



National Institute for
Health Research

Some insights into NIHR research funding.....

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November 2017

Purpose of today?

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- RDS EM seminar/workshop provision.
- Information sharing for you to cascade?
- Get a sense of your relationship with the NIHR?

Get a sense of your relationship with the NIHR?



National Institute for
Health Research

How many of you are involved (in any way) with an NIHR funded study?

What other sorts of study are you involved in? (funded by whom?)

What is your role in these studies?

How involved in the pre-funding stage of these studies were/are you?

What do you know about research funding?

What do you know about study design?

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1. The NIHR Research Funding Landscape ...

Understand the context – the basics....

- The NIHR has annual budget of around £1Bn to support **APPLIED** health and social care research in (or which is relevant to) the NHS.
 - It does not support basic research, or research where implementation/impact is in the longer term – “patient benefit” is good concept to hold onto (*how will your research benefit patients within 5 years?*).
 - It favours research in areas which are NHS / national health priorities.
 - Getting NIHR research into practice is as important as disseminating it via academic avenues.

Understand the context – the basics....

- The NIHR operates 8 different research competitions and 18 different fellowship competitions.
[More than £300M is allocated via these mechanisms.]
 - All are very generous (with resources) ... all are very competitive!
 - (Like siblings) they can look alike, but each has a distinct purpose - some suit early career researchers, some suit more established clinical-academics; some work for early stage clinical development, some for mass role-out of interventions; some target public health, some target healthcare organisation; etc.
 - Targeting the right competitions is important ... but sometimes isn't always straightforward.

NIHR Funding Streams



Central Commissioning Facility (CFF) Managed Programmes

- Invention for Innovation Research (i4i)
- Programme Grants for Applied Research (PGfAR)
- Programme Development Grants (PDG)
- Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB)

NETSCC Managed Programmes

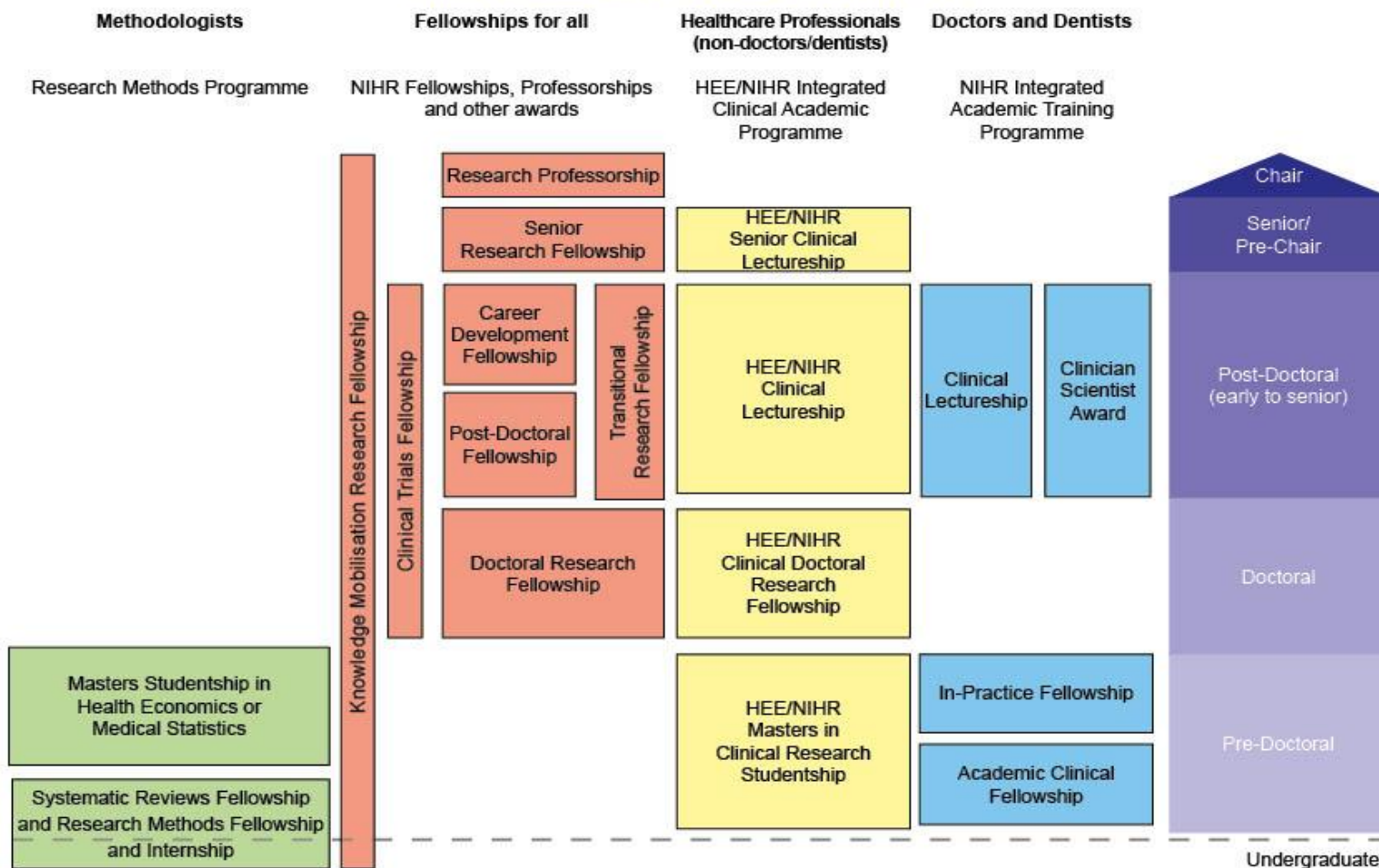
- Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation Programme (EME)
- Health Technology Assessment (HTA)
- Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) (from 2012)
- Public Health Research (PHR)

