



NORTH WEST CANCER RESEARCH GRANT APPLICATION GUIDANCE NOTES:
APPLIED RESEARCH CALL

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to assist potential applicants wishing to apply to the Applied Research Project Grant call from North West Cancer Research (“NWCR” or the “Charity”).

2. Who we are

We are the only independent cancer research charity funding quality research to benefit local people in the North West of England and North Wales. We aim to tackle the most significant cancers in our region, stopping cancer sooner.

3. Our vision

Achieving the best research for a cancer free future.

4. Research

North West Cancer Research funds cancer research work at academic institutions and with our NHS partners and third sector collaborators that benefit the population of the North West of England and North Wales. Much of our funding goes to projects, but we additionally support Lectureships, Chair positions, Fellowships and PhD studentships. Please contact research@nwcr.org for more information.

We have separate calls for research from the fields of cancer discovery, translational research and applied research. These calls have different eligibility criteria and direction is provided in guidance specific to each call enabling researchers to make considered applications.

5. Award

The Applied Research call accepts grant proposals of up to three years. For this funding round, applications are encouraged in the following categories:

- £0 - £50,000
- £50,001 - £150,000
- £150,001 - £300,000

Although it is expected that one award will be made in each of the above categories, funding will ultimately be provided to the best quality research. Researchers should be mindful of the current resources available to North West Cancer Research and ensure that all applications provide good value for money. All applications will be equally considered, regardless of whether funding is requested at the higher or lower end of the funding budget.

In making their applications, researchers should consider the relevance of their application to the people of the North West of England and North Wales. This could mean overall incidence or that the particular cancer type is more common or associated with poor outcomes within the region.

Applications for this funding round are open to researchers across the United Kingdom. We encourage collaboration between research groups and encourage applications that include collaborations with researchers within our regional footprint of the North West of England and North Wales.

We invite applications from researchers for projects which seek to make improvements to existing cancer diagnosis techniques, patient treatments, knowledge and understanding to a practical application. These projects should focus on the improvement of cancer outcomes through better treatment, service developments and/or improving the patient experience of diagnosis, treatment and living with and beyond cancer.

Applications may consider:

- Cancer treatments
- Practices around the care and management of patients and services
- Improvements in cancer prevention and education
- Health economics and the impact of health policies/regulations
- Cancer and ageing
- Palliative care
- Inequalities in how patients access, receive and respond to pathways, treatments and services
- Improving care, treatment and support for people living with and beyond cancer
- Assessment of healthcare needs and measurement of outcomes
- Improving early diagnosis and detection of cancer

People and patients should be at the heart of your application. Applications using predominantly bio-banked samples will not be accepted in this funding round unless the researcher can demonstrate clearly why an application is appropriate. The Charity reserves the right to transfer applications forward to a more suitable call.

6. Application Process

Applications should be submitted before **5pm on Monday 10th November 2025**.

Applications must be submitted electronically via the charity website in one PDF document. Applications that do not meet this deadline will be held over until the next call round. Applications that are not submitted as a single PDF document will be returned to the investigator for modification and will not be included in the round if this falls outside of the call closure.

The NWCR Applied Research Advisory Group will meet approximately 3 months after the submission date to review the submitted and externally reviewed applications. The Board of Trustees will then meet to consider the recommendations of the Advisory Group and give approval for funding. The applicants will be notified of the final decision shortly after the April 2025 Board of Trustees meeting.

7. Review

The Charity's review processes have been constructed in line with guidance and governance considerations set out by the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) Principles of Peer Review (<http://www.amrc.org.uk/publications/principles-peer-review>).

On receipt of an application, the Charity will conduct a 'charity triage' to ensure applications meet with the application guidance. At this stage, the Charity considers the principal investigator and co-applicants previously funded work and the added value they have provided to the Charity. The triage includes assessment in line with the guidelines, completion of all sections and adherence to specified word count for each section.

Applications, which pass the charity check, are sent to all members of the Advisory Group who recommend appropriate independent reviewers according to the specific cancer type and research activity or technology being proposed. In addition to this expertise, the Charity will contact nominated reviewers (named in the application by the principal investigator). The Charity may also request advice from other experts in their database.

Where there have been previous difficulties with projects not completing on a timely basis, or a lack of engagement from the researchers, the Advisory Group will be informed of this. This may influence the panel's decision and voting.

Where the researchers wish to exclude independent reviewers this must be sent to the charity Research Grants Manager at research@nwcr.org. Researchers will be required to provide a full and detailed justification for excluding independent reviewers. The Advisory Group will be informed of the decision to exclude reviewers.

Nominated and Independent reviewers are asked to provide a written report on the proposals and provide a score which will inform the Advisory Group when voting.

