

2025 Open Call for Investigator - initiated Projects

Research and Data Analytics Office
Health Bureau
January 2026



Outline

- Overview of the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF)
- Funding Scope
- Thematic Priorities
- Submission and Timeline
- Funding Decision
- Project Commencement
- 2 ➤ ²Examples of Early Rejected Applications



Overview of the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF)

Overview of HMRF



Establishment

- Dec 2011
- Consolidation of former funds*



Operation

- Annual basis –Open Calls
- Policy driven –Commissioned programmes

*Former funds:

- Health and Health Services Research Fund (HHSRF)
- Research Fund for the Control of Infectious Diseases (RFCID)
- Health Care and Promotion Fund (HCPF)

Mission

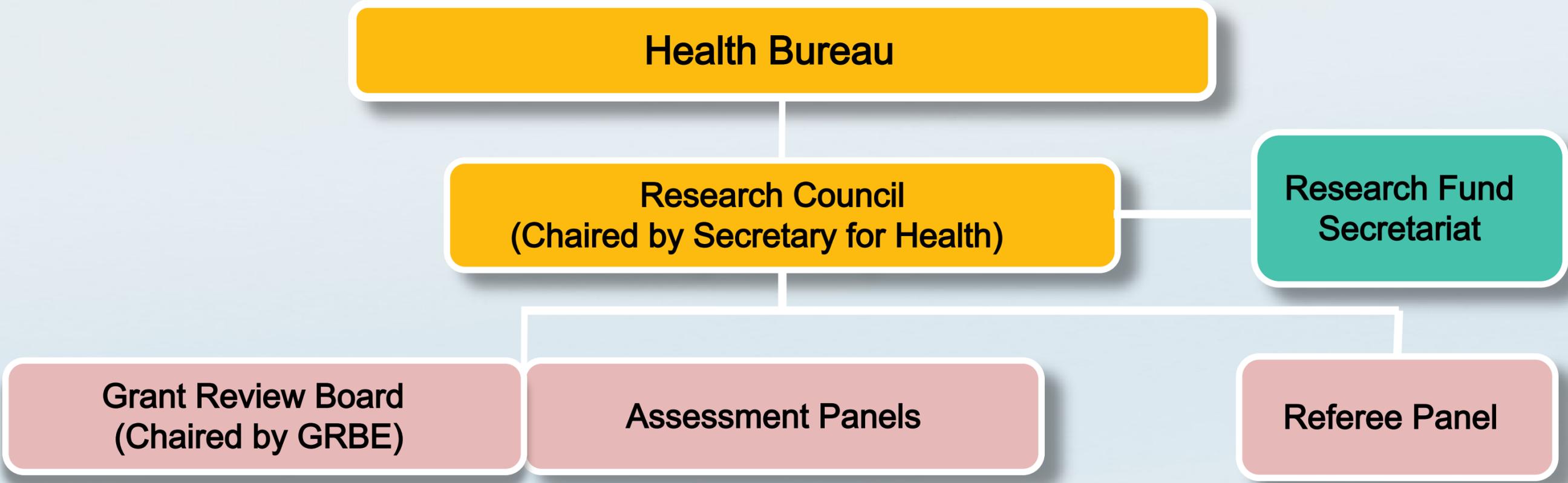
- ◆ **Build research capacity and to encourage, facilitate and support health and medical research to:**
 - Inform health policies
 - Improve population health
 - Strengthen the healthcare system
 - Enhance healthcare practices
 - Advance standard and quality of care
 - Promote clinical excellence

- ... through generation and application of **evidence-based scientific knowledge** derived from local research in health and medicine.

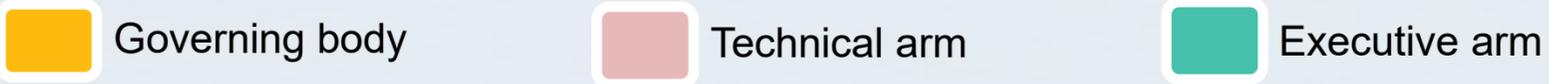
- ◆ **Funding support to evidence-based health promotion projects that help people adopt healthier lifestyles by enhancing awareness, changing adverse health behaviours and creating a conducive environment that supports good health practices.**



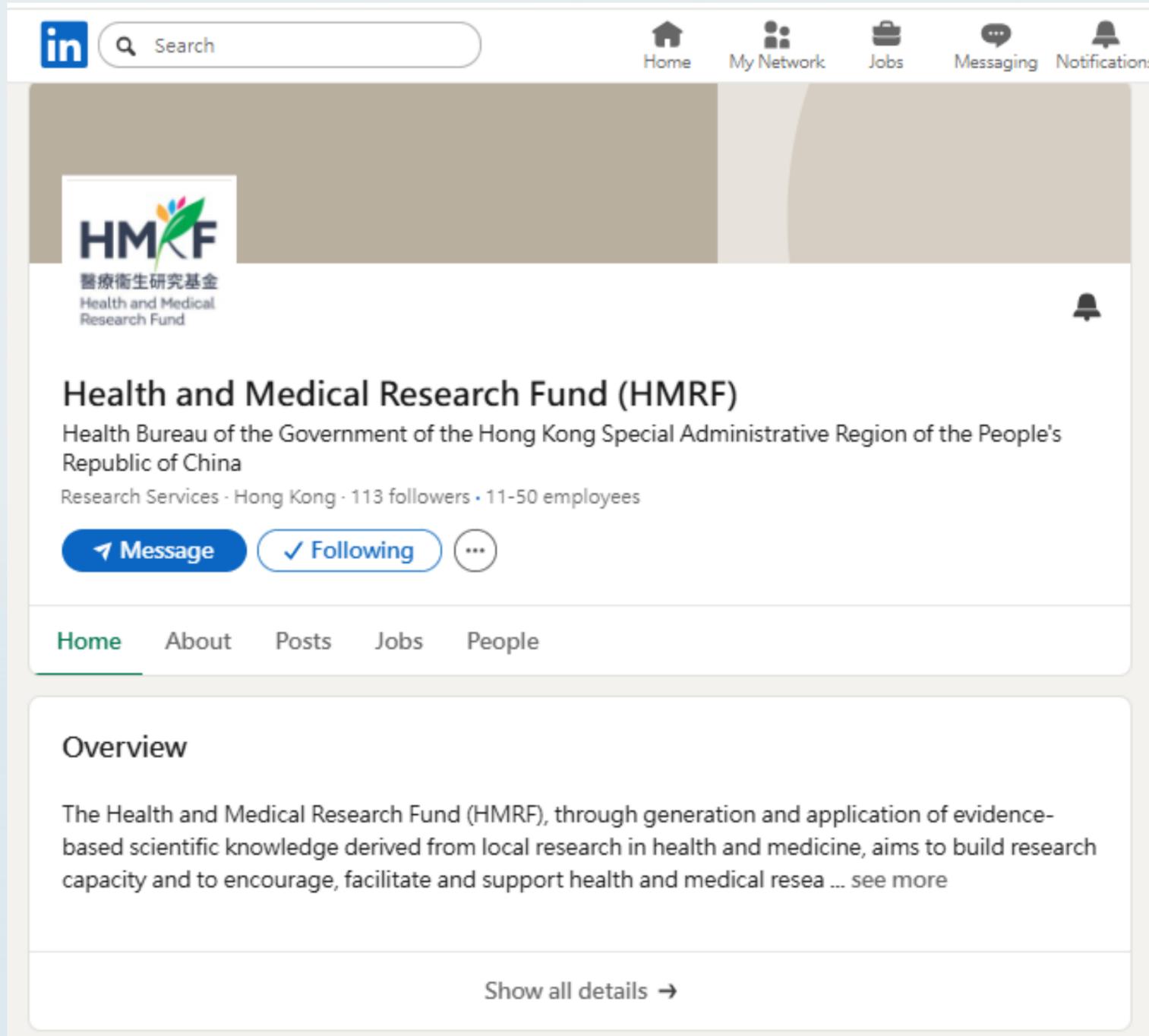
Governance Structure



GRBE: Grant Review Board Executive



HMRF is now on LinkedIn



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/hmrf/>

Follow us to stay connected!



