

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 (LOI)

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 Terms and Conditions](#) prior to the start of a grant.

It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant (as Principal Investigator) to ensure that all relevant colleagues have received a copy of the [INSPIRE Research Challenge Brief](#).

Application summary

Application summary details (max. 1,000 words)

Choose the type of application from the drop-down box: new or revised. If revised, please provide the past application reference number.

Include the project title, the institution where the project will be conducted, the length of study (in months, max. 12), and the total amount requested (max. £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 Study Type and 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:

Background: Provide a concise overview of the existing knowledge and context that led to the formulation of the research hypothesis. Explain the scientific rationale and summarise the current state of evidence in the field.

Hypothesis and objectives: Clearly state the central hypothesis and how the proposed research will advance understanding of the effects of modifiable factors on cancer prevention, treatment, or survival. Outline the specific objectives and goals of the project, ensuring they are measurable and aligned with the overarching hypothesis.

Short-term and long-term impact: Describe the anticipated short-term and long-term impact of your research if the objectives are successfully achieved. Highlight the potential implications for cancer prevention or treatment strategies and outline possible future research directions that build on these findings.

Scientific novelty: Provide a clear explanation of the novel aspects of your proposed research. Specify how your study offers a new perspective, approach, or application that addresses gaps in existing knowledge or challenges current paradigms.

Research environment: (max. 300 words) 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 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 your recent, relevant publications in the Research Outputs section. 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, defined as individuals who are within 2–7 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. Current WCRF grant holders or applicants to this year's WCRF Regular Grant Programme may not apply for the INSPIRE Research Challenge.

Additional contacts

Please add your Head of 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 it, once you submit it on the system. The Head of Department (or another person with authority to sign documents on their behalf), 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 guidelines and 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 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 in this section.

Validation

This provides a summary of all the mandatory fields that are required to be completed before you can submit your application. Please click on the Save and Close button at the bottom right-hand corner of the page, which will take you to the Details page of your application.

On the right-hand side of the page, please click Validate in the Validate the Application box. You will then be able to click Submit in the Submit the Application box. Your application will then be sent to your Finance Officer and Head of Department for approval.

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

If 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.

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 [INSPIRE Research Challenge Brief](#) and the [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 Terms and Conditions prior to the start of a grant. It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant (as Principal Investigator) to ensure that all relevant colleagues have received a copy of the INSPIRE Research Challenge Brief.

You will also be asked where you found out about the INSPIRE Research Challenge.

Application summary

Application summary details (max. 1,000 words)

Choose the type of application from the drop-down box: new or revised. If revised, please provide the previous submission reference number.

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

In conjunction with the INSPIRE Research Challenge Brief, complete the Main Research Area, Exposure, Study Type, Research Field and Cancer Type fields.

Finally, include whether the application proposes the use of animals or human participants in the study. Note that studies involving animals must obtain the appropriate ethical approval and the relevant licenses and/or certification. The 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.

Applicant details

Lead Applicant

Please click on Manage my Details to go to My Details. Please include your title, full name, project institution, research expertise, 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.

Lead Applicant CV: Update your CV in My Details, including your current position, and list your recent, relevant publications in 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: Access the My Research Outputs section of your account and list your 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, in the Publications section of the application, select from the drop-down menu up to ten recent, relevant publications from the ones previously added under Research Outputs. Only these will appear on the application and be available to the Grant Panel.

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 percentage 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.

Eligibility and research experience: (max. 200 words) This grant call is designed for early career researchers, defined as individuals who are within 2–7 years 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. Current WCRF International Regular Grant Programme grant holders or applicants to this year's WCRF International Regular Grant Programme may not apply for the INSPIRE Research Challenge.

Key contacts and collaborators

Please supply the names, contact details and specific research interests of the academic supervisor of the applicant (author of the Letter of Support) and any additional Collaborators involved in the project. Please note, Key Contacts and Collaborators will have to register on the Grant Management System and will have to confirm their participation before the submission of your application.

Specific research interests relevant to the application: (max. 200 words) Briefly summarise the specific research interests relating to the application for the Key Contacts and Collaborators.

Additional contacts

Please add your Head of 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, i.e. 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 INSPIRE Research Challenge Brief and the Terms and Conditions if a grant is awarded as a result of this application.

Research environment

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, is demonstrated.

Abstracts

Scientific abstract (max. 500 words)

This 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, Settings and Methods, Anticipated Short- and Long-Term Impact and Scientific Novelty.

