



Investigator Grants 2026 Guidelines

Opening date:	4 June 2025
Closing date and time:	5:00pm ACT local time on 30 July 2025
Commonwealth policy entity:	National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
Enquiries:	<p>Applicants requiring further assistance are to direct enquiries to their Administering Institution's Research Administration Officer. Research Administration Officers can contact NHMRC's Research Help Centre for further advice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Phone: 1800 500 983 (+61 2 6217 9451 for international callers)▪ Email: help@nhmrc.gov.au <p>NHMRC will not respond to any enquiries related to this grant opportunity submitted after 1:00pm ACT local time on 30 July 2025.</p> <p>Note: NHMRC's Research Help Centre aims to provide a reply to all requests for general assistance within 2 working days. This timeframe may be longer during peak periods or for more detailed requests for assistance.</p> <p>Submission of a registration form and activation of a Sapphire account must occur at least 3 business days before application close, noting that account activation processes cannot be guaranteed in less than this time.</p>
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Type of grant opportunity:	Targeted competitive

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1. Investigator Grants 2026 processes

NHMRC's Investigator Grant scheme is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

The Investigator Grant scheme is a component of the Portfolio Budget Statements Program 1.1: Health and Medical Research, which contributes to Outcome 1: Improved health and medical knowledge.



The grant opportunity opens

NHMRC publishes the grant opportunity guidelines on GrantConnect.



Minimum Data deadline

Application Fields marked with a flag must be completed and not contain placeholder text.



Applicants complete and submit a grant application

Applicants must complete the application form and address all of the eligibility criteria to be considered for a grant.



Applications are verified and assessed

Applications are verified against eligibility criteria and applicants are notified if not eligible. Peer reviewers assess applications against the assessment criteria including an overall consideration of value with money.



Grant decisions are made

NHMRC's CEO seeks approval of funding recommendations from the Minister for Health and Aged Care.



NHMRC notifies applicants of the outcome



Applicant's Administering Institution signs the NHMRC Grant Schedule(s) setting out the grant activity



Delivery of grant

Grantees undertake the grant activity as set out in the schedule to the Funding Agreement. NHMRC manages the grant through the relevant Administering Institution.



Evaluation of the Investigator Grant scheme

NHMRC undertakes periodic evaluations of the performance and administration of its funding schemes to determine strengths and to identify where improvements can be made.

1.1. Introduction

These grant opportunity guidelines (guidelines) contain information for the Investigator Grants 2026 grant opportunity.

Applicants must read these guidelines before filling out an application.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant scheme/grant opportunity
- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how grant applications are considered and selected
- how grantees are notified and receive grant payments
- how grants will be monitored and evaluated
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

GrantConnect (www.grants.gov.au) is the authoritative source of information on this grant opportunity. Any alterations or addenda to these guidelines will be published on GrantConnect.

The Investigator Grants 2026 grant opportunity will be undertaken in accordance with the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles](#) (CGRPs), available from the [Department of Finance website](#).

Commonwealth funding for this grant opportunity, including where future or additional funding opportunities are indicated, is subject to the relevant Commonwealth Government funding policy and priorities at the time of notification and accordingly may be subject to change. This may affect the funding available, and its timing, provided under this grant opportunity. Any such changes will be notified as soon as possible.

2. About the grant program

2.1. About NHMRC

NHMRC is the Australian Government's key entity for managing investment in, and the integrity of, health and medical research. NHMRC works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program in accordance with the [National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992](#) (NHMRC Act) and the CGRPs.

Consistent with the NHMRC Act, the grant program aims to foster health and medical research throughout Australia, and to raise the standard of individual and public health throughout Australia. Grants are awarded through several grant opportunities each year across the 4 pillars of health and medical research: basic science research, clinical medicine and science research, public health research, and health services research.

NHMRC funds high-quality research and researchers, as determined through peer review, to help achieve our mission of building a healthy Australia. Across NHMRC grant opportunities, NHMRC welcomes any research proposals within its remit (and consistent with the specific objectives of the grant opportunity), including those that seek to address Australian Government priorities, such as Australia's national science and research priorities and NHMRC's strategy and priorities for health and medical research, as outlined in its annual Corporate Plan. NHMRC's International Engagement Strategy aims to foster Australian participation in international networks and collaborative research, and NHMRC welcomes research that addresses global and regional health priorities where it advances health and medical knowledge and improves the health of Australians.

The specific objectives of Investigator Grants 2026 are outlined in [2.2](#) below.

2.2. Investigator Grant 2026 objectives

Investigator Grants provide the highest-performing researchers at all career stages with consolidated funding for their salary (if required) and a significant research support package (RSP). The Investigator Grant Chief Investigator (CIA) has the flexibility to pursue important new research directions as they arise, adjust their resources accordingly, and to form collaborations as needed, rather than being restricted to the scope of a specific research project.

Funding for the program will be provided from the NHMRC Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA), which is underpinned by section 51 of the NHMRC Act.

The objectives of the Investigator Grant scheme are:

- support the research program of outstanding investigators at all career stages
- consolidate salary and research support into a single grant scheme by offering a salary component (if required) and an RSP.

The intended outcomes of the Investigator Grant scheme are:

- flexibility for investigators to pursue important new research directions as they arise and to form collaborations as needed
- innovative and creative research
- opportunities for researchers at all career stages to establish their own research programs
- reduced application and peer review burden on researchers.

To support its objectives, the Investigator Grant scheme comprises 2 categories – Emerging Leadership (EL) and Leadership (L) (Category) (**Table 1**).

