

INSPIRE Research Challenge



Instructions for completing the application forms

All applicants must apply online, using our [Grant Management System](#). Please note that when you submit your application on the system, it will be sent to your Head of Department and Finance Officer for approval before World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) International can receive it. Therefore, **please submit your application a few days before the application deadline** to give your Head of Department and Finance Officer time to approve the application to meet the deadline.

INSPIRE Research Challenge: Letter of Intent

Introduction

Declaration: Please confirm that the information contained in the grant application is true and complete to the best of your knowledge, and that you will comply with the WCRF International's guidelines and terms and conditions if a grant is awarded as a result of this application. Please note that, if a grant is awarded, several representatives of the host institution will need to agree to WCRF International's [INSPIRE Terms and Conditions](#) prior to the start of a grant.

It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that all relevant colleagues have received a copy of the [INSPIRE Research Challenge brief](#).

Application summary

Include the project title, the institution where the project will be conducted, the length of study (in months, maximum 12), and the total amount requested (in GBP, maximum £75,000).

Select a single main WCRF International Research Area covered by the proposed study – Cancer Prevention or Cancer Survivorship.

Select a relevant exposure from the drop-down list. If the project addresses a combination of exposures, or other exposure(s) not included in the list, please outline these in the free text box. Select a cancer type from the drop-down list.

Please indicate if your application proposes the use of animals or human participants. Note that studies involving animals must obtain the appropriate ethical approval and the relevant licenses and/or certification. WCRF Network adheres to the guidelines from the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC)

and subscribes to the AMRC policy on the use of animals in research. Studies involving human subjects must obtain the appropriate ethical approval and the relevant licenses and/or certification.

Research proposal

Proposal summary: (max. 600 words)

Please structure the proposal summary under the following headings:

Hypothesis – Clearly state the relevance of the proposed research to understanding the effects of modifiable factors on cancer prevention, treatment or survival.

Background – State the background and existing knowledge that led to the hypothesis to be investigated.

Objectives – State the specific goal(s) of the proposed project.

Relevance to cancer prevention or survivorship – Explain the direct relevance to either cancer prevention or cancer survivorship.

Anticipated impact and future directions – Explain the potential impact of your proposed research if the objectives are successfully met, and outline future directions based on that impact.

Research environment: (max. 300 words)

Please provide an overview of the research environment in which the proposed study will be conducted. Include information on the expertise of the lead applicant and collaborators, facilities, and equipment available to support the project.

Key words:

Please provide up to six key words or phrases that best describe the proposed research project.

References:

A selected list of relevant references should be listed using either the Harvard or Vancouver style.

Applicant details

Lead applicant

Please click on 'Manage my details' to go to 'My details'. Please include your title, full name, research expertise, institution, full address, email, and telephone (including country and area code) in 'Basic information'. Please note that the email address will be used for all communication, including acknowledgement of receipt of the application.

Please also update your CV in 'My details', including your current position, and list up to ten recent relevant publications on the research outputs section. Please ensure that your details, including your CV, are up-to-date as these are required for the submission. You will not be able to edit this information directly from the application form.

Publications list

The lead applicant will have to access the 'My research outputs' section of their accounts and list their most recent relevant publications. To add a publication, applicants need to go to 'Import', 'Select records', and input the relevant information in the search fields. Press 'Search' and click on the corresponding publication(s) you wish to include. Press 'Complete import'. Repeat until all desired publications are added to 'Research outputs'.

Then, on the 'Publications list' section of the application, applicants will need to select from the drop-down menu up to ten recent relevant publications from the ones they previously added under 'Research outputs'. Only these will appear on the application and be available to the Grant Panel.

Eligibility and research experience:

(max. 200 words)

This grant call is designed for early career researchers (ECRs), defined as individuals who are within 2–6 years full-time equivalent (FTE) working in research since the award date of their PhD or equivalent higher research degree. Applicants must describe relevant research experience during and/or since completing their degree, including the duration, nature of work, and research area. Acceptable career breaks, such as parental or medical leave, should be detailed. If applicants have worked outside of research since their degree completion, they must explain their relevant research experience that qualifies them to conduct this independent project.

