International Cardiovascular Research Partnership Awards (ICRPA)

2026 Call for Proposals

Empowering Future Leaders in Cardiovascular Research

1. Introduction

The International Cardiovascular Research Partnership Awards (ICRPA) scheme will run its eighth funding competition in 2026, reflecting an ongoing commitment by participating funders to supporting high-quality international research collaborations that have the potential to accelerate progress towards improved understanding, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular disease.

The scheme will continue to support collaborations exclusively between mid-career investigators who are on an upward trajectory, empowering them to combine complementary skills and resources to deliver impactful research programmes while also expanding their leadership skills and networks towards becoming research leaders in their respective fields of cardiovascular science.

The ICRPA scheme builds on a strong track record, having supported 19 collaborative projects since 2018. For the 2026 round, the scheme welcomes Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Cardiovasculares (CNIC) and Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red Enfermedades Cardiovasculares (CIBER-CV) from Spain as new funding partners, joining the British Heart Foundation (BHF), Dutch Heart Foundation (DHF), German Centre for Cardiovascular Research (DZHK), and the Lefoulon-Delalande Foundation (LDF) from France.

Teams of eligible investigators whose proposed research programmes align with the scope and objectives of the ICRPA scheme are invited to submit their applications under the 2026 competition.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants may only proceed to an application once all PIs have had their eligibility formally confirmed by the relevant national funders.

Principal Investigators (PIs) must:

- Be mid-career researchers with 8-15 years of research experience post-PhD (or equivalent). Allowance will be made for career breaks (see 'Career Break Allowances for PIs' for more information).
- Demonstrate emerging leadership through senior author publications and prior success as lead applicant for competitive research funding.
- Hold an appointment at an eligible academic or non-commercial research institution. Investigators from commercial organisations may participate as collaborators, provided their roles are clearly defined and justified, but cannot act as PIs.
- Lead their own research group with protected research time.
- Have their salary fully covered by other sources.
- Have complementary expertise in biomedical (clinical or non-clinical) or non-biomedical disciplines that facilitates successful delivery of the proposed research.

Co-applicants and Collaborators

- May be at any career stage.
- Co-applicants must be affiliated with an eligible academic institution**.**
- Collaborators may come from academic institutions, commercial or non-commercial research organisations. If collaborators are from commercial or non-academic organisations, they must make a clearly defined contribution whose cost is covered by own sources, and a strong justification for their role.

- Must provide complementary expertise with clearly defined contributions.

Career Break Allowances for PIs

Career breaks may be considered when calculating research experience. Allowances vary by funder:

Funder	Allowances Considered	Calculation Date
BHF, CNIC, LDF, CIBERCV	Parental leave, long-term illness, part-time/flexible working, clinical training.	Years of research experience will be calculated as of 1 January 2026
DZHK	Family leave, long-term illness	Years of research experience will be calculated as of 1 January 2026
DHF	Parental leave, long-term illness, clinical training	Years of research experience will be calculated as of 1 January 2026

Exclusion Criteria

- Receipt of funding from a previous award under this scheme
- Significant scientific overlap with a previously funded ICRPA project.
- Senior institutional position(s) held by PIs (e.g., Head of Department, Research Director).
- Full Professorial appointment for PIs >2 years before the submission deadline.
- **Only one resubmission is allowed, provided reviewer and Panel comments are addressed and the PIs still meet the eligibility criteria.**

Funder Specific Requirements

In addition to the general eligibility criteria, each funder applies its own specific requirements.

Funder	Requirement
BHF	PIs must hold a substantive post via a personal fellowship (BHF Intermediate/Future Leader or Senior level) or a faculty appointment (up to full professor ≤ 2 years before submission deadline). PhD students are not supported under the BHF arm of the project.
DHF	DHF specific requirements can be found here
DZHK	PIs and co-applicants requesting their own budget must hold DZHK status. See here
LDF	Applicants can hold an Inserm or CNRS appointment at "Directeur de recherche deuxième classe" level, held for less than four years.
CIBER-CV	Applicants must be full members of CIBER (group leader, affiliated member, collaborator, or contracted staff
CNIC	Applicants must hold CNIC position that entitles them to apply for competitive grants. PhD students are supported under the CNIC arm of the project. Only one Spanish funder may support each project.