Funding Scope

Funding Scope

Emphasise translational potential of research findings
Supports applications on the following research projects -

Clinical research

- Including patient-oriented research, epidemiological and behavioural studies, outcomes research and health services research

Infectious diseases research with public health implications

- From bench to bedside and at community level and with translational value

Chinese medicine - clinical research

- Based on Chinese medicine theory, or
- On Chinese medicine theory and methodology

Areas of Projects

**Public Health,
Human Health and
Health Services Research**

**Advanced Medical
Research**

**Infectious Diseases
Research**

Health Promotion



Public Health, Human Health and Health Services Research



Public Health

To **enhance prevention and treatment** and so improve population health



Health Services

To determine which interventions and services are **effective and cost-effective** in the local healthcare setting



Chinese Medicine

Must be **clinical research** which is based on Chinese medicine theory or clinical research on Chinese medicine theory and methodology

Infectious Diseases Research

Supports research proposals:

- Focus on those infectious diseases that are **prevalent** in or **pose threat** to Hong Kong and neighbouring areas
- With **public health implications** from bench to bedside and at community level
- With **translational value**

Advanced Medical Research

Apply advanced technologies to facilitate the translation of knowledge generated from health and health services or infectious diseases studies

**Clinical
Studies**

1. into **clinical practice**
2. to inform **health policy**

Health Promotion

Based on **scientific evidence** and evaluated in a systematic way

Pre-set criteria for process and outcome evaluation based on the **RE-AIM framework** are required.



Include a coordinated set of activities that help people adopt **healthier lifestyles** by enhancing awareness, changing adverse health behaviours and creating a conducive environment that supports good health practices

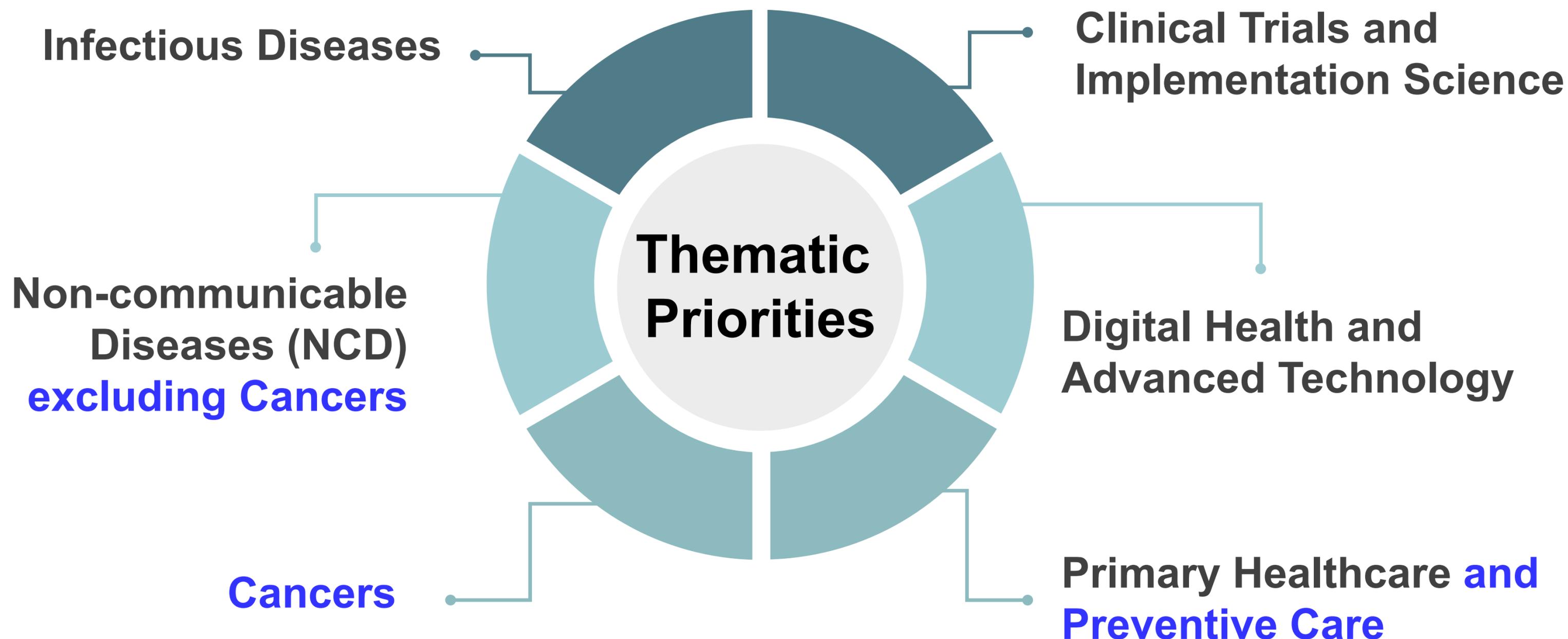
- Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, Maintenance/ sustainability



