2024 Open Call for Investigator-initiated Projects

Research and Data Analytics Office
Health Bureau
January 2025

Outline

- ➤ **Overview of the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF)**

- ➤ **Funding Scope**

- ➤ **Thematic Priorities**

- ➤ **Submission and Timeline**

- ➤ **Funding Decision**

- ➤ **Project Commencement**

- ➤ **Examples of Early Rejected Applications**

Overview of HMRF

Establishment
• Dec 2011 • Consolidation of former funds*

Operation
• Annual basis – Open Calls • Policy driven – Commissioned programmes

*Former funds:
- Health and Health Services Research Fund (HHSRF)
- Research Fund for the Control of Infectious Diseases (RFCID)
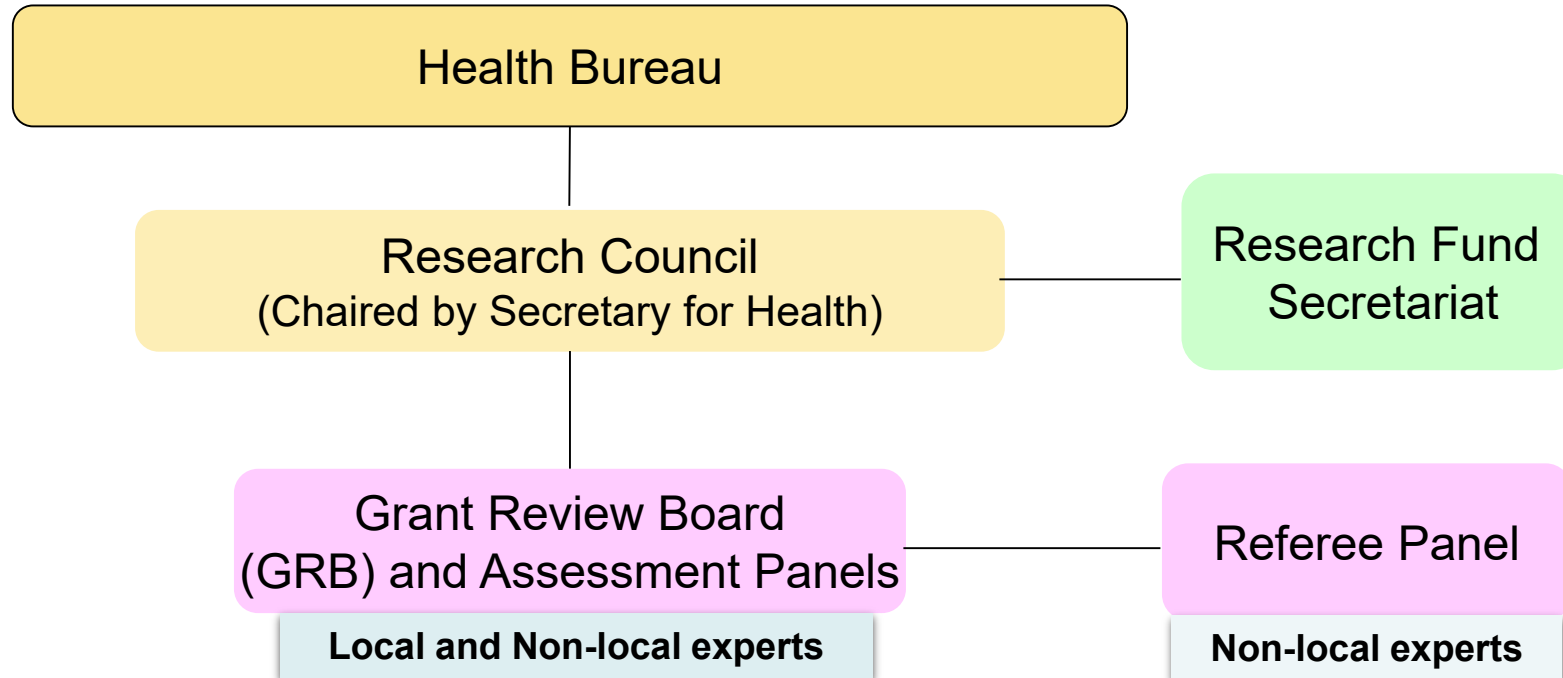- Health Care and Promotion Fund (HCPF)

Mission

◆ Build research capacity and to encourage, facilitate and support **health and medical research** to:

- Inform health policies

- Improve population health

- Strengthen the healthcare system

- Enhance healthcare practices

- Advance standard and quality of care

- Promote clinical excellence

… through generation and application of **evidence-based scientific knowledge** derived from local research in health and medicine.

◆ Funding support to **evidence-based health promotion projects** that help people **adopt healthier lifestyles** by enhancing awareness, changing adverse health behaviours and creating a conducive environment that supports good health practices.

Governance Structure


```
Health Bureau
    |
Research Council ————————— Research Fund
(Chaired by Secretary for Health)   Secretariat
    |
Grant Review Board ————————— Referee Panel
(GRB) and Assessment Panels
    Local and Non-local experts        Non-local experts
```

Governing body   Technical arm   Executive arm

Funding Scope

Emphasise translational potential of research findings
Supports applications on the following research projects -

Clinical research

- Including patient-oriented research, epidemiological and behavioural studies, outcomes research and health services research