Additional contacts

Please add the Head of your Department and Finance Officer to 'Additional contacts'. Before WCRF International can receive the application, your Head of Department and Finance Officer will both have to approve the application once you submit it on the system. The Head of Department (or an authorised organisational officer, ie, a person with authority to sign documents on behalf of the head of department), the Finance Officer and the lead applicant need to confirm that the information contained in the grant application is correct, and that they will comply with the WCRF International's INSPIRE Research Challenge brief and the terms and conditions if a grant is awarded as a result of this application.

Letter of Support

Applicants must provide a Letter of Support from their current academic supervisor, confirming the applicant's ability to conduct the proposed research independently. The Letter of Support should speak to the applicant's competence, achievements, and potential to be a future leader in the field, addressing their character and scientific competency. The Letter of Support should also address the research environment, including relevant expertise and support available within the research team. Additional Letters of Support from other current colleagues, past supervisors, or named proposal collaborators may be submitted. These letters may confirm support for the project, provide permission for data use, or detail other relevant collaborations. Please attach only Microsoft Word or PDF documents.

Appendices

Applicants may upload any relevant additional documents pertaining to their application into the 'Appendices' section.

Validation

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Once they have approved the application, it will be sent to WCRF International. Please allow your Head of Department and Finance Officer at least three working days before the deadline to approve your application after it has been submitted.

INSPIRE Research Challenge: Full application

Once your LOI application has been successful, you will be invited to submit a full application on your portal account. **Please note that some of the fields in the full application stage will already be populated from the LOI application stage. You will still be able to update this information if required.**

Please note that when you submit your application on the [system](#), it will be sent to your Head of Department and Finance Officer for approval before WCRF International can receive it. Therefore, **please submit your application a few days before the application deadline** to give your Head of Department and Finance Officer time to approve the application to meet the deadline.

Introduction

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Lead applicant

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and telephone (including country and area code) in 'Basic Information'. Please note that the email address will be used for all communication, including acknowledgement of receipt of the application.

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(max. 200 words)

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Research interests, expertise and dedication to the proposed study: (max. 300 words)

Outline specific research interests and expertise of the lead applicant relevant to this proposal. Please also state the % full-time equivalent (FTE) of the lead applicant on this project, irrespective of budget allocation towards their salary. The expectation is that the lead applicant will be substantially committed to the proposed study.

Collaborators and consultants

Please supply the names, contact details and main scientific disciplines for any consultants or collaborators involved in your project. The relevance of their expertise and their role in the proposal should be described in the “Research Environment” section above.

The contacts entered in this section will automatically be excluded from being contacted to provide Peer Reviews for any applications in this grant round.

Additional contacts

Please add the Head of your Department and Finance Officer to ‘Additional Contacts’. Before WCRF International can receive the application, your Head of Department and Finance Officer will both have to approve the application once you submit it on the system. The Head of Department (or an authorised organisational officer, ie, a person with authority to sign documents on behalf of the head of department), the Finance Officer and the Lead Applicant need to confirm that the information contained in the grant application is correct, and that they will comply with the WCRF International’s INSPIRE Research Challenge brief and the Terms and Conditions if a grant is awarded as a result of this application.

Research environment: (max. 600 words)

Please provide an overview of the research environment in which the proposed study will be conducted. Include information on the research interests and expertise of the Lead Applicant and collaborators, facilities, and equipment available to support the project. Include information about any relevant additional funding that will support this project, for example from the department or institution. Ensure the independence of the lead applicant in terms of the conception of the research idea and leading the project.

Abstracts

Scientific abstract: (max. 500 words)

The scientific abstract needs to provide sufficient detail to clearly convey the rationale, main aims, research approach and potential impact of the study. Structure the abstract under the headings: ‘Background’, ‘Hypothesis and Objectives’, ‘Setting and Methods’, and ‘Impact’.

