

# FAQs

## US-Ireland R&D Partnership Programme

HSC R&D Division (January 2019)

*The following FAQs are relevant to HEALTH-related proposals only  
i.e. applications to the National Institutes of Health (NIH).*

*(they are written more specifically for applicants from Northern Ireland)*

### 1. What is the US-Ireland Partnership Programme?

This is a programme where Principal Investigators (PI) from the **United States (US)**, **Northern Ireland (NI)** and the **Republic of Ireland (RoI)** collaborate to submit a joint “tri-partite” proposal as an “investigator initiated grant application” to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), following standard application formats and timelines.

To qualify for the US Ireland Partnership Programme there must be at least one PI from each jurisdiction, although the US partner bears the responsibility for submission of the joint “tri-partite” proposal through their ‘home agency’ to NIH.

Under the US Ireland Partnership Programme if the application is approved for funding at the NIH, the US partner agency (NIH) funds the US investigator(s); the partner agency in NI funds the NI-based investigator(s), and the partner agencies in RoI fund the RoI investigator(s).

### 2. Who are the partner agencies?

The partner agency in the US is the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The partner agency in NI is the Public Health Agency Health & Social Care Research & Development Division (HSC R&D).

The partner agencies in RoI are Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), and the Health Research Board (HRB).

### 3. Which NIH calls are relevant to the US-Ireland Partnership Programme?

The remit of the US-Ireland R&D Partnership programme has been expanded to cover research in the broader mission of the National Institutes of Health:

<https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/mission-goals> and  
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/what-does-nih-look-for.htm>

Applications are typically submitted as investigator initiated, unsolicited proposals  
[https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/parent\\_announcements.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/parent_announcements.htm).

(for example the most commonly targeted program has been the [R01 Research Project Grant Program](#))

You are encouraged to discuss your proposed research program (US, NI and RoI team) with the relevant program officer at NIH before submission to assure your proposed topic is of interest to, and within the mission of, a NIH Institute or center. You can find assigned program officials by topic areas here:

[https://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter\\_matchmaker.cfm](https://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter_matchmaker.cfm)

### 4a. I can't find a US-Ireland call listed in NIH.

There is no “US Ireland” funding call at NIH.

Rather the US Ireland Partnership Programme is a mechanism which enables funding agencies in the 3 countries to jointly fund collaborative “tri-partite” proposals. Therefore the US Ireland Programme typically supports certain existing Research Project Grant calls in NIH.

**4b. Where can I find information on eligible calls within the NIH which are open to the US-Ireland Partnership Programme?**

You can search here: <https://grants.nih.gov/funding/searchguide/index.html/> and [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/search\\_guide.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/search_guide.htm) for a listing of all active NIH funding opportunities although please note that not all calls are appropriate for the US Ireland Programme. This website also lists funding opportunities by agencies outside of NIH, but only NIH relevant announcements may apply. NIH Institutes and Centers are listed by their abbreviations.

If you are unsure if the call you are interested in applying to is eligible for the US Ireland Programme please email: [usireland@hscni.net](mailto:usireland@hscni.net)

Also see here for details of the various NIH Institutes: <https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih>

**5. What is the difference between NI & RoI investigators applying for NIH funding calls outside of the US-Ireland Programme or as part of the US-Ireland Programme?**

Most NIH funding opportunities are open to foreign investigators, therefore you can choose to work with a US investigator or apply directly to NIH outside of the US Ireland Programme and without involving the funding agencies in Ireland. In this case the NIH will fund the costs of the entire proposal including any work/research outside the US.

If you receive approval for your project to be part of the US Ireland Programme (prior to applying for a research grant in NIH) and are approved for funding by NIH, then the partner agencies in RoI fund the RoI investigator(s), the partner agency in NI fund the NI-based investigator(s), and the US partner agency funds the US investigator(s).

**6. Do US-Ireland Partnership proposals have a competitive advantage with the NIH calls?**

US-Ireland R&D Partnership proposals compete head-to-head with 'non-US-Ireland partnership' proposals submitted to the same funding opportunity at NIH.

Any competitive advantage comes from the additive nature of the collaboration that will be reflected in the quality of the science. Since the NI/RoI collaborator budget is not included in the collaborative grant application from the US Investigator, it is important for applicants to include detailed letters of collaboration that explain the US-Ireland partnership and summarize this information in the introduction to the proposal to ensure that NIH reviewers fully understand the intricacies of the process.

**7. When are the US-Ireland Partnership Programme calls open?**

The funding call deadlines are set by NIH. You are strongly advised to consult with your US partner for information on NIH call deadlines. The US partner will be responsible for submitting the joint proposal to NIH on behalf of all applicants and should therefore be familiar with NIH programmes.

However, HSC R&D (& SFI/HRB) requires knowledge of an "Intention to Submit" in advance of the NIH full proposal deadline or, if applicable, the deadline at the US University's Research Office in advance of the NIH deadline.

