INTRODUCTION TO THE HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH FUND
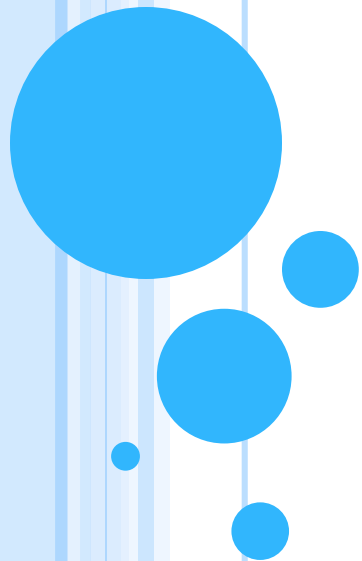
Dr Richard COLLINS
Chief Scientific Reviewer (Research Office)
Food and Health Bureau

Briefing cum Grant Skills Training Workshop for the 2020 Open Call for Investigator-initiated Projects

OUTLINE

- Overview of the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF)

- Areas of Projects

- Peer Review Process

- Application and Timeline

OVERVIEW OF HMRF

Overview of HMRF

- Administered by the Food and Health Bureau (FHB)

- Established in Dec 2011
  - Eight annual open calls (2012 - 2019)

- Incorporates activities of previous FHB funds, i.e.
  - Health and Health Services Research Fund
  - Research Fund for the Control of Infectious Diseases
  - Health Care and Promotion Fund

4

MISSION OF HMRF

- ➢ To build research capacity…
- ➢ …through the generation and application of evidence-based scientific knowledge in health and medicine to encourage, facilitate, and support health and medical research to:
  - Inform health policies
  - Improve population health
  - Strengthen the health system
  - Enhance healthcare practices
  - Advance standard and quality of care
  - Promote clinical excellence

AREAS OF PROJECTS
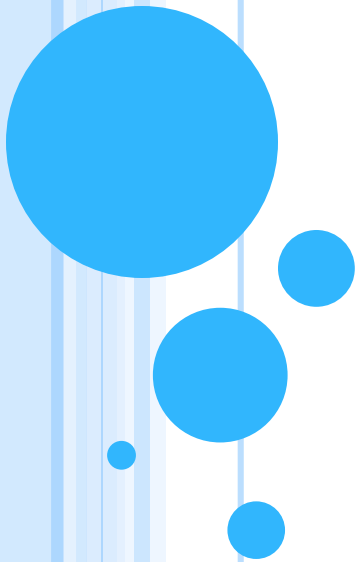
AREAS OF PROJECTS

➢ Public Health, Human Health and Health Services Research

➢ Infectious Diseases Research

➢ Advanced Medical Research

➢ Health Promotion

7

PUBLIC HEALTH, HUMAN HEALTH AND HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH

➢ Examine the cause, treatment and prevention of the full range of diseases and conditions that affect human health and the impact of the organisation, financing and management of healthcare services on the delivery, quality, cost, access to, and outcomes of such services

8

INFECTIOUS DISEASES RESEARCH

➢ Focus on infectious diseases which are prevalent in Hong Kong and neighbouring regions or areas in which the Hong Kong academic community has a competitive edge

ADVANCED MEDICAL RESEARCH

➢ Involves the use of biotechnology to identify and develop novel screening, diagnostic methods and therapeutics/treatments in various medical fields, including

- Paediatric
- Neurosciences
- Clinical genetics
- Clinical trials

HEALTH PROMOTION

➢ Include a coordinated set of activities that help people adopt healthier lifestyles by enhancing awareness, changing adverse health behaviours or creating a conducive environment that supports good health practices

POINTS TO NOTE

➤ Routine public health or clinical services that are provided by the Government or government funded agencies will normally not be considered for support

➤ In general, HMRF does not support guideline development

➤ Applicants are strongly recommended to consult and/or collaborate with field experts (e.g. Hospital Authority clinicians) to improve the feasibility of research proposals, in particular clinical studies and those involving human subjects

➤ The administering institution (AI) shall be responsible for the provision of the basic facilities required to support the project including employment service of the required project staff, procurement of services and equipment, accounting services, etc.

12

PEER REVIEW PROCESS
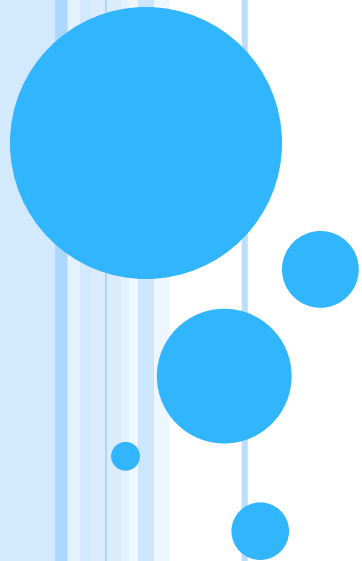
PEER REVIEW PROCESS

➢ 1st: Referee Panel (2500+)