The scoring matrix that will be used for this call together with guidance for scoring are provided below:

Scoring guidance

Criteria 1 and 2: Importance of the research question and quality of proposed study
6 Exceptional – equivalent to top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance (fundable) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crucial research question or knowledge gap in area of strategic importance• Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact• Work that is at the leading edge internationally, addresses all of the assessment criteria, and meets the majority of them to an exceptional level. Likely to have a significant impact on the field.
5 Excellent - equivalent to internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance (fundable) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crucial research question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance• Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact.

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- Work that is of a high international standard, and addresses and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to a very high level. Will answer important questions in the field.
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4 Very Good - equivalent to internationally competitive in parts (fundable)

- Good research question or knowledge gap or in area of strategic importance
 - Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact
 - Work that is internationally competitive and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to a high level. Will advance the field.
-

3 Good (fundable)

- Worthwhile research question or knowledge gap or a valuable scientific resource
 - Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact
 - Work that has merit and meets the majority of the assessment criteria to an adequate level. Likely to advance the field.
-

2 Potentially fundable

- Worthwhile research question with potentially useful outcomes
 - Likelihood of successful delivery
 - Work that is potentially of some merit, and meets some of the assessment criteria to an adequate level, but which is not internationally competitive. Unlikely to advance the field significantly.
-

1 Unfundable

- Poorly defined question
 - Limited likelihood of new knowledge generation
 - Work that is of no significant scientific merit, flawed, or duplicative of other research, or for which the applicants do not present evidence of a satisfactory track record, and which does not meet the majority of the assessment criteria to an adequate level. Unlikely to advance the field
-

Criteria 3: Technical Feasibility

6 Exceptional – equivalent to top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance (fundable)

- Excellent leadership team (*track record, team, environment, and collaborators*)
 - Well-planned, original and innovative design and methodology, with a novel aspect clearly explained
 - Ethical and/ or governance issues are fully considered
 - No impediments to progress identified, clear contingency planning in place
-

5 Excellent - equivalent to internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance (fundable)

- Excellent leadership team (*track record, team, environment, and collaborators*)
 - Well-planned, original and innovative design and methodology, with a novel aspect clearly explained
 - Ethical and/ or governance issues are considered
 - Unlikely to be impediments to progress, clear contingency planning in place
-

4 Very Good - equivalent to internationally competitive in parts (fundable)

- Excellent leadership team (*track record, team, environment, and collaborators*)
 - Robust methodology and design (*innovative in parts*) and evidence of a novel idea
 - Ethical and/ or governance issues are fully considered
-

3 Good (fundable)

- Strong leadership team (*track record, team, environment, and collaborators*)
 - Methodologically sound study with some evidence of a novel idea
 - Ethical and/ or governance issues are well considered
-

2 Potentially fundable

- Appropriate leadership team (*scope to strengthen team; environment; collaborators*)
- Methodologically sound study but areas require revision, minimal evidence of novel aspect
- Ethical and/or governance issues are adequately considered

1 Unfundable

- Poor leadership team
 - Methodologically weak study and no novel idea considered
 - Ethical and/ or governance issues are not adequately considered
-

Criteria 4: Financial Feasibility

6 Exceptional – equivalent to top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance (fundable)

- Potential for high return on investment (*resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation*). Realistic request, highly appropriate for suggested experimental plan.

5 Excellent - equivalent to internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance (fundable)

- Potential for high return on investment (*resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation*). Realistic request, highly appropriate for suggested experimental plan.

4 Very Good - equivalent to internationally competitive in parts (fundable)

- Potential for good return on investment (*resources requested, likelihood of projected delivery, anticipated knowledge generation*). Realistic request, appropriate for suggested experimental plan.

3 Good (fundable)

- Potential for reasonable return on investment (*resources requested, likelihood of projected delivery, anticipated knowledge generation*). Mostly realistic request, appropriate for suggested experimental plan.

2 Potentially fundable

- Potentially more limited return on investment (*resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, and anticipated knowledge generation*)
- Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal

1 Unfundable

- Potentially poor return on investment
-

Criteria 5: Training Potential

6 Exceptional – equivalent to top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance (fundable)

- Wide range of realistic training and development opportunities with clearly structured plans and appropriate resourcing in place.

5 Excellent - equivalent to internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance (fundable)

- Wide range of realistic training and development opportunities described, clear plans for delivery and resourcing.