The EL Category is restricted to researchers who are ≤10 years’ post-PhD or equivalent and comprises 2 salary levels (Levels) (EL1 and EL2) with corresponding RSPs. Recipients of an EL Investigator Grant will have the title ‘NHMRC Emerging Leadership Fellow’.

The L Category comprises 3 Levels (L1, L2 and L3) and an RSP of \$400,000 per annum (see **Tables 1 and 3**).

Following NHMRC’s national consultation during 2022 on options to reach gender equity in the Investigator Grant scheme, NHMRC implemented changes for the Investigator Grant scheme to address systemic disadvantage and ensure the scheme supports a gender diverse and inclusive health and medical research workforce (see [section 8.2](#) and [Appendix A](#)).

Table 1. Structure of the Investigator Grant scheme

Category	Salary Levels	RSP Tiers	Title
Leadership	L3	LT	NHMRC Leadership Fellow
	L2		
	L1		
Emerging Leadership	EL2	ELT2	NHMRC Emerging Leadership Fellow
	EL1	ELT1	

Eligibility to apply for an Investigator Grant at a given Category and Level will be determined by the number of times the highest Level has been held, as detailed in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Number of terms each Investigator Grant Level can be held

Category	Level	Number of terms	Maximum number of terms in each Category
Leadership	L3	5	5
	L2	2	
	L1	2	
Emerging Leadership	EL2	1	2
	EL1	1	

Applicants should anticipate a high level of interest in this grant opportunity and it is expected to be highly competitive. NHMRC's grant program aims to minimise the burden on researchers of application and peer review so that researchers can spend more time producing high-quality research. As such, applications should be carefully scrutinised within the Administering Institution prior to submission to NHMRC to ensure that the application will have the best chance to be considered favourably during NHMRC peer review.

Applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and applications that aim to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strongly encouraged, particularly given the allocation of dedicated structural priority funding (see [Appendix A](#)).

2.2.1. Priorities and funding with other organisations

Information on specific funding priorities that apply to the Investigator Grant 2026 round and Investigator Grant funding with other organisations is provided in [Appendix A](#).

2.3. Key changes

Applicants need to note the following changes for the Investigator Grants 2026 Guidelines.

Research impact and pathway to impact

- The 'Research impact and pathway to impact' assessment criteria has been revised following NHMRC's review of its Research Impact Track Record Assessment (RITRA) framework, extensive consultation and in consultation with the [NHMRC Score Descriptor Working Group](#) (see [Section 6](#) and [Appendix B](#)).
- Revisions include streamlining and simplifying the research impact assessment criteria, reducing 3 sub-criteria to 2:
 - 'Reach and significance' of the research impact (10%)
 - 'Applicant's contribution' to the research impact (10%).
- These revisions aim to reduce the overlap and confusion expressed in feedback from applicants and peer reviewers and shift the focus of the assessment to the contributions the *applicant* has made along a 'pathway to impact' (see [Appendix B](#)).

Score descriptors

- Following consistent sector feedback, the score descriptor tables have been revised and reformatted to include greater detail at each description, to better support peer reviewers to understand the expectations of applicants at each score (see [Appendix B](#)).
- Performance indicators have also been included at [Appendix B](#), to sit 'above' the score descriptor tables. The indicators can be used together with the score descriptors to further understand what is expected of applicants at each score. They provide peer reviewers with descriptions that address 3 broad 'elements' of independent assessment (quality of the proposed research, the potential for impact, and the demonstrated capability of the applicant).

It is not mandatory that peer reviewers use these indicators, they are designed to provide additional support where necessary/appropriate.

Improved flexibility for all Investigator Grant holders

- NHMRC has improved the flexibility for Investigator Grant CIAs who experience career disruptions during the term of their grant. CIAs will have the option to either redirect salary funds to their grant's RSP, or to extend the term of their grant pro-rata (salary + RSP), for up to an additional 2 years (i.e. up to a 7-year grant term) (see [section 3.3](#) and [12.3](#)).
- Investigator Grants are still offered on a 5-year term (as either 'Full Time' or 'Professional' part-time). CIAs wishing to reduce their FTE for a career disruption (previously referred to as a 'Personal part-time' Investigator Grant) can submit a variation request at any time following NHMRC approving the AI's/CIA's acceptance of their offer of a grant (see [section 3.3](#) and [12.2](#)).

Eligibility

- Eligibility to apply for and hold an Investigator and/or Ideas Grant has been clarified in response to the increased flexibility for Investigator Grant holders who experience a career disruption during the term of their grant (which introduces Investigator Grants that will continue to receive payments > 5 years from award (FTE)) (see [Section 4](#)).
- Given mixed feedback on NHMRC's proposal to remove the 10-year post PhD eligibility barrier for Emerging Leadership (EL) applicants following public consultation, NHMRC will not be implementing this change for the 2026 round. Instead, the Statements of Expectations (SoEs) have been updated to better support applicants to make the best decision regarding which Level to apply for, and for peer reviewers to assess the appropriateness of that selection. Since they were updated in 2021, NHMRC data indicates that the SoEs have been effective at supporting CIs and peer reviewers to understand the most appropriate Level for CIs to apply.
- These updates also highlight for prospective applicants that there is no evidence that applicants who apply 'down' to a Level with less senior researchers are more successful than researchers applying as 'expected' (based on years' post-PhD – adjusted for career disruptions).

Leadership

- The Leadership criterion has been streamlined to simplify the assessment. Applicants are required to provide a single narrative that outlines their leadership achievements framed against one or more of the 4 leadership elements in a single text field (see [Appendix B](#)).

