

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.

Additional Frequently Asked Questions following Data Drivers Project Call Webinar on 14 August 2026

APPLICATION PROCESS

Q17. Is there an application form?

Yes. The application form can be found [here](#). If you have any difficulties accessing the form, please contact driverprojects@hdrs.com.

Q18. Are there any restrictions on the number of applications a single organisation can lead or participate in?

There is no limit to the number of applications an organisation may lead or participate in. However, each application must provide evidence demonstrating that the organisation has the capacity and capability to successfully deliver the proposed project.

Q19. If multiple applications are made that may reuse the same resource, should these be costed in full for each application or spread across each application?

Each application should include the full cost of delivering the proposed project and should be capable of being assessed on a standalone basis.

Where a role or other resource is shared across multiple applications, this should be clearly identified in each relevant application. Consistent wording should be used across the relevant applications to explain the shared resource and any cost efficiencies that would result from sharing it across projects, compared with funding the resource separately for each project. The names of any related projects should also be referenced.

Q20. Will there be any penalty for overlapping consortia being assessed?

There will be no penalty for consortia that overlap in membership or focus on similar areas of work. However, it is unlikely that HDRS would fund two consortia seeking to address the same challenge, opportunity, research question or problem. In this instance, we may suggest collaboration between the groups to develop a stronger combined approach. Alternatively, funding may be awarded to the consortium that demonstrates the greatest potential benefits and the strongest confidence in successful delivery.

Q21. Are there any requirements or expectations for lead applicants within a consortium?

The lead applicant within a consortium must be based in the UK and meet the eligibility criteria. Any of the eligible organisation types outlined in the Call Brief may act as the lead applicant. Applications will be assessed on their merits, and no preference will be given to any particular type of organisation acting as the consortium lead.

Q22. Can there be a private sector partner within a consortium?

Any of the eligible organisations outlined in the Call Brief can be part of a consortium, including private sector organisations.

Q23. Does at least one of the organisations in a consortium need to be part of a public sector procurement framework?

There is no requirement that any organisations within a consortium are part of the public sector procurement framework.

Q24. With only a small number of awards and wide scope for eligible applicants, should we all be forming large consortia for this?

Applications from partnerships and consortia are encouraged, particularly where they bring together complementary expertise, data and infrastructure, delivery capability and routes to adoption. However, this is not a requirement within this call and applicants should adopt the size and approach most appropriate for the project and scope of work.

Applications for consortia should clearly describe the role of each partner, the governance arrangements in place, and how collaboration will contribute to successful delivery of the project.

Q25. Are you anticipating projects that dovetail with a pre-existing project or standalone pieces of work?

Both approaches are within scope. However, given the emphasis on delivering by March 2027, we expect projects to be ready to mobilise at the point of award. As all necessary data access arrangements and contracts will need to be in place, it is likely that successful projects will not be starting from scratch.

Q26. Can new data generation be included – e.g. a consented cohort using existing samples to generate omics data to enhance the asset?

Yes, new data generation can be included within an application, provided it can be delivered within the funding period. Applications should clearly describe the proposed approach, including how the data will be generated within the required timeframe.

Q27. Given the breadth of the data landscape, are there particular areas, delivery hypotheses, or emerging opportunities that HDRS sees as having the greatest potential for impact and is therefore prioritising for future development?

We welcome a wide array of projects, recognising the breadth of the ecosystem and its significant potential. However, project proposals should focus on one or more of the following themes:

- Discovery research - demonstrating how existing health data can accelerate scientific discovery, enable new research opportunities, or create new datasets, cohorts, linked resources and assets that support future research.
- Clinical trials - demonstrating how health data can improve the planning, feasibility, recruitment, delivery or follow-up of clinical trials.
- Innovation development - demonstrating how health data can support the development, testing, or validation of innovative technologies, diagnostics, medicines, AI-enabled solutions or digital health products.
- Evaluation and evidence generation - demonstrating how health data assets can be used to generate robust evidence on the effectiveness, safety, value or impact of

interventions, technologies, services or medicines to support clinical, commissioning or regulatory decision-making.

