

# 7<sup>TH</sup> CALL FOR PROPOSALS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

JUNE 2019

Below are some of the most common questions asked concerning the R2HC Calls for Proposals. Please check this list of questions before contacting the R2HC programme with your query. This document will be updated to include new questions as they arise. The questions are grouped into the following topics:

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## WHAT IS R2HC LOOKING FOR?

### a) General overview

#### 1. What are you looking for in a successful application?

**At Expression of Interest (EoI) stage the following criteria are reviewed: scope, potential impact, methodology, feasibility and partnerships. Applicants submitting the strongest EoIs are invited to develop Full Proposals.**

The assessment criteria applied by the Funding Committee for reviewing Full Proposals are set out at the end of this document (Question 46.), alongside guidance for what should be included in a funding application (Question 35.). Applications are scored against certain criteria and then the Funding Committee takes a decision on which are of sufficient quality to be recommended for funding. In previous Calls the strongest applications addressed an identified evidence gap; demonstrated potential to impact humanitarian policy and/or practice; and presented clear research questions, robust research methodologies, and strong research partnerships.

#### 2. **What do you mean by ‘high research quality’? Surely this will vary depending on the context and the research question.**

The quality of the methodology will be examined by the independent expert members of the Funding Committee as part of the assessment of proposals. Proposals based on methodological approaches that do not meet the standards required to be published in a peer-review journal will not be funded.

Various checklists are available on the internet which outline what should be included in the protocol design for research proposals, or to guide audiences when assessing the quality of published papers. Examples include:

- [NICE - for qualitative studies](#)
- [Specialist Unit for Review Evidence \(SURE\) at Cardiff University - for randomised controlled trials and other experimental studies](#)

R2HC has funded research projects which use a broad variety of research methodologies including RCTs, qualitative, mixed methods and experimental. A brief profile of the R2HC projects can be found on the [R2HC website](#).

#### 3. **What do you consider to be a research partnership? What exactly are you looking for here?**

At a minimum, we require a partnership between at least one academic or research institution and one operational humanitarian partner. Either body can be the lead organisation for the application. By operational humanitarian partner, we mean organisations that are actively delivering programmes and interventions in a humanitarian context (e.g. INGOs, NGOs and UN agencies).

Under Call 7, we have an additional requirement, that your research consortium must include at least one academic or research institution from the country(s) or region(s) in which you plan to undertake research.

#### 4. How do you define ‘humanitarian crisis’?

We do not propose a specific definition of ‘humanitarian crisis’ beyond what is included in the Call Guidelines document ([available here](#)) - natural disasters, conflicts, or complex emergencies - but we are looking for proposals that match the objectives of the R2HC programme. We recognise that humanitarian crises come in various forms and occur over a range of timescales.

#### 5. Where can I find more information on the grants funded in the earlier R2HC Calls?

Further details of these grants are available via the [R2HC website](#).

### b) Types of research supported

#### 6. Will the R2HC consider applications for research that may be best conducted in non-humanitarian settings, but that would have an application in humanitarian settings?

Yes, such applications will be considered. In these cases it will be particularly important to demonstrate that the outcomes of the research would have validity as well as applicability in a humanitarian context.

#### 7. Would secondary data collection projects be considered, or do they have to involve primary data collection?

Yes, secondary data collection projects will be considered.

#### 8. Will the R2HC fund systematic reviews?

No. There are other funding mechanisms that are better positioned to fund this kind of work.

#### 9. Will the R2HC fund laboratory-based or clinical trials, or the development of diagnostics?

No, the R2HC does not fund such research.

#### 10. Would research on improved public health tools such as diagnostic measures, monitoring indicators or evaluation approaches be eligible for funding?

Yes, provided that these are applied in the context of a humanitarian crisis and that a concrete link to improved public health outcomes is demonstrated.

#### 11. Will the R2HC fund research related to the refugee crisis in Europe?

The R2HC is only able to fund research in countries featured in the [Development Assistant Committee \(DAC\) list of ODA recipients](#). This means that while we can fund research in countries such as Turkey and North Macedonia, we are not able to do so in others, such as Greece.