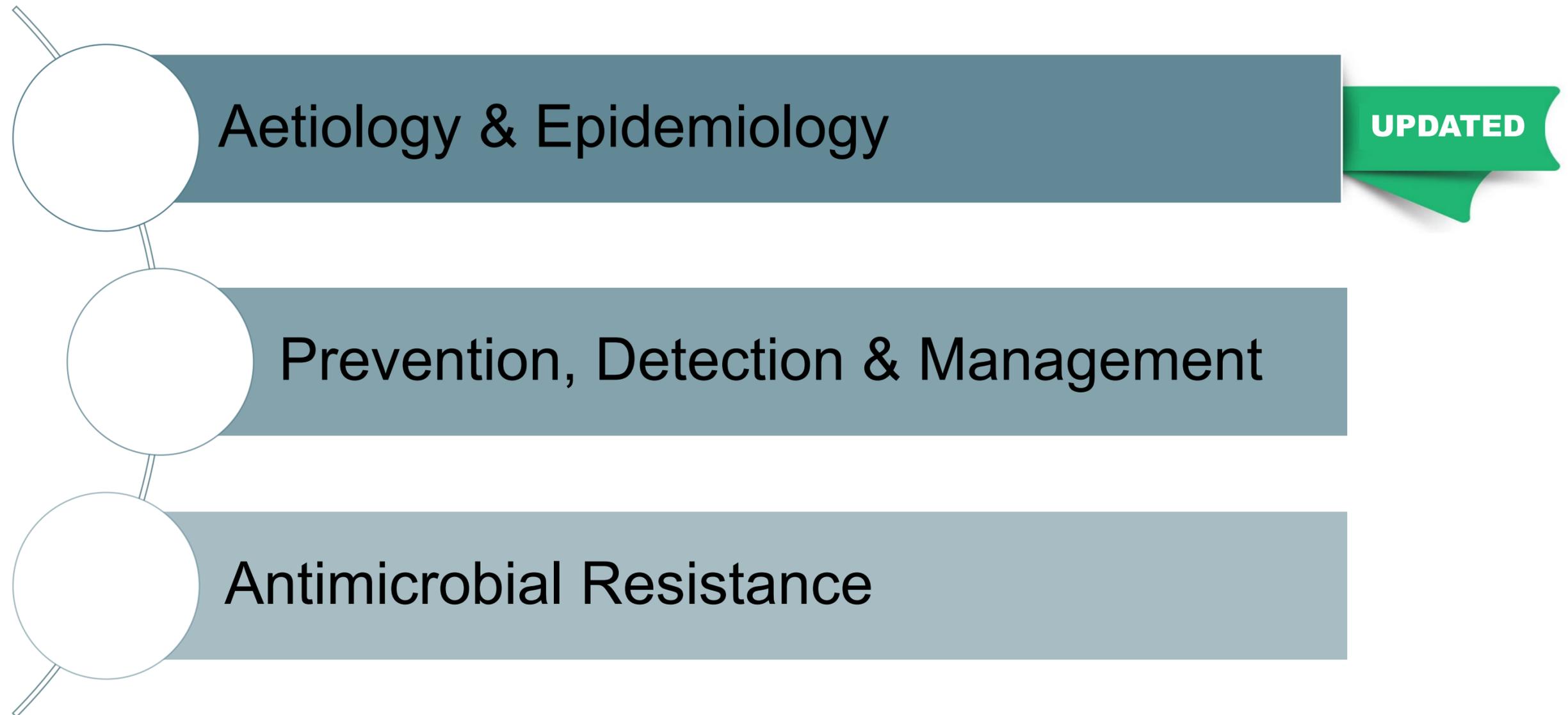
Thematic Priorities

Thematic Priorities for 2025 HMRF Open Call

UPDATED



A. Infectious Diseases



A. Infectious Diseases

A-0002

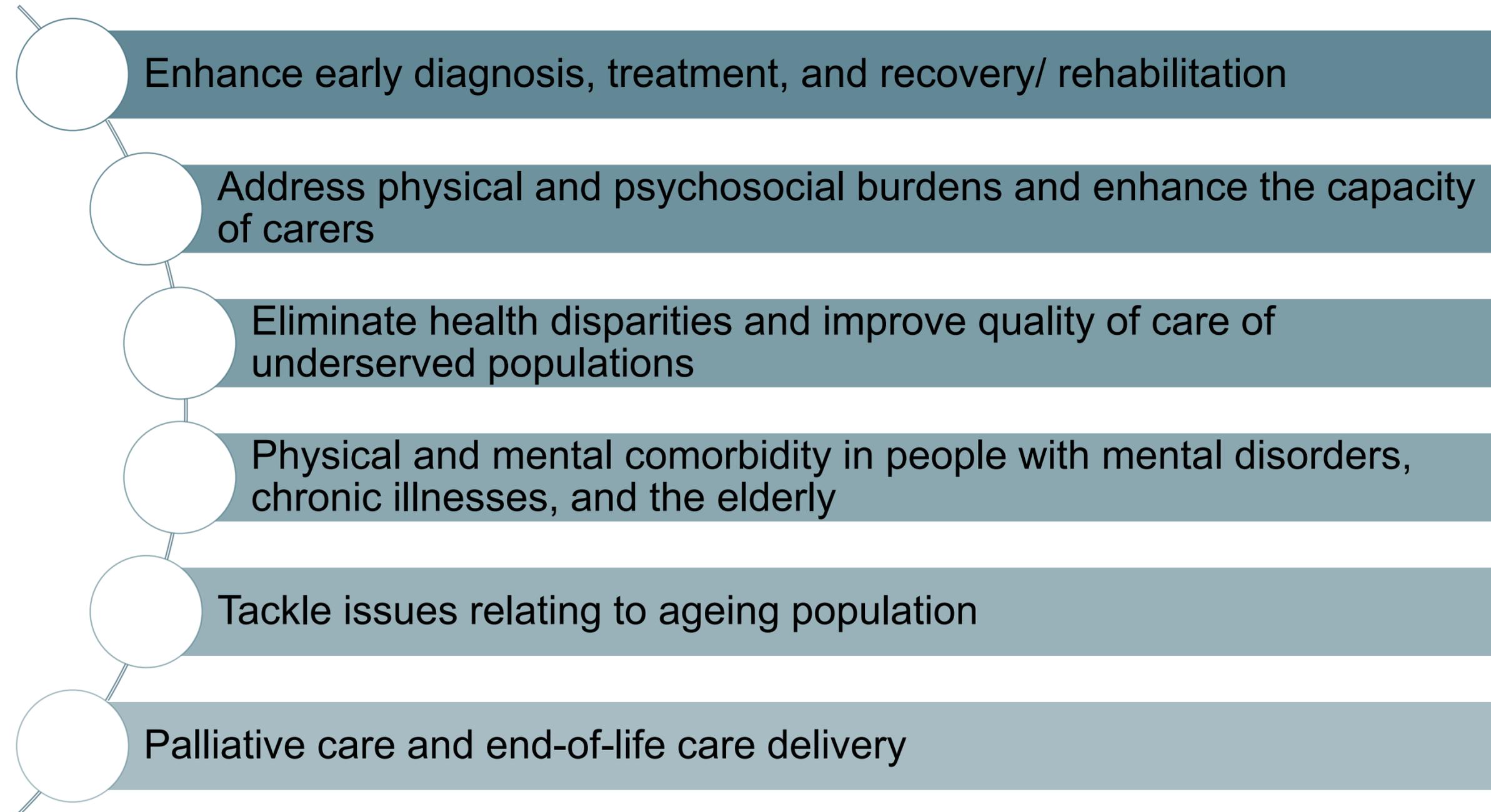
Assess threats from zoonotic or other emerging infectious pathogens and develop methods with coordinated efforts across human, animal and environmental health sectors for reducing the risk



UPDATED

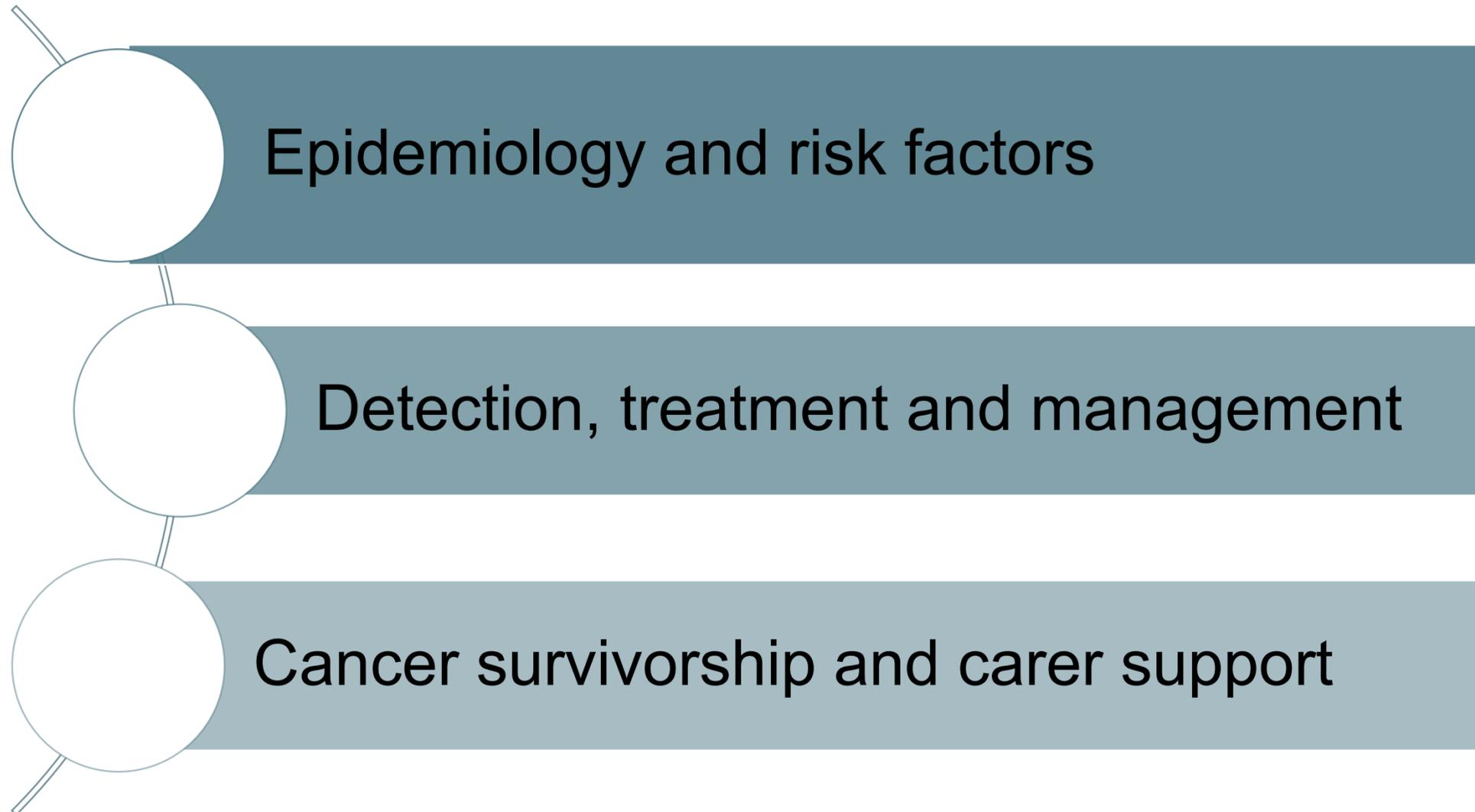
B. Non-communicable Diseases (NCD) excluding Cancers

UPDATED



C. Cancers

NEW



C. Cancers

C-0002	Develop and test novel approaches / technologies (including translation of genetic / genomic discoveries) for enhancing prevention, early diagnosis, treatment, and recovery / rehabilitation from cancers
C-0003	Study on cancer survivorship and carer support addressing a person's physical, emotional and quality of life across all stages of the cancer continuum