Q28. Can you give examples of what project deliverables would look like for each of the four themes, including a sense of the expected scale and outcome of projects?

We have provided examples of the type of projects likely to be well suited to this call within Annex A of the [Call Brief document](#). They are intended to help applicants understand the scope and ambition of the programme and are indicative rather than exhaustive or prescriptive.

We have not defined an expected scale of projects. However, applications will be assessed for how outputs, approaches or learning can be adopted, replicated or scaled beyond the original project.

Q29. Where can we find the T&Cs of this award?

The Call Brief and FAQs can be found [here](#). The proposed contract, including the terms and conditions, will be published separately. Prospective applicants will be notified when it becomes available on the HDRS website.

Q30. Is there a limit to the number of letters of support that can be included with the application?

There is no limit to the number of letters of support that may be included with an application.

Q31. Can projects be put forward that don't require funding but would benefit from endorsement?

We would be happy to have further discussions around providing endorsement. However, projects that do not require funding would be unlikely to be supported as Data Driver Projects under this call.

DATA READINESS

Q32. Why is existing or ready access to data preferred for these projects?

Given the programme timescales, the call is intended to support projects that are sufficiently set up to begin delivery shortly after award. Applicants should therefore be able to demonstrate that the necessary data access, information governance, partnership and delivery arrangements are already in place, or will be in place by project mobilisation in autumn 2026.

Q33. How much preliminary/supporting data is expected to be provided in the application?

Applicants should provide sufficient information to demonstrate ready access to the necessary data and the ability to deliver a minimum viable product (MVP) by March 2027.

Q34. What TRL (technology readiness level) is expected of applicants' projects/platforms?

No specific TRL is required for this call. However, applications will be assessed on their readiness to deliver. Depending on the nature of the project, those that demonstrate a higher level of maturity and delivery readiness may score more highly.

Q35. If we have contracting in place with an NHS board, but want to expand to another, should we include both NHS boards within our application?

We are looking for projects to mobilise as soon as they are awarded. Therefore, any NHS boards included within the core delivery scope of the application must have the necessary contractual arrangements in place by the point of project mobilisation. Applicants may wish to include expansion to additional NHS boards as part of their future development plans.

Q36. Are there international data standards preferred by HDRS?

We have not set out any preferred data standards for this call. Applicants should adopt standards that are appropriate to the proposed project and support interoperability and reuse where possible.

Q37. Will funding include the cost of obtaining datasets e.g. through DARS?

Applicants should include all costs to deliver the proposed outcomes. These costs can include obtaining datasets.

Q38. Do these projects have to involve SDEs? Do you expect primary care applicants to partner with an SDE or academic host?

Projects do not have to involve SDEs, but applicants must show they have the necessary data to deliver their project. Primary care organisations can be lead applicants, and there is no requirement to partner with an SDE or academic host.

Q39. For a bid delivered on a single practice's population, how do you assess adoption, scalability and reuse? Is a transferable method enough, or do you want a second site lined up? And relatedly, what would you consider a strong approximate population base for a project like this?

A transferable method is enough for an application to be considered. However, applications with more concrete pathways to scale will be preferred. A second site would provide higher confidence of scale in this example. There is no minimum or expected population size for projects; this will be considered in the context of the proposed objectives, approach and anticipated impact.

ELIGIBILITY AND SCOPE

Q40. Do projects have to be research-oriented, or can they also include the development of BI/AI SaaS platforms for the use of the NHS and wider healthcare sector?

The programme forms part of HDRS's wider ambition to accelerate the use of health data for research and innovation and to support the optimisation, access and re-use of current data assets. Projects do not need to be purely research-focused. However, they should

demonstrate a clear contribution to enabling, supporting or accelerating health data research.

Q41. If data is currently deposited in an overseas platform, e.g. ClinVar, would that trigger 'out of scope' as a "non-UK data project" even if the data originates in the UK?

It is fine to use data currently deposited in an overseas platform, but data generated from Data Driver Projects should remain in the UK, which may limit where source data can originate.

