

RM Partners Research & Innovation Fund 2026/2027 – Guidance for Applicants

Cancer Alliances & Research

With the recent publication of The National Cancer Plan for England¹, cancer alliances continue to have a role in the implementation and roll out of cancer innovation to meet the ambitions in extending survival, improving quality of life, patient experience outcomes, while reducing variation and addressing inequalities. To support this at RM Partners (RMP), an active pipeline of cancer research is required, where the scale of the cancer alliance population of West London can support rapid adoption and roll out of innovation to patient benefit.

The Research and Innovation Programme is critically dependent on close working partnerships with the academic universities in West London; and research institutions like the Biomedical Research Centres and the Health Innovation Networks, to identify emerging discoveries to apply into clinical setting. RM Partners is best placed to support the rapid expansion and roll out of evidence-based innovations through our network of providers and organisations, accelerating the translation of evidence into policy.

Remit of Research & Innovation Fund

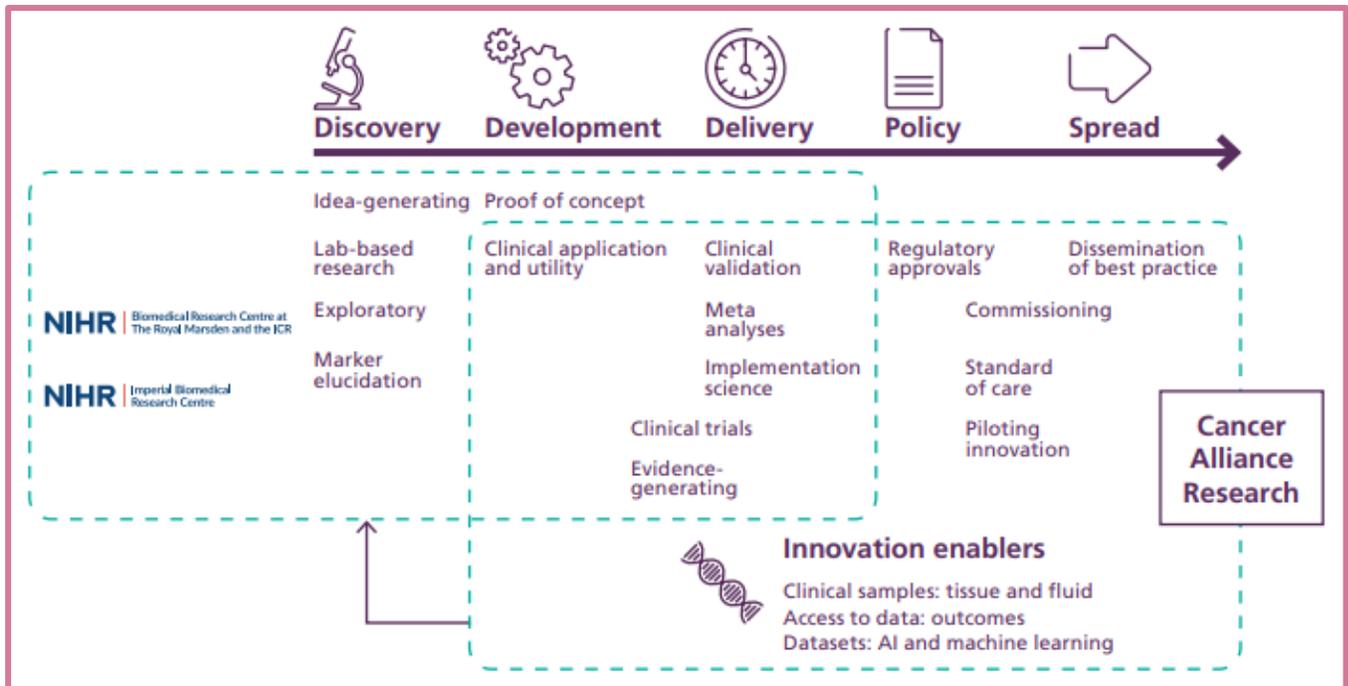


Figure 1. Remit of Cancer Alliance research and innovation along the cancer discovery pathway.

¹ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/698315a35a7e802e96d343a4/national-cancer-plan-for-england-delivering-world-class-cancer-care.pdf>

The aim of the RMP Research & Innovation fund is to provide cancer researchers and clinicians in West London the opportunity to deliver significant projects that support the goals of the National Cancer Plan. Cancer Alliance research and innovation includes evidence-generating clinical trials, or real-world implementation of innovations, where the scale of the Alliance population and clinical engagement and partnership drives rapid adoption and spread.