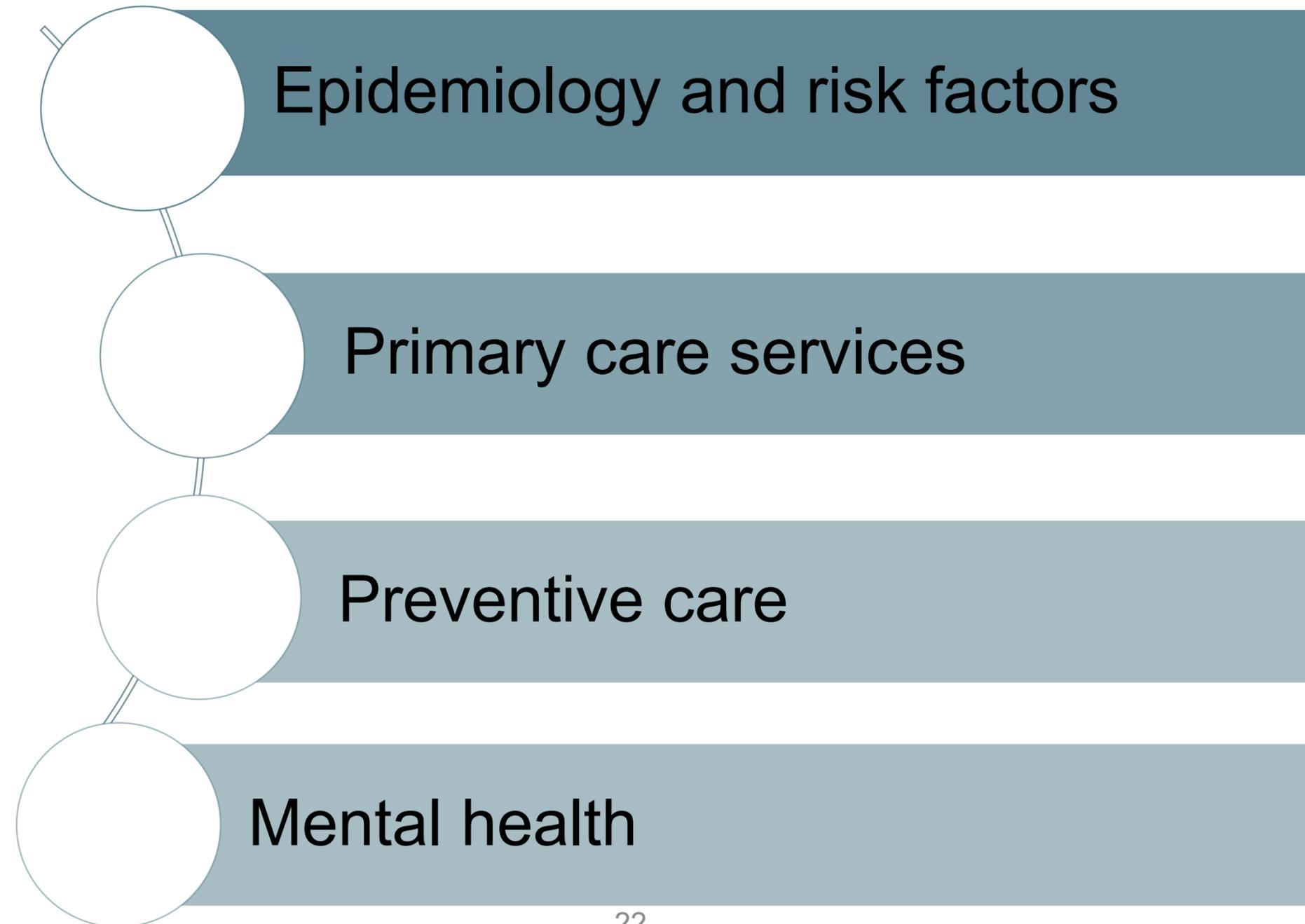
NEW



NEW

D. Primary Healthcare and Preventive Care

UPDATED



D. Primary Healthcare and Preventive Care

D-0012	Develop strategies and measures to improve health awareness, literacy and empowerment of individuals at different levels of health risks to improve uptake of preventive care and self-care capacity	
D-0014	Develop strategies and measures to promote healthy ageing	

D. Primary Healthcare and Preventive Care

D-0016	Identify means to increase mental health literacy, promote mental wellbeing, encourage help-seeking, foster resilience, build interpersonal networks and supportive environments, and reduce stigma towards persons with mental health needs
D-0018	Identify and evaluate novel setting-based interventions (including primary and secondary schools, tertiary institutions and workplace) to promote mental health by building supportive environments to promote healthy lifestyles, foster resilience, and establish care support networks



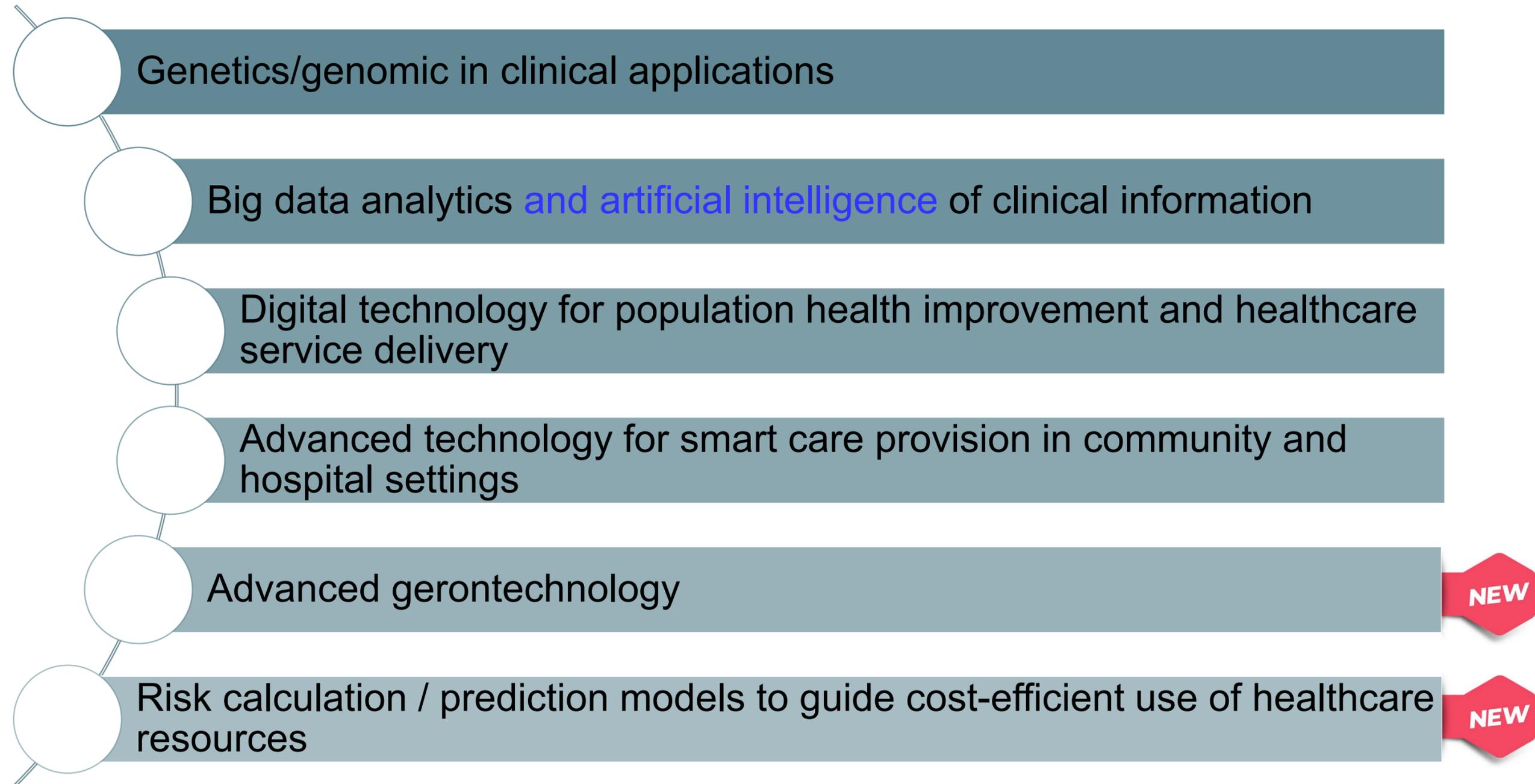
D. Primary Healthcare and Preventive Care



