Feasibility Studies Funding – Call Guidance

CONSOLIDATE is a research network led by Heriot-Watt University, the University of Strathclyde and Age Scotland alongside a number of community, third sector and NHS partners.

We are funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and the Alzheimer's Society.

We have implemented a competitive application process in line with the funder guidelines around eligibility and following UKRI principles of peer review and UKRI Principles of Assessment and Decision Making.

To find out more, visit: dementia.hw.ac.uk or contact: dementia@hw.ac.uk

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1. About Feasibility Studies funding call

CONSOLIDATE invites applications for **Feasibility Studies** that explore innovative, integrated approaches aligned with our strategic aims and themes. The funding call is a two-stage process with an initial Expression of Interest (EOI) stage followed by a full application stage. Those application from the EOI stage that meet the eligibility and call criteria will be invited to the full application stage. These awards support work to test viability, functionality, and potential impact, and to inform future development and applications. These feasibility funds should be intended to support development of research ideas, generation of proof-of-concept data and identification of clinical or industry support for example.

Feasibility studies should demonstrate **clear added value** from working across disciplines, sectors, and lived experience perspectives within CONSOLIDATE. Projects can be run in collaboration with industry partners and other key stakeholders such as third-sector organisations, health and social care professionals, commissioners, designers, policy makers, and community partners.

The funding call launches with a Priority Setting and Funding Webinar on 29 July 2026 (3.30pm UK time). Those interested in applying for this funding should become a network member by signing up here: https://go.hw.ac.uk/CONSOLIDATE

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2. Funding Available

- **Grant value:** £50,000–£100,000

- **Project end date:** No later than 31 December 2027

The final number and size of awards will depend on the quality, scope, and ambition of applications received. We also plan to have a second round of funding for Feasibility Studies following this first round.

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3. Who Can Apply

You must read the EPSRC eligibility criteria before applying:

- Applicants must be based at a UK institution and be eligible to apply for EPSRC grant funding.
- Principal investigators must be academic employees of an eligible organisation and must be resident in the UK who meets the UKRI eligibility criteria. You can check your eligibility on the UKRI website.
- We encourage early career researchers who are not eligible to lead a proposal or be included as researcher co-investigators to discuss with their academic line manager about how they can be involved as collaborators.
- EPSRC fellows, Royal Society fellows and Royal Academy of Engineering fellows holding fellowships aimed at later career stages are eligible to apply.
- Strongly encourage including people with lived experience of dementia, as co-leads or partners. Lived experience includes people living with dementia as well as current or former carers of people living with dementia.
- Engage third sector, industry partners where relevant.
- Applicants can lead one proposal and be involved in a maximum of two.
- The call is open to CONSOLIDATE network members only. You can sign up here for free to become a network member today.
- Applicants are encouraged to attend a one-to-one brief discussion with a member of the core team and attend workshops and events leading up to the funding deadline.

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4. What the Panel Is Looking For

Successful Feasibility Studies will:

- Address **priority themes and challenges** identified through Network scoping. Please see section 5 below.
- Integrate **two or more** of the Network's **Enhance / Support / Manage** aims. Please see section 6 below.

- Embed **Equality, Responsibility, and Sustainability** throughout as per section 6 below.
- Deliver meaningful **Public and Patient Involvement and Engagement (PPIE).**
- Generate clear learning to inform future funding, development, or deployment

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5. Grand Challenges

Successful feasibility studies will need to address one or more of the following challenges and need to justify alignment clearly in their application.

- **Grand Challenge 1: Independence at Home**

"Supporting daily routines, safety and autonomy for as long as possible."

- **Grand Challenge 2: Mobility, Travel & Getting Out**

"Enabling safe, confident mobility and access to community life."

- **Grand Challenge 3: Dementia-Inclusive Technology**

"Designing technology that is simple, stable, intuitive and trusted."

- **Grand Challenge 4: Social Connection & Reducing Isolation**

"Maintaining relationships, belonging, identity and confidence."

- **Grand Challenge 5: Supporting Carers Sustainably**

"Reducing emotional, physical, financial and cognitive load for carers."

The community engagement activities leading to the Grand Challenges, and a fuller description of those, are summarised in CONSOLIDATE's report: Developing technology to enhance independence in dementia: Lived experience shaping priorities for action

Applicants must read the above-mentioned report to ensure proposals address one or more of the needs identified by people living with dementia, carers and health and care professionals within the Grand Challenges.

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6. Enhance, Support and Manage Framework

CONSOLIDATE considers technology with three broad aims: technologies could be used to **Enhance, Support or Manage functional capacities** depending on the needs of the individual. Someone in the early stage of dementia will have specific

functional capacities that can be enhanced or maintained to enable their independence. Functional capacities to be targeted will include cognitive and physical health. At the same time, the person may have specific tasks they can no longer complete, and that is where support technologies are relevant, providing a replacement for a declining or lost skill, for example. At this stage, there may be no or very limited reliance on monitoring. As the person's needs change over time, the focus on enhancing function will reduce, with more support for lost functions and increasing use of sensing and monitoring capabilities to manage symptoms and prioritise safety. By focusing on enhancing and supporting, existing functional capacities will be improved or maintained, slowing progression with benefits for the individual and their immediate network, as well as the need for, and costs of, social care.