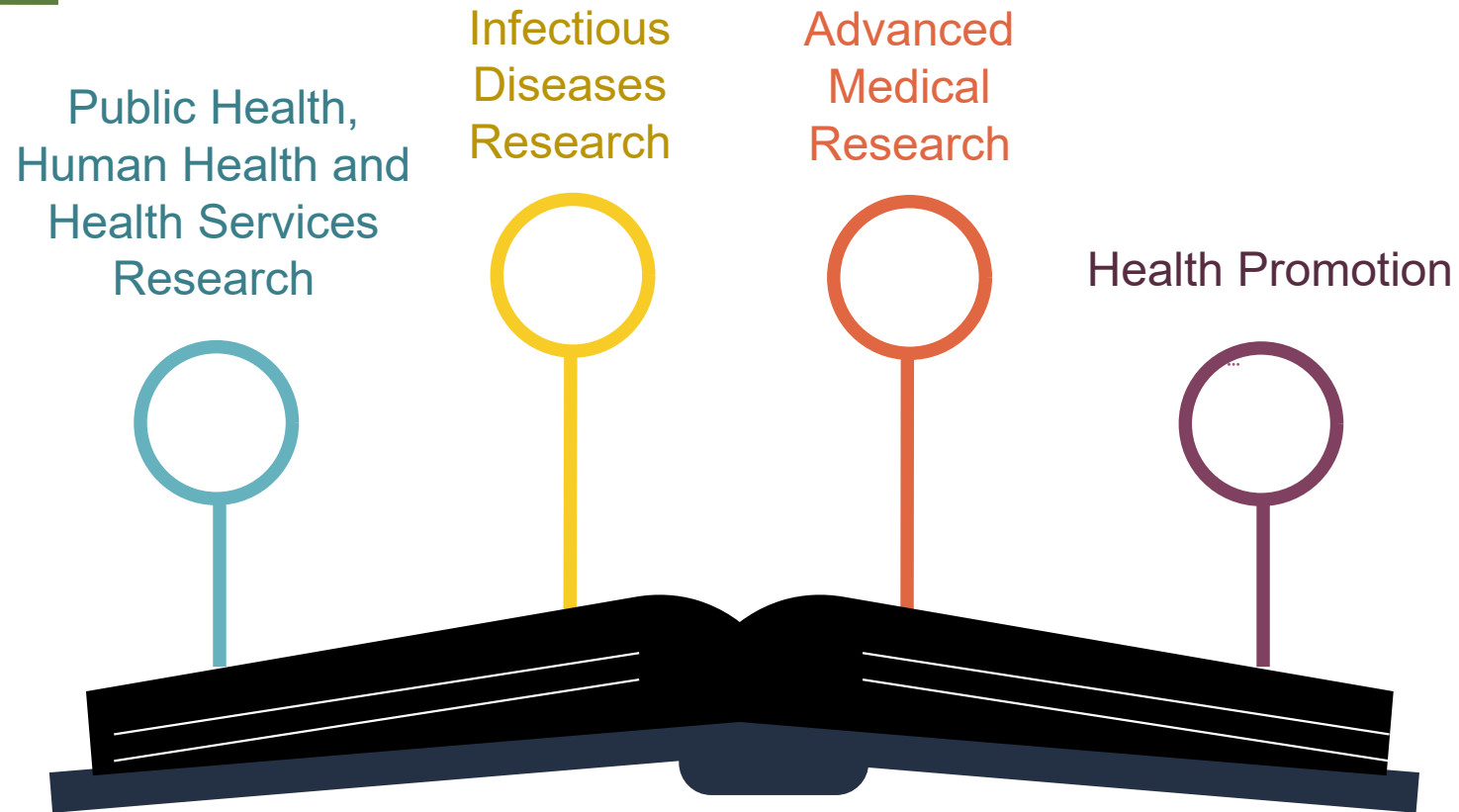**Infectious diseases research with public health implications**

- From bench to bedside and at community level and with translational value

Chinese medicine - clinical research

- Based on Chinese medicine theory, or
- On Chinese medicine theory and methodology

Areas of Projects

Public Health, Human Health and Health Services Research

Infectious Diseases Research

Advanced Medical Research

Health Promotion

Public Health, Human Health and Health Services Research

Public Health

- To enhance prevention and treatment and so improve population health

Health Services

- To determine which interventions and services are effective and cost-effective in the local healthcare setting

Chinese Medicine

- Must be clinical research which is based on Chinese medicine theory or clinical research on Chinese medicine theory and methodology

Infectious Diseases Research

Support research proposals:

➤ Focus on those infectious diseases that are prevalent in or pose threat to Hong Kong and neighbouring areas

➤ With public health implications from bench to bedside and at community level

➤ With translational value

Advanced Medical Research

➢ **Clinical Studies**

➢ **Apply advance technologies to facilitate** the translation of knowledge generated from health and health services or infectious diseases studies
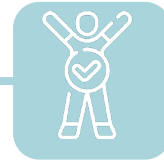
○ into **clinical practice**

○ to inform **health policy**
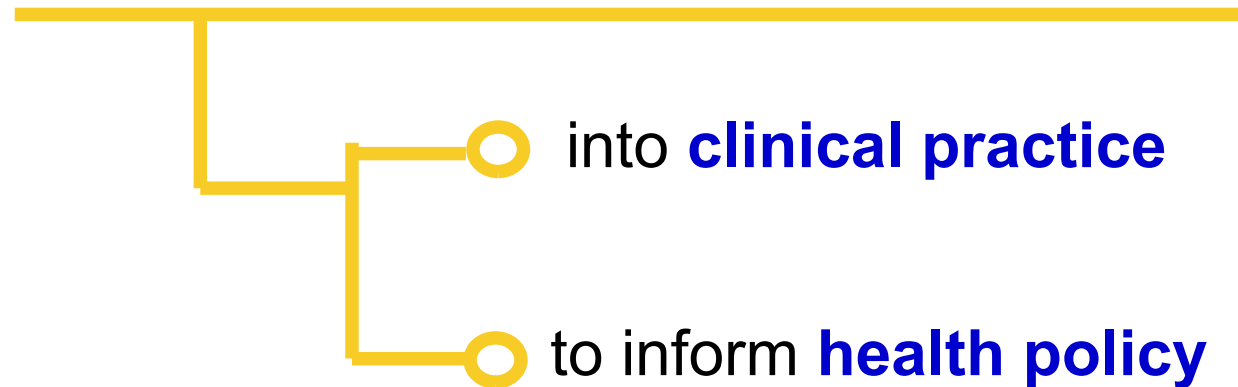
Health Promotion

Based on scientific evidence and evaluated in a systematic way

Pre-set criteria for process and outcome evaluation based on the RE-AIM framework are required.

