

INVITATION TO SUBMIT EDUCATION OR RESEARCH PROPOSALS TO HAC

3.1 Introduction

The Hearing Aid Council (HAC) will cease regulating the independent hearing aid sector on 31 March 2010 and will be abolished at the end of July. The Council is preparing for the contingency that it may have residual resources that it may be able to spend on appropriate research projects before its abolition.

As a public body, the Council is subject to tight controls over how it spends its money and what it spends it on. The Council's enabling legislation does however allow it to use any surplus resources for "purposes connected with education and research or to other purposes applicable to the dispensing of hearing aids, in such manner as it may think fit". To this end, research proposals are invited from suitably qualified research institutes and researchers. It is not yet clear whether the Council will have any surplus funds available but, as a contingency, is inviting interested parties to submit education or research proposals related to the dispensing of hearing aids that could benefit hard of hearing people. Suggested areas for research could include:

- access to hearing assessment and hearing aid provision in the private market;
- issues that might affect the take-up of hearing aids in the private market;
- information needs of potential clients;
- the efficacy of hearing aid provision in the private market;
- barriers to use of the private hearing aid market;
- what issues affect the use or non-use of hearing aids by those first time purchasers of aids;
- and the rehabilitation needs of hearing aid users.

3.2 Conditions

Due to the controls on public spending and the Council's impending abolition, there are a number of conditions any research proposal must meet. Failure to meet these conditions will result in a submission being rejected.

Proposals must be submitted by 17 February 2010 so that they can be distributed to members of the Council's Strategy Executive Committee which will make the decision on what, if any, proposal to fund.

Proposed projects must be ready to begin by 15 March 2010.

Proposed projects must be complete by 16 July 2010 as the HAC will not be able to fund any project after 31 July.

The proposed project must be related to education or research applicable to the dispensing of hearing aids and must have a clear benefit for hard of hearing people. Projects of relevance to consumers in the independent hearing aid sector are especially welcomed.

Those submitting proposals should be aware that the Council will be unclear on how much, if any, funds it can devote to a project until the Strategic Executive Committee meets on 2 March 2010.

In light of this, interested parties are advised to submit a proposal costing £10,000, £20,000 or £40,000. Interested parties are encouraged to submit proposals that could be delivered for each of these sums. There is no limit to the number of proposals one party can submit.

Submissions should clearly detail:

- what is being proposed and how it will be conducted with clear methodology,
- how it meets these HAC conditions and assessment criteria below,
- the value of the project to hard of hearing people,
- a timeline and key milestones for delivering the project,
- project management and quality assurance procedures,
- who will be delivering the project with CVs demonstrating their suitability,
- project cost including VAT and all expenses.
- Interested parties should submit 10 paper copies plus one electronic copy of their proposal.

3.3 Assessment criteria

A decision on whether to fund a project and, if so, which (if any) project to fund will be made by the Council's Strategy Executive Committee on 2 March 2010. The Committee will evaluate submissions based on the following criteria:

- Strategic fit - likelihood that research will provide knowledge that can improve access and take-up of hearing aids in the private market; the efficacy of hearing aids, the information needs of consumers and the rehabilitation needs of consumers.
- Achievability - the extent to which the research can be delivered within the tight timeframes outlined above. The robustness of project management arrangements proposed.
- Robustness - the robustness of the methodology proposed.
- Affordability - the extent to which the research proposal is affordable to the Council, and can be delivered within the resource use proposed

4.0 Contact details

Please send the ten paper copies of your submission to the following address:

Research Proposal
HAC
70 St Mary Axe
London
EC3A 8BE

Plus your electronic copy to: hac@thehearingaidcouncil.org.uk

If you would like any further information about this process then please contact:

Stuart Holland
Modernisation & Transfer Manager
HAC
Tel: 0203 102 4030
Email: stuart.holland@thehearingaidcouncil.org.uk