3. Scientific Scope

Proposals must:

- Focus on research with clearly demonstrable potential to improve understanding, prevention, diagnosis and/or treatment of cardiovascular disease.
- Address high priority scientific questions with clear societal relevance.
- Be innovative and hypothesis driven.
- Be substantially different from any previously funded ICRPA project or any other project to avoid duplication of funding.

Clinical trials are not eligible for support, although early-stage clinical investigations based on a preclinical research programme may be proposed.

4. Team Composition and Collaboration

Teams must:

- Have at least three PIs, with each PI based in a different funder country (France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, UK).
- Have a maximum of two co-applicants per country. The total number of named applicants must not exceed three per country (i.e., one PI and two co-applicants). Teams may also include collaborators, if appropriate, provided each role is clearly defined and strongly justified.
- Be co-led by the participating PIs**,** with each funder supporting work carried out in its respective country.

Proposals must clearly demonstrate:

- How the team's composition and structure enable substantive international collaboration, including the synergistic benefits of combining expertise across countries.
- How the consortium integrates complementary skills, disciplines, and perspectives, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each member.
- A commitment to multidisciplinary collaboration, where appropriate, to strengthen scientific innovation and broaden impact.
- How the team will foster career development for PIs and provide structured training and mentorship opportunities for junior researchers within the consortium.

The number of PIs will not influence application assessment, provided the minimum requirement of three PIs is met. Proposals will be evaluated solely on the perceived scientific quality and potential impact of the project, the added value of international collaboration and the PIs' track records and leadership potential.

5. Ethical and Regulatory Compliance

All proposals must meet relevant ethical and regulatory standards. Proposals may be rejected on the basis of insufficient adherence to those standards and expectations.

- Proposals must adhere to ethical, legal, and data governance standards across all participating countries.

- Work involving animals, human participants, or human samples must conform to regulations in all countries involved, regardless of where the work is conducted.
- Formal approvals/licences must be obtained in the country where the work is conducted, with due consideration of partner country standards.
- Applications must clearly articulate oversight, consent, and data protection mechanisms**.**

6. Project Duration and Funding Limits

- Projects may run for up to four years.
- Each funding partner supports investigators based in their own country.
- Budgets must demonstrate balanced contributions and value for money. Eligible costs include research expenses and personnel (e.g. postdoctoral researchers, technicians). Further guidance on eligible costs is provided in the application form. Should you have any queries, please contact the relevant funder.

Funding Organisation	Maximum Contribution
BHF	up to £500,000
DHF	up to €500,000
DZHK	up to €400,000
LDF	up to €500,000
CNIC CIBER-CV	up to €500,000

Note that PIs based in Spain may apply for up to €500,000 from the organisation that they are affiliated with (CNIC or CIBERCV) but not from both organisations.

7. Application Process and Assessment

i. Eligibility confirmation

- Each PI sends an email to the relevant funder (contact details provided in section 9) detailing how they meet the eligibility criteria, attaching a short CV and any supporting documentation.
- Each funder will then confirm if the PI is eligible. In some cases, funders may request further information to determine eligibility.
- An application may only be initiated once eligibility has been confirmed by all participating funders.

ii. Submission procedure and deadline

- One PI within the collaboration is responsible for submitting the online application form through the BHF Grants Management System, following the on-screen instructions.
- For projects involving BHF funding, the UK-based PI must initiate the application so that it is linked to their BHF account.

