

# UKRI Mental Health Platform (MHP) Collaboration and Innovation (C&I) Awards Review Process and Scoring Criteria

## 1. Overview of the Review Process

The review process runs twice a year and takes place after each funding call closes and the applications have passed eligibility checks. The funding calls run between July 2025 and January 2028.

Applications that progress are reviewed by an independent Review Committee, with an additional peer & PPIE review step for applications  $\geq$  £20,000. All applicants receive written feedback once the process concludes. Unsuccessful applicants may re-apply once more in a future funding call, if applicable.

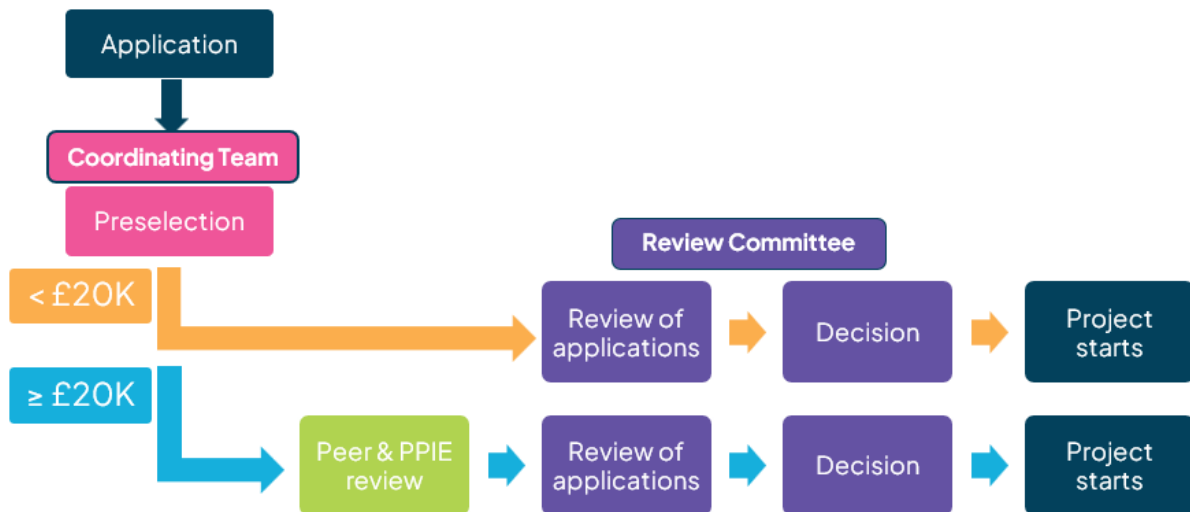


Figure 1. MHP Collaboration & Innovation process, running between July 2025 and January 2028.

## 2. Eligibility Checks

Eligibility screening is carried out by the MHP Coordinating Team (CT). Applicants are notified of outcomes according to the timeline published on the MHP website.

**It is the applicant responsibility to:**

- Apply to the correct funding opportunity.
- Submit a complete application, including all required documents named according to guidance on the application form available from the [MHP website](#)
- Ensure all documents are readable and submitted before the advertised deadline.

**It is the MHP CT's responsibility to check that:**

- All documents meet naming, formatting, and technical requirements.
- The application form is complete and consent for data processing is provided.
- All appendices meet acceptance criteria (page limits, formats, font size).

- The proposal meets the minimum eligibility requirements outlined below.

### 3. Minimum Eligibility Requirements

<b>Minimum eligibility requirements</b>	<p><b>Applicant and Project Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Application form completed in full, including research and budget plan</li> <li>○ Consent was provided to process data.</li> <li>○ The main applicant(s) must be a current member of the MHP.</li> <li>○ The project must link at least two of the MHP Hubs</li> <li>○ The project must address one of the funding themes described in the application form.</li> <li>○ People with lived experience were involved in the design of the application</li> <li>○ Industry partners involved in applications for this award must be part of the MHP Industry Alliance</li> <li>○ The leads of the Hubs and any Collaborators involved provided a letter of support to the project.</li> <li>○ Letters of support from the Collaborators must include a statement that they have read and agreed to the <a href="#">MHP Privacy Policy</a> and their data use.</li> <li>○ Attachments have been submitted as per requirements.</li> <li>○ The project must be completed by 31 December 2028. Projects are expected to start within 6 months of the decision being made and within 1 month of contract being exchanged.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Budget Requirements</b></p> <p>The proposed budget is between £10,000- £300,000 (100% FEC, cost to funder) and excludes ineligible costs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Eligible costs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Direct Project Costs: 100% directly incurred and directly allocated project costs can be claimed, including staff time, travel and subsistence on individual projects.</li> <li>○ Costs of networking activities and events, engagement and knowledge exchange, including travel and subsistence.</li> <li>○ Equipment valued &lt; £10,000.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Ineligible costs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Duplication of other sources of funding that would be more appropriate for the activity to be funded.</li> <li>○ Indirect or estates costs at the research organisation.</li> <li>○ Any costs relating to Intellectual Property protection including but not limited to registering, maintaining, or supporting patents or property rights.</li> <li>○ Equipment valued ≥ £10,000.</li> <li>○ Undergraduate or postgraduate activities or training, or core PhD training including tuition or bench fees.</li> <li>○ Contributions to existing knowledge transfer partnerships.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The salary costs of investigators and staff employed on existing funded Hub awards are also not eligible for inclusion.</li></ul> |
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## 4. Conflict of Interest during the Review Process

