

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**  
**ON GENERAL COOPERATION**  
**Between**  
**THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR**  
**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT OF VIET NAM**  
**And**  
**THE UNITED KINGDOM RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

This Memorandum of Understanding is made between the following parties:

1. The National Foundation for Science and Technology Development of Viet Nam (NAFOSTED);
  2. The United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI)
- (Hereafter referred to as the “the Party” or collectively referred as ‘the Parties’)

**ARTICLE 1: BACKGROUND**

NAFOSTED and UKRI are all charged with fostering and supporting academic research within their own communities in their respective countries. The Parties also recognise that the best research in all countries may be delivered by working with the best researchers internationally.

**ARTICLE 2: THE UNDERSTANDING**

1. The Parties intend to identify opportunities to support bilateral and multilateral Joint Research Projects (JRPs) in the scientific fields mutually agreed upon by NAFOSTED and UKRI.
2. The first proposed joint call (“the First Call”) is under framework of UKRI Southeast Asia Regional Funding Opportunity on Infectious Diseases of Epidemic and Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) Potential:
  - a. UKRI and NAFOSTED intend to collaborate through the UKRI SEA Infectious Diseases of Epidemic and AMR Potential funding activity to support UK Vietnam partnerships. UKRI has an indicative budget of up to £21 million for this funding activity, with an estimated £3 million allocated to support partnership with Vietnam (subject to the number and quality of applications, expected to support up to 10 JRPs). NAFOSTED may provide up to VND25 billion to support Vietnamese researchers to conduct up to 10 JRPs.
  - b. The Parties may jointly finance any agreed joint projects for a period of 03 (three) years, with each Party providing financial support for its own researchers, according to its own terms and conditions.

3. Potential future joint calls: any potential future joint funding calls will be discussed and may be agreed between UKRI (represented by one of its research councils) and NAFOSTED. The budget, scope of research and delivery mechanism for any future calls may be negotiated and decided prior to each respective call by the Parties.

### **ARTICLE 3: ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION**

1. The Parties intend to work together to identify opportunities to support joint UK – Vietnam collaboration in research & innovation, including facilitating high-quality research projects through a joint call for proposals and other mechanisms.
2. The Parties also intend to seek opportunities for other cooperation activities that are mutually agreed to enhance and strengthen the collaboration of both sides.
3. The Parties agree to consider opportunities to support staff capacity building for the NAFOSTED aimed at enhancing mutual understanding and benefits.
4. The principles of implementation for any joint activity will be negotiated and may be agreed between NAFOSTED and UKRI as the activity is developed, and contains these main points:
  - a. Applications will consist of Principal Investigators from both the UK and Vietnam. Each application will be identified clearly as a collaborative proposal under the UK - Vietnam Research MoU, in accordance with specific guidance from NAFOSTED and UKRI.
  - b. Applicants from Vietnam and from the UK will satisfy the eligibility criteria of the relevant NAFOSTED and UKRI respectively.
  - c. The approach to receiving and reviewing applications will be set out in a management plan for each activity and guidance to the applicants will be jointly developed between the Parties.
  - d. The evaluation of the proposals and final selection will be carried out in collaboration between NAFOSTED and UKRI and will involve expert external peer review, including a joint evaluation panel established by both Parties. Both Parties will ensure the agreed approach will fully respect their own specific rules, regulations, and practices. The funding recommendations will be forwarded to NAFOSTED and UKRI for final acceptance, who will communicate their mutual agreement and decision to the applicants (at their absolute discretion).
  - e. The management plan and the call document of the proposed First Call are attached to this MoU (these documents will be updated as agreed by the Parties); for Potential future joint calls such documents may be negotiated and agreed between NAFOSTED and UKRI.

### **ARTICLE 4: CONFIDENTIALITY**

1. The Parties assure confidential treatment of any obtained information or data related to the joint activities.

2. Details regarding the handling of sensitive data will be set out in a separate Data Sharing Agreement between the Parties.

#### **ARTICLE 5: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

1. The intellectual property rights will follow current laws and regulations of each of the Parties own policies and requirements.
2. Where it is necessary to clearly define the intellectual property rights and related rights of each party, UK and Vietnamese Principal Investigators will consult their host institutions and other relevant organizations concerning their relevant IP regulations. If applicable, the UK and Vietnamese Principal Investigators will discuss and submit an additional agreement on sharing of intellectual property rights before signing the funding contract.