### c) Eligibility – who and what R2HC will fund

#### 12. I applied unsuccessfully to an earlier R2HC Call for Proposals. Can I re-apply?

Yes. If you were **shortlisted** for a Full Proposal in an earlier Call, there is an additional question to complete in the application form which allows you to explain the changes made to your proposal. Resubmitted applications are required to address any feedback that was provided by the Funding

Committee. Addressing earlier feedback does not guarantee that the proposal will be accepted as resubmissions are considered on merit alongside all other proposals and are not granted favourable status.

If your application was not shortlisted, you can still reapply, and we would encourage you to ensure that your revised application emphasises the changes made in response to any feedback received at Expression of Interest stage.

### **13. What kind of organisation can apply as the lead applicant?**

The lead applicant may be a research institution, a non-profit institution or NGO, a UN agency, or a public or government institution (including a military organisation of the state). It must be legally registered in the country in which it is based. Individuals or for-profit organisations cannot be the lead applicant.

### **14. Do I need to be registered in the UK to be able to apply?**

No, applicants can come from any part of the world.

### **15. Will you fund the cost of interventions that are the subject of the research?**

We will not generally pay for the costs of interventions, except in limited cases where a small trial pilot is needed. If the proposed research is linked to continuation of a specific intervention over the research period, evidence must be provided in the proposal that (other) funds are available to cover such costs. If in doubt please email [r2hc@elrha.org](mailto:r2hc@elrha.org) for clarification.

### **16. Will you provide funds to support existing research projects?**

Applicants with existing funded research projects that are aligned with the R2HC objectives and criteria may apply for additional funding from the R2HC in order to expand an element of the current research.

The application will need to clearly describe the existing initiative and additional funds requested, as well as the additional research outputs that will be attributable to the R2HC funds.

### **17. Can my organisation submit more than one Expression of Interest?**

Yes. We regularly receive applications from different faculties or departments in the same academic institution, or from different 'branches' of the same humanitarian organisation. Each proposal is considered on its own merit.

### **18. As a researcher, can my name be included in more than one Expression of Interest?**

Yes, you can be included as part of one or more research teams, and in different capacities. However, if you are named as Principal Investigator in more than one proposal, and were invited to develop Full Proposals in relation to each Expression of Interest, if more than one proposal was ranked highly and recommended for funding only one would be funded.

## **d) Grants available**

### **19. I have a proposal concerning the evaluation of a new health intervention, product or tool. Should I apply to the R2HC or the Humanitarian Innovation Fund?**

Alongside the R2HC, Elrha also manages the [Humanitarian Innovation Fund \(HIF\)](#), which supports organisations and individuals to identify, nurture and share innovative and scalable solutions to the challenges facing effective humanitarian assistance (including health). Whereas the R2HC focuses on strengthening the evidence base for health interventions in humanitarian crises, the HIF focuses on the development process for innovations.

If you are unsure whether to apply for funding through the HIF or the R2HC, please contact us via [r2hc@elrha.org](mailto:r2hc@elrha.org) for further guidance.

## **20. How many grants do you plan to fund in this Call for Proposals?**

There is no target number. The number of grants approved for funding will depend on the size and quality of proposals received. To date, an average of 8 proposals have been funded through each Call. Final grant awards are subject to confirmation of funding from R2HC's strategic partners.

## **21. What was the success rate in previous calls?**

Under our last annual call, we received 175 eligible Expression of Interests, with 31 applicants invited to develop Full Proposals. Of the Full Proposals received, grants were awarded to 7 studies.

## **WHAT INFORMATION DOES R2HC NEED?**

### **a) Budget**

#### **22. Is there a maximum or minimum limit to the amount of funds that can be requested?**

No. Applicants are encouraged to request sufficient funds to complete the proposed research successfully. The Funding Committee will recognise that some worthwhile research can be done on a relatively small budget, whilst other research might require a higher level of resources. There is no upper or lower ceiling for budgets and it is possible that a single application could be awarded all the available funds if the proposal is seen as likely to have extremely high impact and to represent good value for money. Each Expression of Interest will be considered on its individual merit.

#### **23. What types of cost will R2HC cover?**

Applicants may request support for personnel costs, travel costs, costs related to data collection and analysis, reasonable equipment costs, and other items so as to cover the full research costs in the relevant setting. The R2HC will not generally pay for the costs of interventions, except in limited cases where a small trial pilot is needed.

