

MRC-CONFAP Call for Health Systems Research Networks

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1. Background

The joint funders have a strong commitment to supporting research that aims to improve health policy and systems for vulnerable communities in Brazil. Since its launch in 1990 Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS) has seen a fundamental restructuring of the Brazilian Health System. Underpinned by political vision and gradual increase in available funds for public health SUS has contributed to improvement in access to health services in Brazil.

The decentralisation of health system decision making and delivery alongside revised arrangements for responsibilities across federal, state and municipal levels have been fundamental to Brazil's move towards attainment of Universal Health Coverage. As the health system continues to evolve there is growing recognition that the challenges confronting health systems strengthening transcend disciplinary boundaries, highlighting the need for research to foster genuine interdisciplinary collaborations across social science, biomedical science, and other disciplines to address these complex challenges.

2. Call scope

2.1 The proposed MRC-CONFAP call for health systems research networks seeks to support UK-Brazil partnerships working to identify research questioned focused on improving the health system and health care for vulnerable communities in Brazil.

2.2 The UK-Brazil network must include at least two participating Brazilian State Funding Agencies (“FAP”) in Brazil and one UK partner.

2.3 The joint funders seek interdisciplinary proposals from UK-Brazil networks that aim to address health systems challenges in Brazil. Proposals must describe how and why the proposed UK-Brazil network would be best placed to develop projects that would have the potential to improve the health of vulnerable communities in Brazil.

2.4 Proposed research activities should aim to provide evidence to strengthen the Brazilian health system and improve health outcomes. The joint funders will award proposals for rigorous, high quality research that will:

2.4.1. Generate evidence on how to strengthen the health system and improve health outcomes in Brazil.

2.4.2 Inform the delivery of evidence-based interventions or structural changes.

2.4.3 Provide evidence that is of direct relevance to decision makers and users in the field.

2.5 Applicants must demonstrate a clear and strong rationale for how their proposed network and research, as well as the approach taken, meets the criteria for world-class and cutting-edge policy-relevant research addressing key questions on strengthening health systems in Brazil.

3. Research impact

3.1 Applicants must identify the potential impacts of their research on policy and practice and outline clear relevance to decision makers and practitioners.

3.2 Projects should identify and address the key barriers to implementation and uptake of evidence-based interventions at local and national levels, paving the way for their successful adoption into routine practice with improved access and use by the populations in need.

3.3 Solutions to strengthening health systems in Brazil must be rooted in, and acceptable to, the institutions, communities, and societies where they will operate. As such, non-academic stakeholders, including potential users of the research, are expected to be included and involved in the design and delivery of projects. Indeed, proposals should demonstrate strong engagement with stakeholders and decision makers from the project inception stage and include appropriate budget for such activities.

3.4 Researchers are encouraged to be innovative in the kinds of user engagement, knowledge exchange, communications and research uptake activities they plan to undertake during and beyond the period of research funding. It is important that applicants appreciate that outreach and engagement activities in themselves do not constitute impact.

4. Assessment criteria

4.1 To be funded, proposals must be internationally competitive and at a standard equivalent to that normally expected to be supported by each joint funder.

4.2 Assessment criteria follow the following headings, full details can be found in the guidance for applicants:

- 4.2.1. Research Quality
- 4.2.2. Impact
- 4.2.3. Research Management, People and Partnership
- 4.2.4. Methodology
- 4.2.5. Ethics
- 4.2.6. Data Management Plan
- 4.2.7. Resources Requested
- 4.2.8. Official Development Assistance (ODA) compliance

4.3 Applications received and comments for all peer-reviews will be assessed by a joint Research Panel in January 2018.

5. Funding & Eligibility

5.1 This call funds partnership working between UK and Brazilian researchers. Each network must be interdisciplinary and include researchers from at least 2 (no more than 4) participating FAPs in Brazil, and at least one UK partner.

5.2 The MRC will make up to £2.0m available for this scheme to fund the UK collaborators. The £2m made available by the UK funders will be matched with equivalent effort from the Brazilian FAPs, who will fund the Brazilian collaborators.

5.3 The agencies would expect to fund approximately 8-12 projects in total. The size of the grants will vary according to the needs of each research project.