Lay abstract: (max. 500 words)

The lay abstract should be a summary of your study in accessible language for a general audience. Outline the research aims, methodology, potential impact, and importance of your study, using clear language without scientific jargon.

Key words:

Please provide up to six key words or phrases that best describe the proposed research project.

References:

A selected list of relevant references should be listed using either the Harvard or Vancouver style.

Research Proposal

Background and rationale: (max. 1,000 words)

Briefly review the background literature and existing knowledge that led to the hypothesis to be investigated. Clearly state the relevance of the proposed research to understanding the effects of lifestyle factors on cancer prevention or improved outcomes in survivors.

Hypothesis: (max. 300 words)

Clearly state the hypothesis that the proposed research project will address.

Aims and objectives: (max. 500 words)

State the specific aims of each component of the proposed research project and the objectives through which each aim will be accomplished. We strongly encourage applicants to use SMART objectives: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound.

Milestones: (max. 500 words)

Expand on the study objectives, including all primary and any secondary outcomes, and link them to the milestones of the proposed research, in chronological sequence.

Study design and methods: (max. 2,000 words)

Concisely describe the study design. A schematic presentation/figure is often helpful. Reprints of publications, by members of the research team that have additional descriptions of the methods used may be included in the appendix. Appropriate description of statistical methods to be used and sample size/power calculations should be included. Indicate any difficulties that might be anticipated in the interpretation of results. Preliminary data (if applicable) should be included in this section.

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement: (max. 500 words)

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) is an emerging focus in the research landscape. World Cancer Research Fund recognizes and strongly supports

the value of PPIE in ensuring that studies are relevant, meaningful, and aligned with the needs and perspectives of those directly affected by the outcomes. Therefore, we advise applicants to understand the importance of PPIE and provide details of any PPIE activities already undertaken for the development of the proposal, or any plans for potential future PPIE as the study progresses.

Innovation, impact and future directions:

(max. 500 words)

Outline the novel or innovative aspects of your research proposal that will elevate its impact and contribute to its significance. Describe the expected outcomes and future steps for this project and planned future studies, including a research dissemination plan.

Tables and figures:

Please attach a Microsoft Word or PDF document (only one attachment – maximum two A4 pages) with the relevant tables.

References:

A selected list of relevant references should be listed using either the Harvard or Vancouver style.

Budget

Budget Details:

The maximum total budget is £75,000 for 12 months. Please provide detailed budget breakdowns for your proposal for the following categories: salaries, supplies, equipment, open access publication fees, travel expenses, and miscellaneous costs. The budget must be submitted in pounds sterling (GBP) only.

Salary: The budget can cover the lead applicant's salary or salary of staff/personnel that will be involved in the project. If the applicant holds a faculty position, their salary can still be covered by the grant budget.

If necessary, calculate and include the percentage of any time claimed by any key personnel (if their respective institutions do not cover that time). Please note that those compensated in whole or in part with funds from a grant shall not be considered as employees of the WCRF Network charities.

When possible, personnel should be named with their title, otherwise indicate 'to be named'. For each person to be supported by the research grant, show grade, percentage time to be spent on the project, salary and the employer's combined contribution to Superannuation and National Insurance (where applicable).

Supplies: Itemised expendables, assays, reagents, questionnaires, glassware, etc.

Equipment: Equipment costing more than £700 must be itemised, if possible, and fully justified. Please note that only equipment essential for the study will be considered.

Open Access publication: WCRF International encourages the Open Access publication of research.

Travel: WCRF International encourages Principal Investigators and other grant personnel to attend conferences and relevant scientific forums to present the grant's outputs, and will provide funds towards the cost of travel, registration and accommodation. These funds must only be used to allow the attendees to present work funded by the grant, in the form of a poster or oral presentation. Other pertinent travel costs not related to conferences should be included under the miscellaneous section of the budget.

Miscellaneous: This section should list relevant and justifiable additional costs pertaining to the study, such as, for example, the travel expenses of study participants, attendance at meetings, maintenance contracts, or the cost of obtaining certification or licenses to carry out research involving human beings or animals. Please note that all costs added to this budget section will need to be itemised and clearly justified in the application.