#### **ARTICLE 6: SAFEGUARDING PROVISIONS**

1. The Parties intend to:
  - a. Take reasonable steps to prevent actual, attempted or threatened Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse or Sexual Harassment by their employees;
  - b. Take reasonable steps to ensure that individuals are enabled to report concerns and complaints of actual, attempted or threatened exploitation, abuse or harassment;
  - c. Adopt and follow robust procedures for the reporting and investigation of actual, attempted or threatened Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse or Sexual Harassment by their employees, including reporting such matters to the relevant authorities; and
  - d. To the extent permitted by law the Parties agree to report any complaints of actual, attempted or threatened Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse or Sexual Harassment to each other where the complaint relates to the activities funded or undertaken relating to this MoU.

#### **ARTICLE 7: ADDITIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS**

1. Nothing in this MoU shall affect the rights and obligations of the Parties arising from their other bilateral and multilateral agreements.
2. Any differences or disputes concerning the interpretation or application of this MoU shall be settled by consultation and amicable discussion between the Parties.
3. This Memorandum of Understanding is not exhaustive and is not intended to be legally binding. Nothing in this memorandum shall operate to oblige either Party to enter into any agreement or limit any agreement into which the parties enter

#### **ARTICLE 8: DURATION AND TERMINATION**

1. This MoU shall come into effect from the date the document is signed by the last party and shall remain valid for a period of five years. The Parties may consider future agreements based on joint evaluation of the activities carried out under this

MoU. This MoU may be automatically extended unless a written notice of termination has been given by either side in accordance with clause 2 of this Article.

2. This MoU may be terminated by either Party by written notice of termination to the other Party with an anticipation of no less than three months of the date of the intended termination. Such a termination will not affect activities already approved jointly or in progress up to the date of termination.

This MoU was signed electronically in one original in English

For the  
National Foundation for Science and  
Technology Development

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dr. PHAM, Dinh Nguyen  
Date:

For the  
United Kingdom Research and  
Innovation

EXECUTIVE CHAIR OF THE  
MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL



Professor Patrick Chinnery  
Date: 24 April 2024

## **ANNEX 1. CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2024**

### **NAFOSTED-UKRI Joint Research Projects**

**Joint Research Projects: Call for Proposals 2024**

**Opening time: March.2024**

**Closing time: May.2024**

**A maximum of 10 projects will be funded for this call**

## **1. Introduction**

In 2024, The National Foundation for Science and Technology Development of Viet Nam (NAFOSTED) and United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) represented by the Medical Research Council (MRC) are launching a joint call for the submission of applications to conduct joint research projects (JRPs) which is under the framework of UKRI Southeast Asia Regional Funding Opportunity on Infectious Diseases of Epidemic and Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) Potential.

## **2. Joint Research Projects**

Grants for Joint Research Projects (JRPs) are aimed at promoting collaborative projects with clearly defined goals, involving at least one partner based in UK and one based in Vietnam. Applications should describe ambitious research and propose innovative approaches. The research is to be carried out at the research facilities involved; reciprocal visits and short stays in UK for researchers from Vietnam and vice versa are possible within the scope of a JRP.

The proposed duration of project is 03 (three) years.

## **3. Area of research**

This call for proposals is open to research areas related to infectious diseases of epidemic and AMR Potential (allowing for both basic research and use inspired research)

## **4. Eligibility**

Applications must consist of Principal Investigators (PIs) from both the UK and Vietnam. They bear the main responsibility for the project, including its technical and administrative coordination as well as the timely delivery of scientific and financial reports. Further applicants based in UK, Vietnam and/or other SEA countries can also participate in a JRP.

### **Eligibility criteria for UK applicants:**

The principal investigation and research members must meet UKRI's eligibility requirements.

### **Eligibility criteria for Vietnamese applicants**

The Principal Investigator (PI), Research Organisation (RO) and research team members on the Vietnamese side must all meet the eligibility requirements of NAFOSTED as stated in the Circular No.12/2018/TT-BKHHCN dated on August 31<sup>st</sup> 2018 regulating establishment and management of collaboration programs between NAFOSTED and its international partners to fund for joint research projects and scientific activities (written in Vietnamese).

Each applicant on Vietnamese side can participate in maximum two (02) projects funded by NAFOSTED at one time, of which being PI in maximum one (01) project. Proposals in which the PI exceeds this allowance will be deemed ineligible.

## **5. Funding**

Each participating agency will secure and commit appropriate levels of funds to support in-country components. Budgets may vary across funders and the management of any discrepancy will be discussed in the assessment section.