**8. Who needs to complete the mandatory "Intention to Submit" stage?**

NI and RoI applicants who are eligible must each send an "Intention to Submit" form to their relevant funding agency. This short form must be submitted by the Research Institution Research Office on behalf of the lead applicant at least 10 weeks in advance of the full proposal deadline at NIH. The "Intention to Submit" form can be found in the call document: <http://www.research.hscni.net/us-ireland-rd-partnership-programme>

All lead applicants and co-applicants must be eligible to be named on the "Intention to Submit" form. For example, if there is more than one NI applicant proposing to participate in a US-Ireland proposal to the NIH, the Research Institution Research Office must deem them all to be eligible for the Programme and include relevant details for all such applicants.

The US partners need to be aware of the US Ireland Programme and how it operates but do not need to fulfil any additional steps outside of the normal application to NIH. However, the US partner should be advised that they do not need to include the NI/RoI budget in their application, but rather provide the necessary collaboration and consortium agreements, as per their University's guidance.

<p><b>10. Why do I have to submit a draft of the proposal to HSC R&amp;D in advance of the NIH deadline?</b></p>	<p>A draft of the “tri-partite” proposal for submission to the NIH must be submitted to HSC R&amp;D at least 6 weeks in advance of the NIH deadline. All additional relevant appendices should also be included with the draft proposal.</p> <p>The purpose of this step is to ensure compliance of the research with remit, to assess the budget requested, and to confirm that the work proposed for each jurisdiction adds significant value so that the overall programme of research goes beyond what might be achieved by any one PI working alone supported only by national funding.</p> <p>If the funding agencies in Ireland agree to support the proposal, a <b>funding commitment letter</b> is provided to the applicants for inclusion in the full proposal to be submitted as part of the NIH grant application. This letter will also be sent to the responsible person at NIH to indicate the commitment to this proposal <b>should it be deemed fundable</b> by the NIH peer-review process.</p> <p>It is recommended that your US partner provide an NIH contact (NIH Program Official) with whom they have discussed the proposal and who can be included in the correspondence.</p>
<p><b>11. I need HSC R&amp;D’s decision by a certain date prior to the NIH deadline?</b></p>	<p>HSC R&amp;D will endeavour to inform you at the earliest possible date if your proposal is approved/declined. If there is a submission deadline at the US research office, please ensure that the draft proposal is submitted to HSC R&amp;D at least 6 weeks in advance of this research office deadline.</p>
<p><b>13. Are there any instructions for writing an NIH application?</b></p>	<p>The US partner will be responsible for submitting the joint “tri-partite” proposal to NIH on behalf of the NI &amp; RoI applicants and should therefore be familiar with NIH programmes and grant application.</p> <p>NIH provides a large amount of advice for writing an application. This is a good place to start: <a href="https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/write-your-application.htm#What%20Peer%20Reviewers%20Look%20For">https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/write-your-application.htm#What%20Peer%20Reviewers%20Look%20For</a></p>
<p><b>14. How should we address the collaboration element of the proposal?</b></p>	<p>Research teams with investigators from different institutions are expected to detail their proposed collaborations as part of the grant application. Therefore you have to include letters of commitment or intent that clearly spell out the roles of the collaborators. These letters should provide assurance to the reviewers that this work will in fact be done, and that funding commitments by HSC R&amp;D are in place.</p> <p>A formal agreement of the terms of the collaboration may be needed if your award is successful, but this is not usually required at the applications stage.</p> <p>For information on consortium agreement please see: <a href="https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps_2011/nihgps_ch15.htm">https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps_2011/nihgps_ch15.htm</a></p>
<p><b>15. What is the maximum funding request for NI?</b></p>	<p>Please consult the call document for details: <a href="http://www.research.hscni.net/us-ireland-rd-partnership-programme">http://www.research.hscni.net/us-ireland-rd-partnership-programme</a></p> <p>It is expected that the funding requested by NI applicants will be commensurate with the work proposed.</p>
<p><b>18. What happens after the application receives a score from the NIH review panel?</b></p>	<p>All applications should receive a “Summary Statement” following NIH review by the relevant Study Section.</p> <p>In some cases the Summary Statement provides an impact score and a percentile (under “SRG Action”). This will give you an idea of how close the application is to being funded. The lower the score and the percentile the better. Different Institutes at NIH will have different cut-offs for funding and this can also vary year to year depending on the relevant budget. Some Institutes will publish the cut-offs. You will also be provided with the reviewers’ critiques and feedback from the study section discussion.</p>

If the summary statement does not provide an impact score (“SRG Action: + +”) then the application was most likely outside the top half of applications in the study section and typically would not then have been discussed. These applications still receive critiques provided by the assigned reviewers

In either case you may be able to resubmit the application. The Program Contact listed at the top of the Summary Statement will provide advice on this.

**19. How long do I have to make a resubmission?**

NIH provides guidance on this. See here: [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/next\\_steps.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/next_steps.htm) and [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/resubmission\\_q&a.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/resubmission_q&a.htm)

**20. What happens if the application is successful?**

If you have a score in the fundable range then you should inform the funding agencies in Ireland as soon as possible.

The funders in Ireland will need to receive a copy of the NIH Notice of Award (NoA) before they can issue their own Letter of Offer.

HSC R&D has an arrangement with the Medical Research Council (MRC) to co-fund a number of US Ireland Awards. HSC R&D Division will contact the MRC regarding this arrangement and inform you of the outcome.