NIHR TCC

- Fellowships & Professorship

NIHR fellowships.

NIHR RESEARCH CAREER PATHWAYS



NIHR fellowships.

- Irrespective of level the NIHR fellowships are intended to support the development of research leaders of the future.
 - *so how are you going to become a leader in your field?
can you show your trajectory to Prof?*
- These are CPD awards NOT research project awards!
 - the research is simply the vehicle for your development, it is not an end in itself!
 - focus upon 'person', 'place', then 'project' when applying for a fellowship.
 - focus upon your formal training and informal development activities.
 - what are you going to offer to your field / profession. [for AHPs in particular this is an important question].

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2. Funding process.

Types of funding.

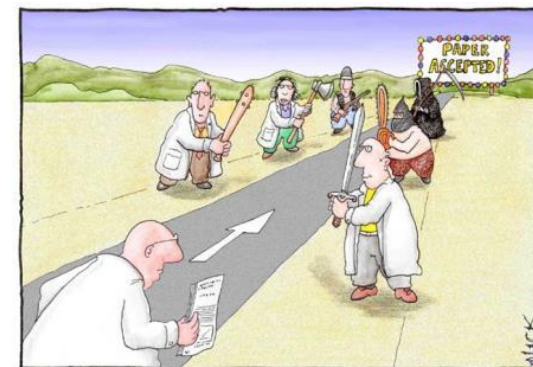


- 4 different types of competition:
 - Researcher led applications.
 - Commissioned research questions.
 - *'Highlight' requests for topics.*
 - Themed calls for research.
- Different timescales.
- Different challenges?

The Application process...

- Decision making....
 - NIHR competitions use a *standard* form.
 - NIHR competitions are 2-stage.
 - ‘Outline’ judged by the panel.
 - ‘Full’ judged by peer review and panel.
 - Maybe looking for different things at the different stages?

- Judgement is subjective!
 - As much about *art* as *science*.



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as "quite an improvement."

Understand the process – How decisions are made.

Before the funding panel meets ...

- An application form (outline or final stage).
- Administrative review & screening.
- Peer review (up to 6; experts from relevant fields).

At a panel meeting...

- A panel of 10-20 'experts' – inc. clinical, methodological, & lay.
- Each application introduced by 2 panel members.
- Short discussion of bid by panel. [maybe 15 minutes?]
- Scoring of bid.
- Scoring review & recommendations at end of meeting.

- Panels may review 20+ bids in one day.
- Panels may meet over multiple days.

Understand the process.



Implications for you to remember:

- Your proposal will be reviewed by people with insight in your field / methods / etc. but reviews will vary in quality.
- Your proposal will be considered in the meeting by people who have NO insight / interest in your field / methods / etc!
- The person introducing your proposal at the meeting is likely to have some knowledge, but don't rely on this..... they may be introducing other things that they are more interested in.
- Decision may be based on as little as a 5 minute group discussion.
- Some panel members may only engage during the meeting!

Appealing to the NIHR



- All funders have specific things that they are looking for:
 - Sometimes these are explicit in the guidelines.
 - Sometimes implicit in their panel membership / portfolio of funded research.
- For the NIHR:
 - *The right question?*
 - *The right solution?*
 - *The right people?*
 - *Value for money?*

Stepping back – some form of timetable.

A common question is how long does it take?

- Depends.....
 - On the funder/type of competition.
 - On you.
- Longer than you think.
 - Longer than you have? Then don't submit, save till later.
- 6 wks or 6 months?

Applying to the NIHR for funding

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“Needs led, Science driven”.

