



HDRS Data Driver Projects Call – Frequently Asked Questions

If you have further questions not covered in this FAQ, the team at HDRS would be happy to support. Please contact the team with your query at: driverprojects@hdrs.com.

ELIGIBILITY

Q1. Can organisations apply to both the Technical Transformation and Data Driver Project calls?

Organisations eligible for the [Technical Transformation Driver Projects](#) call (i.e. those listed below) may also apply to the Data Driver Projects call if the projects meet the required eligibility criteria.

- Data Safe Havens supported by Research Data Scotland (Scotland)
- HSC Business Services Organisation Honest Broker Service (Northern Ireland)
- Regional SDEs (England)
- SAIL Databank (Wales)
- The NHS England SDE (England)

Q2. Do projects need to build on existing data assets, infrastructure or access routes?

Projects may be new or build on existing initiatives. They should make effective use of existing data assets, infrastructure, access routes, partnerships or capabilities wherever possible. This includes existing secure data environments (SDEs), trusted research environments and other health data infrastructure across the UK.

Applicants should clearly explain the additional value that HDRS funding will unlock and why the proposed outcomes would not be delivered, or would be delivered more slowly, at a smaller scale or with reduced impact, without HDRS support.

Projects that rely on substantial new governance, partnership, data access or infrastructure arrangements being established after mobilisation are unlikely to be deliverable within the available timeframe and are therefore considered out of scope.

Q3. Do projects need matched funding or co-investment to be eligible?

Match funding, co-funding and in-kind support are not required. However, HDRS welcomes projects that leverage additional investment where appropriate, and applicants should clearly identify any additional contributions that will help maximise the scale, impact and sustainability of the proposed work. Where applicable, co-funding and match funding should be evidenced through a Letter of Support from each contributing organisation submitted alongside the application.

ASSESSMENT

Q4. How will projects be assessed across the two application cycles?

Applications will be assessed using the same process, criteria and assessment panel (where possible) across both cycles and will be assessed against the same standards. Successful applicants in the first cycle will, however, benefit from an earlier funding decision and a longer delivery period before 31 March 2027.

HDRS does not intend to reserve a fixed proportion of funding for either assessment cycle. Funding recommendations will reflect the quality of applications received and the overall balance of the proposed portfolio. Applicants are encouraged to submit at the earliest opportunity at which they are confident they can present a strong, complete and deliverable proposal. However, we will make sure there is funding available in the second cycle for later applications.

Q5. Can unsuccessful applications from Cycle 1 be resubmitted in Cycle 2?

Applicants who are unsuccessful in Assessment Cycle 1 may be invited by HDRS to submit a revised application for Assessment Cycle 2, provided any recommendations identified during the assessment process can be addressed.

Applications that are not invited to proceed to Assessment Cycle 2 should not be resubmitted under the current call. However, HDRS would very much welcome continued engagement with organisations beyond this funding opportunity. We value the insights, ideas and relationships developed through the programme, which will help inform future HDRS services and priorities and may create opportunities for future collaboration and participation in HDRS activities.

Q6. Will there be a mid-project stage-gate review?

No. Given the relatively short delivery timeframe of the programme, HDRS will not operate a formal mid-project stage-gate review. Instead, projects will be subject to ongoing light-touch monitoring and oversight throughout the funding period against criteria agreed at award, which will include delivery milestones, outputs, outcomes and other measures of progress.

Projects that consistently fail to demonstrate sufficient progress against agreed criteria, and are unable to provide appropriate mitigations, may have their contract terminated and the project discontinued.

SCOPE OF CALL

Q7. Is access to data required as part of the application?

The call is intended to support projects and initiatives that are sufficiently set up to begin delivery shortly after award, with an expectation that most projects funded through this call will deliver materialised benefits by 31 March 2027.

Applicants must demonstrate that all organisations involved in project delivery have, or will have by project mobilisation, the necessary data access, information governance, partnership and delivery arrangements in place to undertake the proposed work.

