

RM Partners Research & Innovation Fund 2023/2024 – Guidance for Applicants

Cancer Alliances & Research

With the publication of the NHS Long Term Plan¹ (LTP), cancer alliances now have a role in the implementation and roll out of cancer innovation to meet the ambitions in improving quality of life, patient experience outcomes, while reducing variation and addressing inequalities. To support this at RM Partners (RMP), an active pipeline of cancer research is required, where the scale of the cancer alliance population of West London can support rapid adoption and roll out of innovation to patient benefit.

The Research and Innovation Programme is critically dependent on close working partnerships with the academic universities in West London; and research institutions like the Biomedical Research Centres and the Academic Health Sciences Network, to identify emerging discoveries to apply into clinical setting. RM Partners best placed to support the rapid expansion and roll out of evidence-based innovations through our network of providers and organisations, accelerating the translation of evidence into policy.

Remit of Research & Innovation Fund 2023/2024

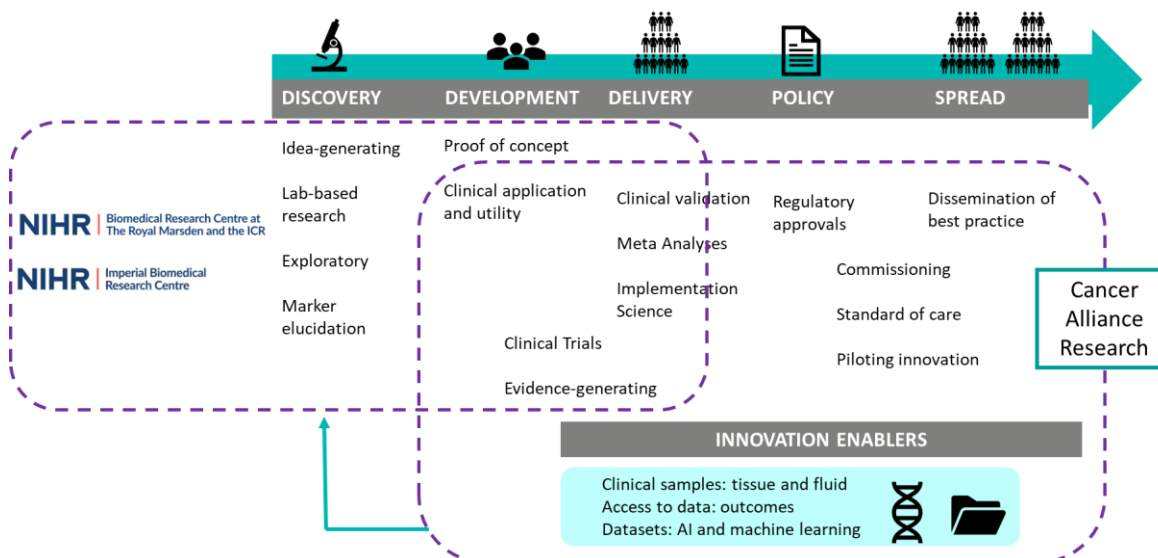


Figure 1. Remit of Cancer Alliance research and innovation along the cancer discovery pathway.

¹ <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf>

The aim of the RMP Research & Innovation fund is to provide cancer researchers and clinicians in West London the opportunity to deliver significant projects that support the goals of the NHS LTP. Cancer Alliance research and innovation includes evidence-generating clinical trials, or real-world implementation of innovations, where the scale of the Alliance population and clinical engagement and partnership drives rapid adoption and spread.

Figure 1 illustrates the areas of research and innovation that the funding scheme will support, including assessment of clinical utility, i.e defining role of biomarkers in early diagnosis of cancer; generating evidence base for regulatory approval of innovations, i.e artificial intelligence to triage suspected cancers; or piloting innovation where regulatory approvals are already in place, but poorly adopted into clinical pathways.

Funding will be awarded to projects that support the research or adoption of late-stage innovations that are ready for implementing within the NHS setting to improve earlier diagnosis and detection of cancer, reduce treatment variation and improve patient outcomes. This can include pragmatic approaches to the identification, stratification, and referral of early-stage symptomatic patients, through to innovative research to identify the earliest possible intervention of cancer detection in an asymptomatic population.

Examples of relevant areas of research may include, but not limited:

- Integration of novel genomics
- New models of care to identify, stratify and monitor those at risk
- Digital health technology
- Medical devices
- Behavioural interventions

Applications should demonstrate patient benefit by addressing challenges of earlier and/or faster detection of cancer, or cancer recurrence.

Successful applications will be encouraged to focus on:

- Delivery of an intervention, rather than observational research, with the potential to scale up
- Generating evidence for implementation, including understanding the current challenges or cost implications for adoption in the NHS
- Incorporating patient and public input and engagement (PPIE) along all aspects of the project
- Collaboration across institutions or organisations, either within existing networks or developing new ones

Eligibility

The funding award is open to all clinical and non-clinical researchers. The application should be submitted by one lead applicant, within the RMP network, with a strong track record in conducting research. Multi-institutional collaborations across RMP are encouraged.