Include a coordinated set of activities that help people adopt healthier lifestyles by enhancing awareness, changing adverse health behaviours and creating a conducive environment that supports good health practices
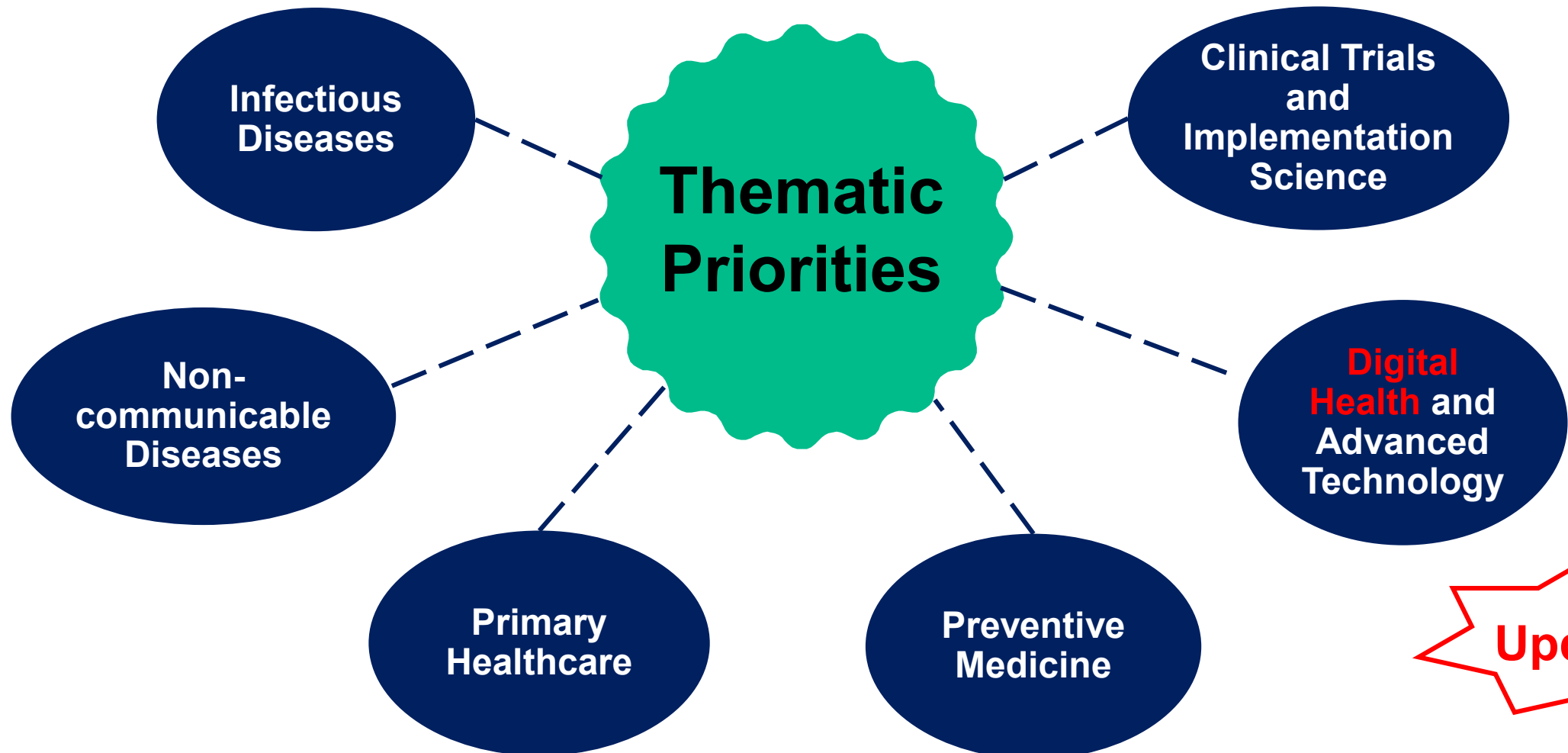
• Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, Maintenance/ sustainability

Thematic Priorities

Thematic Priorities for 2024 HMRF Open Call

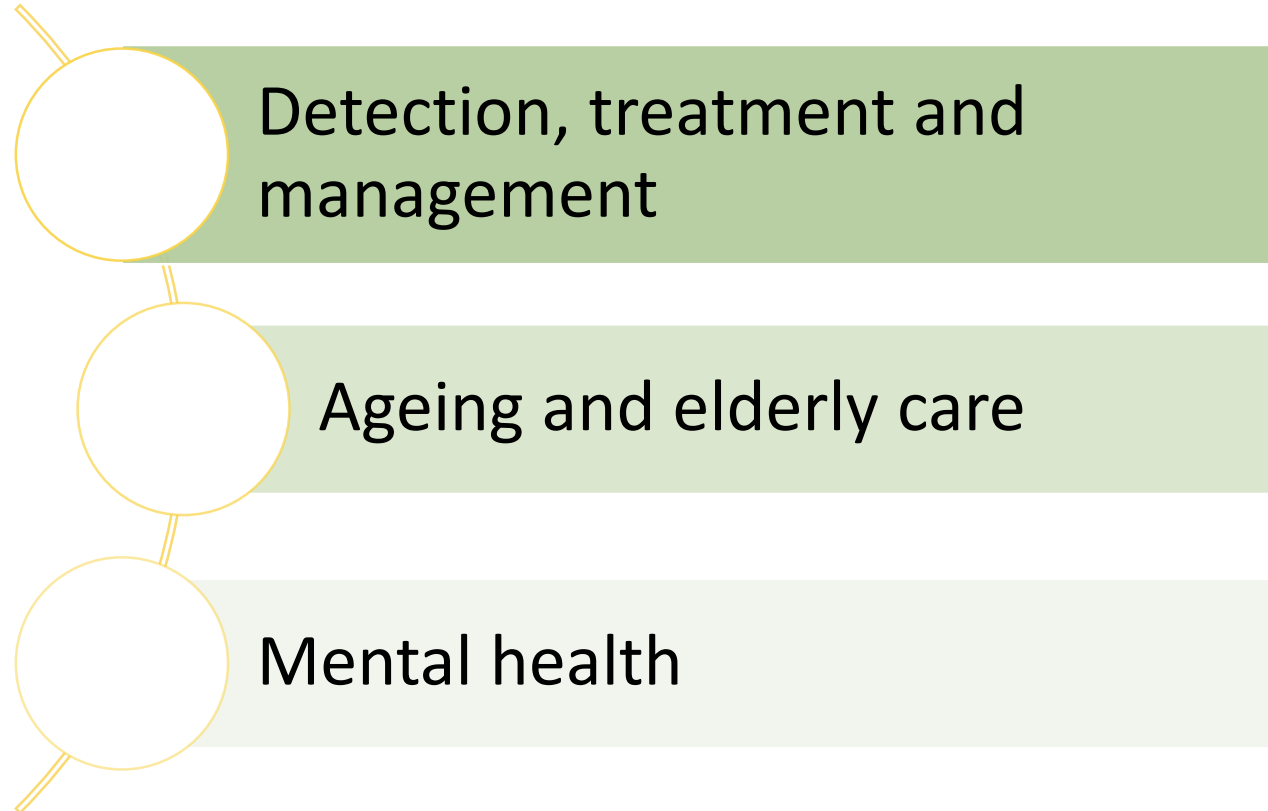**Thematic Priorities**

- Infectious Diseases
- Clinical Trials and Implementation Science
- Non-communicable Diseases
- Digital Health and Advanced Technology
- Primary Healthcare
- Preventive Medicine