#### **24. What costs are permissible in the final year of the study?**

Unlike in previous R2HC annual calls, there are no limitations to the costs that are permissible in the final year of the study. The final year can be used to undertake research and research uptake activities.

#### **25. Will R2HC pay overheads and is there a limit?**

Where the lead applicant has no alternative source of funding for administrative management of the grant, applicants may request funds to cover these costs. The R2HC programme will allow organisations

to request up to 10% of the project costs as organisational management costs. To be considered, these will need to be fully justified. A detailed breakdown of such costs will not be needed at the Expression of Interest stage but will be required at the Full Proposal stage.

**26. Will R2HC cover additional costs if there is a currency exchange loss before or during the project?**

No. The R2HC is unable to cover the costs of any currency exchange loss. The responsibility for managing exchange loss (and gain) lies with grantees, as is noted in the Grant Agreement. A copy of the Grant Agreement will be published with the Call Guidelines. Resources cannot be allocated within a budget as a 'contingency' for currency exchange loss.

**27. Is there a minimum amount that should be included in the budget for the uptake and dissemination of research findings?**

Yes. R2HC requires applicants to plan how research findings will reach a wide audience and impact on humanitarian practitioners and policy makers. R2HC requests applicants to dedicate around 10% of the project budget, or up to £20,000, for these activities.

**b) Research impact**

**28. How much time is available for the promotion of research findings?**

Study teams can undertake research uptake activities throughout the study period, for a maximum of 48 months. It is envisaged that uptake activities such as stakeholder mapping, engagement and communications will be integrated within the research project throughout, to maximise the final impact when the results are available, rather than being viewed as an 'add-on' that is only considered when the research is completed.

**29. What is the R2HC looking for in terms of research impact?**

The overall aim of the R2HC programme is to improve health outcomes for people affected by humanitarian crises by strengthening the evidence base for public health interventions. For this reason, it is important that applicants demonstrate a clear vision for the impact they want to see as a result of their research, and how they anticipate that uptake of their research by humanitarian stakeholders will achieve this impact.

The Full Proposal application form requires inclusion of a research uptake plan, demonstrating that you have considered the different audiences the research findings will target and that you have plans for how the findings can be used to influence policy and practice, including the role of different members of the research team in research uptake activities. Activities could include (amongst others): holding dissemination events with affected local communities, service providers and/or national policy makers; presenting research findings at relevant regional or international conferences; conducting advocacy at relevant policy forums, with key stakeholder groups including national governments, and/or with other influential bodies such as the World Health Organisation; design and publication of products to communicate research findings, such as manuals, briefing papers, guidance notes; publication fees for open access journals etc.

**30. Applicants must identify a focal point for research uptake activities within the research team. What are you looking for from this person?**

Each research study team should include an individual who has the skills, knowledge and experience to be able to develop and deliver a plan for the research findings to influence change in policy and practice within the humanitarian sector. The research uptake focal point could come from one of the agencies already involved in the research partnership, or from another organisation.

**31. How does the R2HC support research impact?**

The R2HC programme provides support for research teams to develop engagement and communications strategies for their research, based on our Research Impact Toolkit (which was developed with the support of ODI and is based on the Outcome Mapping approach). We expect that all research teams will participate in a Research Impact workshop to undertake strategic planning for uptake, engagement and communications for their research, either during project Kick Off meetings or at an early stage during the grant period. We will expect grant partners to **engage with R2HC's research impact function** and support/tools/resources periodically during the course of their grant.

The R2HC will also convene thematic Community of Practice meetings, or Research Fora, with the objective of enabling grantees to develop research uptake approaches and strategies through peer engagement and shared learning. The R2HC also directly engages with the World Health Organisation, the humanitarian health clusters and other key stakeholders to promote the uptake of research funded through the programme.

**32. When should I start the uptake and dissemination activities?**

Grants are offered for a maximum duration of 48 months. Planning for research impact should be undertaken during Year 1 of the grant period and an impact objective for your research agreed with R2HC at an early stage (this is a deliverable of the Research Impact workshop mentioned in 'Support'). We would encourage uptake and dissemination activities to be considered from the offset and span the full period for which you are requesting funding.

**c) Other/miscellaneous**

**33. Can I submit my application in any language?**

No. Applications must be submitted in English. However, R2HC does enable Full Proposals to be prepared in French and costs for translation into English can then be refunded by R2HC. If you are interested in using this mechanism, please contact us by email at [r2hc@elrha.org](mailto:r2hc@elrha.org).

