Introduction to the Health and Medical Research Fund

Briefing Session for HMRF
Research Fund Secretariat
October 2013
Outline

1. Overview of HMRF
2. Administrative requirements
3. Peer Review Process and Assessment Criteria
4. Tips for success with HMRF
5. Application Timeline for 2013/14

Disclaimer: All materials are for reference only and do not constitute any commitment and/or guarantee of funding.
1. Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF) - Overview

- Set up in Dec 2011 by consolidating the former
  - Health and Health Services Research Fund (HHSRF)
  - Research Fund for the Control of Infectious Diseases (RFCID)
- HMRF broadens the scope further to support advanced medical research
- The consolidated fund has a capital commitment of $1.4 billion
- HMRF is administered by the Food and Health Bureau (FHB)
1a. Overview - Mission of HMRF

- To build research capacity…
- …through the generation and application of evidence-based scientific knowledge in health and medicine to encourage, facilitate, and support health and medical research to:
  - inform health policies
  - improve population health
  - strengthen the health system
  - enhance healthcare practices
  - advance standard and quality of care
  - promote clinical excellence
1b. Overview - Grant Size & Eligibility

- Grant
  - $1 million for up to 2 years
  - Larger size / longer duration may be supported at the discretion of the Grant Review Board
  - Smaller pilot studies are encouraged
- Open to local researchers working in the
  - Public sector
  - Private sector
  - Academic sector
- Collaboration with local / overseas institutions is encouraged
2. Administrative Requirements

- Applied by Principal Applicant (PA) and Administering Institution (AI) together
- PA’s responsibility to obtain ethics approval(s) from institutional boards / committees
  - Provision of ethical approvals during the submission of applications is not required.
  - PAs shall submit such approvals within 8 weeks (or as specified by the Secretariat) after issuance of formal funding approval.
  - Letters of exemption for non-applicable regulatory committees are not required.
  - Note potential for delay for 3rd party regulatory approvals (e.g. clinical trial certificate from Department of Health).
2. Administrative Requirements

- Contractual agreement with FHB
  - Terms and conditions
  - Agreements are signed by PA, AI and the Government
- Financial arrangement administered by AI
  - Certified financial statement and independent audited account
  - Payment of grants by reimbursement of expenditure incurred
- Annual progress and final reports
- Ad hoc reports (e.g. regular subject recruitment updates) on a case-by-case basis
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Peer Review Process

- **Screening**
  - Make sure the applications are in order and within scope

- **First-tier review**
  - By renowned overseas experts (2,000+)
  - 2-4 independent reviewers per application

- **Second-tier review**
  - By Grant Review Board (190+)
  - Independent reviews by Board members and panel discussion

- **Recommendations**
  - Seek Research Council approval
  - Check double funding

- **Final Decision**
  - Respond to GRB Reports and reviewer comment
  - Assess PAs’ response
  - Within 8 weeks: proof of ethics approval

- **Initiate projects**
  - Issue agreement
  - Within 6 months: project starts
  - (all regulatory approvals, manpower, collaborations with partners in place, etc)
3a. Assessment Criteria

- Originality
- Relevance to the fund and thematic priorities
- Significance of the research questions
- Quality of scientific content
- Credibility of design and methods
- Applicability to local context
- Translational potential / value
- Track record of applicants
- Ethical consideration
- Value for money

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### 3b. Grading of Grant Applications

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<tr>
<th><strong>Recommended for support</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended for support subject to clarifications/amendments</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Not recommended for support</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Not worthy of support</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- nil or very minor issues to address only</td>
<td>Principal Applicant will be invited to address comments/concerns raised by external referees and the Grant Review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended for support subject to clarifications/amendments</strong></td>
<td>Confirmation of funding is subject to satisfactory response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not recommended for support</strong></td>
<td>Not successful</td>
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4a. Tips for success with HMRF – Scientific considerations (ABCDE)

- Assemble the right team
- Be clear about why, and what you will do and what the project will deliver
- Consider potential pitfalls, alternative approaches and prepare contingency plans
- Don’t be overambitious; be robust
- Ensure all sections of the application tie in well with each other

(adapted from “Confessions of a grey reviewer” by Prof R Fielding)
4b. Tips for success with HMRF - Tactical considerations

- Use the classification system wisely
- Nominate potential overseas reviewers carefully
- Show you have taken steps to ensure project delivery
  - Recruitment-dependent projects
  - Third party data-dependent projects
  - Regulatory approvals
- Beware of multiple submissions
  - Submitting many complex, unwieldy and poorly written proposals will decrease chance of success
5. Application Timeline 2013/14

- 13 Dec 2013: closing date
- Jul 2014: decision letters issued
  - PA to respond to GRB & reviewer comments
- Aug 2014: review of PA responses
- Sep 2014: final approval / reject letters issued; prepare contractual agreements
- Projects to commence within 6 months of final approval letter
2013 open call for HMRF

- Open from 30 August 2013
- Closing on 13 December 2013
- Applications must be submitted on the new electronic application form (e-form)
- Obtain the updated submission procedure and details from the Secretariat’s website

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Further Information
http://www.fhb.gov.hk/grants

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