Knowledge gain

- The Knowledge Gain criterion has been updated to improve the clarity of the assessment. Applicants are asked to make a clear distinction between their broad 5-year vision/plan and the 'proposed new research' they intend to carry out with the Investigator Grant (see [Appendix B](#)).

Other

- [Section 13.1](#) Information about fraud and corruption has been added.
- [Appendix G](#) Guide to Applicants, [Section 8](#), has been updated to include 3 additional checks:
 - The Administering Institution has agreement between all institutions, including international institutions, associated with the application
 - researchers who intend to be involved in the grant have agreement from their institutions
 - any images of people are appropriately de-identified or informed consent has been given.

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1. Grants available

The provisional funding allocation for the Investigator Grants 2026 is between \$400 million and \$430 million. NHMRC’s Research Committee annually reviews and recommends indicative budget amounts to be awarded across individual funding schemes.

Indexation has been included in the funding for this grant opportunity and corresponding indexation is applied to grant payments annually. Grants are expected to start on 01/01/2027.

An Investigator Grant comprises a salary and RSP (see **Table 3**). The salary component of an Investigator Grant is provided as a contribution to assist Administering Institutions with employing the successful applicant to conduct the research. However, an Investigator Grant recipient’s total salary is agreed between the researcher and their Administering Institution. **NHMRC expects that researchers who receive a salary from their institution will not apply for a salary from NHMRC.** This maximises the number of applications that can be funded.

The RSP component of an Investigator Grant is provided to support the Investigator to fulfil the objectives of their 5-year vision/plan, and to provide the flexibility to pursue important new research directions as they arise, adjust their resources accordingly, and form collaborations as needed. The size of the RSP and salary depend on the Level or Category of the grant application (see **Table 3**).

Table 3. Investigator Grant salary and RSP components

Category	Level	Salary	RSP
		Amount per annum	Amount per annum
Leadership	L3	\$202,805	\$400,000
	L2	\$190,915	
	L1	\$163,781	
Emerging Leadership	EL2	\$124,740	\$200,000
	EL1	\$87,681	\$50,000

Note: Amounts in **Table 3** may be indexed and will be provided with rates applied to grants at the time of commencement in alignment to NHMRC published figures and on a pro rata basis for part-time awardees as applicable.

The Category, Level and RSP of the grant will apply for the duration of the grant.

3.1.1. Short-term support to Facilitate International Indigenous Researcher Networks

Funding to Facilitate International Indigenous Researcher Networks (FIIRN supplement) is available to Emerging Leadership (EL1 and EL2) NHMRC Investigator Grant recipients who identify as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. The purpose of this funding is to:

- improve the health of Indigenous people through research between NHMRC, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Health Research Council of New Zealand, as intended under the Tripartite Agreement
- support NHMRC’s strategic objective of building capacity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.

Applicants who identify as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent may request the FIIRN supplement (\$11,000 in addition to their Investigator Grant) to support travel to international

conferences and/or short-term international collaborative activities. Travel to New Zealand or Canada is particularly encouraged, where government travel policy and restrictions allow.

Eligible applicants who wish to be considered for the FIIRN supplement must indicate their interest at the time of application and will be unable to request the supplement at a later date. Where the number of eligible applicants for the FIIRN supplement exceeds NHMRC's allocated funds for this program (\$100,000), NHMRC will offer each eligible applicant a pro rata share of the available funding.

To receive the FIIRN funding, applicants must:

- identify as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent (see information on [AIATSIS website](#))
- indicate their interest in receiving FIIRN funding at the time of application
- outline in their grant application, their proposed use of the funds for travel and/or collaborative purposes.

Administering Institutions must retain evidence, consistent with AIATSIS guidance, of an applicant's identification as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person and must provide this evidence to NHMRC, if requested.

Investigator Grant recipients who receive FIIRN funding must report on the following in their Final Report:

- what the FIIRN funding was used for, and
- the mentoring linkages established as a result of using this funding supplement.

3.2. Grant period

An Investigator Grant is awarded for a 5-year term, irrespective of the Category or Level of grant awarded. CIAs may request to extend the term of their grant pro-rata where they experience career disruptions during the term of the grant (up to an additional 2 years - see [section 3.3.3](#)).

Details on allowable grant variations, including to defer commencement and/or to extend the end date due to limited circumstances, can be found at [section 12.1](#).

3.3. Time commitment

An Investigator Grant may be awarded as either a full-time grant or a 'Professional part-time Investigator Grant'.

3.3.1. Full-time Investigator Grants

A full-time Investigator Grant is intended to support a researcher (employed on a full-time basis) to conduct research. A full-time Investigator Grant CIA must devote at least 80% of their FTE commitment to research¹. This research must include research aimed at achieving the objectives of the Investigator Grant.

Academics who spend **≥80% FTE on research** may apply for a full-time Investigator Grant salary.

Academics who spend **>20% FTE on teaching/administration** may apply for a full-time salaried Investigator Grant if they transfer to a full-time research role (≥80% FTE on research) by 1 January of the year the grant is to commence, or a part-time (professional) Investigator Grant salary to cover the proportion of FTE spent on research if they remain in a teaching/administration role.

¹ For a CIA with a 1.0 FTE commitment to their Investigator Grant (i.e. full-time), they must commit 0.8 FTE of their time to research. For a part-time applicant with a 0.6 FTE commitment to their Investigator Grant, they must commit 80% of that time (i.e. 0.48 FTE) to research.

3.3.2. Professional part-time Investigator Grants

An Investigator Grant awarded on a part-time basis for professional reasons ('Professional part-time Investigator Grant') is intended to allow researchers to conduct research while maintaining other professional activities. These grants are available for 0.2 to 0.8 FTE over 5 years. The salary component of the grant will be reduced pro rata.

