

Tips for success in applying to the Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation programme for funding

The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) programme Board assess research proposals for health importance, scientific quality, feasibility and value for money. The Board provide feedback to applicants on both shortlisted and rejected proposals (further details of the EME programme remit are available from www.eme.ac.uk).

This document aims to summarise the main areas on which the Board have provided feedback to applicants, which can often contribute to a proposal being rejected. We would recommend that you consider these points, in conjunction with the guidance notes, when completing your application, to increase the chances of success for your application.

Summarise the rationale and existing evidence

The Board will need to be convinced that there is a need for your proposed study and that there is a need for your study in light of the existing evidence. The existing research will need to be summarised to ensure that the Board is convinced that there is enough background evidence for your proposed study.

Clearly describe the stage of your study

The Board need to be able to clearly identify from your proposal the planned development of the intervention and what stage it has reached, ie whether it's a feasibility, pilot or definitive study. If you are proposing a definitive study, please demonstrate that there is sufficient evidence from preliminary studies to justify this.

Patient population issues

The Board will need to be convinced that selection of the patient population is relevant to the research question to be addressed.

Trial design

The Board need to be convinced that the study is designed to address the questions it aims to answer and that sufficient attention to detail has been paid to the design of the trial. The involvement of a Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) or your local Research Design Service (RDS) is strongly encouraged in the design of your study. The commitment to methodological rigour is further strengthened by the inclusion of the relevant member of the CTU/RDS or statistician on the trial team rather than just a consultant.

Effect size issues

The Board will need to be convinced that the proposed effect size is clinically meaningful and is derived from the available evidence.

End point measurements

The Board will need to be convinced that the primary outcome is relevant to the research question and is based on the evidence available. Secondary measures will need to be relevant to the study and add to the understanding of the disease or mechanisms of the disease.

Inclusion of a mechanistic study

The Board encourage the inclusion of mechanistic studies. However, the mechanistic study must be embedded within the proposed study and add to current understanding of the disease process.

Explain the sample size calculations

The Board will be looking for evidence on how you have calculated your sample size to satisfy itself that your study is sufficiently powered.

Justify recruitment methods and assumptions

Justify how you intend to recruit to your study. You should also consider potential retention and attrition issues, and how they might be addressed.

Consider possible adverse effects or ethical issues

The safety and welfare of study participants is paramount and you should demonstrate that you have considered this and have a process in place to deal with any potential adverse events.

Ensure that you have the most appropriate team to deliver the project

Many projects require a multi-disciplinary team with appropriate skills and experience. The Board will review the composition of your project team to ensure that it meets the needs of your project.

Clearly justify the funding you request

The EME programme is able to fund research costs, ie the costs which relate to activities that are being undertaken to answer the research questions and which end when the research ends. The costs requested must be clearly justified.

Demonstrate that you've involved members of the public in your project

Consultation and involvement from members of the public at all stages is expected for all NIHR-funded projects. The Board will be looking for evidence that this is planned within the project in a way that will make an effective and meaningful contribution to the research.

Finally, we acknowledge that in a preliminary application form there is a limit to the amount of information you can give us. We recommend that you make full use of the available space within the online form to give the Boards as much information as possible on which they can assess your proposal.

Further help

FAQs

On the EME programme's website there are frequently asked questions, which we continue to develop as a source of further information about the programme:

www.eme.ac.uk

Research guidance

On the EME programme's website there are a number of resources that provide guidance on several aspects of applying for research funding. www.eme.ac.uk/resources/research_guidance.asp

For guidance on the importance of methodological input into trial design the EME programme has developed a resource outlining the importance of statistical considerations.

http://www.eme.ac.uk/resources/pdfs/FINAL%20Methodological%20Input%20to%20Clinical%20Trial%20Protocols_LD4_GD06Mar10.pdf