- Applicants should seek approvals / communicate with relevant partners when developing applications
- Applicants who are interested in collaborating with the Primary Healthcare Commission (PHCC) and/or District Health Centre/Express (DHC/E) should learn about their research collaboration mechanism here:

https://www.healthbureau.gov.hk/phcc/main/research_collabo_phc.html?lang=2

E. Digital Health and Advanced Technology



E. Digital Health and Advanced Technology

E-0005	Develop and evaluate advanced gerontechnology to support independent living, productive ageing, and enhance quality of life
E-0006	Develop and evaluate the use of digital technology (including artificial intelligence) for risk calculation / prediction models for stratification of individuals into different risk groups according to health needs, to guide cost-efficient use of healthcare resources



F. Clinical Trials & Implementation Science

UPDATED



F. Clinical Trials & Implementation Science

F-0004	Studies on health care, public health policies, financial and economic considerations, payment, reimbursement and other contextual factors that influence the success of dissemination or implementation efforts
F-0005	To conduct formative and process evaluation for improving implementation outcomes and to use health-economic analysis to assess the feasibility, scalability, cost-effectiveness, acceptability and sustainability of clinical practices / new and innovative drugs and medical devices

UPDATED

UPDATED



Submission and Timeline

Grant Size & Types

- ONE application per Principal applicant (PA)
- Application with single applicant is not allowed

**\$1.5 million for
up to 3 years**

or

**Seed Grant:
\$0.5 million for
up to 3 years**

**Research
project**

or

**Health
promotion
project**

New proposal

or

Resubmission

Seed Grant

Grant ceiling

\leq \$500,000

Criteria

1. Larger-scale pilot study* or
2. Small-scale study with achievable objectives

*Pre-defined outcome indicators are required to scale up a pilot study

Eligibility



Locally based tertiary institutions, hospitals, medical schools, non-governmental organisations or other appropriate centres, units and service providers.



PA shall be **employed by an administering institution (AI)** which is **based in Hong Kong** at the **time of application** and **throughout the project period**.



Inform us immediately if you plan to leave the local institution after submission of application. **Failure** to do so will **result in disqualification** of the application.



PA being **debarred from submission of applications to the HMRF or any other funding schemes (local or non-local)** as at the closing deadline is ineligible to apply.

Section 10 Proposal

- Two different templates for Sections 10 (a) – (h) must be attached as a PDF file to the e-Form

2025 HMRF Open Call – Research Proposal

2025 HMRF Open Call – Health Promotion Proposal

- To download from <https://rfs.healthbureau.gov.hk>

- [Press Release for the 2025 Open Call for Investigator-initiated Projects](#)
- [Briefing Sessions for Grant Applications for the 2025 Open Call for Investigator-initiated Projects](#)
- [Thematic Priorities](#) updated
- [Guidance Notes on Grant Application](#) updated
- [Explanatory Notes on Grant Application](#) updated
- Electronic Application Form (e-Form): Available on [eGMS](#)
(Path in eGMS: Project > Application > View Application > Application Call > Web-based Online e-Form)
- [Proposal Template for Research Project \(Section 10\(a\)-\(h\)\)](#) updated
- [Proposal Template for Health Promotion Project \(Section 10\(a\)-\(h\)\)](#) updated

Application using incorrect proposal template (Section 10) will not be processed.

Resubmission

New

Rated “2” or above in the
2024 HMRF Open Call only

Rated “2”

Rated “3”/”4”
(but finally not funded)

Substantial revision to the proposal

- Structured point-by-point response to address all GRB and/or reviewers’ comments in the GRB Assessment Report
- Highlight the major changes in different colour in the Project proposal

Resubmission

- To be assessed on the **continued relevance** of the application with respect to:
 - a) Knowledge gaps
 - b) Policy needs
 - c) Translational value
 - d) **Prevailing thematic priorities** at the time of resubmission
- Having satisfactorily addressed comments of GRB/reviewers is **not a guarantee** of funding

New Submission

For previously not funded applications:



**Previous HMRF
Open Call * / Research
Fellowship Scheme**

* Excluding rating of “2” or above in the
2024 Open Call (Refer to Slide 35)

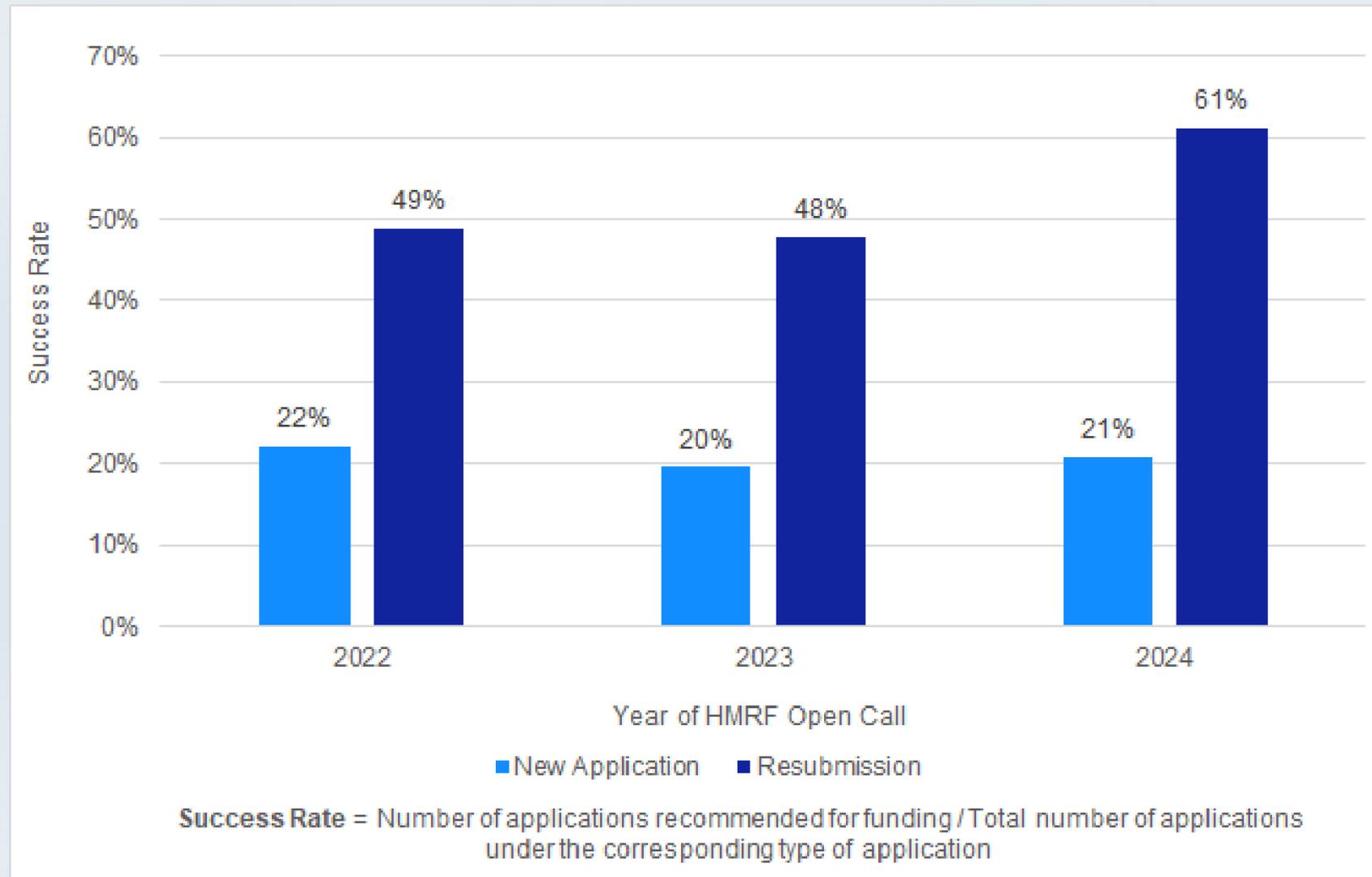


**Other funding
agencies
(local and non-local)**

- Can be **submitted as a new application** after **extensive changes** or improvements made **with full justifications**

2022 -2024 Open Calls for Investigator-initiated Projects

Success Rate – New Application vs Resubmission



Proper Declaration of Conflict of Interest and Sponsorships

PA and all Co-A(s) must declare:



Any actual or perceived conflict of interest

e.g. receive funding or assistance from industries, or use grant monies to purchase products/services from business owned by the AI or any of the applicants



Any sponsorship received/to be received related to any commercial product for this application

Similar/Related Studies and Other Funding (1)

Applicants should provide a list of **all** applications to the HMRF or other funding agencies (local and non-local) -



PA taking PA / Co-A role or Co-A taking PA role in the declared application
- submitted in the past 3 years
- pending funding decision or intended for submission in the next six months



Indicate whether those applications are similar or related to the application.