- Renowned experts in their fields
- Usually 2 External Reviewers (ERs) per application

➢ 2nd: Grant Review Board (GRB)

- More than 200 local senior health professionals and academics
- Since 2018 Open Call, Non-Local Experts will participate in the second-tier peer review
- Independent review and panel discussion

14

1ST Tier Peer Review

- Two external reviewers (ER) per application
- Work independently
- Standardised assessment criteria
- ERs assign an overall rating (1-4)
  - 4: recommended for support
  - 3: recommended for support (subject to clarification / amendment)
  - 2: not recommended for support at present (resubmission possible)
  - 1: not supported
- Applications receiving single or double low rating (1 or 2) are normally not eligible for second-tier peer review

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH PROJECTS)

- Originality
- Relevance to the fund and thematic priorities
- Significance of the research questions
- Quality of scientific content
- Credibility of design and methods
- Applicability to local context
- Translational potential / value

16

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (HEALTH PROMOTION PROJECTS)

- Potential impact in response to the health needs of the target local community
- Scientific evidence of effectiveness of the proposed health promotion activities
- Innovation
- Relevance to thematic priorities
- Feasibility of the proposal
- Evaluation plan of programme effectiveness
- Cross-sector collaboration, in particular collaboration between non-governmental organisations and tertiary institutions
- Impact and sustainability of the programme
- Potential to build community capacity in health promotion

17

2nd Tier Peer Review

- Senior health professionals and academics
- Includes Non-Local Experts from overseas
- Meet in person / via Zoom to discuss applications
- Two reviewers (Speakers) per application
  - Work independently
  - Standardised assessment criteria
  - Speakers assign an overall rating (1-4)
- Final overall rating / funding recommendation (1-4) decided by consensus
- The success rate over the last three years is on average 24%
  - Comparable with other funding schemes
  - RGC GRF 2020/21 Medicine, dentistry and health: 96/367=26%

18

RESULTS OF GRANT APPLICATIONS

Decision letter in Oct 2021 (6 months after application deadline)

- ➢ 4 - Recommended for support
  - Nil / minor issues to address
- ➢ 3 - Recommended for support
  - Subject to satisfactory response to the ERs'+ GRB's comments within 3 weeks
  - Ethics approval / safety clearance/ consent for accessing data for third party data *(to be submitted within 12 weeks from the date of grant approval letter unless specified)*
  - For clinical trials, Department of Health Clinical Trial Certificate / Medicinal Test Certificate is required (suggest applying as early as practical, preferably during the submission of application to the HMRF) to avoid delay in project commencement

- ➢ 2 - Not recommended for support at present

  - Resubmission possible in next open call

- ➢ 1 - Not supported

APPLICATION AND TIMELINE
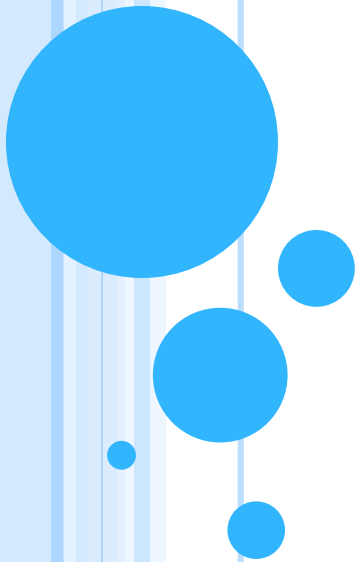
GRANT SIZE & ELIGIBILITY

➢ **Grant**

  ● $1.5 million for up to 3 years

  ● Larger size / longer duration may be supported at the discretion of the GRB

  ● Smaller pilot studies are encouraged

➢ One application only (either research or health promotion project or new proposal or resubmission) by each principal applicant (PA)

ELIGIBILITY

➢ Invite applications from locally-based tertiary institutions, hospitals, medical schools, non-profit-making organisations, registered community groups or other appropriate centres, units or services

➢ PA must be based in a Hong Kong organisation throughout the project period and employed by the AI at time of submitting the application

- Inform us immediately if plan to leave the AI after submission of application. Failure to do so will result in disqualification of the application

Submission of application

➤ Through eGMS by 30 April 2021 (18:00 HKT)

➤ Pay attention to AI's internal deadline, if any

➤ Application with incomplete signatures may not be considered

➤ Application without reference code of thematic priority may be treated as an <u>incomplete application</u> and may not be considered

5b. → Please state the most relevant thematic priority*: ↵ - ↵   ↵
↵
   *please refer to the explanatory notes for details of the thematic priorities↵

➤ PA will receive the acknowledgement email from the Secretariat if the application is successfully submitted

23

eGMS – ONLINE SUBMISSION

SECTION 13 PROPOSAL

➤ Proposed research project: Sections 13 (a) – (h) of the research proposal, with the standard header