Professional part-time Investigator Grant applicants must hold, or have been offered, another funded position (e.g. in policy, industry, clinical, public health or equivalent practice, teaching) and their employer must guarantee to release the Investigator Grant recipient for the time specified in their grant application to conduct research. Similarly, self-employed applicants must confirm that they are able to conduct the research.

Continuation of the Investigator Grant will depend on continued financial support by the employer for the balance of the applicant's work time and for the duration of the grant.

Administering Institutions must retain evidence:

- of the Professional part-time Investigator Grant applicant's alternative funded position
- that the alternative employer will release the applicant to conduct the research proposed in their Investigator Grant application, and
- that the alternative employer will continue to provide salary to support the applicant's non-research time.

This evidence must be made available to NHMRC if requested. Professional part-time Investigator Grant recipients may retain 100% of their RSP. Researchers may select this option at the time of application or reduce to it during the grant (see [section 12.2](#)).

At application or upon request for reduction, the researcher must indicate whether they wish to receive 100% of their Investigator Grant RSP or reduce it in proportion to their part-time status².

The combined time spent on research and on other professional activities by Professional part-time Investigator Grant recipients must equate to 1.0 FTE, except where there is a career disruption. In this case, the 1.0 FTE requirement for research and professional activities is reduced in proportion to the time component of the career disruption.

Professional part-time Investigator Grant recipients must devote 80% of their FTE commitment on research,³ which must include research aimed at achieving the objectives of the Investigator Grant.

Investigator Grants awarded on a part-time basis for professional reasons are to be held part-time, at the awarded FTE and RSP (unless further reduced – see [section 12.2](#)), for the duration of the grant. The awarded FTE and RSP of the grant cannot be increased.

3.3.3. Personal part-time Investigator Grants

An Investigator Grant applicant wishing to complete their grant on a part-time basis due to a career disruption ('Personal part-time Investigator Grant') should apply for a full-time grant. If successful, these CIAs can request a grant variation to reduce their FTE commitment in-line with their career disruption, as required (from any time following the acceptance of their grant). These grants are available at 0.2 to 0.8 FTE.

These CIAs will have the option to either:

- request NHMRC to reduce their salary payment in-line with their FTE reduction

² For example, if an applicant chooses to receive a part-time Investigator Grant at 0.2 FTE and to reduce their RSP in proportion to their FTE, they would receive 20% of the RSP.

³ For example, if the CIA's FTE commitment is 0.4 FTE, then 80% (0.32 FTE) of that commitment must be directed towards research.

- redirect the unused salary to the grant's RSP
- extend the term of the Investigator Grant pro-rata, for up to an additional 2 years
- suspend the grant (salary and RSP) for 1 FTE career disruptions.

For more details on these options, please see [section 12.2](#).

Requests to change FTE commitment for a career disruption must be supported by the Administering Institution, which must retain evidence to confirm that the Investigator Grant recipient's requested FTE is for circumstances defined as a career disruption. The Administering Institution must provide this evidence to NHMRC if requested.

The non-research time is intended to be dedicated to serving the needs of the career disruption and cannot be spent on other paid employment, research, teaching or administrative roles, or clinical or practitioner responsibilities.

When reducing FTE commitment for a career disruption, the researcher must continue to devote at least 80% of that FTE commitment to research⁴, which must include research aimed at achieving the objectives of the Investigator Grant.

3.3.4. Other appointments

The Investigator Grant scheme must not be used to pay or subsidise the salary of grantees with additional institutional leadership/administrative appointments related to research. Such appointments may include academic and institutional leadership/administrative salaried appointments. Funding of these roles is the responsibility of the institution. NHMRC reserves the right to suspend or cease any/all component(s) of an Investigator Grant if, in its judgement, this policy intent is being compromised.

Applicants may apply for an Investigator Grant but are not entitled to salary support for the life of the grant if, on 1 January of the year an Investigator Grant is to commence, they hold a core position requiring substantial time dedicated to:

- roles where the overarching responsibility is leadership of an independent Medical Research Institute (e.g. Director or Chief Executive Officer (CEO))
- roles where the overarching responsibility is leadership of an institute or centre under university or hospital governance (e.g. Director or CEO)
- academic administrative roles such as Dean, Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Pro Vice-Chancellor.

If, through the life of the grant, a grantee holds any of the positions (or similar) listed above, it is expected that they will notify NHMRC. Grantees who hold any such positions will not be required to resign from their position; the appointment can be retained, but the salary component of the Investigator Grant may not be paid for the period of the other appointment.

If, during the life of the grant, an Investigator Grant recipient temporarily holds any of the positions (or similar) listed above, the grantee must choose either to relinquish their salary for the period of overlap or to suspend the grant (salary and RSP) as outlined in [section 12.2.2.2](#). The term 'temporarily' allows for instances where grantees may be asked to take on a Director (or similar) position in a limited or interim capacity (for example, a short-term appointment).

Any appointments held by an Investigator Grant recipient are subject to review by NHMRC at any time throughout the duration of the grant.

NHMRC will only consider exemptions to this policy in exceptional circumstances.

⁴ For example, if the CIA's FTE commitment is 0.6FTE, then 80% (0.48FTE) of that commitment must be directed towards research.

3.3.5. Time spent overseas

Investigator Grant recipients may spend a proportion of their time pursuing research overseas.