Similar/related applications submitted and to be submitted to the HMRF or other funding agencies (local or non-local)



The funding decision of all declared similar/related applications once it is available.

Notify the Secretariat the funding decision immediately once available!

Any false declaration may lead to application not eligible for further processing and shall be subject to **penalty as determined by the Research Council.**

Similar/Related Studies and Other Funding (2)

Guiding principles for determining similar and/or related proposals

- i. Broadly the same **project title or abstract/application summary** or both
- ii. Overall aim and its **overarching goals/high-level objectives** are broadly the same
- iii. Broadly the same **research questions**
- iv. Broadly the same **resources** required to carry out the project
- v. **Project Team members** [i.e. PA, Co-A(s) of the application are largely the same (even the roles are swappers), while the content of the application remains essentially the same].

-NOT an exhaustive list

-If in doubt, declare any potentially similar or related proposals

-The Research Council will make the final decision

Management of Track Records of Applicants

w.e.f. 1 Nov 2024

Scientific Misconduct

- Plagiarism / Self-plagiarism
- Falsification / Fabrication
- Double dipping not declared
- Conflict of Interest not declared
- Non-disclosure of submission of similar/related proposals in the application
- Non-disclosure of similar/related research work in the application

Non-Compliance

- No submission of Final Report by deadline without valid justification
- Early termination without valid justification
- Incomplete project without valid justification
- Final report graded “Unredeemable” or “Unacceptable” or “Not accepted”

Level of Penalty & Penalty Actions

- Light / Medium / Heavy / Serious / Critical
- Warning letter
- Disqualification of related or all submitted applications
- Debarment from 1 to 5 years in all capacities in all funding schemes
- Partial payment or recovery of grant

Submission of Application



Through [eGMS](#) by **31 March 2026 (6:00 pm HKT)**



Your institution's [internal deadline](#), if any



Signatures of all applicants, Head of Department, and authorised persons on behalf of the AI and finance office are required



Receive acknowledgement email upon successful submission of application via [eGMS](#)

eGMS – Online Submission

eGMS electronic Grant Management System

Welcome to the electronic Grant Management System (eGMS) of the Research Fund Secretariat of the Research and Data Analytics Office under the Health Bureau, HKSAR.

The eGMS is an online platform which supports electronic submission and assessment of grant applications to the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF) and reports of HMRF-funded projects as well as dissemination of project results.

By setting up a single eGMS account, each user can manage all of the activities under his/her purview using the eGMS platform.

Login to eGMS

Email:

Your login email is your email address.

Password:

[Forgot your password?](#)
[Forgot your login?](#)

[More Info >](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Account Registration *(FOR APPLICANTS ONLY!)*

Notes to Grant Review Board (GRB) Members/ External Reviewers

eGMS account has already been registered for GRB Members and External Reviewers. Please contact the Research Fund Secretariat (Email: egmsenquiry@healthbureau.gov.hk) if you have any questions.

For security reasons, the eGMS supports the following browsers: Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Safari 7+ with Transport-Level-Security (TLS) protocol version 1.2. For details, please click [here](#).

If you have any queries or encounter difficulties relating to eGMS, please send email to egmsenquiry@healthbureau.gov.hk

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Privacy Policy Statement](#) [Personal Information Collection Statement](#) [Disclaimer](#)



Funding Decision

Upon Receiving Funding Decision

- In late September 2026
- For applications rated “3” or “4”:
 - To respond to GRB and/or Reviewers’ comments and submit a revised application **within three weeks**
 - To declare any similar/related research work done before the project commencement date proposed in the application form after receiving the decision email

Regulatory/Ethics/Third-party Data

Regulatory/Ethical Approvals/Consent for Accessing Third-party Data

- Submit within **12 weeks** from the date of decision email (or specified by the Secretariat)
- Bear(s) the **same project title** as that in the approved application
- The approval(s)/evidence for accessing third-party data must have same protocol/scope as that in the application

Certificate for Clinical Trial/Medicinal Test of pharmaceutical products; Certificate for Clinical Trial and Medicinal Test of proprietary Chinese medicines

- Confirm with Department of Health if required as early as practical

Points to Note – Outstanding deliverables

The grant may also be withdrawn if:

Outstanding/overdue:

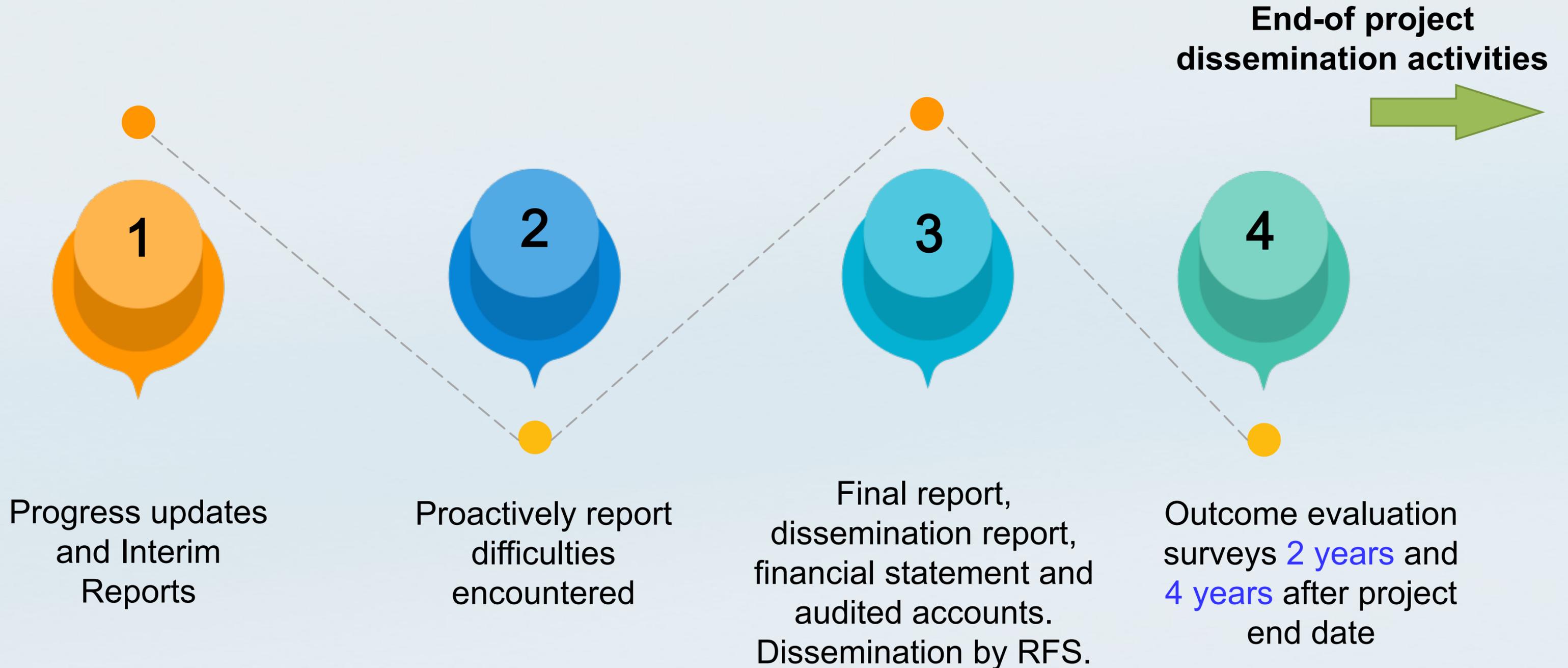
- Report(s)
- Certified Financial Statement(s)
- Audited Accounts
- Outcome Evaluation Questionnaire(s)