2020 HMRF Open Call Proposal

should be attached as a PDF file to the e-Form

➤ The proposal template can be downloaded from https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk

Grant Applications

Investigator-initiated Projects

- Electronic Application Form (e-Form): Available in eGMS (Path in eGMS: Project > Application > Application Call > Web-based Online e-Form)
- Quick Guide for Completing the electronic Application Form *(PDF File 223K)* updated
- Proposed Research Project (Section 13(a)-(h)) *(Word File 33K)* updated
- Proposed Health Promotion Project (Section 13(a)-(h)) *(Word File 30K)* updated

25

SECTION 13 PROPOSAL

- A new item "(v) Potential pitfalls and contingency plans" has been added under Section (d) Plan of Investigation

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d)→   Plan·of·Investigation:↵
↵          (i)↦  Subjects·°°°°°↵
↵          ↵       ↵
↵          (ii)↦  Methods·°°°°°↵
↵          ↵       ↵
↵          (iii)↦  Study·design·°°°°°↵
↵          ↵       ↵
↵          (iv)↦  Data·processing·and·analysis·°°°°°↵
↵              ↤ ↵
↵          (v)↦  Potential·pitfalls·and·contingency·plans·°°°°°↵
↵          ↵       ↵
```

Section 13 Proposal

- Proposed health promotion project: Sections (a) – (h) of the proposal, with the standard header

  2020 HMRF Open Call Proposal – Health Promotion

  should be attached as a PDF file to the e-Form
- The proposal template can be downloaded from https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk

Grant Applications

Investigator-initiated Projects

- Electronic Application Form (e-Form): Available in eGMS (Path in eGMS: Project > Application > Application Call > Web-based Online e-Form)
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27

REGULATORY / ETHICS APPROVAL / CONSENT FOR ACCESSING THIRD-PARTY DATA

➢ Submit ethics/safety/regulatory approvals/consent for accessing third-party data within 12 weeks (or as specified by the Secretariat) after the announcement of funding decisions

➢ For clinical trials, confirm with Department of Health if a Clinical Trial Certificate/Medicinal Test Certificate is required as early as practical (preferably during the submission of application to the HMRF) to avoid delay in project commencement

➢ Ensure that the protocol/scope approved by the relevant regulatory body/IRB is the same as that approved by HMRF

28

STAFF COST - POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWS/ RESEARCH STUDENTS

➢ Shall work on the approved HMRF project

➢ Shall not be PA or Co-Applicant of the HMRF project concerned

➢ Shall not be double funded by other sources

➢ Can support part-time in proportion to the amount of research work on the approved HMRF project

➢ Shall enter into contract of employment with the administering institution.

➢ Ensure the appointment under the approved HMRF project will not breach the terms / restrictions / undertaking of the proposed staff signed with other parties (e.g. University Grants Committee/Research Grants Council).

29

SIMILAR STUDIES AND OTHER FUNDING

➢ Should declare any duplicate funding in the electronic Application Form

➢ Shall notify the Secretariat immediately

- Any other similar or related application submitted to other funding agencies in addition to those listed in the electronic Application Form

- The funding decision of any similar or related application once available

RESUBMISSION

➢ Applications not supported in a previous application round of HMRF investigator-initiated research projects/health promotion projects meeting the following criteria should be submitted under the category of "Resubmission"–

- Application rated "3" which has been revised to address all reviewers' comments in a structured and consistent manner

- Application rated "2" which has been substantially revised to address all reviewers' comments in a structured and consistent manner

Resubmission

- Applications rejected in a previous application round of HMRF investigator-initiated research projects/health promotion projects (i.e. no grading or rated "1" or incomplete or outside of the funding scope) or Research Fellowship Scheme, or other funding agencies (local or overseas) must be submitted as a new application with extensive changes or improvements made with full justifications

RESUBMISSION

➤ To be assessed on the continued relevance of the application with respect to knowledge gap, policy needs, translational value and prevailing thematic priorities at the time of resubmission

➤ Having satisfactorily addressed previous comments is not a guarantee of funding

33

APPLICATION TIMELINE 2020/21

Date	Items
30 Apr 2021 (18:00 HKT)	Closing date
Oct 2021	Decision letters issued • PA to respond to the comments of External Reviewers (ERs) and/or Grant Review Board (GRB) within 3 weeks
Nov - Dec 2021	Review of PAs' responses to satisfactorily address comments made by the ERs and/or GRB
Jan – Mar 2022	Final approval letter and agreement after resolving all outstanding issues including budget clarification and ethics approval

34

FURTHER INFORMATION
https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk/

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Food and Health Bureau
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Multi-Storey Car Park Bldg
2 Rumsey Street
Sheung Wan
Hong Kong

Enquiry emails:
rfs@fhb.gov.hk (General)
egmsenquiry@fhb.gov.hk (eGMS)

THANK YOU