Lay abstract (max. 500 words)

The plain language summary should summarise your study in accessible language for a general audience, and should include the sections Background, Hypothesis and Objectives, Settings and Methods, Anticipated Short- and Long-Term Impact and Scientific Novelty. Please use clear language without scientific jargon or abbreviations. This section will be assessed by a Public Representative

and if your application is successful, it will be featured on the WCRF website. By providing this information you consent to its public sharing. Please refrain from including any confidential details that you do not wish to disclose online.

Key words

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

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. State the relevance of the proposed research to the understanding of the impact of diet, nutrition, (including body composition) or physical activity on cancer.

Hypothesis: (max. 300 words) Clearly state the hypothesis that the proposed research project will address. Please add any relevant preliminary data that can help to strengthen your hypothesis.

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, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Novelty: (max. 500 words) Describe the current state of knowledge in the field, clearly outlining what is already known and the key evidence gaps that remain. Explain how the proposed research addresses these gaps and specify what makes the study novel in comparison with existing work, including how it advances the field beyond what is currently known.

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. Please also specify the planned timelines and key milestones of the project.

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 in the next section. Indicate any difficulties that might be anticipated in the interpretation of results. Preliminary data (if applicable) should be included in this section.

Statistical considerations and power: (max. 500 words) Describe the statistical approach used to determine sample size and power for the proposed study. This should include power calculations and a clear justification of the numbers required to detect the

specified primary and any secondary outcomes. For pre-clinical and mechanistic studies involving animal models, applicants should explain how the number of animals has been determined and demonstrate that the study is appropriately powered to address the research objectives.

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE): Describe the proposed strategy and roles for Patient and Public Involvement (max. 300 words) and Engagement (max. 300 words) in your research study. Examples of PPIE in research include consultations on research priorities and defining research objectives, collaboration in study design and governance (involvement) and disseminating research findings to relevant audiences (engagement). Involvement activities emphasise active participation in the research process, while engagement activities focus on sharing information and raising awareness among the public. You will see that Involvement and Engagement are purposefully listed separately on the application form. Please note that in this context, subjects directly participating in the research project do not qualify as PPIE. See the INSPIRE Research Challenge Brief and consult the [PPIE Guidelines document](#) for further information.

Impact and future directions: Please describe the expected outcomes and future steps for this project. See the INSPIRE Research Challenge Brief and the Terms and Conditions for more information. This section is split into Short-term Impact (max. 500 words), Long-term Impact (max. 500 words) and Future Steps and Dissemination (max. 300 words).

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

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

Budget

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, Miscellaneous and PPIE. The budget must be submitted in pounds sterling (GBP).

Salaries: 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. Please refer to section 5.12–16 (Publication under Open Access) of the Terms and Conditions for more details.

Travel to conferences: 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 to support 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 humans 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.

PPIE: Include costs relating to Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement activities.

Budget justification (max. 500 words)

Provide details of items listed in the Budget section. Subtotals should match those listed in the Budget Details section. All budget items should be fully justified, including an explanation of the role of the individuals budgeted for in the project. For all salaries requested, provide the percentage FTE for each person involved in the study.

Support for researchers and healthcare professionals

Please indicate the number of early career researchers supported by this grant, defined as researchers who have up to seven years of relevant research experience following completion of their PhD. Please specify the duration of their support within the grant timeline. Provide the same information for any PhD students and healthcare professionals supported through the award.

Peer reviewers

Applicants must provide at least two, and preferably three, potential peer reviewers for their application. These peer reviewers must not in any way be connected with your study or institution, nor have any form of collaboration with the Lead Applicant or the Collaborators (i.e. publications, grants) for the last three years. Please note it is essential these peer reviewers are able to provide an informed and impartial review of the application. Applicants may also identify individuals whom they would prefer WCRF International does not approach to peer review the 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 or past supervisors may be submitted. Letters of Support from Collaborators are also encouraged as they can enhance the credibility and expertise of the Lead Applicant and strengthen the application.

Please ensure all authors of Letters of Support are named in the Key Contacts and Collaborators section, and upload only Microsoft Word or PDF documents.

Appendices

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

Validation summary

This provides a summary of all the mandatory fields that are required to be completed before you can submit your application. Please click on the Save and Close button at the bottom right-hand corner of the page, which will take you to the Details page of the application you have completed.

On the right-hand side of the main application front page, please click Validate in the Validate the Application box. You will then be able to click Submit in the Submit the Application box. Your application will then be sent to your Finance Officer and Head of Department for approval.

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 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 WCRF 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:

Applicant introduction: Provide a brief overview of your career, highlighting your skillset, expertise, and relevant experience.

Research question: Clearly articulate the aim of your research, emphasising its importance and providing a clear rationale for its significance.

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.

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:

- Familiarise 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 at inspire@wcrf.org