The MHP is committed to ensuring the review process is as objective and transparent as possible, and that any potential conflict of interest (COI) is minimised or removed. We recognise that individuals who may be involved in the review process may also be active members of the Hubs associated with the application or involved in a variety of other projects that may create a potential or perceivable COI.

The MHP CT will follow the [MHP Declaration of Interest process](#). Reviewers will be excluded from reviewing and scoring an application if they have:

- Direct involvement in the proposed project (e.g. co-lead, collaborator)
- Close professional relationship (e.g. supervisor, Mentor, collaborator or co-applicant with the main applicant in other projects)
- Employment at either the current or proposed host institution named on the application
- Personal or financial interest in the outcomes of the application

We ask **applicants** to identify during the application stage any potential COI with Collaborators, Hub leads, PPIE or other members of the platform.

All **Reviewers** are expected to declare any potential COI when they are invited to be part of the Committee. If a COI is identified during the review process, the reviewer must withdraw immediately from reviewing the application.

Also to note:

- Hub leads, researchers or PPIE reviewers involved in the design of the application will not be reviewing the application. However, they may review the application if they are indirectly involved in the project (e.g. part of the same Hub but not employed by the institutions participating in the project)

## 5. Review Committee Meeting and Assessment

The MHP CT will submit the applications for review as per the timeline outlined on the MHP website.

Proposals will be evaluated using the assessment criteria and the scoring system outlined below.

**For projects with budgets < £20,000**, there will be only one step review process, where a Review Committee will review and score the applications based on the scoring criteria below and decide which applications are fundable in each round.

**For projects with budgets ≥ £20,000**, the proposals will be firstly reviewed by independent peer and PPIE reviewers. All applicants will receive feedback on their application and will have the opportunity to respond within the timeline outline on the MHP website.

The peer & PPIE review results and responses from applicants will be shared with the Review Committee. The Review Committee will review and score the applications, and decide which applications will be funded, using the same scoring criteria, taking in consideration the peer & PPIE review and applicants’ responses.

Peer reviewers will be independent researchers, selected from outside of the MHP and Hubs and will have significant experience and expertise in their field of work. PPIE reviewers will also be selected based on the relevance of their lived experience in severe mental illness (SMI) as patients, carers, or service users to the area under study in the application, and good understanding of PPIE role in research.

The Review Committee consists of:

- Designated Committee Members (usually external reviewers)
- Review Committee Members (Hub representatives)
- Independent PPIE members with relevant lived experience and understanding of PPIE in research

The Review Committee is usually chaired by the Director of the MHP. UKRI MRC representatives may join the Review Committee meeting as Observer throughout the applications review and decision process.

Committee recruitment upholds MHP’s Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) commitments. Our goals are to ensure that the committee is diverse and representative of the broader scientific community and to ensure a broad range of perspectives in decision-making processes, which can lead to more comprehensive and impactful research outcomes.

The Review Committee will review and score the application and provide outcome (funding recommendations) to the Leadership Team.

## 6. Assessment Criteria and Scoring System

Applications are scored on a **5-point scale (5 = Outstanding/Fundable, 1 = Poor/Not Fundable)** across the three weighted criteria:

<b>1. Team Strength, Collaboration and Research Environment (25%):</b> Strength and suitability of the team and research environment to deliver the project.
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<p><b>Team and Collaboration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team demonstrates the right balance of skills and experience to deliver the project.</li> <li>• Applicants must demonstrate a strong commitment to collaborative work within the MHP</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and appropriate.</li> <li>• Collaborators (including Hubs and partners) show clear commitment and value-added contributions</li> <li>• Cross-Hub and/or Hub-external partner collaboration is well-planned</li> </ul>
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**Research Environment:**

- The team has access to a high-quality supportive environment and the required infrastructure, services, datasets or samples to deliver the project.

**2. Impact and Strategic alignment (25%):** Alignment with MHP priorities and potential impact on people living with SMI.

**Strategic alignment:**

- Applications above £100,000 must demonstrate that they are uniquely suited to the aims of the MHP and could not compete for funding elsewhere, such as through regular UKRI routes or other funding agencies.
- Applications must demonstrate alignment with MHP's strategic priorities and Hubs goals. They should also explain how the project expands the value of individual Hub's research.

