

UKRI Mental Health Platform Collaboration and Innovation applications for creative approaches, Round 3 Review Process and Scoring Criteria

Application Review Process

The creative approaches review process will run on one occasion, in 2026, and will take less than 6 months, including peer review and final decision.

Unsuccessful candidates will receive written feedback.



Figure 1. MHP Collaboration & Innovation Round 3 Creative Methods review process.

1. Pre-selection process

Applications are screened for eligibility and completeness by the MHP Coordinating Centre team. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed within two weeks after the application deadline.

It's the applicant responsibility to:

- Ensure they have applied to the correct funding opportunity
- Submit the application and all required documents, named and formatted according to the application form and MHP website, before the published deadline. This will allow the MHP Coordinating Team to complete the necessary pre-selection checks and submit eligible applications to the Review Committee.

It's the MHP Coordinating team's responsibility to:

- Confirm that all documents are named according to the guidance provided in the application form.

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- Confirm that all documents are readable and have no technical problems
- Confirm the application form was completed and the applicant provided consent to process their data
- Confirm that all appendices requested have been submitted and match the pre-defined acceptance criteria (i.e. number and format of pages and font size).
- Confirm the proposal meets the programme's minimum eligibility criteria.

	Minimum Eligibility criteria
Pre-selection stage	• Application form and all required documents correctly submitted; consent provided to process data. • The Lead Applicant must be affiliated with at least one MHP Hub or be an MHP Associate Member, as set out in the application form. • The project must link at least two of the MHP Hubs • The project must address at least one Round 3 Creative Methods theme: Creative methods for discovery; Creative co-production; or Creative translation & communication. • Letters of support from the relevant Hub Lead(s) must be provided and confirm the level of commitment and nature of their contribution. • The project must start within 6 months of the decision being made and within 1 month of the contract being signed. • The proposed budget is between £10,000- £50,000 (100% FEC, cost to funder) and must exclude ineligible costs. ○ Eligible costs: 100% Directly incurred and directly allocated costs, including staff time, travel and subsistence, networking activities and events, engagement and knowledge exchange. ○ Ineligible costs: Duplication of other sources of funding, indirect and estate costs, intellectual property related costs, equipment valued over £10,000, undergraduate and postgraduate activities or training and contributions to existing knowledge transfer partnerships. The salary costs of investigators and staff employed on existing funded Hub awards is also not eligible for inclusion. • Whether people with lived experience were involved in the design of the application • Industry partners involved in applications for this award must be part of the MHP Industry Alliance • Letters of support from collaborators are required where significant in-kind support is proposed, and from industry partners where applicable, as specified in the application checklist. Collaborator letters must include the required statement on the MHP Privacy Policy and proposed use of their data.

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2. Conflict of interest during the review process

The MHP is committed to ensure the review process is as objective and transparent as possible, and that any potential conflict of interest is minimised or removed. We recognise that individuals who may be involved in the review process may also be active members of the Hubs associated with the application, or involved in a variety of other projects that may create a potential or perceivable conflict of interest.

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When selecting the Review Committee and any specialist advisers, the MHP Coordinating Team will exclude those named in the proposal as team members or collaborators, those employed by a participating institution, close collaborators or co-applicants of the applicants, and anyone with another relevant conflict of interest.

The MHP Coordinating Team will follow the MHP Declaration of Interest process when selecting Review Committee members and any specialist advisers. Applicants should declare relationships or interests that could reasonably be perceived as creating a conflict, including relationships with potential reviewers, Hub Leads or other MHP members. All reviewers must declare potential conflicts when invited and must withdraw from assessment of an application where a conflict is identified.

Reviewers will be excluded from reviewing an application if they have:

- Direct involvement in the proposed project (e.g. team member, collaborator, co-supervisor, advisor)
- Close professional relationship (e.g. current or recent collaborator, supervisor, mentor or co-applicant with the main applicant in other projects)
- Employment at either the current or proposed host institution
- Personal or financial interest in the outcomes of the application

Hub leads or researchers representing the Hubs involved in the project in the Review and Interview Committee, will not review and score the applications.

PPIE reviewers involved in the design of the application will not be reviewing the application. However, they may review the application if they are indirectly involved in the project (e.g. part of the same Hub but not employed by the institutions participating in the project)

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3. Review Process and Scoring system:

The MHP Coordinating Team will submit the applications for review within 4 weeks of the submission date.

