

## Health Inequalities Targeted Call (HITC) 2023

### FAQs

---

#### 1. When can I apply?

**For the HITC 2023, recruitment for the call opens on 5 July 2023 and closes at 23:59 on 31 July 2023.**

For the NHS Innovation Accelerator (NIA) 2024 intake, recruitment for the call opens on 11 September 2023 and closes on 22 October 2023.

Applicants successful in gaining a place on the HITC and who wish to apply for a place on the NIA will automatically be shortlisted for an NIA interview, to take place in January 2024.

#### 2. Who can apply?

The HITC and NIA Calls are open to innovations of all types, from the UK or elsewhere. Innovations should be able to demonstrate an evidence base from real-world use and should align with the recruitment themes.

The Calls are open to applicants from any background, including SMEs, clinical entrepreneurs and academia, with innovations of any type that solve a problem for the NHS. For the HITC, applications will be accepted from individuals as well as teams. For the NIA, there needs to be a sole-named applicant.

To be successful, your innovation should be:

- In use in at least one site, in the NHS or elsewhere.
- Supported by an evidence base and able to demonstrate better patient and/or staff outcomes.
- Ready to spread across the NHS.
- Addresses one of the focus areas, where scoring and stratification bias is one of the key issues in the clinical setting:
  - ◆ Maternity
  - ◆ Sickle Cell
  - ◆ Elective Care

The application should demonstrate the following:

- Significant outcomes for significantly lower cost.
- An evidence base for your innovation that shows it is ready to be diffused across the NHS.
- A commitment to scale your evidence-based innovation for patient and population benefit.
- A commitment to understanding health inequalities and to improving equity of access, experience and outcomes through innovation.

Innovators from all genders, ethnicities and backgrounds are encouraged to apply. We know that many groups have been underrepresented in the innovation landscape, and we are keen to move towards supporting individuals that better represents the diversity of the people served by the NHS.

### 3. Are the HITC and the NIA only for UK-based companies?

No. Applicants from across the UK and overseas are encouraged to apply.

For the HITC, applicants should note that the 7 ICSs currently participating in NHS England's Core20PLUS Accelerator programme are all based in England and engagement with them will on many occasions take place in person.

For the NIA, there is a mandatory requirement to attend the NIA launch, summit and quarterly events in person.

### 4. I am from a start-up, can I apply?

The Calls are for innovations that are both ready to scale across the NHS in England and have the necessary resources and team to scale across England over a 12-month period and beyond. Your organisation should therefore have sufficient resources to be able to scale up at pace – and be able to take up opportunities that arise from your participation in the HITC and the NIA.

### 5. I am a clinician, can I apply?

Yes, the Calls for HITC are open to individuals or teams from any background.

### 6. What are the recruitment themes?

The aim of this time-limited and targeted call out for applications to the HITC (supported by the NHS Innovation Accelerator) is to drive ground-breaking innovations that target key areas of healthcare inequalities, aligning with the Core20PLUS5 approach and other key priority areas for reducing healthcare inequalities e.g., elective waiting list and Sickle Cell Disease.

Innovations will need to demonstrate that they can help de-bias the scoring and stratification systems across three clinical settings:

- ◆ Maternity
- ◆ Sickle Cell
- ◆ Elective Care

The NIA 2024 intake recruitment themes will be announced in September 2023.

### 7. How do I apply to join?

You can apply for both calls by following the links found on the [NIA website](#).

Please only apply if you are assured that you and your innovation meet the themes and can fulfil the conditions stated under the “Who can Apply” section.

## 8. Is the HITC for individuals only or can teams/companies apply?

The HITC call is open to individuals as well as teams/companies.

To note, should the successful HITC candidate wish to apply to the NIA 2024 Intake, they will automatically be shortlisted for the NIA interviews in January 2024. While the innovation may have been created by a team/company and supported on the HITC by said team/company, the NIA focuses on the development and support of an individual representing that innovation as a Fellow. Therefore, HITC applicants would need to complete a supplementary form which will provide details on a sole named applicant, that will be the innovation's representative while active on the NIA.

## 9. Do applicants need the support of an Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) before they can apply to the HITC and subsequently the NIA?

An application does not need the support of the [Academic Health Science Network \(AHSN\)](#) prior to submitting an application form. However, applicants may wish to engage with their local AHSN to discuss applications and seek advice on scaling plans before submitting their application.