- **The application deadline is 27/05/2026, 13:00 BST.** Late submissions will not be considered. Applicants are strongly advised to submit with sufficient time to resolve any technical issues.
- For difficulties with submission, contact **internationalresearch@bhf.org.uk.**

iii. **Applications are sent for international expert peer review**

iv. **Rebuttal**

- Applicants are given the opportunity to respond to reviewer comments.

v. **International Review Panel (IRP) Meeting:**

- The Panel evaluates all proposals in open competition, considering peer reviews and rebuttals. Assessment criteria include:
  - Scientific excellence, originality, and innovation.
  - Potential impact on cardiovascular health.
  - Methodological rigour and feasibility.
  - Added value of international partnership and complementarity of expertise.
  - Quality of training and career development opportunities for participating researchers.
  - Value for money and appropriate use of resources.
  - Suitability of each PI, including independence, leadership trajectory, and alignment with the mid-career profile.
  - Diversity, inclusiveness, and balance of expertise across the consortium.
- The Panel advises the funding partners, whose award-making bodies make the final funding decisions.

vi. **Applicants are notified of outcomes**

8. Key Dates

Milestone	Date	Detail
Application submission deadline	**27 May 2026 (13:00 BST)**	Proposals must be submitted via the BHF Grants Management System. Late submissions will not be considered.
External peer reviews shared with applicants for rebuttal	**7 September 2026**	Independent reviewers provide feedback on scientific quality, feasibility, and alignment with scheme scope.
Rebuttal submission deadline	**21 September 2026 (13:00 BST)**	Applicants respond to reviewer comments.
International Review Panel (IRP) meeting	**Oct 2026**	IRP evaluates all proposals in open competition, considering peer reviews and rebuttals, and makes funding recommendations.
Notification of outcomes	**Dec 2026 / Jan 2027**	Final funding decisions communicated to applicants (timelines may vary by funder).

9. Contact Information

For eligibility confirmation and application queries, please contact the relevant national funder:

Funder	Country	Contact Email
BHF	United Kingdom	InternationalResearch@bhf.org.uk
DZHK	Germany	icrpa@dzhk.de
DHF	Netherlands	research@hartstichting.nl
LDF	France	alain.tedgui@inserm.fr
CNIC	Spain	mariabarbara.gonzalez@cnic.es
CIBER-CV	Spain	afbaza.externo@salud.madrid.org

APPLICANT CHECKLIST

Prior to application preparation, each Principal Investigator (PI) must confirm eligibility with their national funder.

The checklist below provides a concise summary of core requirements. Some eligibility requirements vary between funders (see 'Funder-Specific Requirements for more information).

PI Eligibility

- ☐ Mid-career researcher (**8-15 years** post-PhD or equivalent)
- ☐ Demonstrates emerging leadership:
  - Senior-author publications
  - Funding to lead own research group with protected research time
  - **Does not** hold senior institutional positions (e.g., Head of Department, Research Director)
  - Full Professors appointment (if applicable) made **no more than two years** before the submission deadline
- ☐ **Salary** is **fully covered** by other sources
- ☐ Holds an appointment at an eligible **academic/non-commercial institution**
- ☐ Career break allowances (if applicable) checked with relevant funder
- ☐ Has **not** previously held an ICRPA award

Team Composition and Collaboration

- ☐ **Minimum** of **three PIs**, each based in a different funder country
- ☐ No more than **three** named **applicants per country** (one PI + two co-applicants)
- ☐ Co-applicants/collaborators can be at any career stage, and must provide complementary expertise
- ☐ Co-applicants/collaborators must **not** have previously held an ICRPA award
- ☐ Commercial partners (if included) have defined and justified roles

Scientific Scope - All proposals must:

- ☐ Address high-priority cardiovascular questions with societal relevance
- ☐ Be innovative, hypothesis-driven, and distinct from previous ICRPA awards
- ☐ **Not** include clinical trials (early-stage clinical investigations may be included)

Ethics & Compliance - All proposals must:

- ☐ Address **ethical, legal,** and **data governance** standards across all countries
- ☐ Secure all necessary **approvals/licences** in the country where work is conducted
- ☐ Clearly articulate **oversight**, **consent**, and **data protection** mechanisms