**34. Do I have to use the online application system?**

Yes. If you have technical difficulties with the online application system, please make sure you have read all the instructions and watched the video available on the platform ([Common Grant Application](#)). If you cannot find the answer to your question, please email [r2hc@elrha.org](mailto:r2hc@elrha.org).

**d) Further guidance for applicants**

### 35. What further guidance can you give based on the experience of the earlier Calls?

Based on the experience of the applications received in earlier Calls, the following recommendations are put forward to potential applicants for the 7<sup>th</sup> Call:

- Ensure that the proposal is within scope i.e. that it concerns research on public health in a humanitarian crisis.
- Ensure that the proposed research addresses a clear evidence gap.
- Ensure that the research objective is specific and precise.
- Ensure that the proposal explains clearly the nature of the intervention that is the subject of the study (where relevant).
- Ensure that the methodological approach is clearly specified and appropriate to address your research question.
- Ensure that the research could only be undertaken in a humanitarian setting rather than a non-humanitarian setting or laboratory.
- Ensure that the research is designed in such a way that the outcome could be applied in other humanitarian contexts beyond the specific context of the study.
- Ensure that the proposal is to undertake a research study, and is not simply a programmatic evaluation or development of an intervention or product.
- Ensure that the partnership requirements are fulfilled i.e. that at least one academic institution and one humanitarian organisation will be involved in the research, and that at least one academic or research institution is from the country(s) or region(s) in which you plan to undertake research.
- Ensure that the partnership includes organisations or individuals with sufficient experience and in-country networks to feasibly undertake the proposed research activities.
- Ensure that the Principal Investigator demonstrates prior experience of leading similar research.
- Ensure that you state the intended impact for the research and, at Full Proposal stage, set out clear plans for achieving uptake of your research amongst humanitarian policy-makers and practitioners

## WHAT SUPPORT DOES R2HC PROVIDE TO APPLICANTS?

### a) Seed funding

#### 36. What is seed funding?

R2HC offers a seed fund grant of up to £10,000 to applicants invited to submit Full Proposals. These funds are intended to support research partnerships during the development of the more detailed Full Proposal, prior to its submission. More information on seed funding can be found on our [website](#).

#### 37. Who can apply for seed funding?

When submitting an Expression of Interest, any research team is eligible to apply for seed funding to strengthen their partnership and further develop their proposal. Resubmitted proposals which have previously received Seed Funding support under past calls will be ineligible to apply again.



### 38. What costs can be considered under seed funding?

Seed Funding is primarily awarded to support research teams to hold an in-person meeting to discuss and plan the details of the full proposal. We can also consider site visits to the study locations and some preliminary data collection.

No contingency or overheads can be charged under the seed funding grant. Research team salaries are ineligible for seed funding except those that relate specifically to the costs of arranging seed funding activities (e.g. booking travel and accommodation). Staff time to attend meetings, prepare reports and contribute to the R2HC funding application cannot be considered.

## b) Partnerships

### 39. In what ways does the R2HC support research partnerships?

Applicants can request a one-day partnership workshop, facilitated by the R2HC, when applying for seed funding. This facilitated workshop focuses on building and strengthening relationships within the research team, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and ensuring common understandings and expectations of the proposed research and its intended impact, by all team members. Requests for workshops will be prioritised by R2HC on a case by case basis, after a conversation with the PI to determine if a workshop is appropriate for the team. Shorter partnership-strengthening 'workshops' can also be delivered virtually if an in-person workshop is not feasible. R2HC aims to support research teams remotely throughout their grant to manage and strengthen their partnership and is developing resources that can assist teams on partnerships, along with research impact.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT TO OUR APPLICATION?

### 40. What happens to my Expression of Interest once I've submitted it?

You will receive an email confirming receipt. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the shortlisting process by the end of September 2019.

### 41. Will I receive feedback on my application even if I am not selected to go forward to the Full Proposals stage?

We will do our best to provide brief feedback to applicants on the strengths and weaknesses of each Expression of Interest.

### 42. What happens if things change between submitting the Expression of Interest and finalising the grant?

We recognise that humanitarian contexts are characterised by uncertainty and change, and will try to be as flexible as possible to accommodate any such changes.

