Health and Medical Research Fund

Explanatory Notes – Grant Application for Investigator-initiated Projects

IMPORTANT!

- **All applicants MUST read these *Explanatory Notes* in conjunction with the *Guidance Notes – Grant Application for Investigator-initiated Projects* (*the Guidance Notes*) before completing the electronic Application Form (e-Form). Incomplete applications, applications not adhering to these notes, or insufficiently detailed proposals will not be processed and may result in administrative withdrawal.**
- **For general queries about completing the e-Form, please contact the Research Fund Secretariat (the Secretariat) (email: rfs@fhb.gov.hk or fax: 2102 2444).**

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. All applications must be submitted via the electronic Grant Management System (eGMS) (**https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk/eGMS/**) by completing the e-Form on or before the deadline of submission specified by the Secretariat. Principal applicants who are new to the eGMS are strongly advised to prepare their applications ***well before the deadline of submission*** to avoid unexpected situations. Principal applicants will receive an acknowledgement email from eGMS after their applications have been submitted to the Secretariat successfully.

2. Principal applicants should complete one e-Form for each application submission via the eGMS. The *Quick Guide for completing the e-Form* is available at **Annex A**.

3. Each principal applicant is allowed to submit ***one application*** only (either a new or a resubmission of an application). The principal applicant shall be ***based in a Hong Kong organisation*** throughout the project period and be employed by the administering institution at the time of submitting the application.

4. Application without the endorsement(s) of principal applicant, Head of Department (or Head of Agency in Non-governmental organisation (NGO)), and authorised persons on behalf of the administering institution and finance office will be treated as incomplete application and will not be considered.

5. The principal applicant should make sure that all co-applicants endorse the application as the track record for the whole project team might be adversely affected if misconduct/fraud is found. All project team members should be well aware of their participation and roles and responsibilities in the project. Please refer to the *Management of Track Records of Applicants* which can be downloaded from – **https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk/english/policies_guidelines/policies_guidelines.html**.

6. The personal data provided in the e-Form will be used by the Research Council (RC), the Grant Review Board and the Secretariat for the purpose of assessing applications to the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF). For successful applications, such data will also be used for project monitoring, research and statistical analysis, promotion, publicity and dissemination purposes as appropriate. Contents of the submitted application set out in Sections 1 to 9 with the status of project will be made available for public access once funding approval is offered.

GRANT APPLICATION FORM

All applicants must confirm that they have read and understood the *Explanatory Notes* and *Guidance Notes* before preparing this application.

Area of project: The HMRF will consider funding health and medical research and health promotion projects in the following areas (please refer to paragraph 1.2.1 of the *Guidance Notes* for details) –

- Public health, human health and health services (e.g. primary care, non-communicable diseases, Chinese medicine, etc.);
- Prevention, treatment and control of infectious diseases, in particular emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases;
- Advanced medical research in specific fields including paediatrics, neuroscience, clinical genetics and clinical trials; and
- Health promotion that facilitates mobilisation of local resources to promote good health and prevention of illness in the community.

Note: *To help the Secretariat identify appropriate peer reviewers and for other administrative purposes, please indicate your proposed project area. The RC may revise the proposed project area of the application, if necessary.*

1. **Submission**: If this is a resubmission (refer to paragraph 2.4.6 of the *Guidance Notes*), please quote the previous reference number, select the rating of the previous submission, and attach a structured response to the Grant Review Board and expert reviewers (if any) in PDF file.

2. **Funding request**: Please select the appropriate category according to the proposed project sum.

3. **Project title**: The project title should be concise but informative and self-explanatory. ***Limit to 25 words***.

4. **Abstract of project**: Presented ***in BMJ house style*** of ***not more than 250 words*** with the following headings: objectives; hypothesis to be tested; design and subjects; instruments; interventions; main outcome measures; data analysis and expected results. For details, please refer to **http://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resources-authors/house-style**.

4a. **Proposed group and field:** Please select at least one group and field. The full list is at **Annex B**.

4b. **Keywords:** Please enter up to 10 keywords for the project.

5. **Potential application**:

5a. Please explain how the results of this project will likely benefit health or health care of Hong Kong. Elaborate in ***not more than 100 words***.

5b. Please enter the reference code of the most relevant ***thematic priority***. Please refer to the Secretariat's website for details and reference codes of the thematic priorities. Applicants should keep under continuous review the question of whether the work has potential wider application, taking appropriate action in accordance with the administering institution's procedures for the protection and exploitation of research findings/project outcomes.

