# 2025 Request for Proposals

The National Cohorts Office (NCO) is a nationally-funded initiative to advocate for and facilitate competency building among cohorts to enhance the long-term biomedical research ecosystem in Singapore. Under the Research, Innovation, and Enterprise 2025 Plan (RIE2025), funding has been allocated under the Human Health and Potential (HHP) domain to support cohorts as critical infrastructural and foundational capabilities.

# 2025 RFP Objectives

1. To maximise utility, value and impact of existing population cohorts by uplifting to FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable)[[1]](#footnote-1);
2. Support existing population cohorts to prepare their data and processes to enable linkage and secondary use; and
3. Enrich and generate new insights from use cases through data linkage of existing population cohorts with other datasets on TRUST[[2]](#footnote-2).

# Scope of Award

This 2025 request for proposals (RFP) is dedicated to existing cohorts and the priority is to fund population cohorts. Cohorts based on participants from the general population are versatile in health outcomes to address a broad range of research questions. Disease cohorts may be considered if the disease is of national significance and the cohort(s) can demonstrate utility for multi-disciplinary research. These cohorts should minimally have an existing set of participants with full National Registration Identity Card (NRIC) and consent for secondary use and record linkage.

This RFP does not provide funding for cohort maintenance, participant recruitment or new data generation (e.g., follow-up of participants, new measurements). It is meant for cohorts to uplift to FAIR principles and generate new insights through data linkage via TRUST. Applications must include a research use case that includes data linkage and analysis on TRUST.

Applicants should note that if funded, they will be required to have a data-sharing governance structure to facilitate data sharing with other researchers, industry and the Singapore Government and linkage with other research data and government administrative data. This includes having an online data dictionary and data access governance by the end of the funding period. Additionally, awardees must be prepared for their data to be made available to the Singapore Government for future use and linkage with other government administrative data. Applications must be accompanied by a letter of support from the institution for these sharing requirements.

Applications that demonstrate collaboration with other existing cohorts or datasets are welcomed.

# Milestones-based funding

Awardees will be reimbursed based on milestones achieved. Applicants should take this into consideration in their implementation plans.

# Instructions

* The application must be completed on A4 size, with margins of one inch around. All fields must be completed using Arial font, size 11 characters, and single-spaced.
* Applications with incomplete fields may be rejected. A null response (“NA”) is required for fields that are not applicable.
* Annexes and required attachments do not contribute to the page limit.
* The application package includes:

1. [Word] Completed application form
2. [Excel] Completed Annex A, Tables 1 – 8
3. [Word] Annex B, CVs of all applicants to be submitted as a single document
4. [PDF] Annex C, Letter(s) of Support from the Cohort(s) Host Institution(s). There should be a letter of support from the host institution of each cohort listed in the application.
5. [Folder] For every cohort, the latest institutional review board approved participant information sheet, consent form, data collection form and data dictionary corresponding to the timepoints collected using the following naming convention [5.COHORT\_T\*] where \* corresponds to timepoint e.g., T1 for baseline. If available, include the data request form.
6. [PDF] Duly endorsed application form

* Please send the softcopy of the application following the naming conventions in the source files as one zip file via the corresponding applicant’s host institution’s research office to [cohorts@nus.edu.sg](mailto:cohorts@nus.edu.sg).
* If you have questions about grant eligibility or filling out the application, please contact [cohorts@nus.edu.sg](mailto:cohorts@nus.edu.sg).
* The deadline for submission is 25 Jun 2025 (Wed), 12 pm.

# Application Checklist

Ensure that the following have been completed and provided in your application package:

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | The application relates to existing cohort(s) with participant consent for secondary use and record linkage |
|  |  | Every section has been completed and is within the page limits. |
|  |  | Annex A, Tables 1 – 8 have been completed. |
|  |  | CVs (within page limits) have been attached in Annex B. |
|  |  | Cohort and timepoint-specific consent form, participant information sheet, data dictionary and/or data collection form have been included. |
|  |  | Supporting documents for cohort access and institution endorsement for data sharing have been included. |