Updated

A. Infectious Diseases

Aetiology & Epidemiology

Prevention, Detection & Management

Antimicrobial Resistance

Preparedness and Response to Pandemic and Epidemic

B. Non-communicable Diseases

Detection, treatment and management

Ageing and elderly care

Mental health

B. Non-communicable Diseases

B-0001	Epidemiology; identify modifiable risk and protective factors for prevention and development of major NCD including cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes and, mental disorders, **and the top ten cancers in Hong Kong (by incidence or mortality) according to the Hong Kong Cancer Registry's latest statistics**
B-0010	**Identify and evaluate novel school-based interventions to promote students' mental health**

NEW

C. Primary Healthcare

- Enhance primary care services for NCD

- Effectiveness of collaborative care service model for NCD

- Innovative service models

- Family doctor concept

- Adopt a life course preventive care approach and evaluate effectiveness and cost-effectiveness

- Enhance usage of primary healthcare services
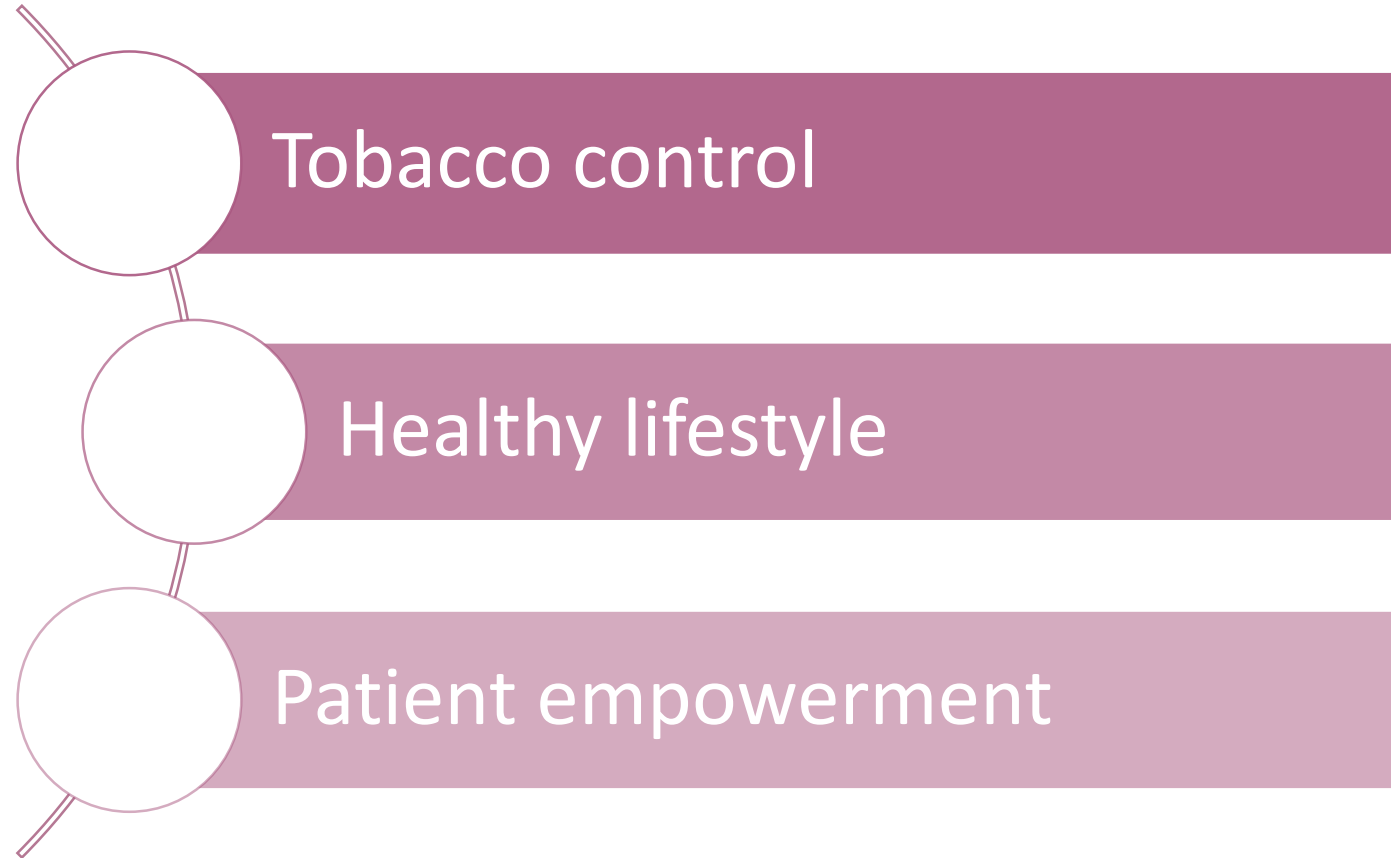
- **Promote oral health** **NEW**

C. Primary Healthcare

C-0007	Develop strategies and measures to promote oral health among preschool children, adolescents, elderly, and underprivileged groups

NEW

D. Preventive Medicine

Tobacco control

Healthy lifestyle

Patient empowerment

D. Preventive Medicine

D-0002	Develop innovative methods, measures, and study designs to assess tobacco use knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours and other related addictions **unhealthy behaviours such as harmful use of alcohol, addiction to** video gaming and drug abuse; including measures to best predict future use of tobacco products other than conventional cigarettes

NEW

E. Digital Health and Advanced Technology

Genetics/genomic in clinical applications

Big data analytics of clinical information

Digital technology for population health improvement and healthcare service delivery

NEW

**Advanced technology for smart care provision in community and hospital settings**

E. Digital Health and Advanced Technology

E-0003	Develop and evaluate the use of **digital technology** to improve the enhancement of population health and the delivery of healthcare services, especially in **health promotion, health self-monitoring, self-care support, primary healthcare**, and **healthcare journey management**
E-0004	Develop, apply and evaluate advanced technology to enable smart care **provision in community and hospital settings** including smart ward, smart clinic, smart pharmacy

