



UK Research
and Innovation

Funding opportunity

Pre-announcement: UKRI–Southeast Asia collaboration on infectious diseases

Opportunity status: Upcoming

Funders: [Medical Research Council \(MRC\)](#)

Co-funders: ARDA Thailand (Agricultural Research Development Agency), DRTPM DIKTI Indonesia (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia), HSRI Thailand (Health Systems Research Institute), MOHE Malaysia (Ministry of Higher Education), NAFOSTED Vietnam (National Foundation for Science and Technology Development), PREPARE (Programme for Research in Epidemic Preparedness and REsponse), on behalf of NRF Singapore (National Research

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

Foundation), PCHRD Philippines (Philippines Council for Health R&D)

Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£21,000,000
Maximum award:	£1,000,000
Publication date:	19 February 2024
Opening date:	14 March 2024 9:00am UK time
Closing date:	30 May 2024 4:00pm UK time

Apply for funding to collaborate with partners in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Singapore on infectious diseases with antimicrobial resistance and epidemics potential.

We will support collaborative research between the UK and at least one partner country in Southeast Asia. Multilateral research teams including more than two partners are encouraged.

Research teams must include at least one UK and one Southeast Asia research organisation to apply for this opportunity.

You can apply for up to £1,000,000 from UKRI. Southeast Asia funding partners will provide co-funding to support their national research teams.

 This is a pre-announcement and the information may change.

Who can apply

Eligibility rules for this funding opportunity require that research teams are made up of at least one researcher based at an eligible UK institution and at least one researcher based at an eligible Southeast Asia (SEA) research institution.

As this funding will be provided through the International Science Partnership Fund Official Development Assistance budget, all applications must include at least one researcher based in a low or middle income country (LMIC). This means we will not be able to support proposals between UK and Singapore only with no LMIC involvement.

For the eligibility of UK researchers, please check the [Eligibility of your Organisation](#). UK applicants must check their [Eligibility as an individual](#) before applying.

Eligibility rules for researchers based in partner countries will be published alongside the funding opportunity once this opens.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all funding applicants. We encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers.

We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. This includes:

- career breaks
- support for people with caring responsibilities
- flexible working

- alternative working patterns

Find out more about [equality, diversity and inclusion at UKRI](#).

What we're looking for

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is partnering with leading funders in Southeast Asia to support research focused on infectious diseases with epidemic or antimicrobial resistance (AMR) potential. The funding partners are:

- ARDA Thailand (Agricultural Research Development Agency)
- DRTPM DIKTI Indonesia (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia)
- HSRI Thailand (Health Systems Research Institute)
- MOHE Malaysia (Ministry of Higher Education)
- NAFOSTED Vietnam (National Foundation for Science and Technology Development)
- PREPARE (Programme for Research in Epidemic Preparedness and REsponse), on behalf of NRF Singapore (National Research Foundation)
- PCHRD Philippines (Philippines Council for Health R&D)

UKRI funding for this partnership will be provided through the International Science Partnership Fund Official Development Assistance budget.

Aim

This funding opportunity is to support partnerships between UK researchers and researchers in Southeast Asia working in collaboration on diseases with epidemic and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) potential. We aim to:

- fund collaborative projects involving the UK and one or more partner countries to address the challenges of AMR and pathogens with epidemic potential of relevance to Southeast Asia
- enhance existing and develop new sustainable partnerships between the UK and Southeast Asia research partners
- strengthen research capacity in the Southeast Asia region through supporting long-term research relationships

UKRI and the co-funders will support collaborative research projects between UK researchers and partners based in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Singapore. In addition, we welcome collaborations involving Southeast Asia Least Developed Countries (Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia).

You may apply for funding to conduct a bilateral project involving the UK and one Southeast Asian country, or a multilateral project involving the UK and multiple Southeast Asian countries. Multilateral projects involving the UK and two or more Southeast Asian partner countries are encouraged.

The research topic must be of primary relevance and benefit to either one or more LMIC or the Southeast Asia region.

Strategic focus of the programme

To effectively tackle global infectious disease threats and challenges, including AMR and epidemic preparedness, a One Health approach is required to achieve sustainable change. Such approaches use integrated, interdisciplinary methodologies, recognising the interconnection between humans, animals (including wildlife, livestock, aquatic organism and companion animals), and environmental (including natural and built environment and climate change) factors, with the goal of improving outcomes for human health, animal health and ecosystems.

This funding opportunity is aligned with the [UKRI tackling infections strategic theme](#), for which infectious disease epidemics and AMR are priorities.

In this context, we will support research projects that fit within two strategic themes:

Antimicrobial resistance

Pathogens inevitably evolve resistance to threats in their environments, resulting in widespread and increasing resistance to antimicrobial drugs. The health, social and economic implications of such resistance are potentially catastrophic, returning humanity to a pre-antibiotic age of major mortality and morbidity risk from common infections. The importance of preventing and treating resistance now has global recognition, spanning bacteria, viruses, parasites, fungi and disease vectors.

Because resistance can evolve in one host and then transmit to another, a systemic One Health approach is critical to take on this threat. Priority research needs are well established to investigate the drivers of, and discover the barriers to, the emergence and spread of resistance. Alongside this discovery research, into the transmission and epidemiology of AMR, we need improved methods for predicting, tracking and tackling resistance. This includes the development of new diagnostics, therapeutics (including both novel and combination therapies), and effective intervention regimes, spanning environmental, cultural and social approaches.