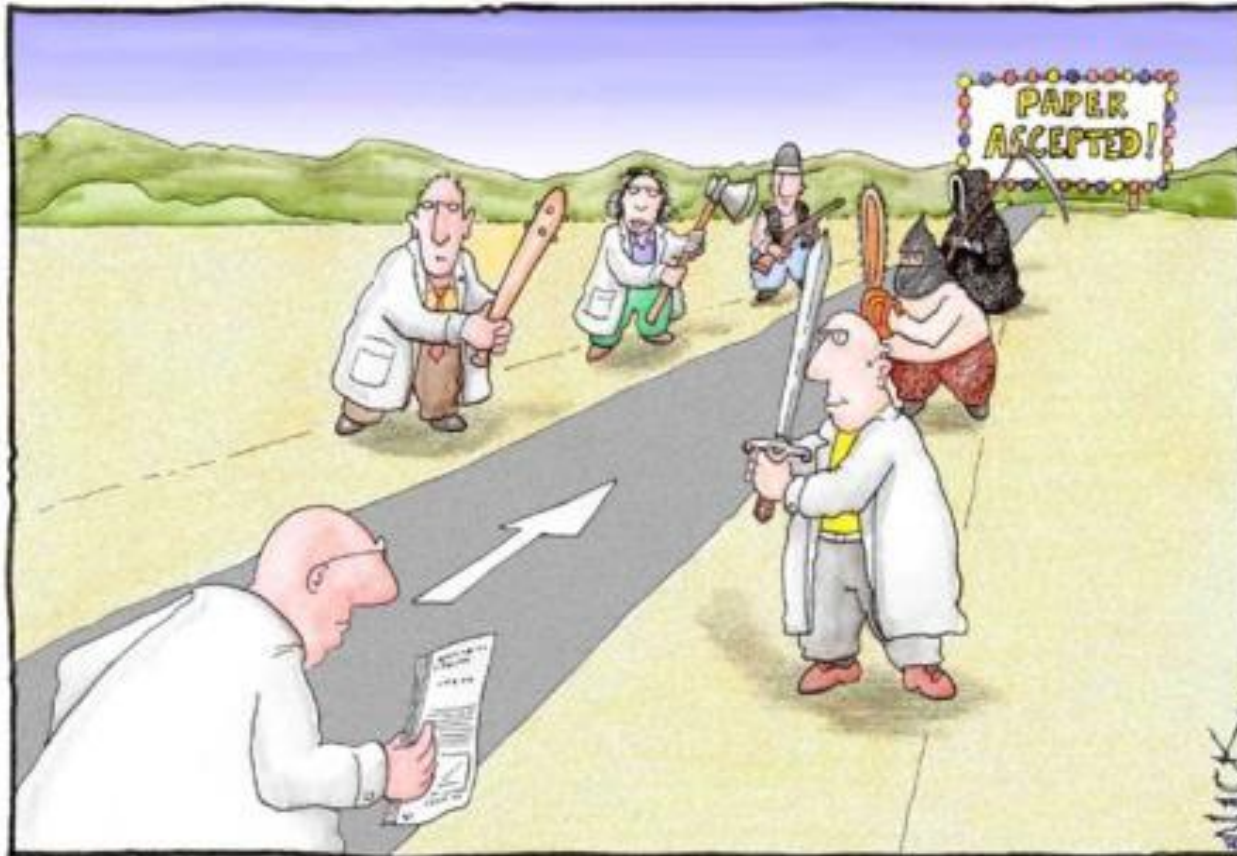
Think problem.

If there isn't a problem have you got a research question that is worth investigating?

Think impact.

If your research can't change things [e.g. 'pure knowledge' ; too expensive to implement] then is the research worth doing?

Two things that you do not want to know.....



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as "quite an improvement."

1. Funding panel members might not be interested in what you want to tell them.
2. Funding panel members may not (fully) understand what you are telling them.

Closing comments – what the funder wants



Give funders all the information that they want!

- AND NOTHING MORE!
- Answer all their questions irrespective of how relevant / important you feel they are.

Make it accessible!

- Don't demonstrate your 'cleverness' by writing a bid that only two other specialists can understand.

Be explicit!

- Take little for granted and (unless you are certain otherwise) presume that you need to explain and justify all elements of your research.