Please note that budgets should not include overhead expenses. Only the direct cost of the research should be included.

Budget Justification: (max. 500 words)

Provide details of items listed in the budget section. Subtotals should match those listed in 'Budget details' section. All budget items should be fully justified, including an explanation of the role of the individuals budgeted for the project. Structure your response using the main headings in the budget sheet. For all salaries requested, provide % FTE for each person involved in the study.

Other

Suggested peer reviewers:

Please suggest at least two peer reviewers with relevant expertise for the evaluation of your applications. The suggested reviewers should not have previously worked with or be currently employed at the same institution as the lead applicant or any key personnel on this proposal.

Letter of Support:

Applicants must provide a Letter of Support from their current academic supervisor, confirming the applicant's ability to conduct the proposed research independently. The Letter of Support should speak to the applicant's competence, achievements, and potential to be a future leader in the field, addressing their character and scientific competency. The Letter of Support should also address the research environment, including relevant expertise and support available within the research team. Additional Letters of Support from other current colleagues or past supervisors may be submitted.

Additional Letters of Support from collaborators are encouraged as they can enhance the credibility and

expertise of the lead applicant, and can be uploaded here to strengthen your application. Please attach only Microsoft Word or PDF documents.

Appendices

Please attach only one Microsoft Word or PDF document (maximum 10 pages).

Validation

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Once they have approved the application, it will be sent to WCRF International. Please allow your Head of Department and Finance Officer at least three working days before the deadline to approve your application after it has been submitted.

INSPIRE Research Challenge: Video interview brief

Introduction

The video interview stage provides an opportunity for invited applicants to showcase their scientific expertise, conceptual independence, and competency in conducting proposed research projects.

Please read the following information carefully to prepare for your video interview session.

Date and time

The video interviews will be conducted following the INSPIRE Panel meeting where full-stage proposals will be deliberated. Specific time slots will be agreed with invited applicants ahead of time.

Interview format

Each video interview will have a total duration of 15 minutes. Applicants are requested to begin with a short PowerPoint presentation lasting 5 minutes (see below for further presentation guidance). Applicants can send their presentation slides to inspire@wcrf.org before the interview in case there are any issues with screen sharing.

The presentation will be followed by a 10 minute session for questions from the INSPIRE Panel Chairs and the World Cancer Research Fund International secretariat. Queries raised during the INSPIRE Panel meeting will be addressed to the applicant. Be prepared to answer questions regarding your independence in leading and executing the project, the feasibility of your proposal, including timelines, access to data, patient recruitment and ethical approval.

Suggested presentation structure

To effectively convey your proposal during the interview, we recommend structuring your presentation as follows:

- 1. Applicant introduction:** provide a brief overview of your career, highlighting your skillset, expertise, and relevant experience.
- 2. Research question:** clearly articulate the aim of your research, emphasising its importance and providing a clear rationale for its significance.
- 3. Methodology:** describe how the research will be conducted, demonstrating the feasibility of your objectives, the adequacy and appropriateness of your methods, and the suitability of your research environment.
- 4. Novelty, impact, and future directions:** discuss the novelty of your research, its potential impact, and outline future directions beyond the proposed project.

Preparation tips

To ensure a successful interview, we recommend the following preparations:

- Familiarize yourself with your proposal and anticipate potential questions.
- Practice your presentation to ensure clarity and conciseness within the allotted time.
- Test your video conferencing setup in advance to ensure smooth connectivity. You will receive a virtual meeting invitation after agreeing to an interview time.
- Please note that only the Lead Applicant on the application should attend the video interview.

Conclusion

The video interview stage is an integral part of the INSPIRE grant cycle, providing applicants with an opportunity to further elucidate their proposals and engage directly with the review panel. We encourage all candidates to prepare diligently and approach the interview with confidence. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us inspire@wcrf.org

World Cancer Research Fund International

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