 Restricted Call: MRC Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE) Round 2 funding opportunity -
internal deadline: 09 November 2023

The MRC have opened a call for outline proposals for **round 2 of their Centre of Research Excellence (MRC CoRE)** opportunity to enable UK research organisations to tackle complex and interdisciplinary health challenges. MRC CoREs will support bold and ambitious research focused on a specific and defined challenge with the potential to prove transformative to biomedical research, health research or both. They must address substantial unmet needs in understanding or modifying human health and disease and have major strategic objectives achievable within a 14-year timeframe.

This new challenge-led approach focuses on distinct and disruptive research that drives breakthrough advances and addresses specific bottlenecks through knowledge generation, technological or methodological innovation, with clear translational relevance. MRC CoREs will harness and network the best expertise in the UK, to bring together creative and diverse approaches for cross-sectoral and multi or interdisciplinary working.

This call is multi-thematic and the themes for this round are:
- Enhancing healthspan
- Immune regulation
- Molecular mechanisms to inform cancer intervention

Details of the scope of these themes as well as examples of relevant focus areas are available on the [call webpage](#) under ‘What we’re looking for’.

MRC CoRE awards provide support for up to 14 years. The initial duration of an award is 7 years with review in year six to approve release of the second period of funding. The full economic cost (FEC) of a project for the first seven years can be up to £26.5 million and MRC will fund 80% of the FEC. It is expected that one or two new CoREs will be funded each year. Applications can be from a single research organisation or in partnership across multiple organisations and may include project partners. International co-investigators can be included if they provide expertise that is not available in the UK.

Outline applications will be made via the UKRI Funding Service platform. Proposals will need to explain the importance of the research challenge, the research approach and also address a number of areas listed in the call guidance under ‘How to apply’. Proposals will require clearly
defined institutional support, including: provision and maintenance of lab space, access to existing facilities, HR services, and underpinning of key staff positions. Details of approaches to environmental sustainability and positive research culture will also be needed.

**University Internal selection:**
Institutions may lead up to three outline applications in round 2, one in each theme. Exceptionally, an institution may submit a proposal that does not fall under one of the three themes, but at the expense of one theme and so not exceeding the three proposal total. Therefore, this call will be managed according to the University’s restricted calls policy.

To take part in the internal selection process please complete our online submission form (if asked to log-in, please use Raven details) by 09 November. Note that UKRI has introduced new role types for funding opportunities being run on the new UKRI Funding Service and these are reflected in our internal selection process. See here for guidance on the new role types.

Please find attached a copy of the questions asked in the online form, to ease preparation. You will need to prepare the following documents to complete the form submission:

- A document listing the project co-leads, collaborators, and external partners on the proposal with details of their departments and institutions
- A summary of the proposed MRC CoRE, covering the following:
  a) the research challenge and approach - outline the gap, opportunity, or unmet need which the challenge addresses, the top level aims and objectives, innovative approaches to delivering the challenge, approach to translational research and knowledge transfer/exchange;
  b) the role the Project Lead will take - indicate how their track record is a good fit;
  c) the make-up and cross disciplinary nature of the leadership team and scientific advisory board - explain how this expertise will be utilised;
  d) the MRC CoRE environment and opportunities for transformational impact - highlight cross-sectoral and multi or interdisciplinary working, proposed approach to training/careers and plans for external stakeholder activities including public engagement and involvement.
- Resume for Research for the Project Lead (PL)
- Head of Department support letter

The internal selection panel will assess against the following criteria
1. Importance of and approach to the challenge - including research approach, translation and knowledge transfer
2. Capability to deliver - including leadership team and partnerships & collaborations
3. MRC CoRE environment - including training, careers and capacity building

**Funder timeline for outline stage:**
- Webinar: 08 November 2023, 10.30am – register here to attend, the webinar will be recorded
- Outline closing date: 07 February 2024
- Outline decisions communicated: April 2024

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at researchstrategy@admin.cam.ac.uk
Best wishes
Andrea

Dr Andrea Walker
Senior Research Funding Coordinator
Research Strategy Office
University of Cambridge