

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Applied Research Centre

Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility criteria

QUESTION	ANSWER
Which organisations are eligible to be consortium leads?	We expect consortium leads to be academic or research organisations registered as not-for-profit organisations in a low- or middle-income country (LMIC). Where leadership is shared, the co-lead (also an academic or research organisation with not-for profit registration) may be a different eligible LMIC organisation or an eligible high-income country (HIC) organisation. Please see the call document for a full list of eligibility criteria.
Which organisations are eligible to be consortium members?	Consortium members must be not-for-profit, but are not restricted to academic or research organisations. Organisation types may include: academic institutions, universities, research institutes or higher education colleges; not-for-profit organisations, registered charities, civil society organisations, foundations and trusts; multilateral organisations, United Nations agencies or other intergovernmental organisations; public sector bodies, government departments, local authorities or public health bodies. Consortium lead(s) should choose partners based on who they assess would be best placed to deliver the expectations of the SRHR Applied Research Centre. The administering organisation will be expected to carry out appropriate due diligence on consortium members. Please note that independent researchers, freelance consultants or other unaffiliated individuals are not eligible as consortium members on their own. Subject to need and

	FCDO approval, individuals may be commissioned by the Centre for specific pieces of research in line with their expertise (see Research Centre scope and design below).
Is there a limit on the number of organisations that can be in the consortium?	The recommended consortium size is six to eight members, and no more than ten, including the consortium lead(s).
Can organisations be on multiple expressions of interest (EOIs) or full proposals?	Yes, organisations may be named on up to three EOIs. Consortium leads should submit only one application as lead but may appear as consortium members on up to two other submissions. Consortium members may be named on up to three separate EOIs.

Application process

QUESTION	ANSWER
Do all consortium members need to be identified at Expression (EOI) of Interest stage?	The clear majority of consortium members should be identified at EOI stage, but changes and additions are possible in the full proposal if necessary. However, only partners named in the EOI are eligible for the proposal development grant, and the organisation submitting the full proposal (where invited) must be the same as submitted the EOI.
How developed should consortium structure and governance be at EOI stage?	Applicants should describe their proposed consortium structure and governance approach in their EOIs. This is a core assessment criterion, so structure and governance arrangements should be sufficiently developed to make a compelling case for how the Centre will be set up and operated to deliver its objectives. At final award stage, operational and governance structures will be agreed and set out in the accountable grant template signed by the successful consortium. Partners will have designated points of contact within FCDO throughout the implementation of the SRHR Applied Research Centre.
How developed should the Centre's research agenda be at EOI stage?	We have asked applicants to identify what they see as high-level research priorities at EOI stage but expect a detailed research agenda to be developed in the full proposal. The proposal development grant is intended to support consortium partner collaboration and co-design of the research agenda.

How many proposals will be funded?	We are looking to fund <u>one</u> proposal that will deliver all the expectations set out in the call for EOIs. We anticipate inviting up to five shortlisted applicants to submit full proposals.
For organisations that are not likely to be the lead applicant, is it advisable to submit an EOI as an individual organisation to be joined up with another bid?	EOIs should only be submitted by consortium leads. The Research Commissioning Centre (RCC) can facilitate the exchange of contact information among organisations interested in joining a bid.
Are letters of support required for consortium members at EOI stage?	No, letters of support are not required at EOI stage. Teams invited to submit full proposals will be asked to include letters of support from all consortium members to demonstrate commitment to delivering the aims of the Centre and signing a consortium agreement if successful.
Do I need to write 500 words for every question?	Word limits are provided as upper bounds to ensure that application volumes are consistent. We are more concerned with quality than quantity of content, so applicants are encouraged to convey their responses clearly and concisely within the 500-word limit.
Can I upload supplementary files? E.g., tables, figures, images	The EOI application requires three file uploads: an illustrative organogram of the proposed consortium structure, CVs of key consortium personnel, and a budget for the proposal development grant (unless opting out). All other questions should be addressed in the text boxes provided. Please note that any additional material provided via the file upload function that has not been requested will not be reviewed.