6. **Proposed start and end dates**: The expected start date is counted as the date on which the administering institution first incurs a direct cost for the funded project. The completion date should be entered based on the proposed duration of the grant. The grant period is calculated from the month closest to the start date up to the month including the end date of the project. The project start date must be after the announcement of funding decisions. For example, applications submitted by the closing date of 30 September 2020 should not expect to start before 30 June 2021.

7. **Summary of financial support requested**: The principal applicant is not required to complete Section 7; the e-Form will automatically summarise the funding requested in Section 10. Costs should be rounded to the nearest dollar. Applicants should refer to "Items Allowable and Unallowable for Reimbursement" and "Financial Arrangements" in Appendices A and B of the *Guidance Notes*.

8. **Research ethics/safety approval/consent for accessing third-party data (if applicable)**: If research ethics, safety approval and/or consent for accessing third-party data has/have been received, complete this section. If not, state the current progress of seeking the approval(s) and/or consent in Section 13(k) (if applicable).

9. **Applicants**: Each application should has one principal applicant and not more than nine Co-applicants. The email address of each applicant must be entered twice to minimise incorrect entries. The employment relationship between the principal applicant and the administering institution should be made clear. The principal applicant shall be ***based in a Hong Kong organisation*** throughout the project period and be employed by the administering institution ***at the time of submitting the application***. If an applicant holds more than one post, e.g., one in University and one in Hospital or another Service or Unit, details of the position at the administering institution should be stated. All applicants are expected to be personally and actively engaged in the project.

10. **Details of financial support requested:** All items must be fully justified as stated in Appendix A of the *Guidance Notes.* Costs of work incurred ***before*** the commencement date or the writing-up of such work are ***not allowed***. Application should be based on ***actual prices***. No allowance should be made for inflation.

10a. STAFF DETAILS

Staff costs should be justified in terms of the level of expertise and workload required by the project. Applicants ***should consult their finance office about the pay scale and the appropriate pay point proposed***. In general, salary scales that apply to equivalent workers employed by the administering institution are acceptable. Funding may be requested for full-time (which may be for periods shorter than the duration of the grant) or part-time posts. For part-time staff, the aggregated and averaged part-time effort must meet at least the 20% threshold. Monthly contributions to the Mandatory Provident Fund should also be included and absorbed in the monthly salary instead of stated as a separate item. Staff benefits such as gratuity, bonus, severance payment, untaken leave of staff employed and medical insurance costs will ***not*** be supported.

Information in this section should reflect salary costs for the ***entire*** project, based on the proposed salaries as at the date of the application and the estimated percentage on level of participation in the project. The ***actual*** costs for each financial year of the grant should be entered in "Staff Costs".

Remarks for Section 10(b)-(d): If the grant period exceeds 24 months and the expenses will be incurred more than three financial years, the annual cost of the third financial year and thereafter should be grouped together.

10b. STAFF COSTS

Please provide the annual costs for each post identified in "Staff Details" above during the proposed project period.

10c. OTHER EXPENSES

Other expenses include consumable or equipment items costing less than HK$10,000, conference (i.e. travel and subsistence), publication costs, reference materials, printing and stationery, etc. Only direct costs can be charged to the project grant. Indirect costs of the

project will not be considered.

For incentives

The purchase of gifts, coupons, etc., as incentives/tokens of appreciation for study participants is allowed if well justified with valid reason(s). A governance system shall be in place to adequately monitor the disbursement of incentives to ensure accountability and traceability.

For purchase of services

Purchase of services from non-local organisations, such as consultancy for project, experimental work, Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3)/P3 laboratory facilities, etc., is allowed if it is well justified with valid reason(s), which should include full justifications for not acquiring the resources/facilities in Hong Kong.

For travel and subsistence

The cost of local travel for project staff to attend clinics and training sites, for purposes directly related to the project are allowed.

10d. EQUIPMENT

Only include items dedicated to the project and costing HK$10,000 or above. Items costing less than HK$10,000 should be included under "Other Expenses".

Purchase of particular types of equipment should be well justified by, but not limited to, the needs of the project and cost, performance and specifications. Tendering should be carried out according to the administering institution's procedures. The administering institution should pay attention to the transparency and fairness in the procurement process and follow its disposal procedures properly. Where the relevant guidelines are not in place, the institution should adopt the *Notes on Acquisition and Disposal of Equipment Items for Institutions without Established Guidelines* which can be obtained from the Secretariat.