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3. Common pitfalls – reasons studies aren't funded

3a. The problem or question being addressed

- Academic, not applied
- Not important to NHS/Social Care
- Not the right question!
- Wrong methods to answer question
- 'Me too' questions



3b. The team

- Not just the clinicians' mates!
- Ensure:
 - Co-applicants have the right skills to lead the research
 - Are costed with enough time to be able to properly contribute to research
 - Methodological expertise within the group
- All appropriate stakeholders are involved
 - Co-applicant or collaborator



3c. Poor writing

Good **writing** will not save **bad** ideas, but **bad writing** can kill good ones. (Kraicer, 1997: The Art of Grantsmanship)

<http://www.hfsp.org/sites/www.hfsp.org/files/webfm/Communications/The%20Art%20of%20Grantsmanship.pdf>

- Writing funding applications requires different style to academic/clinical writing
- Key messages are:
 - Understand the funders requirements and tell them what they need to know
 - There is a problem, we have a solution, it will improve things by.....
 - Clearly, succinctly, no jargon, no technical language.....

3d. Fellowships

- Much of the above applies
- Many Fellowships are personal awards – about developing leaders of the future
- NOT just about the research
- As much about:
 - Person – what they plan to do in the future and how funding them is a good investment
 - Place – learning and developing in centres of excellence
 - Provision of supervision/mentorship

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4. Public Involvement ...

4a. Public Involvement – how much is enough?

*The NIHR expects **appropriate and relevant** involvement of patients and the public and other key stakeholders in the research it supports.*

*It is essential therefore to also **set out your plans to involve patients and the public** as this will be assessed by the funding panel/board including patient and public members.*

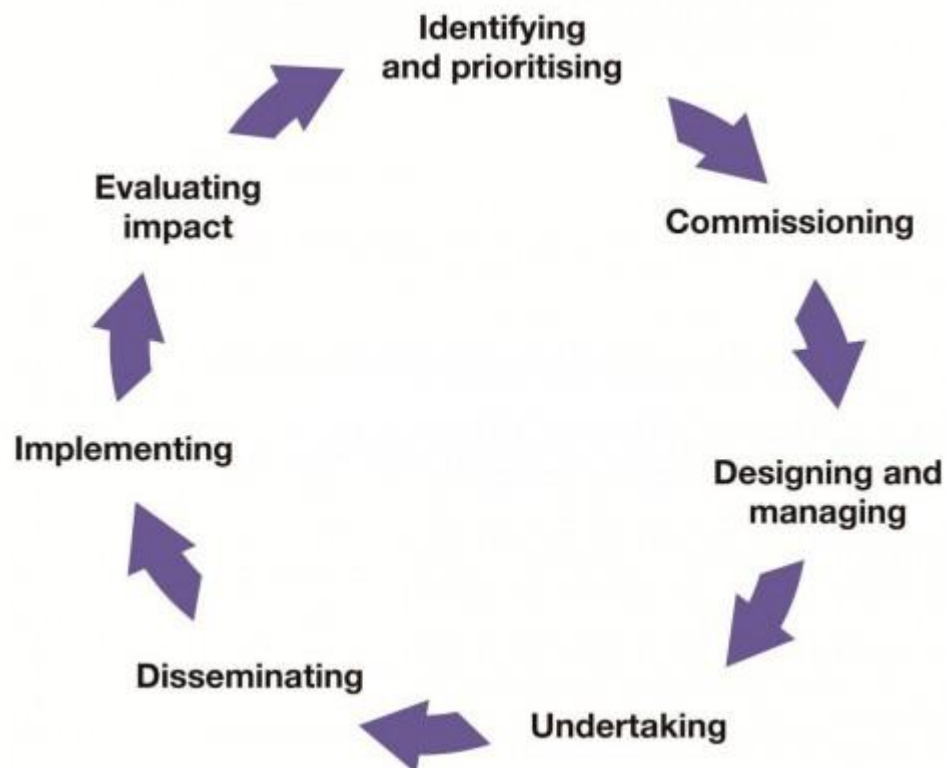
4b. Public Involvement – the new streamlined application forms

- Prompts and tick boxes about public involvement removed from Stage 1 forms
- But – it still needs to be included
- Instead should be an integral part Research Plan – need to think about this to allow costings to be included
- Fuller details given in Stage 2 form
- Use the guidance notes

NIHR Research Standard Application Form (SAF)

Stage 1 Application Form & Guidance

The Research Cycle



Term ‘public involvement’ still causes confusion for some

- It IS – research carried out **with** or **by** members of the public
- It IS NOT – people taking part in research as participants.

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/patients-and-public/how-to-join-in/the-research-cycle/>

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5. Sources of information ...

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www.nihr.ac.uk

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/current-funding-opportunities/>

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/funding-for-research-studies/funding-programmes/>

6. Myth Busting - Is it true....?



- If the subject of an application is outside of themed call NIHR won't be interested.....
 - It's better to rush to submit to a commissioned call deadline than delay and submit a better application.....

 - An unsuccessful application cannot be resubmitted
 - Any others.....?
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You can find more about RDS EM here: <https://www.rds-eastmidlands.nihr.ac.uk/>

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