NEW

F. Clinical Trials & Implementation Science

Clinical Trials

Implementation Science
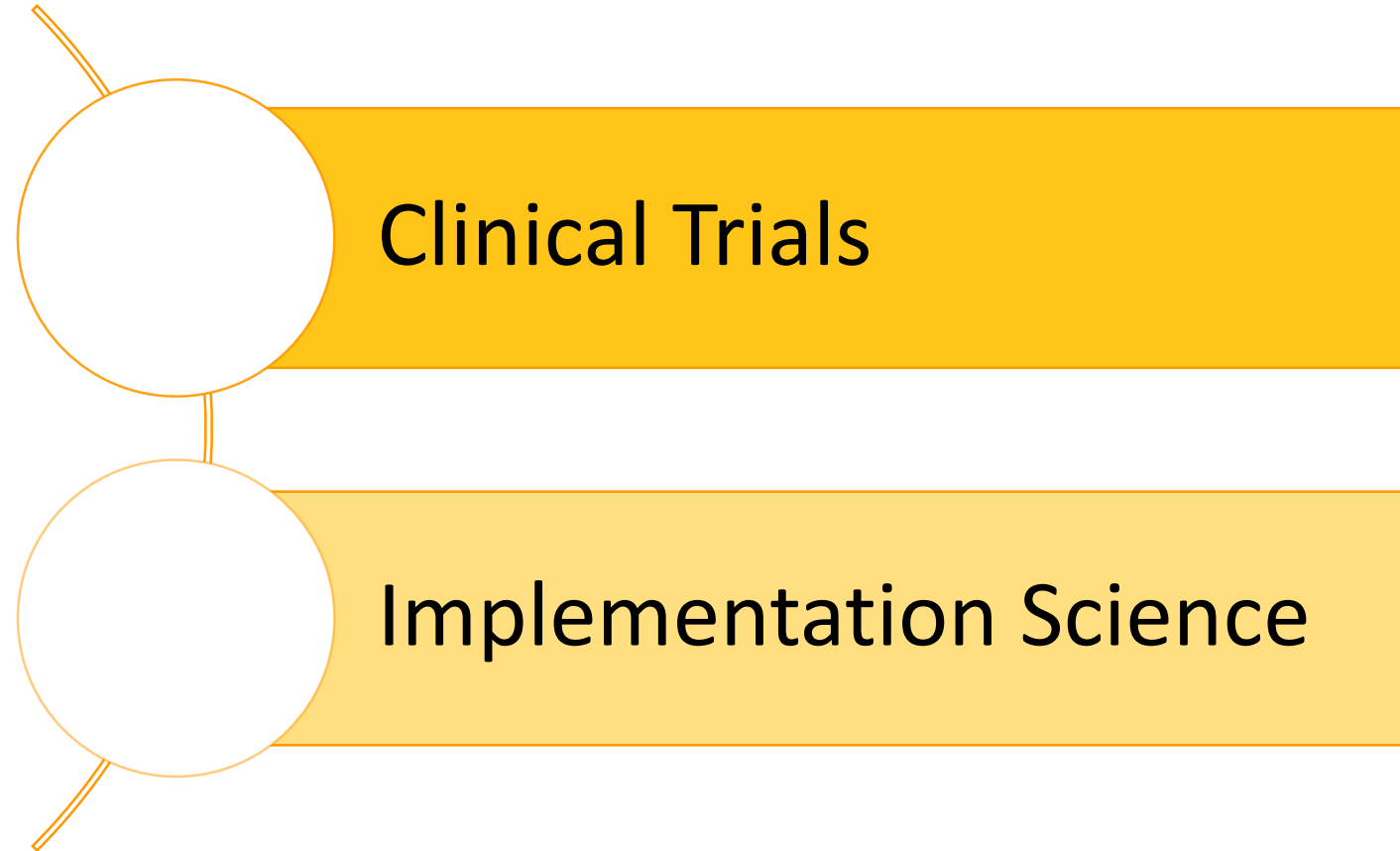
Submission and Timeline

Grant Size & Types

- **ONE** application per Principal applicant (PA)
- Application with single applicant is not allowed

NEW

$1.5 million for up to 3 years	Research project	New proposal
or	or	or
Seed Grant: $0.5 million for up to 3 years	Health promotion project	Resubmission

Seed Grant

Grant ceiling	**≤ $500,000**
Criteria	1. Larger-scale pilot study* **or** 2. Small-scale study with achievable objectives

*Pre-defined outcome indicators are required to scale up a pilot study

Eligibility

✓ Locally based tertiary institutions, hospitals, medical schools, non-governmental organisations or other appropriate centres, units and services.

✓ PA shall be employed by an administering institution (AI) which is based in Hong Kong at the time of application and throughout the project period.

❗ Inform us immediately if you plan to leave the local institution after submission of application. Failure to do so will result in disqualification of the application.

Key Updates on Submission

! Single applicant is not allowed

NEW

! PA is required to indicate a Co-Applicant (Co-A) to take up the PA role as a **contingency measure**

! PA and Co-A(s) are required to provide their h-index and years of research experience in relevant field(s) of the application

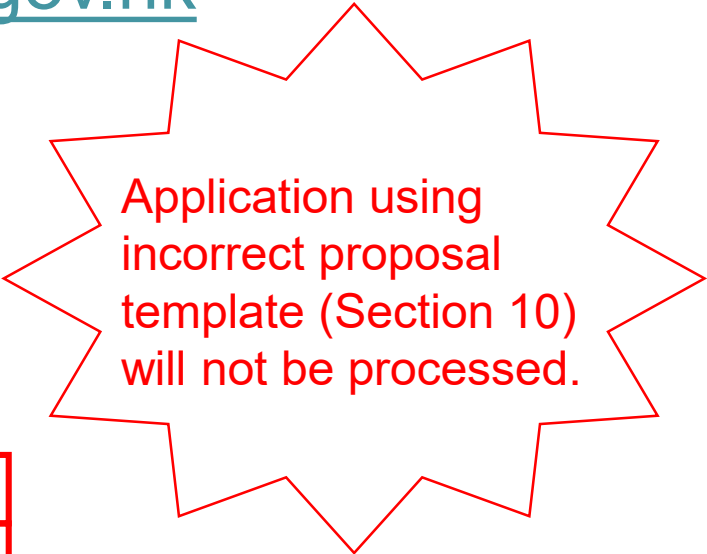**!** Publication cost is increased to a maximum of HK$30,000

Section 10 Proposal

➤ Two different templates for Sections 10 (a) – (h) must be attached as a PDF file to the e-Form

2024·HMRF·Open·Call·–·Research·Proposal

2024·HMRF·Open·Call·–·Health·Promotion·Proposal

➤ To downloaded from https://rfs.healthbureau.gov.hk

- Briefing Sessions on Grant Applications for the 2024 Open Call for Investigator-initiated Projects
- Thematic Priorities updated
- Guidance Notes on Grant Application updated
- Explanatory Notes on Grant Application updated
- Electronic Application Form (e-Form): Available on eGMS
  (Path in eGMS: Project > Application > View Application > Application Call > Web-based Online e-Form)
- Proposal Template for Research Project (Section 10(a)-(h)) updated
- Proposal Template for Health Promotion Project (Section 10(a)-(h)) updated

Application using incorrect proposal template (Section 10) will not be processed.