Q42. Is there a restriction on country of collaborators and data sources? Can data partners outside of the UK be used?

Non-UK organisations may be members of a consortium. However, the lead applicant must be a UK-registered organisation. International data partners and data sources may be included where appropriate. Entirely non-UK data projects are out of scope for this funding call.

EVALUATION

Q43. How many awards are you planning to make per cycle?

We have not defined a fixed number of awards but currently anticipate making around six awards in total across both funding cycles. Awards will be split between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2; however, the final distribution will depend on the quality and number of applications received in each cycle.

Q44. Is there a chance that all awards are made in Cycle 1?

No – we are committed to ensuring that awards are made across both cycles.

There is not expected to be any advantage or disadvantage in funding decisions based on which assessment cycle an application is considered within. Applications in both cycles will be assessed against the same criteria and standards. However, applicants who are successful in the first cycle will benefit from an earlier funding decision and a longer period for project delivery before the programme end date of 31 March 2027.

Q45. Who will the selection panel's independent experts be?

Both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 selection panels will include HDRS representatives and independent external members, including public and patient expertise, representation from the four nations, and expertise within the outline project categories. We will not be publicly naming the panellists.

Q46. To what extent will the project's capacity to support or enable revenue generation be considered as an evaluation criterion?

A project's capability to support or enable revenue generation could be used as evidence within the application for (a) future adoption, scalability and reusability and (b) Value for Money. However, revenue generation is not a requirement for projects, and all applications

will be assessed against the core assessment criteria and themes set out in Section 4 of the [Call Brief](#).

Q47. When will the award decision be made?

We expect to notify applicants of the outcome of their application within one month of the submission deadline for the relevant funding cycle.

FUNDING

Q48. What is the expected award range for these projects?

We have not set a predefined funding range for Data Driver Projects. The primary objective of the programme is to deliver tangible impact by March 2027, and proposals should therefore reflect the true cost of delivering the proposed outcomes, rather than being tailored to a specific funding threshold.

As an indication only, we anticipate that many proposals may fall within the range of £500,000 to £2 million, although projects outside this range would also be considered for funding.

There is no restriction on applicant costings. However, we appreciate that, given funding runs to March 2027, this may present a risk for certain types of spending.

Q49. How important is match funding for applicants to be successful?

Match funding is not a requirement. Applications will be assessed against the published assessment criteria, regardless of whether match funding is included.

Q50. If successful, when will funds be awarded? Will the funds flow in advance of spending or retrospectively on submission of receipts?

Contracting and payment schedules will be agreed as part of the contracting process. The timing and mechanism for payments will be confirmed with successful applicants during this stage.

Q51. What is the duration of the funded projects?

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.

Q52. Are you funding at 100% full Economic Costing (fEC)? Are indirect costs and overheads eligible within costing?

Applicants should ensure that the budget reflects the full cost of delivering the proposed work. This call supports full project costs, including direct costs, indirect costs and institutional overheads where these are necessary for project delivery. Expenditure should

be clearly identified as revenue or capital. Please include VAT where it applies to reflect total costs. Any match funding, co-funding and in-kind contributions should also be clearly identified.

The following will not be funded through this call:

- Business-as-usual maintenance, support or licence renewal costs
- Capital equipment purchases not tied to a specific, scoped project
- Contingency budgets, including risk and optimisation allowances.

Q53. Are there rules around funding rates for industry partners?

We have not set specific funding rates for industry partners. Applications will be assessed on their ability to deliver the proposed outcomes and provide value for money.

Q54. Can applicants only claim costs for within the delivery window or can costs include (a) back funding from the issuance of the award letter, or (b) a longer-term cost e.g. licence terms be front-loaded within this funding period.

During the contracting process, payment schedules and the eligibility of specific costs will be agreed. This may include consideration of costs incurred ahead of project mobilisation or longer-term commitments where these are necessary for project delivery. Applicants should clearly describe and justify any such costs within their application.

Q55. In a consortium, will the funds come to the lead organisation to distribute, or to each member of the consortium?