not submitted within 6 months
from grant approval date



Project Commencement

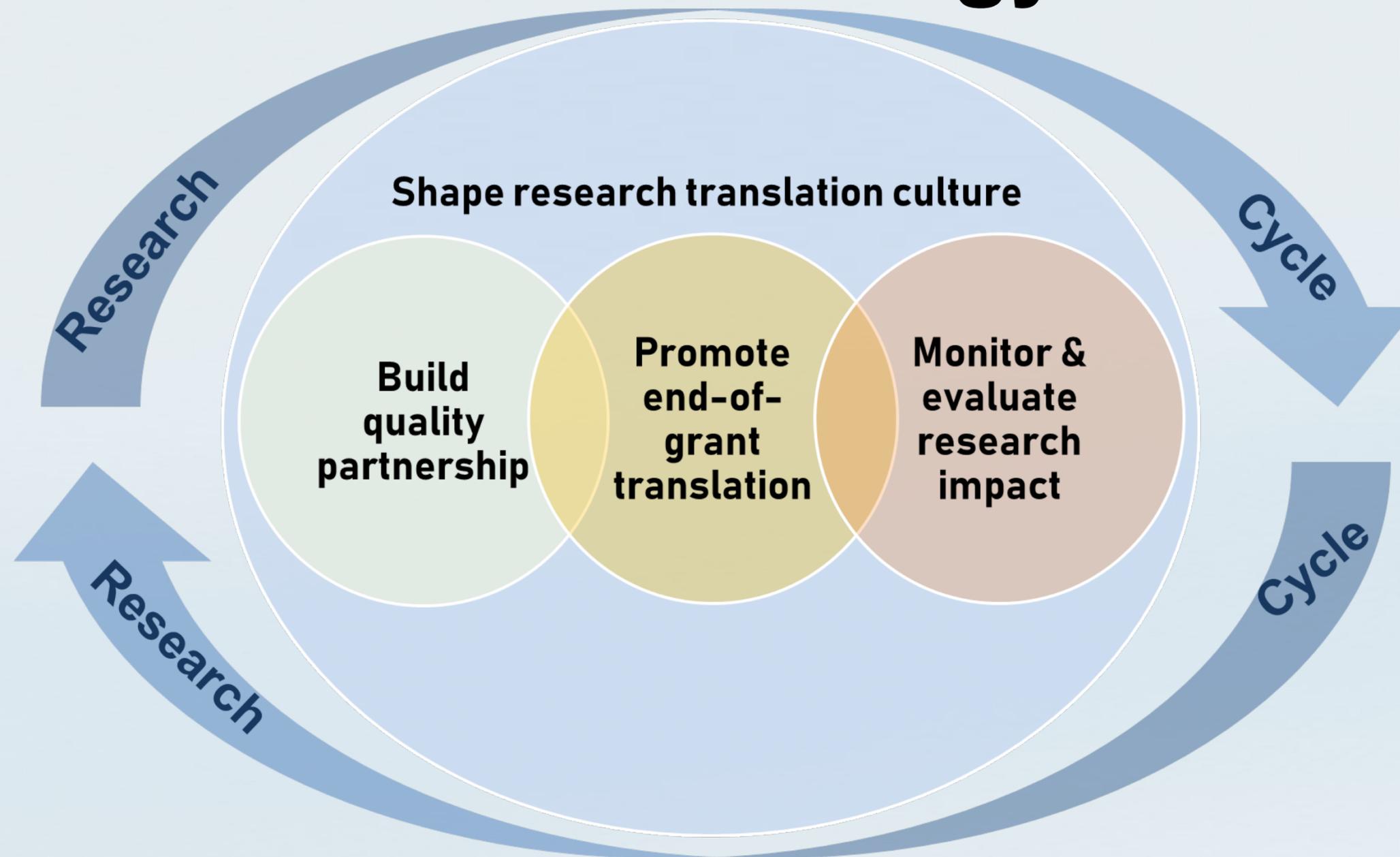
Points to Note – Funded Projects



Research Translation Strategy of HMRF



Strategy Documents



Research funded by HMRF is expected to generate impact beyond academia

Researchers must recognise their role in research translation

Research translation should be promoted throughout research cycle

Research Translation

Covers the processes of synthesis, dissemination, exchange and application of research findings to improve individual and population health through

- informing further research, clinical practices, healthcare services, health policies;
- changing health behaviours; and
- strengthening healthcare systems.

Research Translation



Journal publication and conferences only?



Liaise with end-users of your research findings: before, during and after project (healthcare professionals? patients? community partners? general public)



Disseminate findings in format and channels suitable for your end-users, e.g. infographics, workshops, professional lectures, press conferences, newspaper, website, social media.

Research Translation

 Drive the application/ adoption of your findings

Established professional network	Adopted as guidelines	Adopted by community partners	Influenced clinical services	Adopted as public health practice
Research initiated an Asian anaphylaxis registry	Findings informed HK College of O&G's guideline on preferred test of cervical cancer screening	Novel service model in promoting HPV vaccination among MSM adopted by a NGO	Findings contributed to implementation of an active learning therapy service for amblyopia in Optometry Clinic	Sewage testing adopted as a surveillance tool by the Government in monitoring COVID-19

Outcome Evaluation Surveys

- 2nd and 4th year after project end date

Research Studies

Buxton-Hanney Research Payback Framework

- Knowledge generation
- Capacity building
- Policy or decision making
- Changing behaviour or practice
- Dissemination

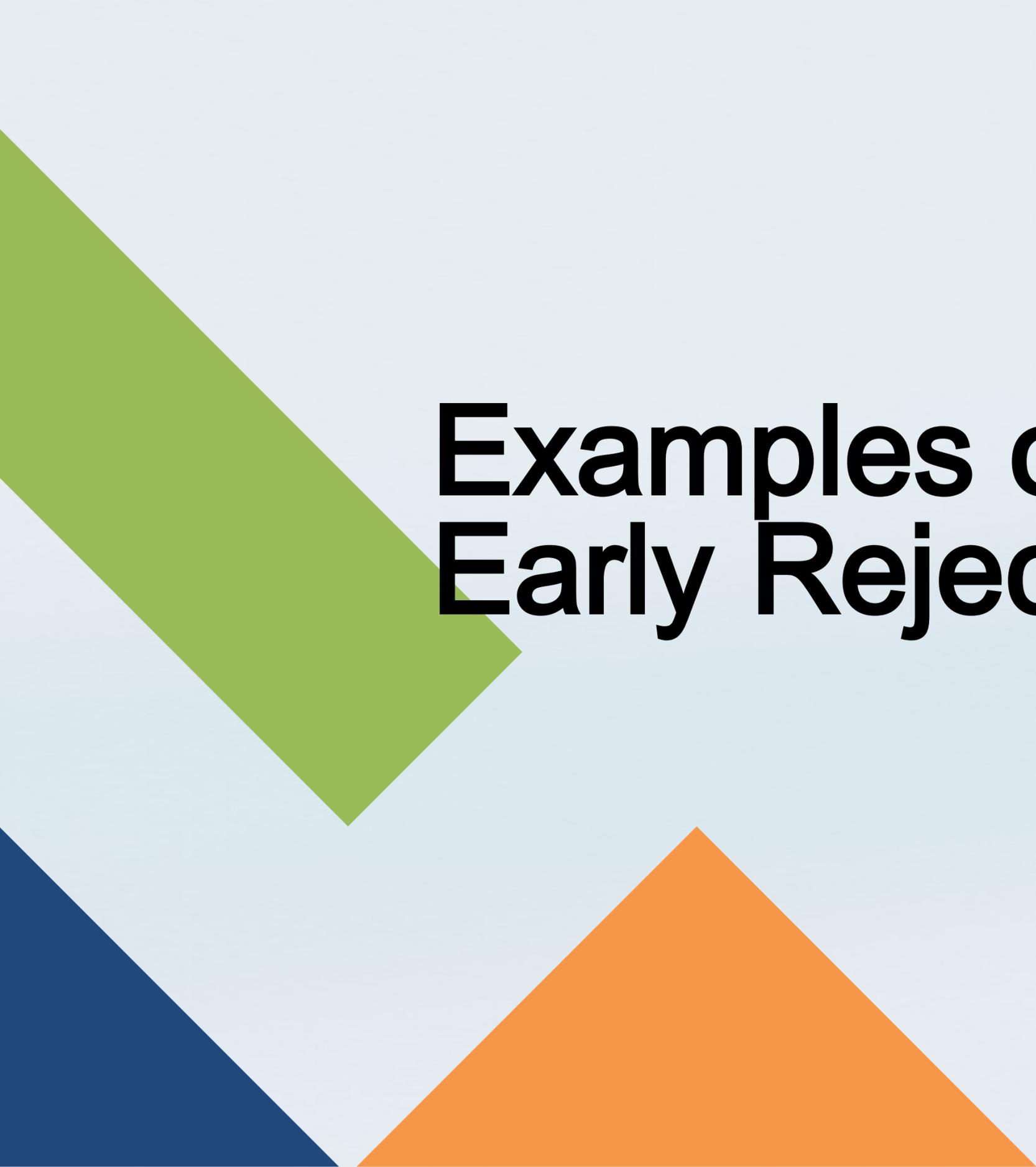
Health Promotion Projects

RE-AIM Framework

- Reach
- Effectiveness
- Adoption
- Implementation
- Maintenance

Purpose:

- ✓ Assess the outcomes / achievements of individual projects for reporting to the Research Council
- ✓ Select impactful projects for presentation and receive awards at Health Research Symposium
- ✓ Further disseminate the findings by the Secretariat



Examples of Early Rejected Applications

Out-of-scope

Basic / pre-clinical research on non-communicable diseases (NCD) caused by microorganisms

A study aims at examining a treatment strategy for a virus-associated cancer using an animal model which is **NOT ID research** and **NOT a clinical research on NCD**

Out-of-scope

Basic/Preclinical research under AMR/HHS

A **basic/pre-clinical study** which aims to determine the treatment effect of a traditional Chinese medicine/herbal formula for a particular disease using mouse models.