Resubmission

Applications rated "2" or above in a previous HMRF Open Call

Rated "2"

Rated "3"/"4"

Substantial revision to the proposal

- Structured point-by-point response to address all GRB and/or reviewers' comments in the GRB Assessment Report

- Highlight the major changes in different colour in the Project proposal

Resubmission

➢ To be assessed on the continued relevance of the application with respect to:

a) Knowledge gaps

b) Policy needs

c) Translational value

d) Prevailing thematic priorities at the time of resubmission

➢ Having satisfactorily addressed comments of GRB/reviewers is not a guarantee of funding

New Submission

For previously not funded applications:

Previous HMRF Open Call / Research Fellowship Scheme	OR	**Other funding agencies (local and overseas)**

➢ Can be submitted as a new application after extensive changes or improvements made with full justifications

Proper Declaration of Conflict of Interest and Sponsorships

PA and **all Co-A(s)** must declare:

! Any actual or perceived conflict of interest

e.g. receive funding or assistance from industries, or use grant monies to purchase products/services from business owned by the AI or any of the applicants

! Any sponsorship received/to be received related to any commercial product for this application

Declaration of Similar/ Related Studies and Other Funding

PAs and all Co-As should declare –

! Similar funded /recommended for support proposals in the past 3 years

! Similar not funded proposal(s) in the past 3 years

! Submitted current or similar proposal(s) pending funding decision

! Intention to submit this or similar application in the next 6 months

Notify the Secretariat the funding decision immediately once available!

Failure to make declaration may lead to application **not eligible** for further processing and **penalty** as determined by the Research Council

Management of Track Records of Applicants w.e.f. 1 Nov 2024

Scientific Misconduct	Non-Compliance	Level of Penalty & Penalty Actions
• Plagiarism / Self-plagiarism	• No submission of Final Report by deadline without valid justification	• Light / Medium / Heavy / Serious / Critical
• Falsification / Fabrication	• Early termination without valid justification	• Warning letter
• Double dipping not declared	• Incomplete project without valid justification	• Disqualification of related or all submitted applications
• Conflict of Interest not declared	• Final report graded "Unredeemable" or "Unacceptable" or "Not accepted"	• Debarment from 1 to 5 years in all capacities in all funding schemes
• Non-disclosure of submission of similar/related proposals in the application		• Partial payment or recovery of grant
• Non-disclosure of similar/related research work in the application		

Submission of Application

- ! Through eGMS by **31 March 2025** (**6:00 pm** HKT)

- ! Your institution's internal deadline, if any

- ! Signatures of all applicants, Head of Department, and authorised persons on behalf of the AI and finance office are required

- ! Receive acknowledgement email upon successful submission of application via eGMS

eGMS – Online Submission

Funding Decision

Upon Receiving Funding Decision

- In **late September 2025**

- For applications rated "3" or "4":

  - To <u>respond to GRB and/or Reviewers' comments</u> and submit a revised application **within three weeks**

  - To declare any similar/related research <u>work done before the project commencement date proposed in the application form</u> after receiving the decision email

NEW

Regulatory/Ethics/Third-party Data

Regulatory/Ethical Approvals/Consent for Accessing Third-party Data

- Submit within **12 weeks** from the date of decision email (or specified by the Secretariat)

- Bear(s) the **same project title** as that in the approved application

- The **protocol/scope** included in such approval(s)/evidence for accessing third-party data must be the **same** as that in the application

Certificate for Clinical Trial/Medicinal Test of pharmaceutical products; Certificate for Clinical Trial and Medicinal Test of proprietary Chinese medicines

- Confirm with Department of Health if required as early as practical

Points to Note – Outstanding deliverables

NEW

The grant may also be withdrawn if:

Outstanding/overdue:
- Report(s)
- Certified Financial Statement(s)
- Audited Accounts
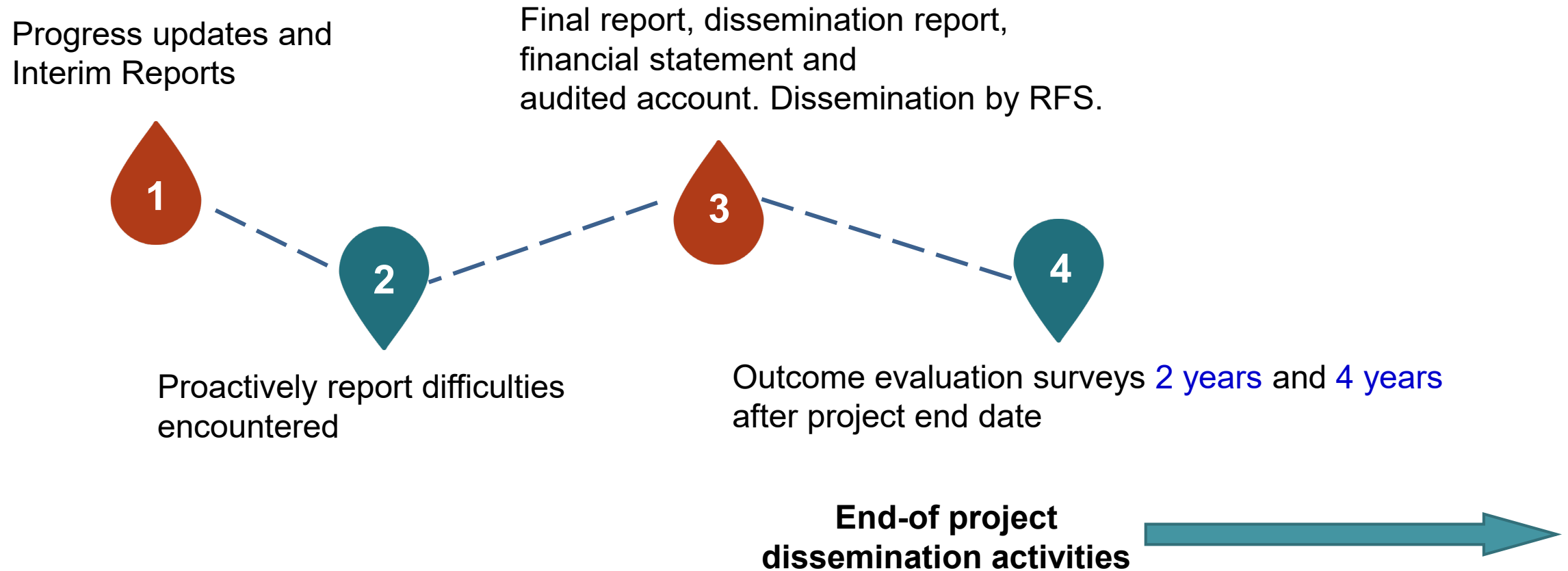- Outcome Evaluation Questionnaire(s)