Cutting across these, three key issues are critical to the network's activities:

• **Equality**: Solutions need to be accessible to those most at risk and not only those with existing resources (our network focuses on socio-economic disadvantage and geographical remoteness, ethnic minorities and underserved groups as targets for reducing inequality and digital literacy gaps);

• **Responsibility**: Solutions need to be guided by responsible technology principles and robust ethical considerations;

• **Sustainability**: Solutions need to demonstrate sustainable deployment at scale in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner.

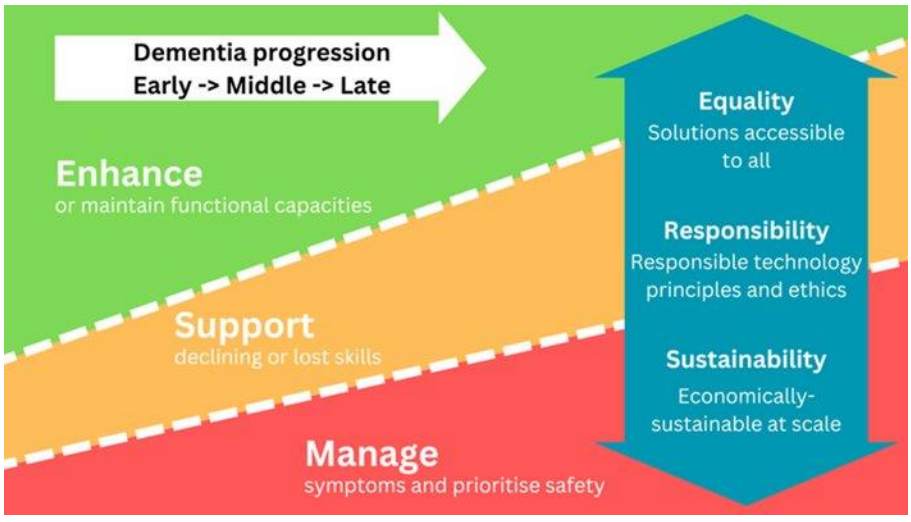

Figure: CONSOLIDATE's Enhance, Support and Manage Framework

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7. Public and Patient Involvement and Engagement (PPIE)

PPIE is a core requirement. For further information or support, contact us at dementia@hw.ac.uk

Applicants must describe how people with lived experience, including people living with dementia and/or their unpaid carers have been or will be involved in:

- Shaping the study design
- Ongoing decision-making and delivery
- Interpretation and dissemination of findings

Support is available through CONSOLIDATE via:

- The Network PPIE Specialist
- People's Voice members (our lived experience panel)
- Named strategic third sector and community partners

Please contact us via email at dementia@hw.ac.uk to discuss your application or support requests.

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8. Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Proposals can range from £50,000-100,000, with direct costs (Directly Incurred) being funded at 100%; indirect costs (Directly Allocated) will not be funded.

The budget should be presented for 100% of direct costs. Please discuss your project and submission with your research office (or equivalent) prior to submission. Costings must be approved by your research office (or equivalent) before submitting your final proposal at the full application stage.

Funds will be awarded by CONSOLIDATE to the lead investigator/institution only. They are responsible for distributing funds to co-investigators including industry/community partners (where relevant).

Projects will be funded by an award letter to the lead organisation specifying T&Cs.

Eligible costs include:

- Research staff and support roles (Directly Incurred (DI))
- Specialist expertise or technical support
- Direct delivery costs (equipment, consumables, engagement)
- Dissemination and knowledge exchange activities

- Ineligible costs:

- PI or Co-Investigator salary allocations (directly allocated (DA)) as funding is intended to support feasibility activity rather than academic time buy-out. Note, salary costs may be included if those can be justified as direct costs. For example, staff on open-ended contracts cannot be funded, but researchers or similar roles on fixed-term contracts could have time allocated as Directly Incurred (with agreement of their Line Manager).
- Estates, indirect and overheads. If infrastructural costs are essential for the completion of the proposal, these must be included as Directly Incurred with appropriate justification.
- Costs not directly attributable to the Feasibility Study.

> For the full list of eligible and ineligible costs, please refer to UKRI guidelines or contact a member of team at dementia@hw.ac.uk.

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9. Assessment and Selection Process

Applications will be reviewed by the Funding Sub-committee and an external expert panel including people with lived experience.