### 43. The Call Guidelines refers to a rebuttal stage. What is this and what will I need to do?

R2HC has introduced a rebuttal period into the review stage of the application process. This will provide an opportunity for applicants to respond to comments or questions raised by technical experts during their reviews. You will be provided with one week to provide clarifications. Your full proposal, the technical reviews, and your rebuttal response will then all be reviewed by Funding Committee members.

It will not be possible for you to amend your proposal in any way, just to provide additional information or clarifications. The rebuttal period is expected to be in January 2020.

#### **44. How will the final list of grants be determined?**

Each application will be assessed on individual merit. There will not be a system of quotas for different sectors, geographical regions, or any other category including 'encouraged' thematic areas. The Funding Committee will be using a standardised scoring system to assess the quality of the proposals. The highest quality proposals will be funded up to the limits of the R2HC budget.

#### **45. Who assesses the applications?**

Each Full Proposal will be reviewed by two independent experts from fields corresponding to the proposed thematic focus of study. Taking these reviews into consideration, the final assessment of research proposals will be conducted by the independent Funding Committee managed by Elrha.

The Funding Committee is comprised of experts in humanitarian health, acting in an independent personal capacity, drawn from academic institutions, NGOs, governmental organisations and UN agencies. A full list of Funding Committee members can be found on the [Elrha website](#).

#### **46. What are the assessment criteria?**

Applications will be assessed using a standard set of criteria. These include the following:

##### **a. Impact**

- How relevant is the research proposal to the stated aim of the R2HC programme?
- To what extent does the research proposal demonstrate how it would strengthen the existing evidence base?
- How great is the potential impact of the research relative to its total budgeted cost?
- How well does the proposal demonstrate a viable pathway to impact?

##### **b. Soundness of methodology**

- Is the research methodology clearly described, and appropriate to the research objectives and the humanitarian context?
- Does the methodology take into account the need for baseline data and subsequent monitoring and evaluation?
- Does the methodology include an appropriate balance of quantitative and qualitative methods?

##### **c. Operational feasibility**

- How realistic is the proposal in terms of the timeframe, the budget and the operational challenges that are likely to be faced?
- Is the proposed configuration of roles and responsibilities of the various partners, including in-country partners, appropriate and credible?
- To what extent have the risks and challenges associated with implementing the proposed research been considered and addressed?
- Are ethical considerations adequately addressed?

##### **d. Value for money**

- How cost effective is the intervention in question (if relevant)?

- Does the budget appear reasonable for the proposed package of work, and do the costs represent good value for money?
  - Given the likely impact of the research relative to the amount of funding requested, to what extent does the proposal represent overall value for money?
- e. Strength of research partnership and team
- Is there evidence of a partnership between (single or multiple) research institutions and operational organisations that will facilitate the implementation of the research and the uptake of the research findings?
  - Are the roles and responsibilities of consortium members proportionate and balanced?
  - To what extent does the lead organisation and the Principal Investigator have the necessary experience and expertise to successfully lead the management and implementation of the research project?
  - What is the overall strength of the research team in terms of relevant experience and expertise?
- f. Uptake and dissemination
- Are publications foreseen in respected academic journals?
  - Does a sound plan exist for uptake and dissemination of research findings that is differentiated by audience? This might include: humanitarian actors; academic institutions and/or scientific community; policy makers, government and non-governmental organisations and other key stakeholders in the country of research; those affected by the research.
  - What steps will be taken to ensure that research findings will be put into practice, and what is the role of each partner in research uptake?

#### 47. When will R2HC make final decisions on which proposals have been accepted?

R2HC aims to inform all applicants if their Full Proposal has been successful during March 2020.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF THE PROPOSAL IS FUNDED?

#### 48. Will an extension beyond the 48 month duration limit for research activities be allowed in the event of delays in obtaining ethical clearance from my institution or the host government?

R2HC aims to be flexible in the case of unforeseen delays. However, we will only permit extensions beyond the 48 months when fully justified.

#### 49. When can successful applicants begin research activities?

Research activities can begin once the necessary due diligence checks on the lead organisation and partners have been carried out, and the Grant Agreement has been signed. We aim for this to be concluded by June 2020.

### OTHER

If you have further questions, please contact us at [r2hc@elrha.org](mailto:r2hc@elrha.org), putting “Query” in the Subject line.