FAQ for the Intermediate and Long Term Care (ILTC) Research Grant

1. Who is eligible to apply for the ILTC Research Grant?

Principal Investigators (PIs) must be employed on a full time basis by either a private organisation or Voluntary Welfare Organisation (VWO) in the ILTC sector and must spend at least 75% of their time in Singapore. ILTC organisations include community hospitals, nursing homes (including psychiatric nursing homes), day care (including dementia day care centres) and day rehabilitation centres, home nursing, home medical and home rehabilitation services. The PI will lead the research project. Collaborators or Co-Principal Investigators can be from the Regional Health Systems, public or private hospitals, family medicine clinics (polyclinics or private clinics), academia, ILTC organisations or private-sector industry.

2. What type of research will be funded?

For this grant call, we are not limiting proposals to any specific area or theme.

The main consideration is that the research proposals must be aimed at gathering new, generalisable knowledge. Examples of research could include:

- Understanding risk factors or developing prediction models for specific diseases or disability outcomes important to the ILTC sector
- Understanding the natural history of a disease or disability population, evaluating novel interventions that could prevent or treat diseases or disability outcomes important to the ILTC sector
- Understanding the cellular or biochemical bases of a disease or outcome important to the ILTC sector.

Proposals that are not research-focused will not be considered. Examples of such proposals include hiring additional manpower to deliver a current service, expanding or improving physical facilities in the ILTC organisation, or asking for funds to perform an evaluation of an existing service, or an existing pilot programme. Alternative sources of funding should be sought for these activities.

3. What items will be covered by this grant?

This grant will only fund items used directly for research, such as the following:

- Expenditure on manpower (labour required for the project)
- Expenditure on equipment (equipment and supplied required for the project)
- Other operating expenses (including consumables and supplies, and other ancillary charges directly pertaining to the research project, such as ethics submission fees, insurance for the study, fees for use of copyrighted questionnaires etc.)

The grant will also support ethics submission fees up to a limit of S$5000.

Salaries of PIs, conference attendances, travel, indirect research costs, etc., will not be supported.

4. What is the grant quantum?

There is no specific quantum fixed for the grants PIs, Co-PIs and collaborators are advised to budget appropriately based on the specific requirements of the project. The duration of the award is 1.5 years, and the research project is expected to be completed within that time period. Funding for the proposals should hence cover only a period of up to 1.5 years.

5. What are the key funding criteria?

Some of the key criteria include:

Relevance of the application
- Significance of the problem motivating the research
- Development of research capabilities in the ILTC sector

Quality
- Scientific excellence of the scientific hypothesis under investigation
- Technological novelty of the research proposed

Impact
- Potential benefit or disruption to current practice in the ILTC sector
- Opportunities to address challenges present in the ILTC sector
- Opportunities to translate results to improve care in the ILTC sector
- Degree to which the proposal can be further developed into a full-scale research project that can attract competitive funding (for exploratory funding)

Implementation
- Competencies of the research team proposing the research study
- Whether aims and objectives of the study are achievable within the timeframe of 1.5 years

6. Who should I contact if I have an enquiry?
7. Do I need to account for any other funding I have received for my grant project?

No. Financial accounting should only document the funds awarded to you by the ILTC Research Grant. However, research proposals should disclose in the application if any funding for the proposed research project have been obtained or submitted for consideration, the quantum, and the funding agency providing the funding or that has been approached for funding.

8. What happens to my proposal once I have submitted it? How will the proposal be evaluated?

Once your proposal is submitted, it will be checked by AIC staff to make sure the proposal fits the grant’s basic eligibility criteria and is eligible for consideration. If your proposal is deemed to be outside the grant’s scope, or is not considered to provide sufficient information or details, it will be rejected at this stage.

Eligible proposals will be sent to a Research Review Panel for review and assessment. AIC will make the final funding approval.

9. Who will be on the evaluation panel?

The Research Review Panel will comprise mainly local experts from the ILTC sector with research experience, and academic experts from local universities with medical human subjects research experience.

