



## **HRB-TMRN Study within a Trial (SWAT) FUNDING 2024**

### **Guidance Notes**

<b>Opening Date:</b>	<b>22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023</b>
<b>Closing Date:</b>	<b>22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024 at 1pm</b>
<b>Notification of outcome:</b>	<b>19<sup>th</sup> April 2024</b>

### **Background**

Since September 2014, the HRB-TMRN has been working to strengthen the methodology and reporting of trials in health and social care in Ireland so that they become more relevant, accessible and influential for patients and other service users, practitioners, policymakers and the public. This is being achieved through a programme of work relating to the methodology of trials and focused on (i) Support (ii) Training and Education (iii) Research and Innovation, and (iv) Public Engagement.

Where randomisation is possible, randomised trials are regarded as the most effective means of evaluating the effects of health care interventions. They have the potential to provide reliable and robust estimates of the effects of healthcare interventions to help people make well-informed decisions about care options. However, there is relatively little work on improving how randomised trials are designed, conducted, analysed, reported and disseminated. The study within a trial (SWAT) initiative is one approach to providing evidence to improve the efficiency of trials. The SWAT programme involves smaller studies focused on trying to find better ways to 'do' trials. These studies are usually conducted within host trials.

Please see the following paper for a brief definition of SWATs, an explanation of why they are important and some practical 'top tips' that come from existing experience of doing SWATs <https://trialsjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13063-018-2535-5>

The MRC Northern Ireland Hub for Trials Methodology SWAT Repository is an online database of ongoing SWATs and provides further information, suggestions and ideas for SWATs.

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/TheNorthernIrelandNetworkforTrialsMethodologyResearch/SWATSWARInformation/>

### Scope of the current call

The scope of the current call is to facilitate the embedding of a study within an ongoing trial to (a) evaluate the effectiveness of alternative ways of delivering or organising a particular trial process (b) explore the implications and consequences of such methodological decisions or (c) address a trials methodology research question related to SWATs e.g. identify priority questions for SWATs. Applications relating to a specific SWAT should address an independent, primary methodology research question on either the design, conduct, analysis, reporting or dissemination of trials for which there is current uncertainty and a need to provide evidence to support alternative ways of delivering or organising trial processes.

*Note: The primary purpose of process evaluations is to assess fidelity, implementation, causal mechanisms and contextual factors rather than address a primary trials methodology question. Process evaluations are, therefore, not eligible for this particular call.*

### Number of awards

One award is available of up to €10,000 in 2024. Overhead costs are also available at 25% of direct project costs. Award duration is for up to 12 months, and strict timelines will apply.

### Who should apply?

Trial investigator teams working on a planned or ongoing randomised trial are invited to apply. There are no eligibility restrictions for the lead applicant (e.g. previous grant holder), and early-stage career researchers are welcome to apply, provided that the Principal Investigator for the host trial within which the proposed SWAT is embedded supports the application and appropriate mentoring arrangements are in place.

**The award must be held and managed within one of the following HRB-TMRN institutions;**

- **University of Galway**
- **University College Cork**
- **Trinity College Dublin**
- **University College Dublin**

- **University of Limerick**

Irish lead applicants not based within these institutions may apply provided there is financial management support agreed with one of the HRB-TMRN institutions listed above through a nominated collaborator. Please contact the HRB-TMRN Programme Manager for further information.

### Eligibility criteria

- Lead applicants must be employed at a recognised HRB host institution.
- Applicants must provide evidence from host institution of provision for funding for the planned / ongoing host trial (letter from research office).
  - In the event that the host trial is not reliant on funding, please contact the HRB-TMRN Programme Manager;
- Applicants must provide evidence of mentoring arrangements (where appropriate) to provide academic and clinical/practice-based support;
- Research funding awarded must be managed in a separate reportable account;
- Applications must include a named collaborator from the Medical Research Council (MRC) National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Trials Methodology Research Partnership. A request for a collaborator can be made by forwarding an abstract (300 words) of the proposed SWAT to the HRB-Trials Methodology Research Network at [hrb-tmrn@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:hrb-tmrn@universityofgalway.ie) before 03<sup>rd</sup> March 2024.

### Budget

Allowable costs include;

#### Salary (salary, PRSI, pension contribution)

Applicants should use the IUA website for the most up-to-date recommended salary scales for academic researchers (<http://www.iua.ie/research-innovation/researcher-salary-scales/>). Please note employee pension contribution of 5% has already been incorporated into the IUA gross salary figure. Please state the pay scale used and the level and point on the scale. This should be justified accordingly.

The HRB-TMRN does not provide funding for the salary or benefits of academic staff within research institutions who are already in receipt of salary or benefits. The HRB-TMRN does not provide salary or buyout time for collaborators.

Employer's contributions to PRSI and/or national insurance at the appropriate rates (e.g. PRSI is calculated at 11.05% of gross salary in RoI).

Pension provision up to a maximum of 20% of gross salary will be paid to the host institution to enable compliance with the Employment Control Framework (an additional 5% employee contribution are part of the salary). The level of employer contribution should be in accordance with the model adopted by the host institution.

### Running costs

- For all costs required to carry out the activities.
- Access to necessary special facilities or services which are not available in the host academic institutions.
- Funding for small items of equipment can be included in this section.
- Standalone computers will **not** be funded.
- All costs must be inclusive of VAT, where applicable.

### Dissemination and knowledge exchange costs

This covers costs associated with the Dissemination and Knowledge Exchange Plan – i.e. Seminar/conference attendance (provide details of name and location, where possible) and any other means of communicating outcomes or engaging with stakeholders.

### Overhead contribution

In accordance with the HRB Policy on Overhead Usage, the HRB-TMRN will contribute to the indirect costs of the research through an overhead payment of 25% of Total Direct Modified Costs for both lab/clinical and desk-based research. The overhead contribution includes the following items: recruitment costs, office space, software, bioinformatics access.

### Deadline

The deadline for submission of complete applications is:

**24<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 1 pm.**

Queries relating to this funding scheme can be sent to [hrb-tmrn@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:hrb-tmrn@universityofgalway.ie)

All application forms must be submitted as a PDF by email and relevant documentation to [hrb-tmrn@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:hrb-tmrn@universityofgalway.ie) by the deadline with '**SWAT AWARD**' in the subject line.

## **Peer Review Process**

Applications will be subject to external peer review. Successful applicants will be notified by Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024.