Project Timelines

The RMP Research and Innovation Fund will award projects to the maximum duration of three years, which should include sufficient time towards a robust evaluation of the proposed intervention. Any research or trial of the proposed intervention should be completed within two

years, with an additional time up to a year to complete evaluation activities. Projects with a duration shorter than three years may be submitted; however, applicants are strongly urged to commit to realistic start dates to allow for time for recruitment and any necessary regulatory approvals. Projects must have a start time no later than 31 March 2024 to be eligible.

Funding

Total funding for each award will be capped at a maximum allocation of £200,000. The total amount of funding requested, once approved by RMP following a successful interview by the Review Panel, will be awarded to the lead applicant's host organisation in a detailed funding award letter in the 2023/2024 financial year. The host organisation will be required to accept the total award for the duration of the project, therefore written confirmation of support from the lead applicant's host organisation's finance team is required at the full application stage. A detailed breakdown of costs will be requested at the full application stage, using the template provided.

Eligible costs

The RMP Research and Innovation Fund is funded from the NHS monies awarded to the Cancer Alliance to deliver on the aims of the LTP. Therefore, RMP will not pay for indirect costs, such as overheads, living costs or journal subscriptions. RMP will pay for the direct incurred cost of the project, including salaries of staff involved in the project, public and patient engagement activities, consumables, equipment (capped at £1,000), travel and dissemination costs. Applications where the primary intent is to purchase capital equipment will not be considered.

Equality and Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

NHS England and NHS Improvement produced the Equality and Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (EHIA) to support the decision-making process in relation to all NHS programmes, and specifically in relation to the LTP. Applicants must articulate how their proposed project will contribute to improving existing health inequity for the duration of the project and the eventual roll out of the intervention if successful. Completion of the EHIA is mandatory for all applications to be considered.

Review Process

This scheme will have a three-phase review process before a funding decision is made by the RMP Research & Innovation Review Panel:

1. Expression of Interest (EOI): This first stage application will include the project proposal, a list of collaborators, lay summary, high level costings and the NHS England Equality and Health Impact Assessment (EHIA) form. Submission deadline is **Friday 14 July**.. At this stage, projects that are not eligible or aligned to the aims of the Research and Innovation Fund will not be shortlisted to proceed. Applicants may receive conditional feedback from the Review Panel before moving to the next stage of full application.
2. Full application: This second stage is a detailed application, outlining methodology, milestones, applicant CVs and a detailed finance costing template, including a letter of confirmation from the finance lead of the host organisation. Full applications will be made available to shortlisted applicants only. Submission deadline is **Friday 8 September**.
3. Interview: Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview with members of the Review Panel. The lead applicant, along with a maximum of two collaborators will be interviewed **Thursday 5 October** . Funding decisions will be made based on reviews and interviews.

At each stage of the review process, feedback from the Review Panel may be requested. Comments and scores will be made available to applicants in an anonymous format. Successful applicants will be informed by mid-October 2023.

Review Panel Membership:

The RMP Research & Innovation Review Panel will be responsible for the scoring and comments on the EOI and full applications and will interview shortlisted applicants. Membership for the Review Panel consists of:

- Clinical Trust Leads or Trust R&D Directors
- BRC Surgery & Cancer Theme Lead at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
- BRC Clinical Director at The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust/Institute of Cancer Research London (ICR)
- Imperial College Health Partners (AHSN) representative
- ICR and Imperial College Health Partners representatives
- Patient, Public and Carer representatives

Review panel members are asked to keep their scores and all information confidential to protect proposals. Members will also be asked to declare any conflicts of interest with applications and will not score any applications where a conflict of interest is declared.

Review Criteria

The RMP Research & Innovation Panel will make assessments on the applications on:

- **Impact & Alignment:** Potential to meet challenges in improvements in outcomes in people with cancer, alignment to the NHS LTP aims, and scalability of intervention in the NHS setting.
- **Quality and originality** of project including its scientific merit, robust methodology and statistical design, including novel and innovative approaches.
- **Quality of team and collaborative environment**, including the suitability and feasibility of the lead applicant to carry out proposed research. Added value of individual collaborators is articulated effectively. Strong engagement with patient and public input in the duration of the proposed project.
- **Resources and timelines proposed** are realistic and reasonably justified in line with proposal, demonstrating value for money and leveraging existing resources where appropriate.

Key Dates of RM Partners Research & Innovation Fund 2023/2024

Launch of Funding Call for Expressions of Interests	Friday 9 June
Deadline for EOI submissions	Friday 14 July
Invitations for full application	Monday 31 July
Deadline for full application	Friday 8 September
Interview with Review Panel	Thursday 5 October

Application Submission Format

Please complete applications using templates where provided, adhering to the word count limit for each section:

- EOI template, which includes the EHIA

- Full application template, CV template, detailed finance spreadsheet, letter of confirmation from finance lead

Any additional information (figures, charts, diagrams) can be added as appendices to the application. Please email documents in .doc or .pdf format to RMPartners.Research@nhs.net before the deadline. Applications received later than the deadline date will not be considered unless agreed otherwise. Once submitted, any amendments or changes to applications can only be made prior to the deadline.

RMP will acknowledge the receipt of the application.

Contact Information

To discuss applications or any queries regarding the RMP Research and Innovation Fund, please contact RMPartners.Research@nhs.net