Where access to health data is required, applicants are expected to demonstrate a credible route to that data through an appropriate existing method or organisation. We would expect organisations that do not themselves host or control the relevant data to be working with, or have the support of, an appropriate partner who can enable that access as part of their proposal.

Projects that rely on significant new data access arrangements being established after mobilisation will be considered out of scope for this call.

Q8. Can projects include local authority data or data relating to wider determinants of health?

HDRS is interested in opportunities to enhance the use of health and social care data and recognises the value that linking additional datasets can bring to research.

Where aligned with the aims of the call, projects may include local authority data and other data relating to the wider determinants of health, particularly where these data can help generate new insights or improve research capabilities.

Q9. Why are pure research studies out of scope of this call?

We are specifically looking for projects that demonstrate how existing health data assets, infrastructure and access routes can be used to unlock research, clinical or public value by 31 March 2027, while generating evidence and insight that inform future HDRS services, priorities and investments.

Applications are therefore expected to deliver measurable benefits within the funding period, alongside reusable datasets, assets, or capabilities that can be adopted, reused or built upon during and/or beyond the life of the project.

While pure research studies are a vital part of the health data ecosystem, projects that focus solely on answering a research question, without creating reusable outputs or generating wider ecosystem benefit, are too narrow in scope for the objectives of this call.

Q10. What does HDRS mean by "materialised benefits"?

HDRS is looking for projects that can demonstrate measurable clinical, research or public value within the funding period (i.e. by end of March 2027).

This does not necessarily require full project completion by March 2027. Benefits may include delivery of a minimum viable product (MVP), proof of concept, pilot, demonstrator, dataset, evidence resource or other reusable asset that delivers immediate value and creates a clear foundation for future impact. For example, demonstrating that a clinical trial patient identification tool improves recruitment rates among underrepresented populations, or producing a validated dataset that enables researchers to address priority health research questions.

FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Q11. How many projects do you expect to fund?

There is no set number of projects that will be funded through this call. HDRS currently expects to support up to six projects, although this is indicative rather than fixed. The final number of awards will depend on the quality, scale and mix of applications received.

Q12. Is there an upper limit on project funding?

The overall funding envelope for this call is flexible. Applicants should size their proposals to the required scope of work, rather than to any assumed envelope, and should expect HDRS to challenge costings that do not appear realistic or proportionate to the deliverable. The intention is that proposals reflect the true cost of delivery, rather than being inflated or reduced to align with a predefined funding limit. Applicants should therefore present the scale of investment they believe is necessary to deliver the proposed outcomes in the most effective and proportionate way.

Funding priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate the strongest strategic fit with the objectives of the call, clear and deliverable impact within the funding period, scalability and reusability of outputs, and strong value for money relative to the benefits expected.

Q13. Are host institution overheads eligible for funding?

HDRS expects applications to reflect the full costs of delivering the proposed work. Institutional overheads are not excluded from consideration. Applicants should undertake a comprehensive planning process and ensure that all direct and indirect costs necessary for successful delivery are included and clearly identified within the budget. Any anticipated overheads should be clearly presented within the cost schedule. Budgets will be assessed on the basis of proportionality, justification and value for money.

Q14. Should VAT be included in costing?

Applicants must specify whether VAT is included or excluded in all costings. Where VAT is applicable, it should be included to provide an accurate representation of total costs.

Q15. Is there scope for projects to continue beyond the current financial year?

At present, HDRS cannot commit to funding beyond March 2027.

Applicants should focus on deliverables that can be achieved within the current funding period, with the expectation that projects funded through this call will deliver materialised benefits by 31 March 2027. However, where there are opportunities that could benefit from further funding or additional time, HDRS would be interested in understanding that longer-term potential as part of the proposal.

Q16. Will there be further funding calls after March 2027?

HDRS is currently funded until March 2027, pending approval of a business case covering future years. The Data Driver Projects programme is intended to help inform future funding approaches and priorities. While HDRS is interested in supporting successful projects beyond March 2027, no commitment can currently be made to future funding rounds or continuation funding.