4 Very Good - equivalent to internationally competitive in parts (fundable)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and development opportunities considered, clear plans for progression and resource allocation.
3 Good (fundable) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and development opportunities considered (limited in parts), clear plans for progression and resource allocation.
2 Potentially fundable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and development opportunities considered but limited in parts
1 Unfundable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and development opportunities not adequately considered
Criteria 6: Relevance of project to region
2 = High Relevance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly relevant to a cancer type, treatment or inequality associated with our region
1 = Moderate Relevance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderately relevant to a cancer type, treatment or inequality associated with our region
0 = Low Relevance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance only to cancer in general, or specific to a cancer with low prevalence or impact in our region
Criteria 7: PI is an early career researcher
2 = Yes
1 = Somewhat
0 = No

At the Advisory Group meeting, the members consider the nominated and independent reviews, together with their own assessment of the quality of science and grade and rank the applications accordingly. The applications are scored anonymously and the mean average then calculated.

8. Data protection

Applicants must understand and agree to North West Cancer Research holding information about their Research Grant. The information we hold will be used to support our impact measurement work at North West Cancer Research. We will not share your details with any third parties for their marketing purposes although we reserve the right to provide details of funded projects to other charities, sector umbrella bodies and other institutions where this is required in order to fulfil the requirements of memberships held by North West Cancer Research. We will also keep you informed of future funding rounds.

NORTH WEST CANCER RESEARCH GRANT APPLICATION APPLIED RESEARCH CALL: GUIDANCE ON COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM

The sections below provide guidance on completing the application form sections. Please remember to adhere to the word count for each section.

1. Project Title

The project title should give potential reviewers a clear idea of the proposed research. Any confidential or commercially sensitive information should not be included in the title.

2. Proposed Start Date and Duration

An award should begin as soon as possible and no later than six months after the date of the award letter.

3. Applicant(s)

Only one application will be considered for a principal investigator. One additional application will be considered where the applicant is named as a co-investigator. Applicants should not appear on more than two applications. Applications will be returned if these guidelines are not adhered to.

Co-investigators should be experienced researchers and the roles of each co-investigator must be justified within the application.

All applicants named on the grant MUST sign the application form. If signatures are not included, the application form will not be accepted.

4. Summary of Proposed Research

Please do not include confidential or commercially sensitive information in this summary as it can be circulated outside of our organisation. Word limit 300.

5. Lay Summary of Proposed Research

This summary must be understandable for the general public as the NWCR research advisory group includes patient and public representatives who are not from a scientific or academic background. Do not use technical language. Poorly written lay summaries will be penalised. Word limit 300.

6. Relevance to region

Within this section, you should provide a clear case as to why this work is of relevance to the local population of the North West of England and North Wales. This could include incidence, research specialisation of the leading groups, collaboration with regional centres of excellence in the NHS or patient group interactions. This should be written in lay terms. Word limit 250.

7. Communications Plan

This must include an outline of your plans for engagement, communication and dissemination of this research. This should include potential impacts for academic and non-academic users. Word limit 250.

8. Impact Summary

Outline the potential impact of your work and the steps you will take to achieve this. We appreciate some research work has a longer impact timeframe, therefore please consider the wider definition of impact and how as a charity we measure it. In your summary, please consider what your project will do to:

- Generate new and novel ideas
- Apply research in new ideas and services
- Create evidence that could influence policy and stakeholders
- Develop the human capacity to do research
- Stimulate further research via new funding partnerships

Please consider the pathway which would need to be taken to ensure that your research benefits patients and the population in our region. Please describe the additional steps and resources that would be needed. Word limit 300.

9. Impact on Inequalities

Please consider whether your project would increase, decrease or have no impact on health inequalities in our region. Word limit 300.

10. Public Patient Involvement

NIHR defines public involvement in research as research being carried out 'with' or 'by' members of the public rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them. Public involvement is important, expected and possible in all types of health and social care research. This not only includes research in laboratories, but also research into health and social care. Research provides evidence about what works best. Please state how your research will consider patients and the public throughout, including in its development.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/patient-and-public-involvement-and-engagement-resource-pack/31218>

11. Human and/or Animal Subjects

NWCR expects the research they fund to be conducted to the highest levels of integrity, probity and good management. The research grant will be managed by NWCR. Research grants are made between NWCR and the research institution, and the charity expects that researchers and their employers will work within the appropriate legal and ethical boundaries and with the approval of research ethical committees where appropriate. If the answer to the question is yes, please complete the supplementary document Appendix A.

North West Cancer Research recommends that researchers follow the guidelines for the welfare and use of animals in research as outlined [here](#). The Charity also promotes the reporting of research using animals according to the ARRIVE (Animal Research: Reporting of In Vivo Experiments) guidelines, as outlined [here](#).

12. Proposed Investigation. This section should not exceed 2,000 words.

The following information should be included:

- a) Title of project
- b) Supporting evidence: Work which has led up to this project including collaborations at other institutions
- c) Project objectives: Hypothesis and specific aims
- d) Detailed plan of investigation: Research plan including background and preliminary results (if appropriate)
- e) Project risks and contingencies
- f) Public/patient involvement plans
- g) References cited max. 20

Tables, images and graphs can be included. These will not be included in the 2,000-word count. References are also not included in the word count.