For information on your local AHSN, please visit the [AHSN Network Innovation Exchange website](#).

## 10. Is there a minimum time commitment?

To ensure they can take advantage of the benefits of being on the HITC (and if successful, the NIA), applicants must be prepared to commit 2 days per week to scaling their innovation. These two days per week could include for example attendance at collaboration with the ICSs, implementation meetings, producing and implementing scaling plans, developing stakeholder engagement and marketing plans or building networks. On the NIA, Fellows will also, for example, be expected to attend quarterly and year-specific events, meet mentors and the [Academic Health Science Networks \(AHSNs\)](#) as needed, and produce quarterly sprint plans.

For some applicants, some of these activities will be part of their normal day jobs - where scaling their innovation is their everyday business.

For others, particularly those who are based in clinical roles, it might require setting aside 2 days for the completion of these discreet tasks.

## 11. How has Covid-19 affected participation in the NIA programme?

The NIA learning programme has been previously delivered face-to-face with quarterly learning events as well as meetings held in London. Due to the Government guidelines during the pandemic, events and meetings were successfully held virtually on platforms easily accessible on all devices including those used in NHS settings. As the guidelines now allow for face-to-face sessions to be held, the programme will revert to running in-person sessions which Fellows are expected to attend.

## 12. What is the selection process?

### HITC and NIA

When submitted, application forms are reviewed by a minimum of five assessors drawn from a range of perspectives including clinical, patient, commercial, health inequalities and implementation. For the HITC, representatives of the NHSE Healthcare Inequalities Improvement Programme (HIIP), and the NHS Race and Health Observatory (RHO) will also form part of the assessment panel (and the interview panels).

Applications are assessed on the basis of the innovation only for the HITC, on the applicant and the innovation for the NIA, and for both, confirmation that there is no straightforward or obvious local mechanism for scaling; in other words, there needs to be a clear reason as to why the NHS would change from its normal practice to use this innovation and to why the applicant needs the support of the NIA.

At the same time, for the HITC, the [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#), and if appropriate the MHRA, informally review all applications. For NIA, the informal reviews take place only for the applicants shortlisted for interview.

Once shortlisted, applicants are invited to a panel interview. For the HITC, as both HIIP and RHO will be represented on the panel, the final decision on offers will be made at the end of the interviews by the interview panel. For the entry onto the NIA, a final decision panel chaired by Professor Stephen Powis, National Medical Director at [NHS England and NHS Improvement](#), and Chair of the NIA Programme Board, reviews the recommendations from the assessment process (application, NICE / MHRA review and interview) to agree which applicants will be offered a conditional place on the NIA.

Following the issuing of conditional offers, the NIA undertake a period of due diligence, and request - where relevant - two years of annual accounts, a list of company directors and published annual reports.

Additionally, all successful applicants to the NIA will be asked to sign an agreement with [UCLPartners](#) (who host the NIA) before being formally announced as an NIA Fellow. An example contract will be available on the application page of the NIA website when the Call is launched. Applicants should check that they and their employing organisation would be happy to sign this contract before applying.

## 13. How many places are available on the HITC and the NIA?

For the HITC, we expect to offer no more than 3 places.

For the NIA, up to 24 individuals will be selected to join the 2024 intake. These individuals will join the existing Fellows from the 2022 and 2023 cohorts, who have progressed to Years 2 and 3 of the Fellowship.

#### 14. Will I receive feedback if my application is unsuccessful?

For the HITC, unsuccessful applications will receive feedback by the end of October 2023, and for the NIA by the end of February 2024. The level of detail of the feedback will depend on the stage to which the application progressed e.g. applicants that have not progressed to the full assessment phase will receive basic feedback whilst those fully assessed will receive detailed feedback.

#### 15. I have not completed an application form like this before, where can I go for support?

##### *UK based Applicants*

Your local Academic Health Science Network may be able to provide support and advice in applying for the NIA. Find your local AHSN here: <https://www.ahsnnetwork.com/>.

##### *International Applicants*

You should contact [Healthcare UK](#) to access the dedicated support on offer for international companies looking to come to the UK.

**Please email [nia@uclpartners.com](mailto:nia@uclpartners.com) if you require any further information.  
Follow the NHS Innovation Accelerator on Twitter [@NHSAccelerator](#).**