5.4 Applicants do not need to request equal amounts from both sides. The difference in values should reflect the difference in costs covered and local prices. The agencies also expect the costs on each side to accurately reflect the research effort to be carried out. It is expected that the research effort on both sides is comparable.

5.5 UK and Brazilian applicants are allowed to participate in 1 (one) proposal as Principal Investigator (PI) and an additional proposal as co-Principal Investigator. Multiple

submissions from researchers of the same Institution of Higher Education and Research is permissible.

For funding support under this call, applicants must be eligible to apply for funding from their respective country's funding agency:

5.5 UK Applicants:

For the UK applicants, standard RCUK/MRC eligibility criteria as described in the MRC Guidance for Applicants and RCUK will apply. MRC Units and Institutes are also eligible to apply to this call. UK costs must be requested in accordance with standard MRC Guidance for Applicants.

5.6 Brazilian Applicants; Eligibility for submission to the Brazilian State Funding Agencies:

Brazilian applicants should refer to CONFAP's eligibility rules for this call.

Please note it is important to check that the relevant Brazilian State Funding Agency ("FAP") is participating in this call – not all Brazilian FAPs have agreed to participate. The participants FAPs of this call for proposal are: FACEPE, FAPDF, FAPEAL, FAPEG, FAPEMA, FAPEMIG, FAPEPI, FAPESC, FAPESP, FAPESQ, FAPITEC, FAPT, FUNCAP e FUNDECT.

5.6.1 Some FAPs may have their own Guidelines associated to this Announcement. Interested parties are advised to consult with their supporting FAP before preparing a proposal.

5.6.2 Researchers from the State of São Paulo must consult the FAPESP Guidelines specific for this Announcement.

5.7 Funding rules for Brazilians Applicants

5.7.1 Each proposal must clearly identify the Principal Investigators (PI) and Co-Principal Investigator who are eligible for support from each FAP, their home institution, and their role in the proposed research activity.

5.7.2 Each proposal must inform the total amount requested from MRC, FAPs, and from each one of the FAPs.

5.7.3 Each proposal must detail the part of the budget requested from each FAP. The proposal must also make explicit the name of the PI eligible to each FAP. If the proposal is approved this PI will be the responsible for contracting and managing the funds approved.

5.7.4 Funding can be requested for travel (economic class and round trip) for team members from Brazil, travel insurance, living stipend, consumables, scholarship, and, equipment (purchase and maintenance), and services, according to the values defined by the FAP accessible by each member of the research team.

5.7.5 Each FAP has its own rules about eligible items and value for scholarships and living stipend. No items and/or values requested outside the list of eligible items and values will be funded by the relevant FAP

5.7.6 Some FAPs may announce information regarding the financial support in their specific Guidelines.

6 Submission guidelines

6.1 The proposal must be elaborated jointly by the applicants in the UK and in Brazil and submitted on the application form shown in ANNEX 1.

6.2 Identical copies of the proposal must be submitted, in English, to MRC and CONFAP by the PIs. Proposals not submitted to all Agencies mentioned above will not be considered eligible in this call for proposal.

6.3 The submission to the CONFAP system will be made by only one Brazilian PI of the proposal. The research team will define the member who will submit the proposal.

6.4 All proposals which include PIs in the State of São Paulo and requesting funds from the State Funding Agency of São Paulo (FAPESP) must be submitted separately to FAPESP (in addition to being submitted to CONFAP) following the Guidelines announced by FAPESP at www.fapesp.br/11089. Proposals requesting funds from FAPESP and not submitted to FAPESP will not be considered.

6.5 The Application Form will be available by 1 August 2017 and it is suggested to be submitted in PDF format.

6.6 UK applicants must ensure applications are submitted on the Je-S system by 26 September 2017 at 16:00 (BST).

6.7 Brazilian PI's must submit applications on the SigConfap <https://sigconfap.ledes.net/> by 26 September 2017 at 13:00 (Brasília time).

6.7 Key dates:

Closing dates for coordinator submit the proposal to MRC, CONFAP e FAPESP	26 September 2017
Research Panel Meeting	Late January 2018
Result announcement	February 2018

7 Contacts

- For further information, UK applicants should contact: international@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk

- For further information, Brazilian applicants should contact:
 - From the State of São Paulo: <http://www.fapesp.br/en/contactus/>
 - From other States: fundonewton.confap@gmail.com