**MRC Centre for Environment and Health**

**Call for Pump-Priming proposals to support fellowship applications**

**DEADLINE: 5pm on Thursday, 28th September 2023**

**Overview and Aims**

Following three successful rounds of pump-priming awards in 2015, 2016 and 2022, the MRC Centre for Environment and Health is pleased to announce a fourth call for pump-priming proposals aimed at supporting career progression of early-career researchers in environment and health.

**Scope and Criteria**

The purpose of these awards is to support applications by early-career researchers affiliated with the MRC Centre to an established fellowship programme, by providing small-scale funding to support a novel research project that will enhance the preparation and submission of a high-quality, competitive fellowship application to be hosted in one of the Centre’s groups.

The funds can be used to support a diverse range of research activities including: generation of pilot data to demonstrate feasibility of a larger project, method development, or analyses of existing samples or datasets in new emerging areas of environmental health. The planned fellowship project must demonstrate how its novelty, in relation to present research, will lead to the development of an independent research career. Public and community involvement in the project is strongly encouraged.

The expectation is that each award should lead to the submission of an application to a fellowship programme within one year of the start date.

Project proposals should address the following criteria:

* Scientific excellence and novelty
* Clearly articulated, feasible research plan
* Value for money
* Relevance to the MRC Centre’s research programmes and themes
* The suitability of the selected fellowship programme
* Novelty of the fellowship project in relation to the applicant’s current research
* Relevance of the fellowship on the career development plan of the applicant

Awards will be made on the recommendation of an assessment panel of senior MRC Centre members (for more details, see Assessment Process). Applicants may request up to £10-£15K per project. The number of awards will be at the discretion of the assessment panel.

**Eligibility and Conditions**

These awards are aimed at postdoctoral researchers looking to transition to independence, with up to 7 years’ post-doctoral experience and a track record of high-quality research in relevant areas.

All candidates must identify a mentor from among the MRC Centre members, who should be outside their current supervisory team (unless a strong justification can be provided). The mentor should agree to guide and support the candidate with the implementation of the project and throughout the preparation of the fellowship application.

**Timeline**

Projects should be started within three months of receiving the award letter and a fellowship application should be submitted within 12 months of the award start date. The maximum length of the project will be 6 months and the proposed end date of the project cannot go beyond 31st July 2024.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| w/c 24 July 2023 | Call launch |
| 28 September 2023 | Deadline for submission of completed proposals |
| September to October 2023 | Review of proposals |
| October 2023 | Notification of successful proposals |
| November 2023 – January 2024 | Project start dates |
| July 2024 | Latest project end date and final date to incur expenditure |
| Within 2 months of the end date | Short report |
| Within 12 months of the start date | Fellowship application submission |

Applicants will be responsible for ensuring the appropriate ethical approvals or data access agreements, etc. are in place before the work commences.

A short report on the use of the funds, the impact on the fellowship application and its outcome, if known, should be submitted within two months of pump-priming award the end date.

**Project Costs**

Eligible costs include consumables, small equipment (<10K), sample collection, storage and analysis, data access and other directly incurred costs. They may include costs of placements/collaborations with external partners. Collaborations with NIHR HPRUs, UKHSA (formerly PHE), other and industry partners are particularly encouraged. Costs should not duplicate resources and services already available within the Centre. Salary support will only be awarded in exceptional circumstances and should not be used for bridging funds nor for paying other researchers’ or technicians’ time. Animal costs cannot be supported.

A budget plan should be developed using the ICL costing system. The final awards will only provide 100% of directly incurred costs. Only summary costs need to be included and do not need to have been formally approved in advance of submission, as successful proposals may be amended, but they will need to have been agreed in outline by the relevant department manager (an e-mail signifying approval will suffice).

**Assessment process**

A representative assessment panel of at least five members nominated by the MRC Centre Directors will consider applications. The panel should include an external member, ideally a representative of the ICL Graduate School. The assessment will be based on the criteria listed above with a focus on the relevance of the proposal to the Centre's Themes and its scientific novelty/originality. The assessment will be fair, rigorous and in line with College policies. The decision of the assessment panel will be final and binding. It is intended that the assessment panel recommendations will be reported to the Centre’s Steering Committee for approval.

**How to apply**

Applications should be submitted using the attached application form (maximum 3 pages) including:

* A detailed account of the proposed project including title, aims and objectives, methods and approach, and a study timeline
* Novelty of the proposed fellowship project and impact on the applicant’s development of an independent research career
* A budget plan using the template provided

In addition, a complete application will also include:

* A brief *Curriculum Vitae*
* A letter of support from the applicant’s mentor
* An email from the Departmental Administrator approving the budget

The application will be a single-stage process.

**Enquiries**

General enquiries relating to the scope and objectives of this call should be directed to Anastasia Ioakeimidou, the Centre Scientific Manager: [a.ioakeimidou@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:a.ioakeimidou@imperial.ac.uk).