If the project involves patient information, human volunteers or tissue samples, or animals, Appendix A should be completed and submitted with the main application form as part of the submitted PDF document.

13. Early Career Researcher

Our aim is to support the development of all research staff and to nurture Early Career Researchers (ECR) as they start out on a research career. There is no single definition of an Early Career Researcher, however the UK Research Councils and the Research Excellence Framework suggest an ECR is determined on the length of time since the individual completed their PhD, e.g.:

- Those with a doctorate who had their doctoral viva not more than 5 years from the application closing date - Leverhulme.
- A maximum of four years' academic research experience following the completion of their PhD, or be of equivalent professional standing - AHRC.

However, we understand these definitions offer a perspective of who falls into the official category of an ECR, but we believe these definitions are too rigid and fail to encapsulate our diverse research and academic community. We have a wide range of researchers from post-doctoral researchers to senior lecturers who are undertaking the first stages of their research careers. Therefore, we encourage our researchers to use a self-defining definition of who is an ECR.

14. Nominated External Reviewers

Nominated reviewers must be experts in the research field and/or be able to provide an expert view on the value and benefits of the research proposal.

Applicants should not provide reviewers from their own organisation or where any possible conflict of interest may arise. This conflict includes people with whom you have held grants within the last five years. It also includes anyone with whom you have published in the same period. Close personal relationships are also considered a conflict of interest.

If the applicant does not want a particular reviewer contacted, this should not be added to the main application form but should be submitted directly to the NWCR Research Officer. Researchers must provide justification for this exclusion e.g. “main scientific competitor” or “commercial sensitivity”.

It is in your best interests for your application to be peer reviewed by as many external reviewers as possible, so you might find it useful to notify your nominated reviewers in advance.

15. Summary of Costs

Costs (not amounting to more than £50,000, £150,000 or £300,000) should be included under a number of categories:

Salaries/Stipend:	Funding will be available for staff working directly on the project. This can include PhD students, Post-Doctoral Assistants, Graduate Research Assistants, or others. Any student stipend should not exceed £21,000 per annum. Note that where a project is based upon a PhD studentship then stipend funding for up to 3.5-years shall be allowed to enable sufficient time for project write-up.
Fees	Postgraduate registration fees or any other relevant costs
Equipment:	Funds can be requested for small pieces of specialist equipment that are essential for the project. IT equipment will only be provided in exceptional circumstances.
Consumables:	Funds can be requested for routine research consumables.
Animal Costs	Details of any costs associated with animal samples mentioned in Appendix A.
PPI	Public and patient involvement/engagement. This can include engagement overheads, incentivising payments to participants including travel reimbursement and rewards. Projects requiring ethical applications should additionally submit details of overheads and procedures in Appendix A.
Dissemination	Costs for open access publications and/or attendance at conferences primarily for the dissemination of findings and results.

Research carried out in the NHS: This call will be registered with NIHR and NWCR is a non-commercial partner. Grant holders carrying out research in the NHS must ensure that all costs are attributed according to the [AcoRD \(Attributing the costs of health & social care Research & Development\) Guidelines \(link is external\)](#), or equivalent. It is expected that researchers use the study support service when applications are written.

16. Justification for Support Requested

This information should clearly describe how the resources requested are appropriate for the research proposed. Please note under resourcing a proposal will not give precedence for funding. Where staff who have substantive posts are not calculated

within the budget but are intending to work, in part on the proposal, this should be added and clarified in this section. If you make reference to alternative sources of funding from other funders or research groups throughout the application, please provide further detail here.

17. CVs

Please include CVs within the PDF document for all named applicants with a list of publications.

18. Published Papers

Please include a publication list related to the work proposed in this application. Additionally, if applicants have previously received grants from North West Cancer Research please provide a list of publications resulting from this funded work. This includes work funded by the charity or any of its predecessor bodies including:

- North West Cancer Research Fund
- Clatterbridge Cancer Research
- Cancer and Polio Research Fund Ltd
- KidsCan

19. Optional: Resubmission

If the application is a resubmission to North West Cancer Research, please include a covering letter and highlight details of changes from the original application. Please address the concerns raised by both the advisory group and external reviewers following the original application.

20. Signatures

Please ensure that ALL named applicants sign the form.

The approval of the Head of Department/School and Administrative representative confirms that the Institution agrees with the budget request and use of facilities.

21. Letters of Support

A relevant letter of support should confirm commitment to the proposed project by articulating the benefits of the collaboration, its relevance and potential impact.