# Section A: Application Summary

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| **Proposal Title**  **(max. 300 characters)** | : |  |
| **Cohort, Institution and Name of Applicants**: | | |
| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Cohort** | | **Applicant** | | | | **Name** | **Host institution** | **Cohort Lead (Y/N)** | **Name** | **Host Institution** | |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | *Please indicate* ***Corresponding applicant*** *in bold; indicate applicant that is a TRUST data user with an asterisk*  Add more rows if required, for collaborative cohort applications, or co-applicants.  Collaborative cohort applications need to complete Section E | | | | | | | |
| **Budget request**  **(max. $750K or $1.5M for collaborative applications)** | : | SGD |
| **Period of support**  **(no. of years; max. 1.5 years)** | : | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years |
| **Proposal summary (250 words)**  In plain English, explain i) the significance of the use case research through linkage and ii) how it contributes to a data sharing ecosystem. | : |  |

# Section B: Cohort description (1 page)

* State the aims of the cohort(s) and describe its value proposition compared to other cohorts in Singapore.
* Showcase up to 3 notable achievements, highlighting how the cohort(s) has contributed to original research studies and/or policy, practice and product translation.
* Provide a descriptive overview of the cohort(s), elaborating on recruitment, sampling strategies and consent clauses that facilitate secondary use and data linkage. Participant engagement activities should be highlighted.
* Describe how data (and specimens, if applicable) are being managed, including data cleaning, quality control, and database management approaches. Elaborate on processes implemented to maintain data privacy and security.
* Provide further details of the existing cohort(s) collection, participant engagement activities and research outputs by completing Annex A, Tables 1 to 3, respectively.

# Section C: Moving towards FAIR[[3]](#footnote-3) data access (1 page)

* Describe the current data sharing and access governance processes, use a flowchart if applicable. Highlight previous data requests and data linkages and list the details in Annex A, Table 4.
* Describe the delta required for the cohort(s) to be FAIR (e.g. data dictionary is online, data access framework and data use register are published, measurement instruments are in accordance with local or international data standards).
* Explain how this funding will help the cohort(s) i) organise data in a more efficient manner, ii) improve the governance framework, and iii) increase discoverability, to facilitate secondary use. Specifically, state the anticipated increase in number of data requests and improvement in time efficiencies in preparing data and samples for such requests due to this funding.

# Section D: Data linkage use case (2 pages)

*The research use case must address a health or healthcare issue that requires linkage with TRUST dataset(s).*

* Detail the objectives of the data linkage use case, highlighting how it uplifts the cohort(s) according to FAIR principles and enriches the existing data.
* Describe the research plan for the use case and specify the methodological approaches proposed in sufficient detail to allow them to be assessed (e.g., justification for sample sizes, inclusion and exclusion criteria, choice of analysis etc.).
* If applicable, indicate how participant engagement has informed or will be used to inform any stage of this research.
* Please state which data tables from the TRUST Data Catalogue[[4]](#footnote-4) will be required and provide details of planned linkage and data analysis(es).
* Make a case for the capabilities (e.g., new analytics, improved data management) that the use case will enable, enhance or establish. Highlight any improvements or outputs that could be made available to other researchers.

# Section E. Cross-cohort collaboration (1 page)

*only for collaborative applications*

* Describe the collaboration and justify why and how it meets the cohorts’ synergistic needs.
* Elaborate on the collaborative outcomes that will be enabled by this funding.

# Section F. Team composition (1 page)

* Explain the team composition and show how the team has the necessary mix of research skills and experience to achieve the objectives of the proposal.
* Please highlight how the proposal encourages talent development (e.g., foster multi-disciplinary teams, jumpstart junior reserachers’ career) if any.
* Detail individual team members’ expertise and contributions to the proposal in Annex B.

# Annexes:

## Annex A

Annex A consists of the following 8 tables. Complete each table and submit as one excel file with your application.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table** | **Table Description** | **Instructions/ Remarks** |
| 1 | Cohort(s) data/specimen collection details | Applications with more than one cohort should complete this table separately for **each** cohort. |
| 2 | Participant engagement activities | Describe past/current and planned activities to engage cohort participants in the research process according to the various stages of research. |
| 3 | Cohort(s) research outputs and achievements | List the research output generated, including publication list. |
| 4 | List of data and/or biospecimens requests received by the cohort(s) in the last 5 years | If the cohort(s) does not have any data and/or biospecimens requests or does not currently keep a record of data requests, you may provide a short justification in the table. |
| 5 | Milestones | Fund disbursement will be based on milestones achieved. Applicants should consider this in their implementation timelines. |
| 6 | Expected outcomes from the proposal for the requested funding period | Provide realistic estimates, we understand that it takes time to deliver on outcomes. |
| 7 | RFP Budget Request | Include the overall statement justifying the budget request. The funding is for uplifting to FAIR data access (e.g. data access forms, cohort website) and cohort enrichment through data linkage via TRUST (e.g. trusted third party TTP, compute cost). |
| 8 | Initial cohort setup funding and list of past, current and pending funding received in the last 10 years | The rationale is to provide the review panel insight into your funding trajectory. |