Funding arrangements for consortium members will be agreed as part of the contracting process between HDRS and successful applicants. This will include how funding is distributed across consortium partners.

Q56. Do organisations need to use a formal UKRI-type costing model?

We have not adopted the UKRI costing model for this call. However, applicants should provide a sufficiently detailed breakdown of costs to enable review and scrutiny, and to demonstrate that the proposed work is realistic, appropriately resourced and deliverable by March 2027.

Q57. What is the definition of "project mobilisation"? If we start soon, would that be feasible?

Project mobilisation refers to the point at which a project is able to begin delivery activities. We would encourage applicants to mobilise as quickly as possible and, where appropriate, begin preparatory work ahead of formal award. We may be able to pay for work in arrears, although this will need to be negotiated at the award.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

Q58. What monitoring requirements will there be for this funding?

HDRS will agree governance and monitoring arrangements with each successful project as part of the contracting process. This will include a set of success criteria, including the specific deliverable(s) to be produced, the research use case(s) or users enabled, and the milestones expected by the end of the funding period. These criteria will form the basis for assessing project progress, delivery and impact.

Q59. What are the reporting requirements for successful projects? What are the timelines for this?

Reporting requirements for individual projects will be agreed as part of the contracting process. Successful projects should expect to participate in ongoing light-touch governance and monitoring activities throughout the delivery period. In addition, an end-of-project report will be required following project completion, setting out progress against agreed deliverables, milestones and outcomes.

Q60. Will HDRS be reporting on the findings and outputs of successful projects?

Yes. We plan to publish reports demonstrating the impact of the funded projects. This will be developed in collaboration with successful projects.

Q61. If successful, would payments be dependent on completing milestones?

HDRS will agree payment schedules and milestones with each successful project as part of the contracting process.

Q62. Does HDRS anticipate taking any share of IP created?

IP arrangements will be agreed with successful applicants as part of the contract agreement. If applicants have a set IP position, we recommend setting this out within the application.

FUTURE PROJECT PLANNING BEYOND MARCH 2027

Q63. Will no cost extensions be considered beyond March 2027?

Any continuation of project activity beyond March 2027, including no-cost extensions, will be dependent on broader discussions with DHSC regarding HDRS funding arrangements beyond March 2027. While we cannot make any commitments at this stage, we will continue to consider how HDRS can support projects that are performing well beyond the current funding period.

Q64. Are HDRS planning to fund research based on development of these tools in this round? Or must there always be some element of infrastructure / reusability / legacy?

While HDRS's long-term strategy is still under development, there is currently no plan for HDRS to become a research funder. The focus of this programme is on supporting the development of tools, infrastructure and capabilities that enable health data research. As such, we are particularly interested in projects that demonstrate a clear pathway to reusability, sustainability and ongoing value beyond the initial funding period.

Q65. If a project is delivered on a commercial platform, what does the leave-behind need to be: the capability staying live and usable after March 2027, or documentation that allows others to replicate the outcome?

It is sufficient to leave documentation, as HDRS cannot commit to funding beyond March 2027. Where a commercial platform is used, applicants are encouraged to identify, at the point of application, a model for how the capability could be sustained and funded in the future.

Additional Frequently Asked Questions following Data Drivers Project Call Webinar on 2 September 2026

PARTNERSHIPS AND DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

Q66. If multiple organisations are collaborating on a project, should each organisation submit a separate application?

Applications should be submitted at the project level. Where a project is being delivered through a consortium or partnership, a single application should be submitted by a lead organisation on behalf of the collaboration. Applicants should clearly describe the role of each partner and how the partnership will contribute to successful delivery.

Q67. Will a consortium without a formal partnership agreement already in place be considered out of scope?

Depending on the nature of the project, applicants may provide evidence of partnership through mechanisms such as MoUs, collaboration agreements, letters of support or other documentation.

The key consideration is whether applicants can demonstrate that all necessary partnership, governance, data access and delivery arrangements will be in place by project mobilisation. Projects that rely on substantial new partnership, governance or data access arrangements being established after mobilisation are unlikely to be considered deliverable within the available timeframe.