Assessment criteria will focus on:

- Strategic alignment with CONSOLIDATE aims and Grand Challenges
- Quality and feasibility of the study design
- Strength and authenticity of PPIE
- Integration across themes and aims
- Value for money
- Potential to inform next-stage funding or deployment

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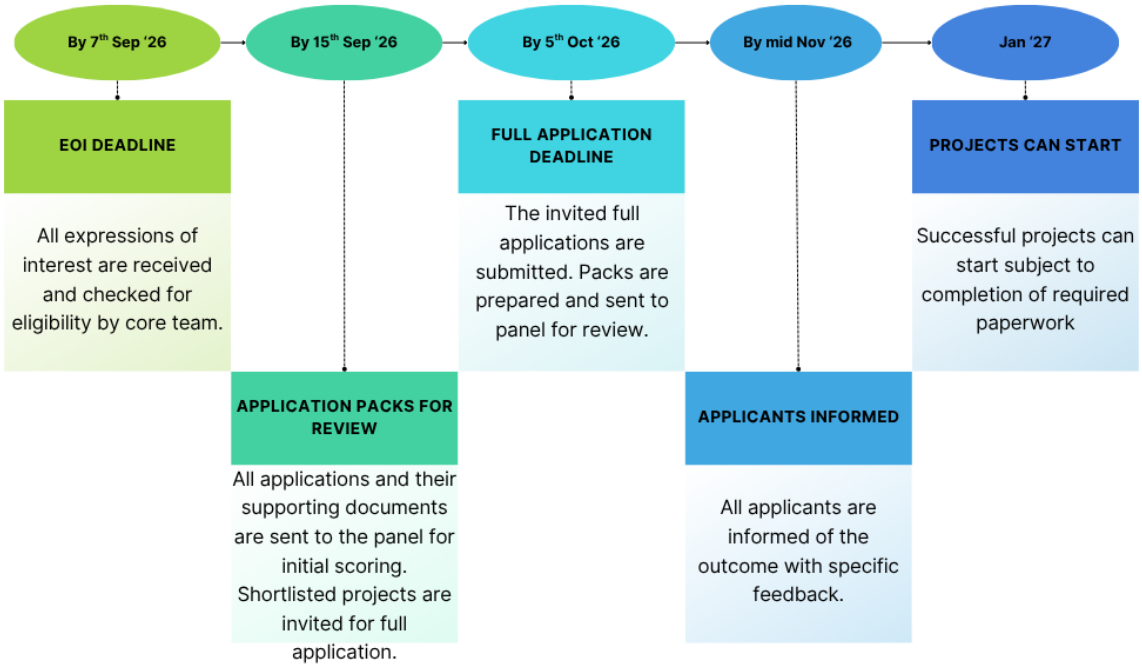
10. Call Timeline and Process Flow

Indicative timeline (subject to change):

Application Review Process and estimated timeline



Submission

- Please email your completed Expression of Interest (EOI) form to dementia@hw.ac.uk by **7th September 2026, 10 am UK time**.

Review

- Processes for allocation of research funds will be fair and transparent.
- Applications will be reviewed by a research review panel of CONSOLIDATE's Funding Sub-committee an external expert panel including people with lived experience to ensure breadth of experience.
- We will include people with lived experience in the application review process. Please ensure you use accessible language.
- The panel will be selected to minimise conflicts of interest, and when there is a conflict, the panel member will be absent for those discussions.
- Outcomes will be announced in November 2026.

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- It is anticipated there will be two rounds of funding, however, depending on the quality of the applications received, we may reduce or increase the scope of future calls.

Awards of funding

- Funds will be awarded via an award letter issued by Heriot-Watt University, which will include the details of the successful organisation and a breakdown of costs, as well as specifying T&Cs. It will be signed by Heriot-Watt University and by the organisation receiving the award.
- A purchase order (PO) will then be raised at Heriot-Watt University and the organisation receiving the award will raise an invoice for the funding amount, quarterly in arrears, based on actual expenditure.
- The feasibility projects will be funded at 100% directly incurred costs as mentioned above.
- Where projects involve multiple partners, the funding will be awarded to the main PI, who will then allocate the funding accordingly.
- Ethical approval will need to be in place before projects begin. Gaining ethical approval is the responsibility of the lead applicant.

Reporting requirements

- Awardees will be required to report on project progress, finances and outcomes, as required by CONSOLIDATE and the originating funders, EPSRC and NIHR.
- Requirements will include a final project report and presentations in workshops and conferences.

If you have any questions, please email dementia@hw.ac.uk

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11. Functional Capacity Assessment

All funded projects are expected to have clear outcome(s) that address one or more functional capacities that support independent living. This will:

- Support testing of novel technologies or approaches
- Enable comparison across studies
- Focus on enabling independence and real-world applicability

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12. Getting Support

Applicants are encouraged to:

- Attend Network events and webinar information sessions for the funding call. Please check our webpage for up-to-date information.
- Engage early with PPIE support structures (contact dementia@hw.ac.uk)
- Contact the CONSOLIDATE core team via dementia@hw.ac.uk for any queries.

Further guidance and application materials can be found on the call website.

We strongly encourage ambitious, collaborative ideas that bring together diverse expertise and lived experience to shape the future direction of CONSOLIDATE.

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