Epidemic preparedness: Emerging and zoonotic infections

Recent outbreaks of COVID-19, Mpox, Ebola, Zika, bird and swine flu highlight the challenges infectious diseases continue to pose to human health. The threats posed by zoonotic pathogens and emerging infections are clear and these dangers are amplified and accelerated by the growing impact of climate change. The global nature of infectious disease threats is also apparent and research partnerships across national boundaries represent a

major opportunity for the scientific community – such partnerships, transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries in a One Health setting, offer a critical international defence against future pathogen threats.

This funding opportunity will consider applications focused on pathogens of relevance to the Southeast Asia region and with potential impact on human health, which may include viral, bacterial, fungal or parasitic threats.

What we will fund

We will support a diverse portfolio of activity and examples of areas in which research may be conducted include but are not limited to:

- discovery research into the mechanisms underlying AMR or the emergence of pathogens of epidemic potential
- drug discovery and novel therapeutics
- development of innovative approaches to surveillance (novel technologies for surveillance)
- applied research including intervention development and testing (including vaccines, diagnostics), economic and policy research
- multifaceted evidence-based interventions, including environmental, social, cultural and economic strategies
- health systems research
- digital health and artificial intelligence (AI) approaches
- novel analytical or modelling methods

Applications should demonstrate the added value provided through the international collaboration proposed, which may include access to:

- knowledge (from bench to bedside)
- expertise (scientific or socio-cultural)
- resources

- cohorts
- populations

Out of scope

We will not fund:

- applications focused on delivery of surveillance and detection programmes
- studies focusing on plant or crop health or disease
- applied or 'gain of function' research to enhance the virulence of a pathogen or render a non-pathogen virulent, increase transmissibility of a pathogen or alter the host range of a pathogen

Strengthening research capacity as part of your application

We are committed to strengthening research capacity within low and middle income countries (LMICs) and the UK. All applicants are required to develop plans to strengthen research capacity within their application, which will be assessed by expert reviewers and inform funding decisions.

We encourage you to start discussing capacity strengthening priorities as early as possible, in consultation with key stakeholders, both within and outside of your project team. For example:

- researchers
- laboratory technicians
- data collectors
- field workers
- managers
- practitioners
- policymakers
- research management offices

- local government units

We take a broad view of where capacity strengthening activities could be targeted, however plans must be directly linked to the proposed project and will contribute to attainment of project objectives and deliverables. Activities could target the individual, institutional or contextual level (or span multiple levels), and plans should be proportionate to the scale of the project, with larger projects expected to be more ambitious.

Examples of capacity building include, but are not limited to:

- building leadership skills amongst early career researchers
- opportunities for mutual learning across the project team, such as through staff exchanges (for example, the wider health context, engagement with policymakers and research management)
- building capacity to work collaboratively, across disciplines and across practice-research boundaries (for example, with policymakers, managers, and practitioners in the system)
- providing mentoring to improve the capacity of less-experienced researchers to generate new knowledge and achieve policy impact
- team members attending training courses to develop specific expertise or obtain relevant qualifications (excluding masters and PhDs)
- opportunities for staff and associated health managers to author or co-author journal and conference papers and participate in national and international conferences
- building organisational capacity (for example, in management, finance or communications)
- the formation of LMICs research networks

[Further resources, tools and guides on strengthening research capacity](#) are available on the UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) website.

Duration

Proposals funded under this programme will be for three years. Successful applications must start by April 2025.

Starting date requirements in partner countries will be provided when the funding opportunity opens.

Funding available

You may apply for up to £1,000,000 from UKRI. This is 80% of the full economic costs (FEC). This funding can be used for:

- UK research costs
- capacity building activities across the partnership
- consortium management costs across the partnership
- funding for SEA Least Developed Country researchers
- funding for LMIC costs if required over and above the funding offered by the SEA funder (funding requests must not be duplicated and it is expected that funding will first be requested from the national funder)

Funding partners will cover costs associated with research components in their respective countries. This funding will be additional to any UKRI funding.

As part of the application, you will be required to specify funding requirements from UKRI and other funders from countries involved. Details on how to do this will be provided when the funding opportunity opens.

How to apply

We are running this funding opportunity on the new UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service. You will not be able to apply on the Joint Electronic Submissions (Je-S) system.

The project lead must be UK based. They are responsible for completing the application process on the Funding Service, but we expect all partners to contribute equally to developing the application and the application must provide details of the full collaboration, not just the UK activities.

The lead research organisation must be an eligible UK based organisation. Only the lead research organisation can apply to UKRI.

Full details on submission requirements will be provided when the funding opportunity opens. Funding partners may require additional documents to be submitted directly when researchers from their countries are involved in a project. These details will be published alongside the funding opportunity when it opens.

Deadline

UKRI must receive your application by 31 May 2024 4:00pm UK time. Funding partners may set up their own deadlines which may differ from the UK's one. This information will be provided when the funding opportunity opens and we ask you to carefully consider this when preparing your application.

How we will assess your application

Full assessment criteria will be provided when the funding opportunity opens.

Proposals will be assessed by external peer review followed by an expert panel. The panel will be comprised of experts from the UK and Southeast Asia partner countries.

In the event this funding opportunity is oversubscribed, UKRI and funding partners reserve the right to modify the assessment process.

Successful proposals will be expected to start by April 2025.

Contact details

Additional details on the funding opportunity, including scope and submission requirements, will be provided when the funding opportunity opens on 14 March 2024.

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ukri-southeast-asia-collaboration-on-infectious-diseases>