For computer equipment, software and computing consumables

Advice should be sought from the Secretariat on the relevance and costs of computing equipment/facilities requested in proposed applications for funding. Applicants should therefore list the make and model, quantity, price and annual maintenance costs of equipment along with any special features required, e.g., communications, graphics, etc. In cases where funding is sought for storage media or devices, an estimate in storage capacity (in megabytes) should also be provided.

The purpose of any special software to be developed, e.g., commissioned in house, or modifications of existing software should be detailed and the development time required given in hours or man-months.

If external resources are to be used, the estimated time required, a breakdown of the resources required, and the cost per unit of computing time/purchase of consultancy, should be given.

Any computing consumable to be purchased should be itemised under "Other Expenses" with a breakdown of both quantity and price.

Should computing advice be sought, details of the persons/organisations to be consulted should be given.

11. **Other support, similar or related proposals and track record**: All applicants listed in Section 9 must declare whether any similar grant applications have been submitted ***in the past three years from the closing deadline***, are currently submitted, or will be submitted in the next six months to the HMRF or any of its preceding funding schemes, or other funding agencies (local or overseas). Failure to make declaration shall be subject to penalty as determined by the RC. Please refer to the *Management of Track Records of Applicants* which can be downloaded from https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk.

Proposals rejected or not supported by HMRF or other funding agencies (local or overseas) must

be submitted **as a new application with extensive changes or improvements** made to the rejected application and with full justifications. **Resubmission of the rejected application is not accepted.** Principal applicant should provide (i) all comments raised by the funding agency; (ii) the principal applicant's responses to address these comments; (iii) the revised proposal with highlights of changes made; and (iv) detailed explanation and justifications if no change is made in the proposal. It is always advisable for applicants to declare similar or related proposals when there is uncertainty.

Applicants should declare any duplicate funding in the e-Form. At any time before the announcement of the funding decision of the HMRF application for investigator-initiated projects, applicants are required to notify the Secretariat immediately about (a) any other similar or related application submitted to other funding agencies in addition to those listed in the e-Form; and (b) the funding decision of any similar or related application once available. If the application has been approved, indicate the current status: on-going, completed, withdrawn, terminated, not yet started, etc.

12. Declaration and authorisation: The e-Form must be endorsed by all applicants, the Head of Department (or Head of Agency in NGO), and authorised persons on behalf of the administering institution and finance office via the eGMS. The email address of the Head of Department (or Head of Agency in NGO) must be entered twice to minimise incorrect entries. If the principal applicant has attached co-applicant(s)' physical signature(s) (an email confirmation from co-applicant(s) is accepted), the relevant electronic signature is not required (i.e. the eGMS will not send out notification email to the co-applicant(s) concerned for endorsement.)

13. Depending on the type of proposal submitted, please follow the relevant guidelines as follows –

Proposed research project

Content required for the Area of Project -

- **Public health, human health and health services research**
- **Infectious diseases**
- **Advanced medical research**

Sections (a) – (h) of the proposal, with the standard header "**2019 HMRF Open Call Proposal**", should be **attached as a PDF file** to the e-Form. To ensure consistency and fairness, applicants must strictly comply with the formatting requirements listed below. The Secretariat **will not process applications that do not comply with these formatting requirements.** In particular, insufficiently detailed proposals may be withdrawn.

Format

13 (a) – (d) inclusive: Not more than 4,000 words. **Please provide the word count for Section 13 (a) – (d).**
Research proposals beyond the word limit will NOT be considered.
Figures and tables must be appended separately and SHOULD NOT be embedded within the text.

Margin:	Left at least 2.5cm. Others at least 1.5cm
Font:	At least 10-point. Preferably Arial.
Character spacing:	Normal
Line spacing:	At least Single

The template for Section 13(a) – (h) can be downloaded from the Secretariat's website **https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk**.)

a. **Title:** Same as Section 3

b. **Introduction:** Explain the relevance of the proposal to the scope of the fund and summarise previous work in the field (including any by the applicants) drawing attention to gaps in present knowledge and citing key references.

c. **Aims and hypotheses to be tested**: State the aims and hypotheses, wherever possible, as a list of questions to which answers will be sought.

d. **Plan of investigation**: Give practical details of how answers will be obtained to the questions posed. This should include information on –

(i) Subjects to be included in the study. Where appropriate show a power analysis to support the chosen sample size.