Within this call:

- UKRI has an indicative budget of up to £21m for this funding activity, with an estimated £3m allocated to support partnership with Vietnam (subject to the number and quality of applications).
- NAFOSTED may provide up to VND25 billion to support Vietnamese researchers to conduct up to 10 JRPs.

### **Eligible costs in UK:**

The UKRI regulations apply to the UK budget.

With regard to international travel and subsistence, the overall principle is that airfare and insurance will be covered under the funded budget of the sending country, while accommodation, meals, subsistence, and local travel will be paid by the country hosting the visit.

### **Eligible costs in Vietnam:**

NAFOSTED regulations apply to the Vietnamese budget (Circular No. 02/2023/TT-BKHHCN and Joint Circular No. 27/2015/TTLT-BKHHCN-BTC). Please note that the requested budget shall be assessed by NAFOSTED and items that do not show clear relevance to research needs in the research plan or do not match national cost-norms and regulations can be cut down.

With regard to international travel and subsistence, the overall principle is that airfare and insurance will be covered under funded budget of the sending country, while accommodation, meals, subsistence, and local travel will be paid by the country hosting the visit.

## **6. Submission process**

UKRI will administer the processing of applications on behalf of all funders, including an Expression of Interest (EoI) stage and full application stage.

### **Expression of interest:**

Applicants will submit a light-touch Expression of interest (EoI) to UKRI (MRC) [via a survey tool](#). The EoI will include an outline of the anticipated research

programme, a list of project partners, and an overview of funds requested, broken down by country, and an outline of any ethical implications.

This EoI stage will not be compulsory, it is rather a tool for the funders to better understand expected demand and to prepare for peer review.

**Full application:**

Full proposals will be submitted through UKRI's '[The Funding Service](#)' (TFS). All proposals will cover full details for the entire collaborative project, including:

- Proposal cover letters and statements of support
- Central scientific case (project details and methodology)
- Team details and, track record (Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI))
- Work plan
- Data management plan
- Ethical information
- Full budget details and justification (including budgets requested from all funders)

Applicants will also be requested to submit their proposals to their respective funding agencies, either using the funders standard application forms or by submitting a PDF copy of the TFS submitted application. To ensure fairness and consistency, the joint peer review process will be based on the proposals submitted via UKRI and applicants will be asked to ensure the same information is submitted through both routes.

When preparing and submitting a proposal, applicants will comply with the application process of UKRI and will be required to ensure that the proposed activities of each collaborator will meet the eligibility and remit requirements of their respective funding agency.

All proposals must adhere to the overall budget restrictions and guidelines of the funding opportunity, as well as any specific limitations set by the funding agencies to which they are applying. Applicants should provide a Statement of Support from each research organisation involved in the proposal as part of the application.

Neither the UKRI nor NAFOSTED will be held responsible for non-submission of an application.

Note: If selected for funding, Vietnamese award holders shall need to submit an additional research proposal and other documents according to Vietnamese relevant laws and regulations in Vietnamese language to NAFOSTED.

**Submission on TFS:** Applicants can find the Instructions for submitting applications on the TFS system on the website of UKRI.



**Deadline for Expression of interest:** 14/4/2024

**Deadline for submission of full applications:** 30/5/2024, 4 pm UK time is equivalent to 30/5/2024, 23 pm Vietnam time.

Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

## **7. Assessment process**

All applications will be assessed through written peer review by external independent experts before evaluating by a Joint Funding Panel. All Funders will jointly agree the projects to be funded based on the Joint Funding Panel recommendations

### **Written peer review**

Each application will receive three written comments.

All reviewers will comment on set criteria including the excellence of the research and the feasibility of the study design. All reviewers will provide a score.

The written reviews will be shared with applicants and the applicants will be given an opportunity to provide a written response to the review comments.

### **Panel meeting**

A Joint Funding Panel will be established, including experts proposed by all funders. Based on peer reviews and the assigned panel members' reviews, each proposal will be discussed and given a score.

The Joint Funding Panel will provide a ranked list of funding recommendations to be considered at the funders meeting.

### **Funders meeting**

Following the Joint Funding Panel, Funders will hold the final decision-making responsibility, however, will commit to adhering to the recommended ranked list of proposals as closely as possible. It is recognised that country funding requests and budgets may vary and the final funding list may therefore require some flexibility.