3.3.5.1. Emerging Leadership Investigator Grants

To allow flexibility and support early and mid-career researchers to conduct a proportion of research overseas, EL1 and EL2 Investigator Grant recipients may spend up to 50% of their grant's duration overseas. However, the final year of the Investigator Grant must be undertaken in Australia. Administering Institutions must retain evidence that the Investigator Grant recipient is in Australia for the final year of the grant and provide this to NHMRC if requested.

3.3.5.2. Leadership Investigator Grants

Leadership Investigator Grant (L1-L3) recipients must be based in Australia for at least 80% of the grant's duration.

4. Eligibility criteria

Applications will only be accepted from [NHMRC Administering Institutions](#).

The Chief Investigator A (CIA) and Administering Institution must ensure applications and grants meet all eligibility requirements as set out in these guidelines. Applications that do not meet these eligibility requirements may be ineligible and may be excluded from further consideration.

A submitted Investigator Grant application that is withdrawn after the closing date for applications will continue to affect the eligibility of applications to the Ideas Grant Scheme in the same funding round (i.e. where funding commences in the same year, see [section 14: Glossary](#)). Conversely, the removal of CIs from other relevant NHMRC applications (after round close) and/or grants (see [section 4.3](#)) will continue to affect Investigator Grant eligibility. Each CI is only permitted on 2 applications per funding round irrespective of the outcome of those applications (i.e. successful, unsuccessful, ineligible or withdrawn).

Where an eligibility ruling is being considered, NHMRC may request further information to assess whether the eligibility requirement has been met.

Decisions are made based on current policies and considerations specific to this grant opportunity. Decisions made in relation to previous grant opportunities or other NHMRC funding schemes will not be regarded as precedents and will not be considered when assessing compliance with the requirements of this grant opportunity.

Administering Institutions will be notified in writing of ineligible applications and are responsible for advising applicants of the decision.

NHMRC staff will not make eligibility rulings before the minimum data deadline. Grant offers may be withdrawn if eligibility criteria are not maintained. Action may also be taken over the life of a grant if eligibility criteria to continue holding a grant are not met.

4.1. Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

4.1.1. Chief Investigators

The maximum number of CIs allowed on an Investigator Grant application is one (the CIA).

Chief Investigator 'A'

At the time of acceptance and for the duration of a grant the CIA must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, or a permanent resident of Australia, or have an appropriate work visa in place. The CIA must also be based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period, except for NHMRC Emerging Leadership Fellows, who must be based in Australia for at least 50% of the funding period of their Investigator Grant (see [section 3.3.5.1](#)).

The CIA must:

- only submit one application for an Investigator Grant in a given funding round
- select only one Category and one Level of Investigator Grant
- provide justification for the selected Category and Level of Investigator Grant, particularly outlining why they do not meet the expectations of a higher Level.

The CIA must consider the *Statements of Expectations* ([Appendix D](#)). It is the responsibility of the CIA to determine the most appropriate Level to apply for and submit an application at a Level commensurate with their research experience and profile.

NHMRC expects that applicants will apply at an appropriate Level to help achieve parity and fairness for all Investigator Grant applicants.

The selected Category and Level cannot be changed by an applicant after the close of applications.

NHMRC will not change the selected Category or Level for any reason.

4.2. Qualifications

NHMRC expects (but does not mandate) that Emerging Leadership and Leadership applicants will hold a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), or a research qualification equivalent to the level 10 criteria of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Second Edition January 2013, or equivalent research experience.

NHMRC acknowledges that some researchers will have had fewer opportunities to produce traditional academic research outputs, for example applicants who have spent time in industry (see [Appendix I](#)) or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers (see [section 8.1.3](#)).

If the CIA holds a research higher degree that is not a PhD or has equivalent research experience, the applicant's Administering Institution must provide evidence that the applicant's qualification or research experience meets the level 10 criteria of the AQF, if requested by NHMRC. NHMRC reserves the right, at any time during the application or peer review process, to exclude applicants who, in its judgement, do not have appropriate qualifications or experience.

If the CIA holds multiple PhDs, eligibility to apply at the EL Level will be determined using the earliest awarded PhD, irrespective of whether the PhD still aligns with the CIA's area of research (see [section 4.4](#)).

4.3. Multiple applications/grants

Limits apply to the number of NHMRC grants that a CI may concurrently apply for and/or hold.

Existing NHMRC data on current grants held will be used to determine an Investigator Grant applicant's eligibility to apply, as well as any required reductions to their RSP component.

The budget calculation date on which salary and RSP reductions will be calculated for Investigator Grant applications will be 5:00pm ACT local time on 30 July 2025 (see [section 7.1](#)). The awarded RSP will apply for the duration of the grant, irrespective of extensions to existing grant(s) held after the budget calculation date.

It is the responsibility of the CIA to ensure they meet all the eligibility requirements for concurrent research applications and/or grants, including any additional applications to the Ideas Grant scheme in the same funding round.

4.3.1. Information for Investigator and Ideas Grant schemes

CIs can submit a total of up to 2 applications across the Investigator and Ideas Grant schemes in any given funding round⁵. For the 2026 funding round, this includes the 2026 Investigator Grant round, closing in July 2025 (i.e. [this grant opportunity](#)), and the 2026 Ideas Grant round, expected to close in April/May 2026. CIs can hold a maximum of up to 2 grants concurrently from the Investigator and Ideas Grant schemes. See specific rules for the Investigator and Ideas Grant schemes.

Eligibility for existing [Investigator Grant holders](#) to apply for and/or hold an Investigator or Ideas Grant is based upon the Investigator's 'actual' end date of the held grant (in Sapphire) at time of application. This means that, where CIAs apply grant variations that extend the grant's 'actual' end date in Sapphire (e.g. defer grant start date, fully suspend the grant or extend the term of the grant pro-rata for career disruptions) their eligibility to reapply may be impacted.