## Annex B

Annex B comprises the CVs of the application team. It should correspond to the names listed in Section A and described in Section F. Please keep to the page limits of 3 pages for corresponding applicant and 1 page for each co-applicant and collaborator.

## Annex C

Annex C include a template for the letter of support for cohort access and data sharing. Please submit an endorsed copy from the Host Institution.

# Section G: Declarations and Signatories

## Corresponding Applicant Declaration

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| In signing this application, I declare that: |
| * all submitted information is accurate and true, |
| * the application adheres to the Grant T&Cs/Funding Guidelines, * the requested equipment/resources are not funded by another agency or research proposal, unless otherwise stated, * I have/will not send similar versions or part(s) of this proposal to other agencies for funding, * I am the cohort custodian *or* have proof of willingness from the cohort custodian for me to act on his/her behalf for the purposes of this proposal, and I have attached the relevant supporting documents, * I will disclose and make available all data generated from the Research (“Research Data”) on the Trusted Research and Real World-Data Utilisation and Sharing Tech Platform (“TRUST”) upon a written request made by MOH (or, where MOH ceases to be the owner of TRUST, by any subsequent owner of TRUST) to us (which may be made during the term of the Research or after the conclusion of the Research), in accordance with the terms of all agreements and contracts that we may enter into from time to time in relation to TRUST, including but not limited to any Data Request Agreement or any Data Contributor’s Pre-Agreement in relation to TRUST. |
| * I will comply with the provisions of any relevant laws of the Republic of Singapore, statutes, regulations, by-laws, rules, guidelines, and requirements, applicable to it, as well as all applicable terms, conditions, policies, and procedures adopted by the National Cohorts Office as the same may be amended or varied from time to time, * I will ensure that this funding is acknowledged in all publications. * I have a primary appointment with the Host Institution that has endorsed this application, and I am salaried by the institution, and |
| * If awarded, I will be actively engaged and agree to hold primary responsibility for the execution of the proposed plans and shall abide and comply with the ethical, legal and professional standards relevant to research, in accordance with the research integrity policy of the Institution(s). |
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| Corresponding applicant name and signature Date |
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## Host Institution declaration

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| In signing this application, I declare that: |
| * I have read, support, and agree to this project being carried out in the Institution(s), |
| * the Institution(s) will provide the necessary facilities to implement the project and assumes financial and other management responsibilities for the duration of the project to be carried out at the institution(s), * acknowledge that the cohort custodian agreed to disclose and make available all data generated from the Research (“Research Data”) on the Trusted Research and Real World-Data Utilisation and Sharing Tech Platform (“TRUST”) upon a written request made by MOH (or, where MOH ceases to be the owner of TRUST, by any subsequent owner of TRUST) to us (which may be made during the term of the Research or after the conclusion of the Research), in accordance with the terms of all agreements and contracts that we may enter into from time to time in relation to TRUST, including but not limited to any Data Request Agreement or any Data Contributor’s Pre-Agreement in relation to TRUST, and * the applicant(s) has the i) necessary endorsement to access and share the cohort(s) data and ii) ability to provide appropriate administrative and scientific oversight of the proposed work.   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Name and Designation  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Signature Date |

1. FAIR principles: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. Wilkinson, Mark D., et al. "The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship." Scientific data 3.1 (2016): 1-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Trusted Research and Real world-data Utilisation and Sharing Tech (TRUST) is a national linkage platform for health-related research. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. FAIR principles: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. Wilkinson, Mark D., et al. "The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship." Scientific data 3.1 (2016): 1-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Accessible to TRUST data users via <https://trustplatform.sg/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)