Q68. Is formal host institution approval required before an application can be submitted?

HDRS does not require a formal internal approval process as a condition of submission. However, applicants should ensure that all organisations involved in delivering the project are aware of, support and have approved the proposal before submission.

Q69. Are letters of support encouraged?

Yes, letters of support are encouraged where they help demonstrate partner commitment, intended adoption, delivery capability, user demand or other evidence of readiness. Such evidence can help strengthen confidence in project delivery and impact.

DEMONSTRATING READINESS

Q70. What does HDRS mean by a "viable model for effectively resourcing the project"?

Applicants should demonstrate that they have a realistic and credible route to securing the people and expertise required to deliver the project within the available timeframe. This could include recruitment, fixed-term appointments, redeployment of existing resources, backfilling posts, professional services support, or a combination of approaches. The key consideration is whether the proposed resourcing model provides confidence that the project can be successfully delivered.

Q71. Where the lead applicant does not hold the data, what evidence of data access arrangements is expected?

The lead applicant does not need to directly hold the relevant data. However, applications should demonstrate a credible route to accessing and using the required data through project partners and existing access arrangements.

Letters of support may be used to demonstrate partner commitment at the application stage. However, applicants must be able to demonstrate that the necessary data access, governance, partnership and delivery arrangements are already in place, or will be in place by project mobilisation. Projects that rely on significant new data access arrangements being established after mobilisation are unlikely to be considered deliverable within the available timeframe.

Q72. Is additional explanation required for all Readiness Criteria responses?

Applicants must provide explanations and mitigations where the answer to a Readiness Criterion is "No". However, applicants are also encouraged to provide supporting context where this helps demonstrate readiness, provide assurance of deliverability, or strengthen confidence in the proposed approach, even where the answer is "Yes".

Q73. Can projects include data curation, standardisation, harmonisation or quality improvement activities?

Activities such as curation, harmonisation, standardisation, quality assessment and development of common data specifications may be included where they are necessary to enable the proposed outcomes and create a reusable asset, capability or resource beyond the life of the project.

PROJECT OUTPUTS AND SCOPE

Q74. Can funding be used towards training costs?

Training costs may be included where they form part of a wider project that delivers reusable outputs, capabilities or benefits aligned to the objectives of the programme.

Training activity alone would be unlikely to be competitive unless it clearly contributes to the delivery, adoption or sustainability of the proposed outputs.

Q75. Are projects involving protected intellectual property eligible?

Projects may involve protected intellectual property. However, applicants must demonstrate that intellectual property arrangements will not prevent the sharing, adoption, reuse or future development of outputs generated through the programme. The key consideration is whether the project delivers wider ecosystem benefit through reusable outputs and capabilities.

Q76. Will a project that delivers reusable tooling or infrastructure be considered less suitable than one that creates a data asset?

No, projects that deliver reusable tooling or infrastructure will not be considered less suitable. Projects will not be assessed differently because they create tooling, software, infrastructure components, methodologies or other capabilities rather than a dataset. The

assessment will focus on the benefits delivered, the degree of reuse and how well the proposal aligns with the objectives of the programme.

Q77. Do projects need to create a data asset, or can they deliver a statistical model, analytical tool or research methodology?

Projects do not need to create a new dataset or data asset. Statistical models, analytical tools, reusable software, methodologies, code and other capabilities are all potentially within scope provided they deliver meaningful research, clinical or public benefit and can be adopted or reused beyond the life of the project.

Q78. Can a demonstrator built on synthetic or test data satisfy the materialised benefits requirement?

This would depend on the nature of the demonstrator and the value it is expected to deliver. Applicants should clearly demonstrate the benefit that will be realised within the funding period, provide a credible route to real-world impact, and explain how any resulting outputs, capabilities or learning could be adopted, reused or built upon beyond the life of the project.

Q79. Will projects be assessed differently depending on whether the lead organisation is a supplier, data custodian, NHS organisation or university?

No. HDRS does not apply any preference in favour of particular organisation types. Applications will be assessed against the published criteria based on the strength of the proposal and confidence in delivery.