Eligibility for existing [Ideas Grant holders](#) to apply for and/or hold an Investigator or Ideas Grant is based upon the 'original' end date of the held grant (contained in the Schedule to the Funding Agreement) irrespective of whether the Ideas Grant end date has been extended through a variation.

If an Ideas Grant CI (CIA-CIJ) is successful with their Investigator Grant application, the value of the RSP will be reduced by 50%, for the period of overlap with the concurrently held Ideas Grant. The reduction to the RSP will cease at the 'original' end date for the Ideas Grant.

Investigator Grant holders cannot apply for an Ideas Grant unless their existing Investigator Grant will end before the new Ideas Grant is due to commence.⁶

An Investigator Grant CIA is eligible to apply for a new Investigator Grant if, at the time of application, their existing Investigator Grant will end before, or be in its final year, on 1 January of the year the new Investigator Grant is to commence⁷ (see [section 4.3.5](#) for further details).

CIs are not eligible to hold 2 Investigator Grants concurrently. If the grant application is successful, the CIA will complete their existing Investigator Grant before commencing their new

⁵ For example, in the 2026 funding round for funding commencing in 2027 (subject to other scheme-specific eligibility requirements), CIs may submit 1x Investigator Grant application + 1x Ideas Grant application = 2 applications in total. Note: the outcome of the application (i.e. successful, unsuccessful, ineligible or withdrawn) does not impact on it counting towards the 2 applications each CI is permitted per funding round.

⁶ Based on the held Investigator Grant's 'actual' end date (in Sapphire) at time of application. If the CIA's 'actual' end date on their Investigator Grant is extended (via an approved variation request), [after](#) having submitted an eligible Ideas Grant application, this will not impact the eligibility of the Ideas Grant application (or Grant, if successful, i.e. the Ideas Grant, if awarded, can begin as scheduled).

⁷ Based on the held Investigator Grant's 'actual' end date (in Sapphire) at time of application.

Investigator Grant. The CIA is not required to relinquish any part of either existing Investigator Grant, nor are they able to relinquish their existing grant for the purposes of taking up the new Investigator Grant early. If the existing grant cannot be completed before the date the new Investigator Grant is due to commence, the CIA must defer the commencement of the new Investigator Grant. Their new Investigator Grant will not be considered a 'concurrently held' grant until their existing Investigator Grant has concluded, for the purposes of determining NHMRC grant capping eligibility (i.e. the eligibility to apply for and hold an Ideas and/or Investigator Grant).

If an applicant is unsuccessful, they may re-apply in any subsequent Investigator Grant opportunity.

For the purposes of eligibility, recipients of Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Investigator Grants⁸ will be considered equivalent to NHMRC Investigator Grants. All conditions and policies outlined in these Guidelines will be applicable to MRFF Investigator Grants.

If any CI (CIA-CIJ) submits an Investigator or Ideas Grant application(s), in the same funding round, in excess of the maximum for which they are eligible to apply or hold, the breaching application(s) (i.e. the last submitted) on which that CI is named may be ineligible and excluded from consideration, irrespective of:

- the scheme to which they have applied
- that CI's position or role on the application.

If a CI (CIA-CIJ) concurrently (in the same funding round) applies for an Investigator Grant and an Ideas Grant and the Investigator Grant application is successful, the Ideas Grant application will not be eligible for NHMRC funding.

If an Investigator Grant applicant is a CI (CIA-CIJ) on an Ideas Grant application(s) from the previous round, and are subsequently offered an Ideas Grant(s) to the maximum of NHMRC grants that they are eligible to hold, the Investigator Grant application will not be eligible for NHMRC funding and will be removed from consideration, irrespective of whether the Ideas Grant(s) is accepted.

If an Investigator Grant is offered, then application and grant capping eligibility rules will continue to affect applications to the Ideas Grant schemes for the remainder of the concurrent round in which the Investigator Grant was offered.

NHMRC eligibility capping rules do not apply to Ideas Grant CIs who apply for or hold Ideas Grants that do not seek or receive NHMRC funding (i.e. that only seek funding through an NHMRC Partner Organisation, e.g. Cancer Councils, Cancer Australia & Funding Partners, see [Appendix A](#) of the Ideas Grant Guidelines). Such applicants should check the capping rules applied by those Partner Organisations.

Requests for alteration of a submitted application in an attempt to satisfy eligibility criteria (for example removal of a CI) will not alter the eligibility ruling for those affected applications.

Detailed information on how eligibility for an Investigator Grant is affected by a CI's grant applications and/or currently held grants is available in [Appendix E](#) (eligibility for 2026 funding round) and the [NHMRC Eligibility web tool](#).

4.3.2. Current and/or former NHMRC Fellowship recipients

Current NHMRC Fellows may apply for an Investigator Grant at any time during their Fellowship.

⁸ Investigator Grants awarded in 2019 and 2020 via the Investigator Grants: Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Priority Round.

Current or previous NHMRC Fellowship recipients cannot apply for an Investigator Grant at a Level lower than the applicant's most recently held NHMRC Fellowship ([Appendix F](#)). Previously held NHMRC Fellowships will not count towards the number of terms an Investigator Grant can be held (see [section 2.2](#)).

For the purposes of eligibility, an NHMRC Fellowship is considered held if the offer of funding was accepted and any grant funding expended.

A summary of the Investigator Grant Category and Level for which NHMRC Fellowship recipients (previous and current) are eligible to apply is at [Appendix E](#).