(ii) Methods to be employed, giving references where these are non-standard. Where new methods are being developed, arrangements for establishing validity and reliability should be described. Examples of non-standard questionnaires, tests etc. should accompany the application or their content be clearly indicated.

(iii) Study design described in sufficient detail to allow assessment of workload and timetable and including experiments, observations to be made, randomisation method where relevant, and the use of controls.

(iv) Data processing and analysis including outcome measures, means of validating records, and the type of statistical analysis to be carried out.

e. **Existing facilities**: Describe resources and facilities available for supervision, equipment, space, staffing, relevant departmental interests, and collaboration. Supplementary sponsorship must be fully justified. Applicants shall state clearly whether any supplementary support has been/will be received from other sources, including but not limited to monetary, investigational new drugs/devices, reagents, and consumables and rental of equipment.

f. **Justification of requirements**: The staff requirement should be justified in terms of expertise and workload required by the research. Reasons should be given for selecting particular types of equipment. ***Please refer to the allowable and unallowable items at Appendix A of the Guidance Notes***.

g. **Impact on people's health and health services as well as plan to disseminate research findings to end users**: Describe the underlying purpose of the project, and its possible implications for health and health care in Hong Kong. Where appropriate, describe plans for possible applications arising from the research. Describe the ways in which the research results will be disseminated.

h. **Key references**: Include a maximum of 25 references in Vancouver style. Follow the "*Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals*" at www.icmje.org/index.html for referencing. If it is considered essential to cite work by the applicants that are ***in press*** for publication, please provide a copy (PDF file) in "Section 13 (i) - List of additional materials".

Proposed health promotion project

Content required for the Area of Project - Health promotion

Sections (a) – (h) of the proposal, with the standard header "**2019 HMRF Open Call Proposal – Health Promotion**", should be attached as a PDF file to the e-Form. To ensure consistency and fairness, applicants must strictly comply with the formatting requirements listed below. The Secretariat **will not process applications that do not comply with these formatting requirements**. In particular, insufficiently detailed proposals may be withdrawn.

a. **Title:** Same as Section 3

b. **Justification for conducting the project:** Explain the health needs of the local community (supported by published data or relevant experiences), summarise others' strategies to address the specific needs by reviewing information published locally or overseas, and explain the strategies proposed in this project to address the needs supported by scientific evidence. Key references should be cited.

c. **Aim and objectives:** State the long-term ultimate aims, and a list of objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

d. **Project plan:** Give practical details of how the stated objectives will be achieved. This should include information on –

(i) **Target group** to be included in the project. Justify and explain the feasibility in reaching the target group size.

(ii) **Implementation plan** described in sufficient detail to allow assessment of

workload and **timetable**.

(iii) **Contingency**/**alternative plan** if any problem encountered during implementation.

(iv) Cross-**sector collaboration** including collaborations among public and private sectors, NGOs and tertiary institutions. Collaborations in project implementation between NGOs and tertiary institutions are highly encouraged.

(v) Indicators and targets linked to the stated objectives, which can show to what extent are the objectives achieved.

(vi) Evaluation plan of how and when the indicators and targets will be measured throughout the project period to evaluate to what extent are the objectives achieved, including but not limited to pre- and post-intervention measurements.

(vii) Results **analysis** including how the evaluation results will be processed and interpreted to evaluate to what extent are the objectives achieved, including the type of statistical analysis to be carried out.

e. **Existing facilities**: Describe resources and facilities available for supervision, equipment, space, staffing, relevant departmental interests, and collaboration.

f. **Justification of resource requirements:** The staff requirement should be justified in terms of expertise and workload required by the project. If any income will be generated from the project, please specify how it will be used to offset the project expenditure. If any supplementary support, monetary or non-monetary, has been/will be received from other sources, including but not limited to devices, consumables and rental of equipment, please specify how it will meet the expenditure or resource requirement of the project. **Please refer to the allowable and unallowable items at Appendix A of the *Guidance Notes*.**

g. **Impact and sustainability:** Describe how this project will enhance your community's capacity to promote health in the long run, such as establishment of partnership, transfer of knowledge, enhancement of problem solving abilities, or development of infrastructure. Describe the ways in which the project benefits will be disseminated and sustained after the funding period, such as alternative financial support, adoption of the project by administering institution or other organisation(s), establishment of new policies/procedures, or development of new products.

h. **Key references:** Include a maximum of 25 references.