Proposals will be evaluated using the assessment criteria and the scoring system outlined below.

All applications in this round (£10,000-£50,000) will follow the same one-stage assessment process. The Review Committee will review and score each eligible application against the criteria below and make funding recommendations.

The MHP Coordinating Team may seek additional specialist advice where needed, for example on creative practice, lived experience, technical feasibility, safeguarding, ethics, data or industry collaboration.

Any specialist advice will be shared with the Review Committee and used to inform its assessment; it will not replace the Committee's overall judgement against the published criteria.

Assessment is not restricted to conventional academic peer review. Reviewers should judge whether the proposed creative approach is appropriate, credible and likely to achieve its stated objectives, recognising relevant forms of evidence, practice and expertise.

The Review Committee will include a balance of expertise and perspectives relevant to the call, which may include mental health research and practice, creative practice, lived experience, engagement and communication, project delivery, MHP leadership and Hub representation. UKRI representatives may join as observers throughout the review and decision process.

We are committed to upholding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the recruitment of the Review Committee. The Committee should include a broad range of relevant perspectives and experience so that creative, lived experience, practice and research contributions can be assessed fairly.

The Review Committee will score applications and make funding recommendations; final awards will be confirmed by the MHP Leadership Team.

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Scoring criteria

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following three key criteria:

1. Team Strength, Collaboration and Delivery Environment (25%): Strength, complementarity and suitability of the team, collaboration and environment to deliver the project
2. Impact and Strategic alignment (25%): Alignment with Round 3 Creative Methods themes and MHP priorities, and potential benefit to people living with severe mental illness and/or relevant audiences.
3. Creative Quality, Innovation and Delivery (50%): Quality, originality, appropriateness and feasibility of the creative approach and delivery plan

The applications will be reviewed based on the following criteria (Scored using a 5-point scale: 5 = Outstanding/Fundable, 1 = Poor/Not Fundable):

Scoring guidance
1. Team Strength, Collaboration and Delivery Environment (Score 1-5, 25%): Strength, complementarity and suitability of the team, collaboration and environment to deliver the project Team and Collaboration: - The team demonstrates the right balance of skills and experience across research, creative practice, lived experience and/or other relevant areas to deliver the project. - Applicants must demonstrate a strong commitment to collaborative work within the MHP - Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and appropriate. - Collaborators, including Hubs and external partners, show clear commitment and value-added contributions. - Cross-Hub and/or Hub-external partner collaboration is well planned and clearly adds value. Delivery Environment: - The team has access to an appropriate supportive environment and the infrastructure, facilities, networks, audiences, services, datasets or other resources needed to deliver the project. Relevant expertise may be evidenced through creative practice, exhibitions, performances, films, engagement, policy, reports, publications or lived experience; academic publication record should not be treated as the default measure of expertise.
2. Impact and Strategic Alignment (Score 1-5, 25%): Alignment with the Round 3 Creative Methods themes and MHP priorities, and potential benefit to people living with severe mental illness and/or relevant audiences.
Strategic alignment:

- Applications must address at least one Round 3 Creative Methods theme and demonstrate why the proposed approach is a good fit for the MHP Collaboration & Innovation Awards.
- Applications must demonstrate alignment with MHP priorities and Hub goals, and explain the added value of cross-Hub collaboration and what becomes possible through the collaboration that would not otherwise be achievable.

Impact:

- Clear and realistic explanation of the intended outputs and outcomes, who will benefit or engage, and how the project could generate new understanding, improve collaboration, or translate or communicate knowledge.
- The project addresses a meaningful mental health need or opportunity, with clear relevance to people living with severe mental illness and/or the intended audiences.
- Where people with lived experience are involved, their role is meaningful, proportionate to the project and integrated appropriately.
- Partnerships should be equitable, with fair support, remuneration, recognition and timely feedback for all involved.
- Where PPIE activities are proposed, the budget is appropriate and adequately resourced.
- PPIE involvement, engagement or co-production plans should follow relevant good-practice guidance and be proportionate to the project's aims.