4.3.3. Current NHMRC grantees (not fellows) seeking an Investigator Grant

Recipients of an Investigator Grant are not entitled to receive salary concurrently from other NHMRC grants.

Current NHMRC grantees who are drawing salary support via a Personnel Support Package (PSP) may apply for an Investigator Grant. Successful applicants will be required to cease drawing this salary support from the existing NHMRC grant(s) by 1 January of the year the Investigator Grant is to commence.

Once an Investigator Grant recipient has ceased drawing salary support from their existing NHMRC grant(s), those funds may be used for other direct research costs (DRCs) associated with the existing research activities.

All DRC expenditure for NHMRC funded research activities must align with [NHMRC's DRC guidelines and principles](#).

Recipients of an Investigator Grant cannot vary off these existing NHMRC grant(s) unless requests comply with the NHMRC Grantee Variation Policy (see [section 12.1](#)).

4.3.4. Non-NHMRC grants

CIAs in receipt of an Investigator Grant salary are not eligible to concurrently receive salary support from non-NHMRC grants^{9 10}. The term 'non-NHMRC grant' covers competitive funding received from any source other than NHMRC (including MRFF).

Investigator Grant applicants who, at the time of application, have accepted salary support funding from a non-NHMRC grant that will overlap with the Investigator Grant, will not be eligible to draw a salary from the Investigator Grant for the period of overlap.

During this overlap, the Investigator Grant will run concurrently with the non-NHMRC grant and the overall salary component of the Investigator Grant will be reduced accordingly (i.e. the salary is forfeited for the period of overlap). Once the non-NHMRC grant salary support has ended, the CIA will be eligible to draw a salary from their Investigator Grant. The RSP component of the Investigator Grant will not be affected.

All salary declarations must be correct at the time of application and representative of the full lifespan of the active non-NHMRC grant(s), not based upon prospective conditions if an applicant

⁹ For the purposes of the non-NHMRC grant policy, 'salary support' means any salary from a non-NHMRC grant that totals >20% of the value of the awarded Investigator Grant salary, for the period of overlap. This can be achieved by a single salary, or multiple smaller salaries. Requests to reduce the CIA's FTE commitment to the Investigator Grant will not impact the calculation of the 'awarded' salary.

¹⁰ CIAs with non-NHMRC grants that provide salary(ies) with a total value ≤20% of the value of the awarded Investigator Grant salary can retain both/all salaries. Requests to reduce the CIA's FTE commitment to the Investigator Grant will not impact the calculation of the 'awarded' salary.

is awarded an Investigator Grant. CIAs must not plan to relinquish their salary should their Investigator Grant be successful. Should an Investigator Grant be awarded and a non-NHMRC grant salary be relinquished, responsibility for salary will not be transferred to NHMRC.

An Investigator Grant applicant who accepts a non-NHMRC grant that provides salary support (after they have submitted their Investigator Grant application that requests a salary, but before they are notified of its successful outcome), must contact NHMRC Post Award (postaward.management@nhmrc.gov.au), before the commencement of their Investigator Grant, to indicate which salary they will relinquish for the period of overlap.

A CIA who requests and receives an Investigator Grant salary, who then accepts a non-NHMRC grant that provides salary support (any time after they are notified of their successful Investigator Grant outcome), will not be eligible to receive their Investigator Grant salary for the period of overlap. CIAs must notify NHMRC Post Award (postaward.management@nhmrc.gov.au) to declare the last date on which they will draw their non-NHMRC grant salary. The overall salary component of the Investigator Grant will be reduced accordingly (i.e. the salary is forfeited for the period of overlap). The RSP component of the Investigator Grant will not be affected.

CIAs may not suspend any part of their Investigator Grant for the purposes of taking up a non-NHMRC grant.

4.3.5. Current and/or former NHMRC or MRFF Investigator Grant recipients

If an Investigator Grant CIA holds or has previously held an Investigator Grant(s), they will be eligible to apply for a restricted number of Categories and Levels of Investigator Grant.

Emerging Leadership Investigator Grants

Each Level of the EL Category (EL1 and EL2) can only be held once (see Table 2).

Leadership Investigator Grants

Leadership Investigator Grants can be held for a total of 5 terms across the 3 Levels of the Category. However, the number of terms each Level can be held is limited (see Table 2):

- Leadership Level 1 (L1) can be held for a maximum of 2 terms
- Leadership Level 2 (L2) can be held for a maximum of 2 terms
- Leadership Level 3 (L3) can be held for a maximum of 5 terms.

Current or previous Investigator Grant recipients cannot apply for an Investigator Grant at a Level lower than the applicant's most recently held Investigator Grant.

An Investigator Grant CIA is eligible to apply for a new Investigator Grant if, at the time of application, their existing Investigator Grant will end before, or be in its final year on, 1 January of the year the new Investigator Grant is to commence¹¹. A summary of the Categories and Levels of Investigator Grant for which current or previous Investigator Grant recipients may apply is at [Appendices E and G](#).

¹¹ Based on the held Grant's 'original' end date, unless the CIA has applied a variation to that Grant which causes the Research Activities to continue beyond the 'original' end date, in which case, eligibility is based on the grant's 'actual' end date, at time of application (see [section 4.3](#)).

4.4. Emerging Leadership applicants – PhD census date

As at 30 July 2025 (application close), an EL applicant must have held their PhD, or equivalent, for no more than 10 years from the date that their PhD thesis was passed (not the date of conferral), unless they have had a valid career disruption (see [Appendix C](#)).