Section 13(i) – (k) apply to both research projects and health promotion projects–

i. **List of additional materials:** Include figures/tables, study instruments, questionnaires, consent forms, project protocol, implementation guidelines, diagrams of equipment, etc. Figures and tables should be of sufficient size and resolution to allow easy reading. Use colour where applicable. Not more than five figures and/or tables are allowed. List the items that have been attached. All attachments should be as PDF files only. The limit of the total file size is 8MB.

j. **Timetable of work:** In the table provided, describe clearly the key milestones of the project, the date (i.e. months after project commencement) by which these key milestones are expected to be reached, and the resulting deliverable. An example is included for reference, which may be overwritten/deleted in the final submission. Include 3 to 5 key milestones. These milestones will be used to determine the frequency of reporting progress to the Secretariat.

k. **Research ethics/safety approval/consent for accessing third-party data:** Select (☐) the appropriate boxes to confirm if approvals for the respective ethics, safety issues and/or consent for accessing third-party data has been obtained or is being sought from the proper authorities. Provision of the ethics approvals and/or consent is not required at the time of submission. Principal applicants shall submit such approvals and/or consent **within 12 weeks** (or as specified by the Secretariat) after the announcement of funding decisions. Failure to do so will result in withdrawal of grant. Letters of exemption for non-applicable regulatory committees are not required. For details regarding Independent Ethics Committee/Institutional Review Board (IRB), please refer to Section 3 of Efficacy Guidelines (E6 – Good Clinical Practice) published by the International Council for Harmonisation at **https://www.ich.org/page/efficacy-guidelines.**

Clinical Trials: Under regulation 36B of the Pharmacy and Poisons Regulations (Cap 138A), for the purpose of conducting a clinical trial on human beings or medicinal tests on animals, a Clinical Trial Certificate/Medicinal Test Certificate issued by the Department of Health must be obtained prior to the commencement of the research project. Principal applicants conducting clinical trials, in particular those involving the use of Chinese medicine, are strongly advised to confirm the need of a Clinical Trial Certificate/Medicinal Test Certificate from the Department of Health as early as practical (preferably before/during the submission of applications to the HMRF) to avoid delay in project commencement. If a Clinical Trial Certificate/Medicinal Test Certificate is required, failure to present a valid clinical trial certificate by a specified deadline will result in withdrawal of the grant.

14. Report on previous research grants: Report all previous grants supported by the HMRF or any of its preceding funding schemes held by all applicants (if applicable), including projects currently underway and completed research/projects ***in the past three years from the closing deadline***.

If progress, interim, final or dissemination reports for other projects supported by the HMRF are overdue, specify the reasons and indicate when these reports will be submitted. Failure to submit the required reports on time will affect this and future grant applications.

Briefly summarise current perception of the significance of the work done (e.g., apart from knowledge, conceptual or methodological advances, contribution, if any, to health care, medical practice, training, applicability/spin-off) and of the project's significance for your own, your assistants', and your colleagues' scientific development.

Please list full papers published or "in press" in refereed journals with titles, page numbers and co-authorships.

15. Curriculum vitae (CV) and roles & responsibilities of all applicants: Each applicant listed in Section 9 must provide his/her personal particulars and their specific role and responsibilities on this project. ***Up to five most recent relevant publications of applicant(s) in the past three years from the closing deadline*** should be listed.

NOMINATION OF NON-LOCAL REVIEWERS

Nomination of reviewers: The principal applicant is encouraged to nominate up to ***three non-local*** experts whom they consider qualified to review this application. Nomination of experts with experience in specialised fields is particularly welcome. Your nominations will enhance the quality and speed of the review process. The Secretariat shall invite appropriate experts to review the application.

When nominating non-local reviewers, the principal applicant is responsible for the proper and complete declaration of any past or present significant personal and/or professional relationship between any of the applicant(s) listed in Section 9 and the nominated expert(s). Significant relationship includes, but is not limited to, spouse/partner/other relative; close personal friend; employer/employee/business partner; mentor/student; departmental colleague; research collaborator/co-author, etc. Please note that a relationship as co-author includes "in press" articles.

Please elaborate, as appropriate, the name(s) of applicant(s) and the nature and duration of the relationship declared (e.g., when and where the relationship was developed, name/nature of project, publications or events involved, etc.). **Failure to declare potential conflict of interest shall be subject to penalty as determined by the RC. Please refer to the *Management of Track Records of Applicants* which can be downloaded from –**

https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk/english/policies_guidelines/policies_guidelines.html.