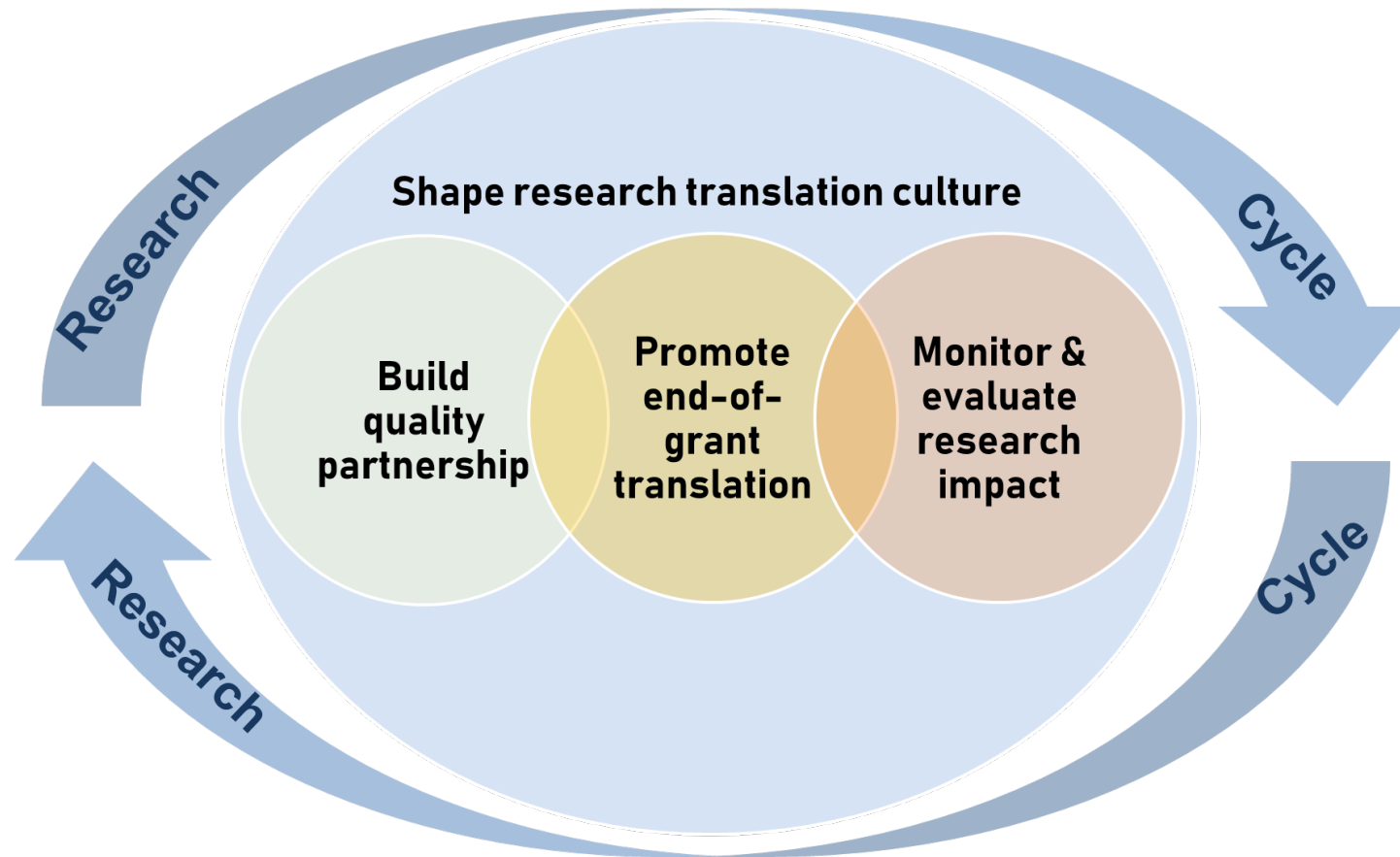not submitted within 6 months
from grant approval date

Project Commencement

Points to Note – Funded Projects

Progress updates and
Interim Reports

Final report, dissemination report,
financial statement and
audited account. Dissemination by RFS.

1

2

3

4

Proactively report difficulties
encountered

Outcome evaluation surveys 2 years and 4 years
after project end date

**End-of project
dissemination activities**

Research Translation Strategy of HMRF

Shape research translation culture

Build quality partnership

Promote end-of-grant translation

Monitor & evaluate research impact

Research Cycle Research Cycle

Research funded by HMRF is expected to generate <u>impact beyond academia</u>

Researchers must recognise their role in research translation

Research translation should be promoted throughout research cycle

Research Translation

Covers the processes of <u>synthesis, dissemination, exchange and application</u> of research findings to improve individual and population health through

➢ Informing further research, clinical practices, healthcare services, health policies;

➢ Changing health behaviours; and

➢ Strengthening healthcare systems.

Research Translation

✗ Journal publication and conferences suffice?

✓ Liaise with <u>end-users</u> of your research findings: before, during and after project (healthcare professionals? patients? community partners? general public)

✓ Disseminate findings in <u>format and channels</u> suitable for your end-users, e.g. infographics, workshops, professional lectures, press conferences, newspaper, website, social media

Research Translation

✅ <u>Drive</u> the application/ adoption of your findings

Established professional network	Adopted as guidelines	Adopted by community partners	Influenced clinical services	Adopted as public health practice
Fellowship recipient initiated an Asian anaphylaxis registry	Findings informed HK College of O&G's guideline on preferred test of cervical cancer screening	Novel service model in promoting HPV vaccination among MSM adopted by a NGO	Ortho-geriatric multidisciplinary care model adopted by Hospital Authority for fragility hip fractures patients	Sewage testing adopted as a surveillance tool by the Government in monitoring COVID-19

Outcome Evaluation Surveys
- 2nd and 4th year after project end date

Research Studies	Health Promotion Projects
Buxton-Hanney Research Payback Framework • Knowledge generation • Capacity building • Policy or decision making • Changing behaviour or practice • Dissemination	**RE-AIM Framework** • Reach • Effectiveness • Adoption • Implementation • Maintenance

Purpose:

✓ Assess the outcomes / achievements of individual projects for reporting to the Research Council

✓ Select impactful projects for presentation and receive awards at Health Research Symposium

✓ Further disseminate the findings by the Secretariat

Examples of Early Rejected Applications

Examples

Out-of-scope
Basic/Preclinical research
under AMR/HHS

Out-of-scope
Research under ID with low
public health implication

A **basic/pre-clinical study** which aims to determine the treatment effect of a traditional Chinese medicine/herbal formula for a particular disease using mouse models.