### **Assessment criteria**

The assessment criteria will be agreed with funding partners but is likely to include the following (with scientific excellence as a priority):

- Vision of the project: novelty, importance and timeliness of the proposed research, the impact of the research.
- Approach of the project: design and feasibility of the proposed methodology
- Research partnership: including strength and clarity of the collaboration and opportunities provided, the added value of the partnership and the appropriateness of the governance arrangements

- Capacity strengthening plans of the project
- Capability of the applicants and the project team to deliver the project
- Ethical and responsible research and innovation considerations of the project
- Value for money and equity of the project

### **Conflicts of interest**

UKRI defines a conflict of interest as a situation in which an individual's ability to exercise judgement or act in one role is, could be, or is seen to be impaired or otherwise influenced by their involvement in another role or relationship.

The funding agencies will seek to ensure that no peer reviewer or panel member will be asked to review an application on which they have a conflict of interest.

### **8. Funding decisions**

Funders will fund from the top of the ranked list downward until the budget of any funding organisation is exhausted.

At this point, funders may agree to skip to the next highest-ranking proposal that can be funded with the remaining budgets.

The funders meeting will agree a list of proposals to fund, subject to any further internal processes required by any funding agency. At NAFOSTED, the funding recommendation will need to be approved by the Board of Trustees for final decision.

No outcomes or feedback will be communicated to the applicants until all funding is confirmed by each funding agency. Final funding commitments will be detailed in the co-funding documentation between the funding partners.

Funding will then be administered by each relevant agency, as per their standard processes, terms and conditions and requirements.

### **9. Post-award considerations**

Awardees must comply with the award conditions and reporting requirements of the participating agencies from which they receive funding.

Awardees will be required to acknowledge all funding agencies that have provided funding for the relevant grant in any publications arising from the grant.

Requests for extensions will be considered by the participating agencies using standard procedures. Funding agencies will inform the other funding partners if they intend to make any material changes to any award (e.g. if they decide they wish to cease funding following an interim review, significant extensions etc).

### **10. Ethics**

Any research activities with ethical implications will be required to comply with local ethical processes and requirements

Each funder will be responsible for ensuring compliance with ethical requirements within their country

In addition, UKRI ethics policy requires UK researchers to seek local ethical approval for any relevant research activities, regardless of the location of the activity. Complying with this requirement will be the responsibility of the UK PIs, with input as required from their international co-PIs.

### **11. Periodic and Final Reporting**

UK and Vietnamese Principal Investigators (PIs) will report separately to the UKRI and NAFOSTED, as the following:

**In UK:** The UK PIs will be responsible for reporting to the UKRI. Standard UKRI regulations apply both for the financial and the scientific reports.

**In Vietnam:** The Vietnamese PIs will be responsible for reporting to NAFOSTED. Standard NAFOSTED regulations apply both for the financial and the scientific reports. NAFOSTED shall conduct periodic assessments of the projects every year from the date of the signed contract, as well as a final assessment of the project after its completion.

**If requested,** the UK PIs and the Vietnamese PIs shall jointly submit a comprehensive report for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of funding.

### **12. Payments**

**In UK (UKRI funding):** Standard UKRI rules apply.

**In Vietnam:** Standard NAFOSTED rules apply. In principle, Vietnamese budgets are transferred in parts right after contract signing and continuously every next 1 year based on the results of periodic and final assessments of the project.

### **13. VAT**

**In UK (UKRI funding)** The UK VAT's regulations apply to the UK budget.

**In Vietnam:** Research expenses occurred during a JRP can be subject to VAT or other taxes and charges and therefore are also subject to current relevant Vietnamese regulations.

### **14. Publications, Collaboration Agreement and Intellectual Property**

The PIs are obliged to publish research results generated by the JRPs in appropriate form and according to UKRI's and NAFOSTED's standards as well as regulations.

The basis of collaboration between the involved Research organisations and Researchers of funded project is expected to be set out in a formal Collaboration Agreement. The Collaboration Agreement should include ownership of intellectual property (IP) generated during the project and rights to exploitation, and costs of IP management. It should also include the allocation of resources throughout the

project. It is the responsibility of the research organisations to put such an agreement in place before the research begins. The terms of collaboration shall not conflict with the terms and conditions of any funding partner associated with the application. *Please note that no specific format for this agreement will be provided by UKRI or NAFOSTED. The involved Research organisations are free to elaborate such a document as long as it contains the necessary basic information.*

In terms of intellectual property rights, PIs are subject to the relevant UK and Vietnamese laws and regulations on intellectual property.

In principle, on the Vietnamese side, the rights to the research results gained from the implementation of scientific and technological tasks funded by NAFOSTED are owned by the State as regulated by the Vietnamese laws. On the UK side, the rights to the research results gained in the course of research work funded by the UKRI are owned by the PIs or their employer. PIs are obliged to define such rights together with their employer by no later than the time the funded research work is completed.