For further guidance, please consult:

- [Guidance for applicants on working with people and communities | NIHR](#)
- [10 for 10: Public involvement in mental health research | The McPin Foundation](#)
- [NIHR Guidance on co-producing a research project](#)
- [Embedding lived experience in mental health research | Funding Guidance | Wellcome](#)

3. Proposal Quality, Innovation and Delivery (Score 1–5, 50%): quality, innovation and feasibility of the research plan

Innovation:

- The creative approach is original and ambitious, with clear potential to generate new knowledge, understanding, collaboration, engagement or translation.
- The proposed creative methods are well matched to the unmet need or opportunity and add value beyond more conventional approaches, while building appropriately on existing Hub work.

Quality and appropriateness:

- The delivery plan has clear objectives, a coherent and credible creative approach or methodology, realistic work packages or activities, appropriate risk mitigation and a deliverable timeline. The rationale is supported by relevant prior work, evidence, practice and/or lived experience.

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- Where the project generates or uses data, data management should be proportionate and address collection, storage, security, consent or confidentiality, and sharing, with compliance with the MHP Data Sharing Policy and deposition in DATAMIND's Trusted Research Environment where applicable. Quantitative methods or statistical power justification are not required unless relevant to the proposed work.
- The project should consider diversity, inclusion and accessibility in the project design, team and intended participants or audiences. Any limitations should be clearly justified. For further guidance, please consult:
 - [Embedding diversity in research design – MRC – UKRI](#)
 - [UKRI Guidance for equality, diversity and inclusion](#)
 - [NIHR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit](#)

Project delivery:

- Applicants must include plans to communicate and share project outputs and learning with the MHP and intended audiences. Data sharing requirements apply where relevant.
- Ethical, safeguarding, consent and regulatory considerations are clearly identified and appropriately addressed.
- The budget must be clear, realistic, justified, compliant and provide good value for money. The funding requested must not exceed £50,000.
- Costs must be in British Pounds (GBP).
- The budget should reflect only eligible costs and be proportionate to the proposed activities and outputs.
- PPIE members involved in projects should be offered payment for their contributions and these costs should be included in the budget plan. Please consult the two links below for guidance on costing public involvement activities:
 - [Guidance on payment for public partners – UKRI](#)
 - [Payment guidance for researchers and professionals | NIHR](#)
- Co-funding, in-kind contributions and industry involvement should be clearly described where applicable and should add value to the project.
- For applications submitted under the MRC Industry Collaboration Framework, the following criteria will be assessed:
 - The collaboration is appropriate for the delivery of the project objectives and is a good use of public funding
 - The collaboration will be managed effectively throughout the project
 - The contributions from the company partner have been costed appropriately

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4. Subaward information and Next steps:

After the MHP Leadership Team confirms the awards, the decisions will be communicated to UKRI and the successful applicants.

The Coordinating Team, in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh Research Office, will update the MHP Subaward template with the relevant project information and forward it to the participating institutions and project leads. The project is expected to start within 6 months of the decision being made and within 1 month of the subaward being signed.

Awardees are expected to comply with the MHP values and Data Sharing Policy. Where a project generates or uses data that fall within the MHP Data Sharing Policy, the relevant data should be deposited on DATAMIND's Trusted Research Environment where applicable.

Awardees are also expected to comply with the Terms and Conditions of the [MHP Subaward letter](#).

Project teams are expected to comply with relevant MRC policies and guidance and with all applicable ethical, safeguarding, consent and regulatory requirements. Approvals do not need to be in place at the time of application, but activities requiring approval must not begin until the necessary approvals are in place.

For applications submitted under the MRC Industry Collaboration Framework, successful applicants will also need to submit a copy of the signed collaboration agreement to the MHP Coordinating Team and the MRC within three months of the issue of the award letter and before the project begins.

Failure to provide the information requested for industry or company partners under ICF could result in the application being rejected. The applicant is recommended to discuss the goals and conditions of any collaboration with an industry or company with the technology transfer or contracts office before applying. A copy of the collaboration agreement must be signed by all partners, before an ICF award starts.

Funds must be spent as detailed on the application. The MHP Coordinating team will be in regular contact with awardees throughout their project to collect and discuss progress updates.

Awardees are expected to submit brief written project updates twice a year to the MHP Coordinating Centre and Leadership Team, focused on project outputs and outcomes as well as operational aspects such as timelines and budget spent. Awardees will also submit a final report on the conduct and outcomes of the project within one month of the end of the project.

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