re-use by individuals. For researchers, the move to FAIR and open data, where applicable, means researchers should consider data management issues and find suitable data repositories at the research planning stage. Applicants will have to provide information about their plans for data management and data sharing at application stage.

In line with the HRB's policy on management and sharing of research data[15], all successful applicants are required to submit a completed data management plan (DMP) to the HRB on or before three months after the grant start date, and a final updated version of the DMP with the last annual report.

The DMP will need to be submitted alongside a certification of completion from the designated representative(s) within the Host Institution.

Applicants will have to provide an outline of their plans for data management and data sharing in the application inclusive of the costs associated to the plan.

The timing for completion and submission of the DMPs must be also included among the objectives and deliverables of the programme.

General Data Protection Regulation

The **General Data Protection Regulation** (GDPR) came into force on 25 May 2018. As a result, the applicant team will be asked through the HRB online grant management system GEMS to **confirm you understand** that personal data provided as part of this application, including but not limited to CV information, may be shared with person(s) based outside of the European Economic Area (EEA) for the specific purpose of obtaining peer reviews of this application. International reviewers play a vital role for the HRB in setting standards and in benchmarking our scientific community to enable them to operate in a global context. Individual peer reviewers are selected for their specific expertise in relation to submitted applications and can be based anywhere in the world.

[14] https://www.nature.com/articles/sdata201618

[15] https://www.hrb.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/HRB_Policy_on_sharing_of_research_data.pdf

Furthermore, by confirming participation, you will be asked to confirm you understand that HRB uses the information you provide (regarding all applicant team members) to consider your application, contact you about your application, and if you are successful, to manage your grant throughout its lifetime in accordance with HRB general T&C for research awards. This will include contacting you with regard to monitoring of progress through written reporting and other means e.g., interim review. We will publish some basic information on successful awards including PI, Host Institution, amount awarded and lay summary on our website and may highlight individual awards or researchers in more detail (with specific consent). We will also use the information you have provided to generate general statistics around our current funding portfolio, and to evaluate our funding mechanisms and investment. After your grant has ended, we will continue to keep your information on file (in accordance with HRB policies) to allow us to evaluate the outcomes, outputs and impacts of HRB investment in your research.

Please note that we will also use information associated with *unsuccessful* applications for a number of the purposes outlined above such as generating general statistics around our current funding portfolio, and to evaluate our funding mechanisms and investment e.g., demographics of applicants, research areas of applicants. Similarly, we will use the information provided about people employed on awards to help evaluate our career support and capacity building initiatives.

The Health Research Regulations

Following the implementation of GDPR, a regulation for health research known as the Health Research Regulations 2018 (S.I. 314) has been implemented, with further amendments made in 2019 (S.I. 188) and 2021 (S.I. 18)[16]. These regulations outline the mandatory suitable and specific measures for the processing of personal data for the purposes of health research. They further set out that explicit consent is a mandatory safeguard that must be obtained from individuals when using their personal data for health research. Where it is not feasible to obtain explicit consent, an application for a consent declaration can be made to the Health Research Consent Declaration Committee[17].

Ethical Approval and Approvals for Use of Animals

Ethical approval is required for all research work funded by the HRB that involves human participants, human material (including tissue) or animals (pre-clinical models only). Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all necessary approvals are in place prior to the start of the research.

Applicants should allow sufficient time to obtain ethical and/or competent authority approval and/or animal licenses as if successful, the applicant will be required to complete and submit Approvals Declaration form to the HRB before the initiation of the grant. It is suggested that these are sought in parallel to the submission of the application to the HRB.

[16] http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/si/18/made/en/pdf

[17] https://hrcdc.ie/

HRB Observer Initiative

The HRB is committed to being an independent, credible voice for research and evidence. To further increase transparency of our selection processes, the HRB invites staff members from HI Research Offices to observe selected HRB panel meetings, with safeguards to maintain the confidentiality of applications. We invite observers to selection panel meetings and interview-based panels, during which panel reviewers will discuss competing applications and rank these for funding. Where a panel shortlists pre-applications the meeting may also be open to observers. Our hope is that observers will widely pass on their first-hand experience of the HRB process to others inside and outside their organisation.

Research on Research

The HRB is developing its approach to research on research (RoR) with the aim of enhancing the evidence base for HRB research funding practices. We may also collaborate with researchers on request regarding specific RoR questions. Should your application become of interest to such a study, the HRB will seek your consent for the use of your information.

HRB Gender Policy

In line with international best practice, the **HRB Gender Policy**[18] recognises the responsibility of the HRB to support everyone to realise their full potential in order to ensure equality of opportunity and to maximise the quantity and the quality of research. To ensure fairness and equality to all applicants, each funding application received will be assessed as outlined in the call guidance documentation for that particular funding round. To ensure gender balance in decision-making, the HRB aims to reach the international best practice target of 40% of the under-represented gender in all HRB panels where possible. Gender will also be considered when appointing the position of Panel Chair.

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest rules *are applied rigorously*. Where a conflict of interest exists, the reviewer is requested to inform the HRB immediately so that an alternative reviewer may be appointed. International peer reviewers will not provide comments or scores on any application on which they have a conflict of interest.

Reviewers must adhere to high standards of integrity during the peer review process. They must respect the intellectual property of applicants and may not appropriate and use as their own, or disclose to any third party, ideas, concepts, or data contained in the applications they review.

Appeals Procedure

[18] https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/HRB-Policy-on-Gender-in-Research-Funding-2.pdf

The HRB's Policy on Appeals on funding decisions is available at https://www.hrb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/HRB-Policy-on-Appeals-2.pdf.

Privacy Policy

To understand why we collect the information we collect and what we do with that information, please see our Privacy Policy[19].

Useful Links

Useful online resources and websites can be found on the HRB Funding Opportunities webpage at: http://www.hrb.ie/funding/funding-opportunities/useful-links

[19] https://www.hrb.ie/privacy-notice/