

How we judge your application: quick guide

Applications are scored against four criteria:

1. Scientific quality
2. Benefit to people living with CHS conditions (or wider population)
3. Benefit to NICHHS (the charity)
4. Value for money

This is a summary sheet of each criterion. In the application pack, there are detailed descriptions of these criteria, including illustrative scoring bands.

1. Scientific Quality

Key question

Is this a credible, well-designed study for its purpose?

Strong applications show:

- Clear, focused research question
- Methods that fit the question and stage
- Awareness of relevant evidence
- Realistic and deliverable plan
- Appropriate expertise and oversight

Watch for:

- Overly complex or ill-fitting design
- Weak justification of methods
- Gaps in feasibility or skills

2. Benefit to People

Key question

Who benefits, how, and when?

Strong applications show:

- Clear beneficiaries (patients, carers, services, public)
- Practical, realistic benefits
- Credible pathway from study → real-world relevance
- Realistic timing (short / medium / long term)
- Meaningful or justified involvement of people with lived experience

Watch for:

- Vague or overstated claims
- No clear link from findings to benefit
- Implausible timelines

3. Benefit to NICHHS (the Charity)

Key question

Why should NICHHS fund this?

Strong applications show:

- Clear relevance to CHS conditions and Northern Ireland
- Credible fit with NICHHS mission or priorities
- Clear case for use of donor funding
- What the study delivers now and what it could lead to

Watch for:

- Generic or weak links to NICHHS
- Reputational risk and fit with charity ethos
- Poor explanation of value to NI or the charity
- Hard to justify to donors/public

4. Value for money

Key question

Are costs proportionate and justified?

Strong applications show:

- Costs clearly linked to the work and outputs
- Staffing and resources in scale with the study
- Realistic timelines and delivery plan
- Clear explanation of key costs
- Strong case as a good use of donations

Watch for:

- Poorly explained or inflated costs
- Mismatch between budget and work
- Weak delivery plan

Cross-cutting principles (apply to all)

- **Proportionality:** Assess relative to scale, stage, and purpose
- **Clarity:** Must be understandable to non-specialists
- **Realism:** Plans, benefits, and costs should be credible and a good fit to the proposed study.

Scoring (applies to all criteria)

- **9–10:** Exceptionally clear, convincing, well-matched
- **7–8:** Strong and credible, minor gaps
- **5–6:** Adequate but with clear weaknesses
- **3–4:** Significant concerns
- **0–2:** Unclear, implausible, or not deliverable