## 15. Further information and contacts

<p><b>In UK:</b> The United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) ...</p>	<p><b>In Vietnam</b> The National Foundation for Science and Technology Development of Viet Nam ..... Planning and General Affairs Department 39 Tran Hung Dao, Hoan Kiem, Hanoi Phone: +84 (24) 39367750 – ext. ..... E-mail: ..... or nafosted@most.gov.vn Website: www.nafosted.gov.vn</p>
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## **ANNEX 2. MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE 2024 PROPOSALS CALL**

### **Introduction**

1. This document is intended to provide an overview of management and operational issues concerning the UKRI SEA regional call on Infectious Diseases between the following funding organisations:
  - UKRI (led by MRC)
  - NAFOSTED
  
2. The aim of this management plan is to document key decisions agreed between the funding partners in the following areas:
  - Overall principles and aims
  - Budget and financial requirements
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Scope
  - Engagement of third countries (ODA DAC Least Developed Countries)
  - Timeline
  - Submission process
  - Assessment process
  - Funding decisions
  - Post award considerations
  - Evaluation
  - Ethics
  - Collaboration agreements and Intellectual property
  - Data sharing
  
3. This document is not a legally binding document. This document will sit alongside a MomouU and data sharing agreement.

### **Overall Principles and Aims**

4. The call aims to support bilateral and multilateral (minimum 2 countries - UK and Vietnam) research teams with three-year grants in the research area of ‘infectious diseases of relevance to SEA and with epidemic and AMR potential’
5. The co-funding mechanism will allow bilateral and multilateral research teams to submit a single collaborative proposal assessed through a single external peer

review exercise, administered on behalf of all co-funders by UKRI. Details of this process are outlined in this management plan.

6. This is a collaborative activity with all decisions agreed across co-funding partners.
7. Each country's successful applicants will be supported directly by their funding agency, ensuring agencies maintain control over their budgets and awards. In addition, the UKRI budget can be used for additional activities, including:
  - Engagement of third country researchers (SEA LDCs)
  - Capacity building across the partnership
  - Collaboration management costs
8. All applicants will be required to submit applications within the eligibility requirements and remits of their country funder. Clear guidance regarding the eligibility and remit requirements of each funder will be included in the funding call documentation.

### **Budget and financial requirements**

9. Each participating agency will secure and commit appropriate levels of funds to support in-country components. Budgets may vary across funders and the management of any discrepancy will be discussed in the assessment section.
10. Upon cross-funder agreement of successful proposals, each funder will fund their researchers directly, according to their standard terms and conditions and other requirements. Funders will aim to coordinate funding timescales as closely as possible.
11. Each funder will be responsible for confirming that the financial requests for the application components in their country are appropriate and in line with the funding agency rules. Additionally, the reviewers will be asked to comment on the overall value for money of the proposals.
12. Expected financial commitment by funder:
  - UKRI has an indicative budget of up to £21m for this funding activity, with an estimated £3m allocated to support partnership with Vietnam (subject to the number and quality of applications).
  - NAFOSTED may provide up to VND25 billion to support Vietnamese researchers to conduct up to 10 JRPs

### **Roles and responsibilities**

13. This activity will be delivered through a funding collaboration
14. UKRI will lead the administration of the funding call
15. Decisions will be made by consensus across all funders

16. Key responsibilities of each party is as follows:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsible organisation</b>
Networking events	Central organisation Identification of attendees	UKRI (with input from co-funders on agenda and approach) Each funder will identify attendees from their own country
Development and publication of funding call	Development of central text Development of country annexes Publicising in country	UKRI (with input and agreement from co-funders) All funders to develop all
Responding to queries	General queries Country-specific query	UKRI (an FAQ will be developed) Relevant funder
Eligibility checking	Confirming researcher and remit eligibility for relevant country Checking fit to call	All funders UKRI
Administration of written peer review and applicant response	Identifying relevant peer reviews Administration of process	All funders to recommend reviewers from their own countries UKRI
Panel meeting	Administration Identification of panel members	UKRI All funders to identify their own external representatives
Funding decisions	Administration Decisions	UKRI All funders to confirm the applications they will support and agree list to fund
Administration of funding	Informing applicants of outcome	All

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsible organisation</b>
	Making awards and providing funding	All funders will award the relevant research components through their existing systems as per agreed schedule
Monitoring	Monitoring awards	All funders as per existing mechanism and T&Cs
Evaluation	Evaluation of projects	All funders as per existing mechanisms and T&Cs
	Evaluation of scheme	UKRI (with input from all funders) [To be confirmed]

### Scoping

1. The scope of the funding call will be developed in collaboration with all partners.
2. All partners will be asked to provide detail of their strategic interests, relevant remits and any other relevant information. UKRI will utilise this information to develop draft call text for discussion and approval by all partners.
3. In addition, specific requirements for each funder will be provided in a country annex of the call documentation.