Figure 1 illustrates the areas of research and innovation that the funding scheme will support, including assessment of clinical utility, i.e. clinical decision making using non-invasive biomarkers in early diagnosis of cancer; generation of evidence base for regulatory approval of innovations, i.e. artificial intelligence to triage suspected cancers; or implementation of innovation where regulatory approvals are already in place, but poorly adopted into clinical pathways.

Examples of projects awarded in past rounds can be found on the RM Partners [website](#).

Funding will be awarded to projects that support the research or adoption of late-stage innovations that are ready for implementing within the NHS setting to improve earlier diagnosis and detection of cancer, reduce treatment variation, drive clinical efficiency and improve patient outcomes. This can include pragmatic approaches to the identification, stratification, and referral of early-stage symptomatic patients, through to innovative research to identify the earliest possible intervention of cancer detection in an asymptomatic population.

Applications must demonstrate the scale and impact of patient benefit by addressing challenges of earlier and/or faster detection of cancer, personalised care, and minimising treatment variation, with priority given to projects that include rapid adoption of innovation. Applicants are encouraged to consider future requirements and potential barriers for the wider implementation route into the NHS, which may involve regulatory and professional body approvals and endorsements, and any support (beyond funding) requested from the cancer alliance.

Alignment and enhancement of **RMP's five-year strategy (2025-2030)**² will be assessed, with these priority areas:

- **Cancer Prevention**
- **Equity in access and outcomes**
- **Earlier diagnosis or improved survival in cancers where there has been little or no improvement in survival, such as pancreas, liver, oesophagus, ovarian cancers**
- **Sustainable delivery models of personalised care in neighbourhood health settings**
- **Technology to improve timely access to cancer-directed treatment**

Successful applications will be encouraged to focus on:

- **Delivery of an intervention**, rather than observational research, with the potential to scale up.
- **Innovative and inclusive project design** using the scale of the cancer alliance (across two ICBs) to generate robust evidence and outputs
- Generating **evidence for implementation**, including understanding the current challenges or cost implications for adoption in the NHS.
- **Rapid delivery of outputs** within the project timelines, building in interim analysis, and other milestones that are ready for wider dissemination to prepare for wider commissioning and roll out
- **Incorporating patient and public input and engagement (PPIE)** early in the project

² https://rmpartners.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/R24008a_RMP-Strategy_AW_WEB_PAGES-revised-May-2025.pdf

application to support the project design and lay summary. Projects with strong PPIE input should be included into the project team for involvement throughout the project.

- **Collaboration** across institutions or organisations, either within existing networks or developing new ones.
- **Neighborhood health** involvement, including innovative recruitment strategies or community-based delivery of intervention(s)

Eligibility

The funding award is open to all clinical and non-clinical researchers. The application should be submitted by one lead applicant, where the host organisation sits within the RMP network. Multi-institutional collaborations across RMP are required. Partners and boroughs within the cancer alliance are listed [here](#).

Project Timelines

The RMP Research and Innovation Fund will award projects to the maximum duration of three years, which should include sufficient time towards a robust evaluation of the proposed intervention. Any research or trial of the proposed intervention should be completed within two years, with an additional time up to a year to complete evaluation activities. Projects with a duration shorter than three years may be submitted; however, applicants are strongly urged to commit to realistic start dates to allow for time for recruitment and any necessary regulatory approvals.

Projects must have a start time no later than 1 October 2026 to be eligible. A letter of support from the host organisation committing to project timelines will be required at the time of full application submission.

Funding

Total funding for each award will be capped at a maximum allocation of £200,000. The total amount of funding requested, once approved by RMP following a successful interview by the Review Panel, will be awarded to the lead applicant's host organisation in a detailed funding award letter in the 2026/2027 financial year. The host organisation will be required to accept the total award for the duration of the project, therefore written confirmation of support from the lead applicant's host organisation's finance team is required at the full application stage. A detailed breakdown of costs will be requested at the full application stage, using the template provided.

Eligible costs

The RMP Research and Innovation Fund is funded from the NHS monies awarded to the Cancer Alliance to deliver on the aims of the National Cancer Plan for England. Therefore, RMP will not pay for indirect costs, such as overheads, living costs or journal subscriptions, or capital equipment. RMP will pay for the direct incurred cost of the project, including salaries of staff involved in the project, public and patient engagement activities, consumables and dissemination costs. Applications where the primary intent is to purchase capital equipment will not be considered.