SRHR Applied Research Centre scope and design

QUESTION	ANSWER
Will the Centre be expected to convene open calls or targeted consultancies for additional research, or will all research be conducted by named consortium members?	We are asking applicants to design the way they would deliver on the requirements of the Centre. We expect that any bid reflects the need for embedded expertise and close coordination, which likely better suits a collaborative consortium established over a longer period than a consultancy model where partners are brought in for individual pieces of work.

	On-demand requests in Pillar 2 may require working across new geographies, research domains or partners based on evidence need, which could include additional commissioning. Applicants will be asked to consider their approach to managing the responsive research fund at full proposal stage.
Does FCDO expect journal publications or other research outputs as part of this Centre, or is the emphasis more on the operational sharing of evidence for decision-making?	The aim of this programme is to make research more contextually relevant, politically astute, and accessible to policy-makers, advocates and implementers. Academic journal articles will likely be part of the dissemination work alongside other means of information sharing, but FCDO has no set expectations on the minimum number of academic publications, and research is judged on its real-world impact rather than purely academic merits, with a strong focus on equitable partnerships. FCDO-funded research must align with an Open Science approach, including making data and methods open-source and ensuring that all publications are available open access, in line with the Research Open and Enhanced Access Policy.
Is FCDO expecting research and synthesis that is globally or regionally applicable or more locally-focused?	Pillar 1 should have a global remit while maintaining a focused country portfolio. Applicants should propose the countries (minimum of six LMICs) in which they propose to work, with opportunities for learning across countries and specifically for fragile and conflict-affected settings. The focus of Pillar 2 will depend on evidence need.
Are there particular country or regional priorities within LMICs?	Applicants should propose work in a minimum of six diverse LMICs, including but not limited to, countries in various parts of Africa and South/Southeast Asia. We expect the country portfolio to include at least some fragile and/or conflict-affected settings and some countries where FCDO has supported the country's health sector.
Is it expected that the Centre will have a physical presence in every country on which its research focuses?	We expect the consortium to have an in-country presence in at least six LMICs; Pillar 2 may extend beyond the core country portfolio based on need.

Finance and budget

QUESTION	ANSWER
Are any budget details required at the Expression of Interest stage?	Budgets for Research Centre delivery are <u>not</u> required at the EOI stage; they will be assessed as part of full proposals for shortlisted consortia. A budget template and eligible cost guidance are provided on the call page for applicants' reference. The budget for the proposal development grant (max £30,000) is submitted as part of the EOI, using the separate template provided.
What is the basis for the funding -- e.g. will it be on a full-economic costing basis, including overheads, or is there an expectation that the lead institution will be required to contribute towards the cost of running the Centre?	The Research Centre is funded on a full-economic costing basis, including overheads. Full proposals will be assessed for value for money using the '5Es' framework—Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Equity, and Cost-Effectiveness—and must provide a detailed, transparent budget breakdown, including overheads, supply chain costs, risks, and any cost-sharing or savings initiatives.
What funding arrangements will apply to the successful consortium?	Unless otherwise agreed, payments will be made to the administering organisation quarterly in arrears, upon FCDO approval of required financial reporting documentation. The administering organisation is responsible for onward payments to consortium members.
Is there a cap on overhead/ indirect cost rates that can be charged?	Full proposals will be assessed for value for money using the '5Es' framework—Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Equity and Cost-Effectiveness—and must provide a detailed, transparent budget breakdown, including overheads, supply chain costs, risks, and any profit, cost-sharing or savings initiatives. Further guidance will be provided at a later stage of the competition.
Can costs for a PhD stipend be included?	A PhD stipend can be included in UK ODA (Official Development Assistance) funds, provided certain conditions are met: The research must be ODA compliant, SRHR focused and primarily benefit a country or countries on the OECD DAC list (i.e., LMICs), and the main purpose of the grant must be the research in the interest of the consortium, not the individual.