

Impact of Covid-19 on Research Funding

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How has Covid-19 impacted research funding, both for existing grant holders and for prospective applicants?

Post Award

- Disruptions to Research Projects including
 - Closure of labs
 - Suspension of clinical trials
 - Travel restrictions
 - Visa implications for overseas researchers
 - Collecting research data

University Response

- Work to support UK Covid response
 - Covid-19 Research on MS Teams (Seb Oliver)
 - HEIF Covid funding scheme
 - Non-funded research
- Ability to work from home (R&E working remotely)
- Response to Funders re meeting post-award deadlines
- Furlough Scheme

Funder responses

- UKRI have provided a COVID additional allocation pot – to be spent by September 2021. Internal allocation call for grants ending before 31.3.2021 as a priority
- WT increased allocations and end dates
- CRUK reductions to budgets
- DFID – tbc but likely budget reductions and future allocation based on UK GDP so likely reduction
- Royal Society – addition funds (to be bid for from the RS)
- EU – allowing no cost extensions but NO additional funding

Impact on funding opportunities

Funding landscape

- Funding from governments and others for collaborative Covid-19 research (WHO global research framework)
 - Over €1bn from EU and H2020 made available for Covid-19
 - UK £744m commitment (Apr 20)
 - Wellcome Trust
- Early Covid-19 calls: Wellcome, UKRI/NIHR Rapid response
- NIHR Prioritisation panel for Covid-19 clinical research
- Some standard calls delayed or cancelled
- UKRI grant holders encouraged to divert projects to address C-19

Impact on funding opportunities

Characteristics of funding

- All disciplines
 - UKRI – short-term projects that address and mitigate the health, social, economic, cultural and environmental impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak
 - UKRI priority areas
- Add-on strands to existing calls: BA Covid-19 Special Research Grants
- Dedicated calls but also Covid-19 integrated in standard calls
- Calls continuing to open
- Situation is evolving - research priorities depend on the funder on the funder strategy

Impact on funding opportunities

Funder Requirements

- Clear impact pathway
- Very short start times
- Short turnaround for contracts
- Often short project duration – 6-18 months
- Challenges – proposals must address current restrictions, in-country conditions, access to facilities / participants, handling data (working remotely), recruiting staff (need for rapid start), rapid ethical approvals
- Additional institutional approvals

Going forward

- Impact on charity funding
- Brexit
- Government plans – ARPA, etc
- Creation of FCDO – impact on overseas aid budget (0.7% GDP), associated research programmes (GCRF, Newton Fund), funding for overseas collaborations
- R&D Roadmap – 2.4% GDP by 2027
- Regional emphasis – strength in places
- UKRI – change in methods of funding (‘light touch’ proposals -10 Sept)

Hints and tips

- Horizon scanning - Research Professional, funder websites/social media. UKRI Covid-19 research priorities list.
- Sussex Covid-19 Research MS Team (fortnightly funding opportunities)
- SSRP mailing list
- UoS Covid-19 webpages, UKRI coronavirus hub, UKRO webpages
- Notify RO early
- Keep applying with non-Covid research