ASSESSMENT APPROACH

Q80. Are all assessment criteria equally weighted?

Applications will be assessed against six criteria grouped into two assessment domains and are not equally weighted.

Strategic Impact and Deliverability (60%)

- Strategic Relevance: 15%
- Potential Impact: 20%
- Deliverability & Readiness: 25%

Building the Future Sustainably (40%)

- Adoption, Scalability & Reuse: 15%
- Value for Money: 15%
- Learning & Future Potential: 10%

This weighting reflects the programme's focus on supporting projects that can demonstrate clear impact and successful delivery within the funding period, whilst also recognising the importance of creating sustainable value through adoption, reuse, learning and future ecosystem development.

Scores for each criterion will be weighted and combined to generate an overall application score which will support shortlisting and moderation discussions.

Q81. Will HDRS indicate which themes are already represented by successful Cycle 1 projects before the Cycle 2 deadline?

HDRS does not currently intend to signal which themes are represented by successful Cycle 1 projects prior to the Cycle 2 deadline. HDRS is not seeking to fund only one project within each theme area. Multiple successful projects may fall within the same theme, and applicants should not assume a theme is closed because another project in that area has already been funded.

Q82. Which is more important: immediate project impact or the long-term value of the resulting asset or capability?

Both are important and will form part of the assessment. Applications are expected to demonstrate meaningful benefits within the funding period while also creating outputs, assets, capabilities or learning that can continue to generate value beyond the life of the project.

Assessors will consider both the value that can be demonstrated by March 2027 and the extent to which the resulting outputs create lasting benefit through future adoption, use or reuse.

FUNDING AND DELIVERY TIMELINES

Q83. Why is HDRS currently expecting to support around six projects?

HDRS currently expects to support around six projects, although this figure is indicative rather than fixed. This reflects both the available funding and HDRS's current capacity to contract with, mobilise and support projects during delivery. HDRS may ultimately fund more or fewer projects depending on the quality, scale and mix of applications received.

Q84. What assumptions should applicants make about expenditure by 31 March 2027?

HDRS funding should be assumed to be fully utilised by 31 March 2027. This reflects the current funding period available to HDRS and applicants should plan expenditure accordingly. Applicants are welcome to describe how outputs, capabilities or services may be sustained beyond this point through future funding, partner support or other mechanisms.

Q85. Can HDRS fund a project that has already started or is about to start?

Potentially, but applicants should clearly explain why HDRS funding and support are required and what additional value they would unlock.

The purpose of this call is to support projects where HDRS investment accelerates delivery, increases scale, expands impact or enables outcomes that would not otherwise be achieved. Projects that are already fully funded and proceeding independently are unlikely to align with the objectives of the programme. Where work has already commenced, applicants

should clearly describe the current status of the project, the activities for which funding is being sought, and the additional value that HDRS support would provide.

Q86. How will requests for overheads be considered as part of the value for money assessment?

Applicants should include all direct and indirect costs necessary to deliver the proposed project, including institutional overheads where applicable. HDRS will assess value for money based on the overall cost of the project relative to the anticipated benefits and outcomes, rather than considering overheads in isolation. However, where overheads represent a significant proportion of the overall budget, applicants should be prepared to justify them as part of their cost schedule and delivery approach.

Q87. Is funding split equally between Assessment Cycle 1 and Assessment Cycle 2?

HDRS has not allocated a fixed proportion of funding to either assessment cycle and has retained flexibility to support strong applications from both rounds. Funding recommendations will be based on the quality of applications received, while ensuring that both cycles have a genuine opportunity to receive funding. Applicants should not assume that applying in Cycle 2 will reduce their chances of success, even if a larger volume of applications is received.

Q88. What start date should applicants assume for projects funded through Assessment Cycle 2?

There is no fixed start date. Successful projects are expected to be assessed within a month of the deadline and mobilise as soon as possible following funding approval and completion of contracting. The exact start date will depend on the complexity of the contracting arrangements and the readiness of the successful applicant(s). Applicants should therefore focus on demonstrating that the project can mobilise quickly and deliver meaningful outcomes by 31 March 2027.