### Engagement of Least Developed Countries (LDC)

17. Draft call text for the opportunity will be circulated to representatives from funding agencies in LDC for comment, with comments feeding in to subsequent iterations.
18. Capacity strengthening elements of proposals will include instructions to detail South-South capacity strengthening activities
19. UKRI budget will support involvement of LDC researchers as well as capacity strengthening activities aimed at LDC specifically.
20. Expert reviewers and Funding Panels to include representatives from either LDC Ministry of Health (or equivalent) or relevant academic experts from an LDC organisation subject to availability and relevant proposals being submitted.

### Timeline

21. It is anticipated that the programme will be launched within 2024 (Jan – March), with first expenditures expected in 2025 (Jan – April).
22. Indicative Timings:



<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Networking event</b>	Aim to bring together academics from across the UK and SEA to network and discuss potential applications to the funding opportunity. Invitation to the event organized through each funder, UKRI will ask interested UK academics to apply to attend.	February 2024
<b>Funding opportunity launched</b>	Communicated and promoted by all partner countries.	February 2024
<b>Expression of Interest</b>	Administered by UKRI and shared with all partner countries. This stage is not mandatory.	March 2024
<b>Funding opportunity deadline</b>	Funding opportunity closes, UKRI require the opportunity to be open for a minimum of 8 weeks.	May 2024
<b>Peer Review and PI response</b>	Written peer review from international experts, administered by UKRI with input from partner countries. PIs will be given the opportunity to jointly respond.	May - July 2024
<b>Shortlisting mechanism (optional)</b>	If many applications are received, we will need to shortlist to conduct an effective joint panel meeting.	August 2024
<b>Joint Panel meeting</b>	Panel meeting including experts from all partner countries. The panel members will provide a ranked list of funding recommendations to be considered at the funders meeting.	November 2024
<b>Funders Meeting</b>	All Funders will jointly agree the awards to be funded based on the panel recommendations.	December 2024
<b>Grants begin</b>	Grants live	Expected April 2025

### **Submission process**

23. UKRI will administer the processing of applications on behalf of all funders, including an Expression of Interest (EoI) stage and full application stage.

#### **Expression of interest:**

24. Applicants will submit a light-touch Expression of interest (EoI) to UKRI (MRC) via a survey tool (tbc). The EoI will include an outline of the anticipated research

programme, a list of project partners, and an overview of funds requested, broken down by country, and an outline of any ethical implications.

25. UKRI (MRC) will securely share the received EoIs for eligibility checks and fit to scope but will not carry out a quality assessment at this point.
26. This EoI stage will not be compulsory, it is rather a tool for the funders to better understand expected demand and to prepare for peer review.

### **Full application:**

27. Full proposals will be submitted through UKRI's 'The Funding Service' (TFS). All proposals will cover full details for the entire collaborative project, including:
  - proposal cover letters and statements of support
  - Central scientific case (project details and methodology)
  - Team details and, track record (Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI))
  - Work plan
  - Data management plan
  - Ethical information
  - Full budget details and justification (including budgets requested from all funders)
28. If required, applicants will also be requested to submit their proposals to their respective funding agencies, either using the funders standard application forms or by submitting a PDF copy of the TFS submitted application. To ensure fairness and consistency, the joint peer review process will be based on the proposals submitted via UKRI and applicants will be asked to ensure the same information is submitted through both routes.
29. When preparing and submitting a proposal, applicants will comply with the application process of UKRI and will be required to ensure that the proposed activities of each collaborator will meet the eligibility and remit requirements of their respective funding agency.
30. All proposals must adhere to the overall budget restrictions and guidelines of the funding opportunity, as well as any specific limitations set by the funding agencies to which they are applying. Applicants should provide a Statement of Support from each research organisation involved in the proposal as part of the application.
31. UKRI will compile details of the submitted application and all documents will be shared with partners through a secure route.
32. Each funding agency will be responsible for checking the eligibility of the investigators and research components based in their countries along with the funds requested from their budget.
33. Neither the UKRI nor NAFOSTED will be held responsible for non-submission of an application.

