

## Criteria for assessing applications to the blood-based biomarker call:

Our reviewers play a crucial role in ensuring that we support the best quality science and researchers. We strive to uphold a robust, fair and transparent review process that is free from bias or undue influence. Our reviewers are experts in their field of work, and we rely on their expertise, experience and impartiality to make recommendations on the very best research for us to invest in.

The main objective of this call will be to produce clinical evidence and economic data that could help make the case for blood biomarker implementation in a healthcare setting in the UK.

With that in mind, this programme will fund a prospective project that assesses a panel of biomarkers in real-world populations. In order to build a stronger case for future implementation, the final proposal should include a component of an economic analysis of the use of blood biomarker in a healthcare setting.

We expect our reviewers to assess applications for funding based on four key assessment criteria:

1. The excellence of the science, and the potential for impact in the field and people affected by dementia.
2. The involvement and engagement of people affected by dementia.
3. The skills and expertise of the applicants, and the suitability of the team and environment that surround them.
4. How well the proposal meets the scheme criteria, and whether the resources requested are justified.

We know that there is no single definition of excellence when it comes to what high quality research might look like, and that indicators of quality will vary between disciplines, career stages, the type of work being proposed or the scientific area. We therefore ask that reviewers consider the assessment criteria holistically in terms of the overall quality of the proposed research in order to determine a final score.

Further examples of the elements that may be considered under these assessment criteria are detailed below, however we recognise that this is by no means an exhaustive list of considerations, and that not all of the examples will be relevant to all applicants or research proposals.

## Excellence of the Science and the Potential for Impact on the Field and People Affected by Dementia

1. Strong Scientific Rationale	The proposed study should have a strong scientific rationale, supported by relevant scientific literature or data, that underpins the research question being addressed.
2. Feasibility and Likelihood of Success	The proposal should demonstrate the overall feasibility and likelihood of success of the proposed work, including clearly defined and achievable objectives, appropriate methodology, and robust experimental design. This should be supported by adequate power calculations and a well-defined plan for statistical analysis.
3. Value and Importance in Advancing Dementia Research	The proposed work should demonstrate its value and importance in advancing the dementia research field towards blood biomarker implementation in a healthcare setting in the UK. This includes robust plans for economic analysis to support the adoption of new biomarkers in clinical practice.
4. Potential Impact for People Living with Dementia	The significance of the proposed study should be clear in terms of its potential impact for people living with dementia, both in terms of improving diagnosis and treatment outcomes, and in enhancing the quality of life for affected individuals and their caregivers.
5. Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Considerations	The applicants should have considered and justified the diversity of the study population, ensuring that the study (including recruitment, exclusion/inclusion criteria, feasibility, and outcomes) is designed to promote equity, inclusion, and diversity. This may include addressing underrepresented populations or considering factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
6. Data Sharing and Accessibility	The proposal should include a clear plan for making generated outputs (such as datasets, findings, and publications) available and accessible to the scientific community in line with best practice data sharing regulations. This may involve the use of data repositories, open access publication, or other strategies to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

## The Involvement and Engagement of People Affected by Dementia

1. Meaningful Involvement of People Affected by Dementia	The proposal should demonstrate how people affected by dementia (including individuals with dementia, their families, and caregivers) have been, and will continue to be, meaningfully involved in the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of the research project.
2. Co-creation and Collaborative Approach	The project should emphasize co-creation and collaboration with people affected by dementia, ensuring that their perspectives, experiences, and insights are incorporated into the research process, from conceptualization to dissemination of findings.
3. Tailored Communication and Inclusivity	The proposal should outline strategies for ensuring clear, accessible, and inclusive communication with people affected by dementia throughout the research process. This may include the use of plain language summaries, visual aids, or other approaches to facilitate understanding and engagement.
4. Training and Support for People Affected by Dementia	The proposal should outline plans for providing appropriate training and support to people affected by dementia who are involved in the research project. This may include resources for understanding research processes, mentorship opportunities, or other forms of assistance that enable meaningful participation.
5. Evaluation of Involvement and Engagement	The proposal should include a plan for evaluating the involvement and engagement of people affected by dementia in the research project, both in terms of the impact on the research outcomes and the experience of those participating. This may involve feedback mechanisms, surveys, or other methods for gathering insights and measuring success.
6. Ethical Considerations and Safeguards	The proposal should address any ethical considerations and safeguards in place to protect the well-being of people affected by dementia involved in the research process. This may include obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, addressing potential conflicts of interest, and implementing strategies to minimize any potential burden or distress.
7. Dissemination of Findings and Impact	The proposal should include a plan for disseminating research findings to people affected by dementia in a timely and accessible manner. This may involve the use of various communication channels, such as community presentations, social media, or patient advocacy organizations, to ensure that the research outcomes are translated into real-world impact.