**Impact:**

- Clear and realistic strategy for translating research outputs into tangible impact.
- The project addresses a timely and significant challenge in mental health, with clear relevance to people with SMI.
- Strong integration of inclusive PPIE throughout the project lifecycle
- Applications must describe equitable partnerships will be created, ensuring fair support, remuneration, recognition, and timely feedback for all involved.
- PPIE budget is appropriate for the PPIE activities plan proposed
- Applicants can submit plans proposing involvement, engagement or co-production with people with lived experience (PWLE). PPI plans must follow the [UK Standards for Public Involvement](#)

**3. Research Quality, Innovation and Delivery (50%):** Scientific quality, innovation and feasibility of the research plan.

**Innovation:**

- Ambitious, high-risk/high-reward research with transformative potential
- Demonstrates innovation in approach, design, methods, or technology, while building on existing Hub work.

**Research Quality:**

- Research plan must have well-structured work packages and realistic methodology, supported by appropriate risk mitigation and a deliverable timeline. Strong scientific rationale (e.g. literature or data).
- Robust data management plan ensuring quality, security, and data sharing. The plan must include the type of data used, format and scale, including appropriate statistical power justification. Applicants are expected to comply with the MHP [Data Sharing policy](#) and all data generated must be deposited on DATAMIND's Trusted Research Environment.
- The Project must actively embed diversity, equity and inclusion in research design, participation, and implementation. Applicants must demonstrate consideration of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) principles in the research design, ensuring it reflects the diversity of the population affected by the condition(s) under study. Proposed research outcomes must be significant and meaningful for the target population. Any limitations in applying EDI principles must be clearly justified.

**Project delivery:**

- Applicants must include plans to communicate and share research outputs with other MHP researchers, adhering to the [MHP Data Sharing Policy](#).
- Ethical considerations are clearly identified, evaluated and addressed.
- Budget plan must be submitted with well-justified costs and deliver good value for money. A max budget of £300k (cost to funder, at 100% FEC) may be requested. Costs must be in British Pounds (GBP).
- PPIE members involved in ECR projects should be offered payment for their contributions and these costs accounted in the budget plan.
- Projects involving matched-funding, or an industrial partner, are encouraged.
- For applications submitted under the MRC Industry Collaboration Framework, the following criteria will be assessed:
  - The collaboration is appropriate for the delivery of the research objectives and is a good use of public funding
  - The collaboration will be managed effectively throughout the project
  - The contributions from the company partner have been costed appropriately

## 7. Awards Process and Next Steps

Following review, outcomes and feedback are communicated to all applicants and the UKRI MRC. Successful applicants (“awardees”) proceed to contract initiation with the MHP CT and the University of Edinburgh Research Office (ERO).

### Contracting

As the awardee is associated with a host institution (e.g. academic institution, charity), the institution will be responsible for signing the contract. They will also be responsible for receiving and monitoring the award and paying the awardee for their time in the project.

### Expectations for Awardees

Awardees must:

- Start the project within 6 months of the decision and within 1 month of contract signing.
- Comply with the [MHP values](#), [Code of Conduct](#) and [Data Sharing policy](#), and relevant [MRC policies and guidance](#).
- Secure necessary ethical approvals before research begins.
- Research data generated by the project must be deposited on DATAMIND’s Trusted Research Environment.
- Spend funds as approved in the application.
- Keep in touch with the relevant teams (MHP CT, PPIE Steering Group, Hubs Leads and/or Collaborators) to identify any support needs and progress.
- Submit **bi-annual project reports** to the MHP CT
- Submit a **final project report** within **one month** of project completion.

For applications submitted under the MRC Industry Collaboration Framework, successful applicants will also need to submit a copy of the signed collaboration agreement to the MHP Coordinating Team and the MRC, within three months of the issue of the award letter and before the project begins.

Failure to provide the information requested for industry or company partners under ICF could result in the application being rejected. The applicant is recommended to discuss the goals and conditions of any collaboration with an industry or company with the technology transfer or contracts office before applying. A copy of the collaboration agreement must be signed by all partners, before an ICF award starts.

### **Additional Guidance and Resources:**

The following resources offer support for PPIE, EDI, and costing involvement activities:

- PPIE Guidance
  - [UK Standards for Public Involvement](#)
  - [Guidance for applicants on working with people and communities | NIHR](#)
  - [10 for 10: Public involvement in mental health research | The McPin Foundation](#)
  - [NIHR Guidance on co-producing a research project](#)
  - [Embedding lived experience in mental health research | Funding Guidance | Wellcome](#)
- EDI Guidance
  - [Embedding diversity in research design – MRC – UKRI](#)
  - [UKRI Guidance for equality, diversity and inclusion](#)
  - [NIHR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit](#)
- Costing PPIE Activities
  - [Payment guidance for researchers and professionals | NIHR](#)