Out-of-scope

Research under ID with low public health implication

A viral evolutionary biology study on sequencing the samples collected from various animal sources and the findings is **unlikely to identify new viruses that can infect human** and cause public health threats

Please refer to **Appendix A** of the **Guidance Notes for examples**

Examples

Unclear Local Relevance

- A study to establish an early detection model of mental disorders using a dataset outside Hong Kong that contains regionally variable parameters such as genotypes, environmental and cultural factors, and social behaviours.
- A study to examine the tumour microenvironment / gut microbiome of cancer patients on chemotherapy. All clinical samples were obtained from non-Chinese cancer patients outside Hong Kong. Unclear how the research findings based on non-local data will benefit patients' health and/or healthcare system in Hong Kong.

Please refer to [Appendix A](#) of the Guidance Notes for examples

Examples



Immature Application

- Insufficient details for peer review:
 - Methodology, sampling, study design, description of primary and secondary outcomes, data analysis plans, potential pitfalls and contingency plans

Examples



**Non-compliance with
Resubmission
Requirements**

For resubmission of a HMRF application previously rated “2” or above:

- No point-by-point response to address all comments in the GRB Assessment Report or the revised proposal without highlights of the major changes in different colour
- If you disagree with the comments and choose not to change your proposal, please state your rationale

Examples

Applications not funded by the HMRF or other funding agencies (local or non-local):

Not providing the required materials:

- Previously submitted similar application
- Decision letter(s) and reviewers' comment(s), if available
- Point-by-point responses to address all reviewers' comment(s), if available
- Revised proposal with major changes highlighted in different colour
- Explanation if applications, comments or point-by-point responses are not submitted

**Non-compliance with
Submission
Requirements**

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Examples

**Under-declared of
Previously Similar/Related
Not Funded Application(s)**

- Under-declared a similar grant proposal **not funded** in a **previous HMRF application round** or by another funding agency
- Study aims/ objectives/ hypothesis/ study design/ methodology/ data analysis plan, etc. are similar to the previous submission
- No point-by-point responses to address the previous reviewers' comments
- Current proposal is not substantially revised

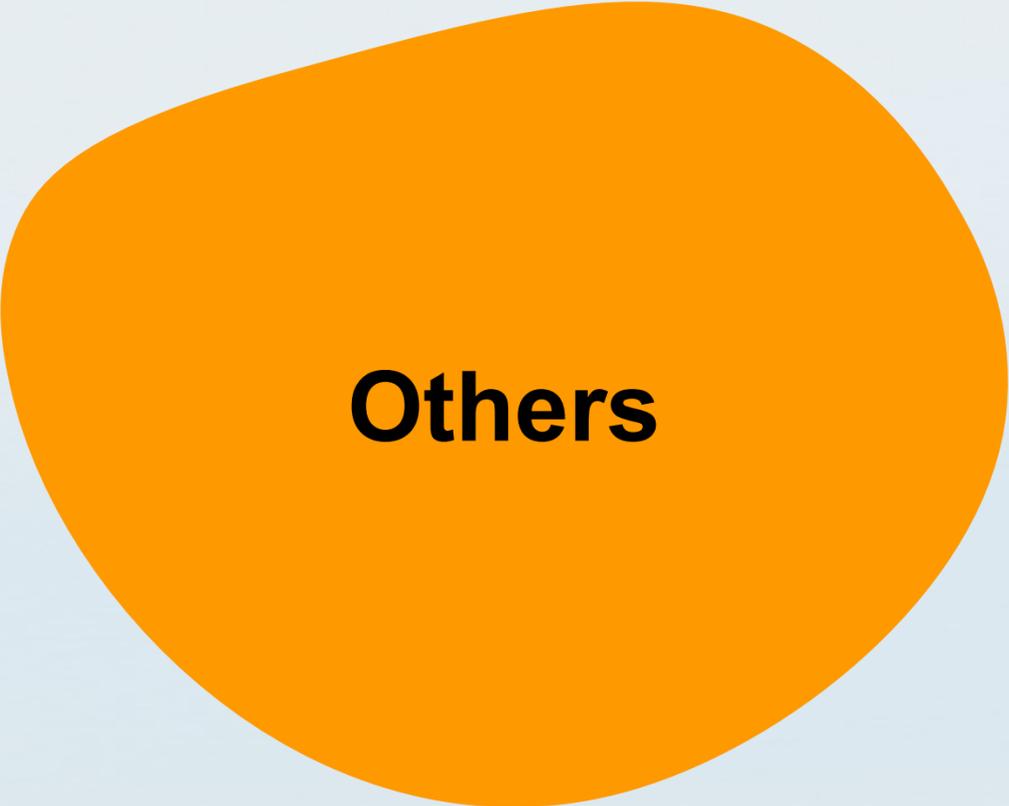
Examples

Similar / related proposal(s) to HMRF or any of its preceding funding schemes, or other funding agencies (local or non-local) in the application:

Under-declared of Similar / Related Application(s)

- Proposal(s) submitted in the past 3 years from the closing deadline
- Proposal(s) submitted to the same application round of HMRF or same year of different funding schemes under HMRF
- Proposal(s) to be submitted in the next 6 months from the closing deadline

Examples



Others

- Wrong proposal template used (e.g. HHS/AMR/ID must use research project template)
- Missing items under Section 10(a) – (h) of proposal template
- Exceeding 4,000 words (Section 10(a) – (d))
 - Any essential information provided in the **attachment file** (e.g. Appendices) will be included in word count

Further Information

- Home
- What's New
- Council & Committees
- Policies and Guidelines
- Annual Reports
- Call for Application
- Funds
- Funded Project
- Past Events
- Publications
- Useful Links
- Contact Us



Investigator-initiated Projects

The HMRF invites applications for investigator-initiated research projects and health promotion projects.

The normal grant ceiling for a proposal is HK\$1,500,000 and the usual duration is 3 years. Higher grants or grants of longer duration may be awarded where justified.

Larger-scale pilot studies, such as those evaluating trialability and scalability for future implementation, or small-scale research with achievable objectives, can be submitted to seed grant with a grant ceiling of \$500,000 per project.

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- [Briefing Sessions for Grant Applications for the 2025 Open Call for Investigator-initiated Projects](#)
- [Thematic Priorities](#) updated
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- [Proposal Template for Research Project \(Section 10\(a\)-\(h\)\)](#) updated
- [Proposal Template for Health Promotion Project \(Section 10\(a\)-\(h\)\)](#) updated

Further Information



The screenshot shows the top section of a website. On the left is the Hong Kong Government logo. In the center, it reads 'Research Fund Secretariat Health Bureau' and 'The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China'. On the right is the 'HMKF Health and Medical Research Fund' logo. Below the header is a navigation bar with 'GovHK香港政府一站通' and language options '繁體版 简体版'. To the right of the navigation bar are search and share icons, a search input field with the text 'Enter search keyword(s)', and links for 'SITE MAP' and a mail icon. The main banner area has a blue header with 'Research Fund Secretariat'. The main text reads '2025 Open Call for Investigator-initiated Projects' with a closing date of '31 March 2026 (6:00 pm Hong Kong time)'. It also mentions 'Briefing sessions will be held on 19 and 22 January 2026' and includes a link 'Click here for more details' with a right-pointing arrow. The background of the banner features a hand holding a magnifying glass over a grid of hexagons containing various medical and scientific icons like pills, a stethoscope, a DNA helix, and a microscope.



Enquiry emails:

rfs@healthbureau.gov.hk (General)

egmsenquiry@healthbureau.gov.hk (eGMS)



Thank You