## Skills, Expertise, and Track Record of the Applicants, and the Suitability of the Team and Environment that Surround Them

1. Skills and Expertise of the Applicants	The proposal should demonstrate that the applicants possess the necessary skills and expertise to carry out and deliver the proposed research. This may include relevant qualifications, prior experience, and a track record of success in related research fields.
2. Value Added through Collaboration	The proposal should highlight the value added through collaboration with other grant participants, ensuring that the research team involves individuals with the required expertise and/or disciplines needed to support the research. This may include interdisciplinary collaborations or partnerships with other institutions, organizations, or industry partners.
3. Access to Necessary Resources and Facilities	The proposal should demonstrate that the applicant/team have access to the necessary resources or facilities required for the fulfilment of the project. This may include suitable analytical resources for blood samples, access to specialist techniques, or specialized equipment needed for the research.
4. Project Management and Oversight	The proposal should include robust plans for project management and oversight of multiple study sites, ensuring that the research activities are well-coordinated and efficiently executed. This may involve the designation of a project manager, regular progress meetings, or other mechanisms for communication and collaboration across the research team.
5. Opportunities for Career Development and Training	The proposal should outline the opportunities for career development and training of personnel involved in the grant. This may include professional development activities, mentorship programs, or opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning that enhances the skills and expertise of the research team members.
6. Track Record and Suitability of the Research Environment	The proposal should highlight the track record of the applicants and the suitability of the research environment in which they are situated. This may include a history of successful delivery of related projects, or evidence of a supportive and productive research environment conducive to achieving the goals of the proposed project.

<b>Scheme Remit and Resources Requested</b>	
1. Appropriateness for the Scheme	The proposal should demonstrate that it is appropriate for the specific funding scheme in question, addressing the key objectives, requirements, and priorities of the program.
2. Eligibility and Value for Money	The proposal should clearly outline the costs requested, ensuring that they are eligible according to the funding scheme's guidelines and represent good value for money. This may involve providing a detailed budget, highlighting cost-effective strategies, or demonstrating how the requested resources will contribute to the success of the project.
3. Justification of Requested Resources	The proposal should provide a clear and well-reasoned justification for the requested resources, explaining how they are appropriate and necessary for the delivery of the proposed work. This may include a description of the equipment, materials, or personnel required, as well as their specific role in the research process.
4. Reasonableness of Salaries Requested	If salaries are requested, the proposal should demonstrate that they are reasonable, considering the expertise and experience required by the role. This may involve providing information on the qualifications, responsibilities, and expected contributions of the personnel involved, as well as benchmarking against comparable positions in the field.
5. Staff Time Allocation	The proposal should clearly outline the staff time allocated to the project, ensuring that it is appropriate and sufficient to deliver the proposed work. This may involve providing a detailed timeline, work plan, or staffing chart, demonstrating how the research team members' time and expertise will be effectively utilized to achieve the project's objectives.

## Guidance for Reviewers

### Scoring system:

We ask our reviewers to consider and review each proposal in line with our assessment criteria, and to score each application accordingly based on the scoring system below. The scoring system comprises a 1 - 5 scale (including half points) with 1 as the best score. We invite our reviewers to use the full range of scores when considering applications.

Score	Description
1.0	<b>Very Good:</b> Excellent scientific proposal, with strong rationale, robust methodology, and high potential impact on the research field and people with dementia. Applicant and team have the necessary skills, expertise, and track record. The research environment is conducive to success, and the proposal demonstrates meaningful engagement with people affected by dementia. The proposal fits the scheme and resources requested are appropriate and well-justified.
1.5	<b>Very Good/Good:</b> Strong scientific proposal with potential for significant benefit to the research field and to people with dementia. Applicant and team mostly possess the necessary skills and expertise, with some minor gaps. The research environment is supportive, and there is evidence of engagement with people affected by dementia. The proposal fits the scheme, but some resources requested may need minor revision.
2.0	<b>Good:</b> Good scientific proposal, with potential for benefit to the research field and to people with dementia. Applicants or wider team's skills and expertise are likely to benefit the research outlined in the proposal. The research environment is adequate, and there is some engagement with people affected by dementia. The proposal fits the scheme, but the resources requested need revision.
2.5	<b>Good/Average:</b> Satisfactory scientific proposal, with some potential for benefit to the research field and to people with dementia. Some gaps in applicant or wider team's skills and expertise may impact the success of the research. The research environment is acceptable, and there is limited engagement with people affected by dementia. The proposal fits the scheme, but resources requested require substantial revision.
3.0	<b>Average:</b> The proposal presents some weaknesses which diminish its potential to benefit the research field and people with dementia. Applicant's or wider team's skills and expertise do not align with the needs of the science proposed. The research environment is not optimal, and there is minimal engagement with people affected by dementia. The proposal fits the scheme, but the resources requested need revision.
3.5	<b>Average/Below Average:</b> The proposal has several weaknesses that limit its potential impact on the research field and people with dementia. Significant gaps in applicant or wider team's skills and expertise may hinder the success of the research. The research environment is lacking, and there is little or no engagement with people affected by dementia. The proposal partially fits the scheme, and resources requested require significant revision.
4.0	<b>Average/Below Average:</b> The proposal has several weaknesses that limit its potential impact on the research field and people with dementia. Significant gaps in applicant or wider team's skills and expertise may hinder the success of the research. The research environment is lacking, and there

	is little or no engagement with people affected by dementia. The proposal partially fits the scheme, and resources requested require significant revision.
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Below Average/Poor:</b> The proposal has substantial weaknesses and limited potential for a positive impact on the research field or people with dementia. Major gaps in applicant or wider team's skills and expertise make the success of the research unlikely. The research environment is inadequate, and there is no engagement with people affected by dementia. The proposal is not well-aligned with the scheme, and resources requested are unsuitable.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Poor:</b> The proposal is of very poor scientific quality and/or is out of remit. Applicant or wider team's skills and expertise are inadequate for the proposed research. The research environment is unsuitable, and there is no engagement with people affected by dementia. The proposal does not fit the scheme, and resources requested are not appropriate or justified.