A viral evolutionary biology study on sequencing the samples collected from various animal sources and the findings is **unlikely to identify new viruses that can infect human** and cause public health threats

Please refer to Appendix A of the Guidance Notes for examples

Examples

Unclear Local Relevance

- A study to establish an early detection model of mental disorders using a dataset <u>outside Hong Kong</u> that contains regionally variable parameters such as genotypes, environmental and cultural factors, and social behaviours.

- A study to examine the tumour microenvironment / gut microbiome of cancer patients on chemotherapy. All clinical samples were obtained from non-Chinese cancer patients outside Hong Kong. <u>Unclear how the research findings based on non-local data</u> will benefit patients' health and/or healthcare system in Hong Kong.

Please refer to <u>Appendix A</u> of the Guidance Notes for examples

Examples

Immature Application

- Insufficient details for peer review:
  - ➢ Methodology, sampling, study design, description of primary and secondary outcomes, data analysis plans, potential pitfalls and contingency plans

Examples

Non-compliance with Resubmission Requirements

For resubmission of a HMRF application previously rated "2" or above:

- No point-by-point response to address <u>all comments</u> in the GRB Assessment Report <u>or</u> the revised proposal <u>without highlights of the major changes</u> in different colour
- If you disagree with the comments and choose not to change your proposal, please state your rationale

Examples

Non-compliance with Submission Requirements

Applications not funded by the HMRF or other funding agencies (local or overseas):

Not providing the required materials:

- Previously submitted similar application
- Decision letter(s) and reviewers' comment(s), if available
- Point-by-point responses to address all reviewers' comment(s), if available
- Revised proposal with major changes highlighted in different colour
- Explanation if comments or point-by-point responses are not submitted

Examples

Under-declared of Previously Similar Rejected Application(s)

- Under-declared a similar grant proposal rejected in a previous HMRF application round or by another funding agency

- Study aims/ objectives/ hypothesis/ study design/ methodology/ data analysis plan, etc. are similar to the previous submission

- No point-by-point responses to address the previous reviewers' comments

- Current proposal is not substantially revised

Examples

Under-declared of Similar / Related Application(s)

Similar / related proposal(s) to HMRF or any of its preceding funding schemes, or other funding agencies (local or overseas) in the application:

- Proposal(s) submitted in the past 3 years from the closing deadline
- Proposal(s) submitted to the same application round of HMRF or same year of different funding schemes under HMRF
- Proposal(s) to be submitted in the next 6 months from the closing deadline

Examples

Others
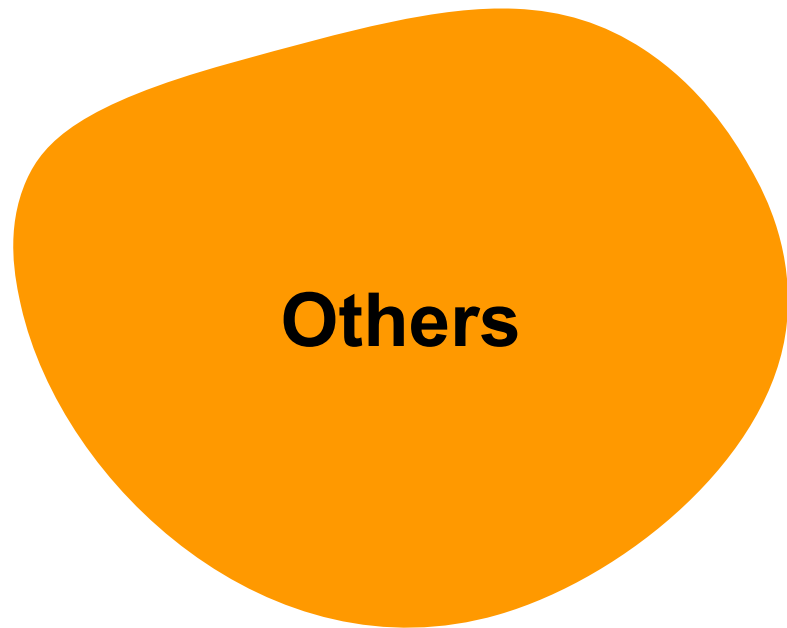
- Wrong proposal template used (e.g. HHS/AMR/ID must use research project template)

- Missing items under Section 10(a) – (h) of proposal template

- Exceeding 4,000 words (Section 10(a) – (d))
  - Any essential information provided in the **attachment file** (e.g. Appendices) will be included in word count

Further Information

Home
What's New
Council & Committees
Policies and Guidelines
Annual Reports
Call for Application
Funds
Funded Project
Past Events
Publications
Useful Links
Contact Us

W3C WAI-AA WCAG 2.1
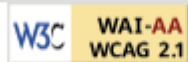
Investigator-initiated Projects

The HMRF invites applications for investigator-initiated research projects and health promotion projects.

The normal grant ceiling for a proposal is HK$1,500,000 and the usual duration is 3 years. Higher grants or grants of longer duration may be awarded where justified.

Larger-scale pilot studies, such as those evaluating trialability and scalability for future implementation, or small-scale research with achievable objectives, can be submitted to seed grant with a grant ceiling of $500,000 per project.

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- Thematic Priorities updated
- Guidance Notes on Grant Application updated
- Explanatory Notes on Grant Application updated
- Electronic Application Form (e-Form): Available on eGMS
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- Proposal Template for Research Project (Section 10(a)-(h)) updated
- Proposal Template for Health Promotion Project (Section 10(a)-(h))
  updated

Further Information

Enquiry emails:
rfs@healthbureau.gov.hk (General)
egmsenquiry@healthbureau.gov.hk (eGMS)

Thank You