34. If selected for funding, Vietnamese award holders shall need to submit an additional research proposal and other documents according to Vietnamese relevant laws and regulations in Vietnamese language to NAFOSTED.

### **Overview of the peer review process**

35. All applications will be assessed through written peer review by external independent experts before assessment by a Funding Panel.

#### **Written peer review:**

36. UKRI MRC will co-ordinate the peer review process and will request external independent experts are identified by the funding agencies associated with the application.
37. In addition to the experts provided by the funding agencies, UKRI MRC will seek experts from across the globe with a particular focus on experts based in the region of Southeast Asia. Each application will receive three written comments.
38. All reviewers will comment on set criteria including the excellence of the research and the feasibility of the study design. All reviewers will provide a score.
39. The written reviews received will be shared with the co-funders
40. The written reviews will be shared with applicants and the applicants will be given an opportunity to provide a written response to the review comments.

#### **Panel meeting**

41. The panel will comprise of 1 independent academic chair, 1 independent academic deputy chair and panel members comprised of independent academic experts from each country (number to be determined).
42. Each proposal will be assigned to a minimum of 3 panel members who will be expected to:
  - Provide a written review and score for each proposal assigned to them 1 week before the panel meeting
  - At the panel meeting they will be expected to provide a verbal review of proposals assigned to them and suggest a score.
  - work with the panel to agree a final overall score for the proposal.
43. The panel members will have access to all the proposals submitted to the call as well as the written reviews and applicant responses (subject to any restrictions required due to conflict of interests) and will have the opportunity to comment on all proposals at the panel meeting should they wish to do so.

44. Panel members will be assigned to proposals based on academic expertise rather than nationality i.e.: does their expertise match the science covered in the proposal). However, we will aim to include at least 1 reviewer from countries involved in the applications where possible (approach TBC).
45. Each proposal will be discussed and given a score. The assessment criteria will be agreed with funding partners but is likely to include the following (with scientific excellence as a priority):
- vision of the project: novelty, importance and timeliness of the proposed research, the impact of the research.
  - approach of the project: design and feasibility of the proposed methodology
  - Research partnership: including strength and clarity of the collaboration and opportunities provided, the added value of the partnership and the appropriateness of the governance arrangements
  - capacity strengthening plans of the project
  - capability of the applicants and the project team to deliver the project
  - ethical and responsible research and innovation considerations of the project
  - value for money and equity of the project
46. At the end of the panel meeting, the scores given for each proposal will be used to rank the proposals relative to each other by the panel. Within a score bracket (e.g. 8), the panel will be given advice on strategic considerations, e.g. geographic spread, alignment with local health priorities, strengthen of capacity building components.
47. The panel will be asked to confirm a cut off for the following 3 categories: strongly recommended, recommended, not recommended. This then forms the basis of a recommendation to the funding agencies (subject to budget availability).

### **Conflicts of interest**

48. UKRI defines a conflict of interest as a situation in which an individual's ability to exercise judgement or act in one role is, could be, or is seen to be impaired or otherwise influenced by their involvement in another role or relationship.
49. The funding agencies will seek to ensure that no peer reviewer or panel member will be asked to review an application on which they have a conflict of interest.
50. According to UKRI policy, conflicts of interest exist with a panel member where:
- the applicant is a relative
  - they are directly involved in the work the applicant proposes to carry out

- they may benefit financially from the work (for example if they are involved with a company acting as a project partner)
  - they work in the same research organisation as an applicant, co-applicant or project partner
  - they work closely with the applicant, (for example, as a co-author or PhD supervisor), or have done within the last three years.
51. Conflicts of interest of panel members will be identified by all funders at the earliest opportunity and an approach to managing conflicts at the panel meeting will be agreed by all funding agencies.
52. In addition to the above, if a panel member is a named investigator on an application then it would be considered a hard conflict of interest. While it is preferable to avoid the presence of any ‘hard’ conflicts, it is recognised that this may not be possible in all cases and a pragmatic approach will be sought.
53. Any panel member with a hard conflict of interest must be excluded from discussion of the application on which they are named and must be excluded from any ranking discussion of their proposal.
54. Panel members will be required to provide a conflict-of-interest declaration to the funders.