It is the responsibility of the lead applicant and host organisation to include VAT into costs or services that are taxable. VAT must be documented in the detailed finance submission required at the full application stage and must be covered by the overall funding award. Further information can be found under the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document.

Equality and Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

Care equity is central to RMP's strategy and delivery, and built into every aspect of the work funded and delivered by the cancer alliance. This includes a pro-active and comprehensive

understanding of where health inequities exist, how the proposed work will take steps to ensure inclusive design and engage people with protected characteristics in the development, implementation and dissemination of the work. Applicants invited to full application will have to complete the Equality and Health Inequalities Impact Assessment (EHIA), produced by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

EOI's will also have to articulate how the proposed project will contribute to improving existing health inequity for the duration of the project and the eventual roll out of the intervention if successful.

Review Process

As per previous years, this scheme will have a three-phase review process before a funding decision is made by the RMP Research & Innovation Review Panel:

1. Expression of Interest (EOI): This first stage application will include the project proposal, list of collaborators, lay summary, high level costings and consideration of impact on health inequalities. EOI submission deadline is **Friday 24 April**. Projects that are not eligible or aligned to the aims of the Research and Innovation Fund will not be invited to full application. Applicants may receive conditional feedback before moving to the next stage of full application.
2. Full application: This second stage is a detailed application, outlining methodology, milestones, applicant CVs and a detailed finance costing template, including a letter of confirmation from the finance lead of the host organisation. Full applications will be made available to shortlisted applicants only. Submission deadline is **Wednesday 3 June**.
3. Interview: Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an in-person interview with members of the Review Panel at RMP's office. The lead applicant, along with a maximum of two collaborators, will be interviewed. on **Monday 29 June**. Funding decisions will be made based on reviews and interviews.

At each stage of the review process, feedback from the Review Panel may be requested. Successful applicants will be informed by July 2026.

Review Panel Membership:

The RMP Research & Innovation Review Panel will be responsible for the scoring and feedback of applications and will interview shortlisted applicants. Membership for the Review Panel consists of:

- Clinical Trust Leads or Trust R&D Directors
- Biomedical Research Centre representatives
- Additional representation from key RM Partners stakeholders including but not limited to Imperial College Health Partners, South London HIN, ICR and Imperial College London representatives.
- Patient, Public and Carer representatives

Review panel members will be asked to keep their scores and all information confidential to protect proposals. Members of the review panel will also be asked to declare any conflicts of interest with applications and will not score applications where a conflict of interest is declared.

Review Criteria

The RMP Research & Innovation Panel will make assessments on the applications on:

- **Impact & Alignment:** Potential to meet challenges in improvements in outcomes in people with cancer, alignment to the National Cancer Plan and RMP aims, and scalability of intervention in the NHS setting.
- **Quality and originality** of project including its scientific merit, robust methodology and inclusive design, including novel and innovative approaches.
- **Quality of team and collaborative environment**, including the suitability and feasibility of the lead applicant to carry out proposed project. Representation of collaborating organisations and community or neighbourhood partners. Strong engagement with patient and public input throughout the duration of the proposed project.
- **Resources and timelines proposed** are realistic and reasonably justified in line with proposal, demonstrating value for money and leveraging existing resources where appropriate. Timelines are feasible, with risks and mitigations well articulated.

Key Dates of RM Partners Research & Innovation Fund 2026/2027

Launch of Funding Call for Expressions of Interests	Monday 16 March
Deadline for EOI submissions	Friday 24 April
Invitations for full application	Tuesday 5 May
Deadline for full application	Wednesday 3 June
Interview with Review Panel	Monday 29 June
Funding Decision made	from 13 July

Application Submission Format

Please complete applications using templates where provided, adhering to the word count limit for each section:

- **1st EOI submission:** EOI template only
- **2nd stage submission by invitation only:** Full application template, EHIA, CV template, detailed finance spreadsheet, letter of confirmation from organisation (signed by finance, legal and R&D lead). Any additional information (figures, charts, diagrams) can be added as appendices to the application.

Please email documents in .doc or .pdf format to RMPartners.Research@nhs.net before the deadline. Applications received later than the deadline date will not be considered unless agreed otherwise. Once submitted, any amendments or changes to applications can only be made prior to the deadline.

RMP will acknowledge the receipt of the application via email. If you have not received an acknowledgement, your application has not been received and it is advised that you contact RMP to resolve any potential firewall issues blocking the submission.

Contact information

To discuss applications or any queries regarding the RMP Research and Innovation Fund, please contact RMPartners.Research@nhs.net