10. Will a presentation be required?

Presentations by PIs whose projects have been shortlisted by the Research Review Panel may be required. This will likely take place in September 2016.

11. How long will I have to wait for a decision on my proposal?

We aim to award the grants by 1 Nov 2016.

12. Can an applicant submit more than one research proposal?

Yes.

13. Can I submit the same proposal more than once?

The same proposal may be submitted for consideration under another grant call in the future if it is not successfully awarded in this round. Duplicate proposals may also be
submitted to any other award-making body, subject to a clear declaration of the simultaneous submission being made in the relevant section of the proposal.

14. If my proposal is successful, when can the research start?

The projects can start in Nov 2016, after award of the grant.

15. How often do I need to report back on the grant?

Yearly updates and a final progress report on the awarded project should be submitted to AIC.

16. What outcomes must I deliver if I am awarded the funding?

In your application, you should specify the expected outcomes from the research proposal. At minimum, this should include complete collection and analyses of data, together with interpretation of these findings. A plan to disseminate your findings should be included in your proposal. Preferably, you should indicate plans to publish findings in a local or international peer-reviewed scientific journal, and/or oral or poster presentation at a local scientific conference. (Please note that you should not cost funding for conference attendance as this will not be supported by this grant. Alternative sources of funding from your institution or AIC can be sought for funding conference attendance).

If you propose to use this funding to obtain preliminary or pilot data for exploratory investigation into a research hypothesis, you should make clear how you intend to use these data to extend your research, for example by supporting a competitive national grant proposal (e.g. for research funding provided by the National Research Foundation (NRF) or the National Medical Research Council (NMRC)).

You should also include, where appropriate, plans for how your research findings will be used in the real-world setting.

PIs with successful proposals may be asked to present their results at an AIC-organised research grant-call conference, and the PIs should be prepared to do this presentation if requested.

17. Must I guarantee that the results of my research are positive?

As this is research, with the aim of gathering new knowledge or resolving an area of uncertainty, there can be no guarantee that any research results will be “positive”. A “negative” or null research finding can itself be interesting and useful, as it may provide information about the feasibility or viability of a specific research idea, or offer insight into how the research idea may be improved. We do not expect proposals to guarantee
a “positive” outcome. However, it is expected that research proposals should include complete collection and analysis of data (see response to question 16, above).

18. What is the Human Biomedical Research Act (HBRA), and what impact does this have on my proposal?

The HBRA is a new Act passed by the Singapore Parliament in August 2015. This Act governs research activities conducted on human subjects, and is intended to protect human beings who participate in research or who contribute tissue or samples to research studies. This Act is currently not yet enforced, although enforcement will begin in the near future.

The Act can be found at the following website:

http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/aol/search/display/view.w3p;page=0;query=CompId%3Af5e3b0d8-e3e5-496b-b1e3-1cd8d83049eb;rec=0;resUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fstatutes.agc.gov.sg%2Faol%2Fbrowse%2FtitleResults.w3p%3Bletter%3DH%3Btype%3DactsPub

We advise PIs to understand the requirements of the HBRA, and to be prepared to ensure that their research proposals are compliant with the HBRA when this Act comes into force.

19. Do I need to seek ethics board approval for my project?

If your research proposal is accepted for funding, you will need to submit your study proposal for ethics board review and approval prior to starting your research project. We suggest that you consider this requirement in your timeline and budgeting.

Ethics board approval will take about 3 months. We suggest that you budget about S$5000 for the approval process. Prior to the grant award (aimed for November 2016), you should ensure that your institution has set up an ethics review board of its own, or has made arrangement for an existing ethics review board to review research projects from your institution.

More information about established ethics review boards can be found here:

NHG ethics board (DSRB):

Singhealth ethics board (CIRB):

NUS Institutional Review Board (IRB):
http://www.nus.edu.sg/irb/

NTU Institutional Review Board (IRB):