### **Funding decisions**

55. Following the Joint Panel, Funders will hold the final decision-making responsibility, however, will commit to adhering to the recommended ranked list of proposals as closely as possible. It is recognised that country funding requests and budgets may vary and the final funding list may therefore require some flexibility.
56. Funders will retain the option to prioritise amongst proposals with equal scores if agreed by all partners. This may be to address geographic spread or engagement of LDCs.
57. Key principles:
- Funders will fund from the top of the ranked list downward until the budget of any funding organisation is exhausted.
  - At this point, funders may agree to skip to the next highest-ranking proposal that can be funded with the remaining budgets.
58. It is recognised that some funding agencies may need to complete additional approval processes following the panel and funders meetings. Therefore, the following points are agreed:
- The funders meeting will agree a list of proposals to fund, subject to any further internal processes required by any funding agency

- No outcomes or feedback will be communicated to the applicants until all funding is confirmed by each funding agency. Final funding commitments will be detailed in the co-funding documentation between the funding partners
  - Funding agencies will agree the information that will be provided to applicants and will agree a date on which all applicants will be informed of their outcomes.
59. Funding will then be administered by each relevant agency, as per their standard processes, terms and conditions and requirements.

### **Post-award considerations**

60. Awardees must comply with the award conditions and reporting requirements of the participating agencies from which they receive funding.
61. Awardees will be required to acknowledge all funding agencies that have provided funding for the relevant grant in any publications arising from the grant.
62. Requests for extensions will be considered by the participating agencies using standard procedures. Funding agencies will inform the other funding partners if they intend to make any material changes to any award (e.g. if they decide they wish to cease funding following an interim review, significant extensions etc)

### **Evaluation plan**

63. Projects will be monitored through standard Funding Agency reporting processes.
64. In addition, the funding agencies may consider additional evaluation activities throughout the lifetime of the award. Any evaluation proposal will be considered and agreed with all funders.
65. The number of proposals submitted to this funding opportunity and the outcome of the review and assessment process will be used to inform the development of future funding opportunities.
66. UK and Vietnamese Principal Investigators (PIs) will submit Periodic and Final report separately to the UKRI and NAFOSTED. If requested, the UK PIs and the Vietnamese PIs shall jointly submit a comprehensive report for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of funding
67. The PIs are obliged to publish research results generated by the JRPs in appropriate form and according to UKRI's and NAFOSTED's standards as well as regulations

### **Ethics**

68. Any research activities with ethical implications will be required to comply with local ethical processes and requirements
69. Each funder will be responsible for ensuring compliance with ethical requirements within their country
70. In addition, UKRI ethics policy requires UK researchers to seek local ethical approval for any relevant research activities, regardless of the location of the activity. Complying with this requirement will be the responsibility of the UK Project Lead, with input as required from their international co-leads.
71. Ethics considerations will also be built into the peer review process, with focused ethics questions in the application form and a requirement for ethical issues to be considered as part of written peer review and by panel members.
72. All proposals with ethical considerations will be identified by UKRI with input from funding partners, and UKRI will seek to ensure that reviewers are allocated that are able to provide expert ethics review.
73. All partners require that any ethical approval is sought and secured before the relevant research activities commence.

### **Collaboration Agreements and Intellectual Property**

74. As the research projects will be carried out by multiple research organisations and project partners, the basis of collaboration between the organisations and project partners is expected to be set out in a formal Collaboration Agreement between the research organisations involved.
75. The Collaboration Agreement should include ownership of intellectual property (IP) generated during the project and rights to exploitation, and costs of IP management. It should also include the allocation of resources throughout the project. It is the responsibility of the research organisations to put such an agreement in place before the research begins. The terms of collaboration shall not conflict with the terms and conditions of any funding partner associated with the application.
76. Funders will outline in the call documentation that Collaboration Agreements should be provided to the relevant funding organisations/be made available to the funding organisations on request.
77. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) means any copyright and related rights, patents, rights to inventions, registered designs, database rights, design rights, topography rights, trademarks, service marks, trade names and domain names, trade secrets, rights in unpatented know-how, rights of confidence and any other intellectual or industrial property rights of any nature including all applications (or rights to apply) for, and renewals or extensions of such rights and all similar

or equivalent rights or forms of protection which subsist or will subsist now or in the future in any part of the world.

78. Ownership of intellectual property (IP) generated during the project and rights to exploitation, as well as any costs regarding management of IP, are expected to be agreed between the collaborating research organisations before the research begins. It is up to the respective research teams to determine in advance how any exploited IP will be divided amongst the partners. Details of this agreement must be included in the Collaboration Agreement (as above).
79. Agreements must not conflict with the policies or terms and conditions of any funding partner associated with the application. Any agreements in place between a research organisation and their respective funding organisation must be adhered to, including the sharing of IP costs or benefits. Any IP sharing agreements in place between a research organisation and their national funding body would be expected to apply only to the IP share of that research organisation.