Q89. Is there a standard reporting requirement across both HDRS Driver Project calls?

Reporting requirements will be agreed as part of the contracting process and may vary depending on the nature of the project and the successful organisation(s). Applicants should not assume that reporting arrangements will necessarily be identical across the Technical Transformation and Data Driver Project calls. HDRS intends reporting requirements to be proportionate and focused on supporting delivery rather than creating unnecessary administrative burden.

HDRS AND THE WIDER ECOSYSTEM

Q90. HDRS has been clear that Data Driver Projects should leave reusable assets that inform future services and priorities. How should applicants think about the relationship between project outputs and future HDRS architecture?

Applicants should focus on creating outputs that can be adopted, reused or built upon beyond the life of the project. Depending on the nature of the project, this may involve reuse by researchers, NHS organisations, Secure Data Environments or other parts of the wider health data ecosystem. The key consideration is the ability of the outputs to deliver lasting value and wider ecosystem benefit.

Where appropriate, HDRS may support wider adoption and reuse of successful outputs, but applicants should not assume that all funded projects will ultimately converge into a single HDRS architecture.

Additional Frequently Asked Questions relating to the Draft Contract Template (18 September 2026)

Q91. Does the warranty in Clause 4.2 of the draft Contract, that Approved Costs do not include profit, apply only to the Contractor's own internal costs, or does it also extend to third-party commercial costs (such as software licences, subcontractor charges and consortium partner services) that are procured at market rates? If it also applies to those third-party costs, how does HDRS expect suppliers to demonstrate compliance where market-rate pricing inherently includes a profit margin?

The intention of this provision is that the Approved Costs should reflect the genuine costs of delivering the project and that applicants should not include an additional profit margin within the funding request.

We recognise that some projects may involve commercial software, third-party products, licences and subcontracted services procured at market rates. Applicants should therefore clearly identify and justify such costs within their application. Where projects involve commercial partners, HDRS would expect appropriate transparency regarding the proposed commercial arrangements and costs.

Q92. Where a consortium partner uses a pre-existing commercial platform for the purposes of the Project, is HDRS willing to exclude that platform's pre-existing IP from the licence requirements relating to Project IP? If so, should applicants identify their proposed approach in the application, or would this be discussed and agreed during contracting?

As noted in the FAQs, applicants are encouraged to set out any material IP considerations within their application where relevant. Should an application be successful, there would be an opportunity to discuss specific IP and licensing arrangements during the contracting stage. Where applicants believe there are particular background IP, licensing or platform-related considerations that are material to the proposal, we would encourage these to be highlighted within the application.

Q93. FAQ 84 states that "HDRS funding should be assumed to be fully utilised by 31 March 2027". Where a commercial platform licence can only be procured in multi-year terms, would HDRS regard (a) the portion of the fee attributable to periods after 31 March 2027 as an eligible cost, and (b) a prepayment made before 31 March 2027 as "fully utilised"? More generally, how does HDRS expect applicants to reconcile the requirement for funding to be fully utilised by 31 March 2027 with the recognition that longer-term commitments may be necessary for project delivery?

As a general principle, applicants should request funding only for costs that are necessary to deliver the proposed outcomes within the project period. Where longer-term commitments are required to enable delivery, applicants should clearly explain the rationale and how those costs relate to the delivery of project outputs and outcomes.

Applicants should also outline how any resulting capability, service or asset would be sustained beyond the funding period where relevant. Should a project be successful, any specific questions relating to licence terms, longer-term commitments or cost treatment would be discussed at the contracting stage.

Q94. Can HDRS confirm whether the 50% retention, set out at Clause 4.3 of the draft Contract, is applied only where a milestone is partially achieved or whether 50% of every milestone payment is retained as standard?

The retention provision set out in Clause 4.3 is discretionary rather than automatic. The payment profile for any successful project, including any retention arrangements where applicable, would be agreed as part of the contracting process and will take account of the proposed milestones, deliverables and delivery plan.