Each period of career disruption (see [Appendix C](#)) claimed in the application must:

- not be counted twice if there is overlap with another career disruption
- only include periods since the award of the PhD even if this sits outside the last 10-year period
- only include periods before the close date (any career disruptions after the application close date will not be applicable/considered in this funding round)
- involve a continuous absence from work of 90 calendar days or more, or continuous part-time employment (with defined % FTE) due to circumstances defined as a career disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 90 calendar days or more.¹³

Consecutive changes to % FTE resulting from a single career disruption event are considered cumulatively (for example, a researcher returning from maternity leave at reduced % FTE due to carer responsibilities may claim both the period of maternity leave and the absence due to reduced % FTE).

Administering Institutions must retain evidence that applicants to the EL Category have met the 10-year time restriction (pass date of PhD or other equivalent qualification/research experience), including any career disruption claims, if applicable. This evidence must be an official document from the relevant institution(s) and must be available to NHMRC if requested.

If the CIA holds multiple PhDs in a health and/or medical research field, eligibility to apply at the Emerging Leadership Level will be determined using the earliest awarded PhD, irrespective of whether the PhD still aligns with the CIA's area of research.

Note: Neither the submission date of the PhD thesis nor the date of degree conferral will be accepted as evidence. The PhD census date is the application close date (30 July 2025) for all applicants, including current Investigator Grant holders (i.e. whose grants will not end prior to when their new Investigator Grant is to commence (if successful)).

4.5. Exclusion of applications

An application may be excluded from further consideration if NHMRC identifies that:

- it contravenes an eligibility rule or other requirement as set out in these guidelines
- it, or the CIA, [contravenes an applicable law or code](#), or
- it is inconsistent with the objectives of the NHMRC Act and/or the purposes of the MREA.

An application will be excluded if the CIA is the subject of a decision by NHMRC's CEO or delegate that any application they make to NHMRC, for specified funding schemes, will be excluded from consideration for a period of time, whether or not they otherwise meet the eligibility requirements. Such decisions will generally reflect consequential action taken by NHMRC in response to findings of a serious breach of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (the Code)

¹² Career disruptions prior to the PhD pass date (but after CIA has commenced research) may be included to extend the 10-year timeframe for track record assessment ('10-year assessment timeframe' – see [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix G](#)).

¹³ For example, an applicant who has childcare responsibilities at 0.2 FTE (i.e. employed at 0.8 FTE) would need to maintain this level of employment for at least 450 consecutive calendar days to achieve a career disruption of 90 continuous calendar days.

¹⁴ Based on the held Grant's 'original' end date, unless the CIA has applied a variation to that Grant which causes the Research Activities to continue beyond the 'original' end date, in which case, eligibility is based on the grant's 'actual' end date, at time of application (see [section 4.3](#)).

(including a finding of research misconduct, where this term is used) or a Probity Event. See the Code for a definition of 'research misconduct' and the [NHMRC Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy](#).

Such exclusion may take place at any time following CIA and Administering Institution certification of the application.

If a decision is made to exclude an application from further consideration, NHMRC will provide its decision and the reason(s) for the decision to the Administering Institution's Research Administration Officer (RAO). The Administering Institution's RAO is responsible for advising applicants of the decision. Decisions to exclude an application may be reviewable by [NHMRC's Commissioner of Complaints](#).

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1. Eligible grants activities and expenditure

Funding provided by NHMRC for a grant activity must be spent on costs directly incurred in that grant activity that satisfy the principles and requirements outlined in the [Direct Research Costs Guidelines](#).

5.1.1. Salary support

The salary component of an Investigator Grant is provided to assist employing the Investigator Grant recipient and only that recipient. The actual remuneration is agreed between the Investigator and the Administering Institution.

The research support package (RSP) component of an Investigator Grant can only be spent on direct costs of research. It must not be used to supplement the salary of the Investigator Grant recipient but can be used for [Personnel Support Packages](#) (PSPs) to employ research staff.

Recipients of an Investigator Grant are not entitled to receive salary concurrently from other NHMRC grants (see [section 4.3.3](#)).

5.2. Funding to support overseas grant activities and researchers

The RSP is for research cost expenditure in Australia. Funding can be used to support specific grant activities to be undertaken overseas if the overseas grant activity is critical to the successful completion of the project and the equipment/resources required for the grant activity are not available in Australia.

See [NHMRC's Direct Research Costs Guidelines](#) for further guidance on the expenditure of funding for a grant activity.

5.3. Duplicate funding

NHMRC may compare the research proposed in grant applications with current applications across NHMRC-funded and administered grant opportunities, grants previously funded, currently funded and funded by other agencies (e.g. Australian Research Council or Department of Health, Disability and Aging) and published research. NHMRC will not fund research that it considers duplicates research previously or currently being funded.

Where NHMRC believes that an applicant has submitted similar research proposals to NHMRC and has been successful with more than one application, the applicant may be required to provide NHMRC with a written report clearly identifying the difference between the research activities in each application. If NHMRC subsequently considers that the research activities are not sufficiently different, NHMRC may withdraw an offer of funding, or the applicant will be required to decline or relinquish one of the grants.

6. The assessment criteria

Applications for Investigator Grants 2026 are assessed by peers against the assessment criteria listed below and the score descriptors in [Appendix B](#).

- Track Record, relative to opportunity (70%), including selected Level
- Knowledge Gain (30%).

6.1. Track record

NHMRC defines ‘track record’ for the Investigator Grant scheme as the value of an individual’s past research achievement, using evidence, relative to opportunity (see [Appendix C](#)), not prospective achievements. Assessment of track record comprises peer reviewers’ consideration of:

Criteria	Weighting	Assessment timeframe*
Publications	35%	10-year assessment timeframe*
Research impact and pathway to impact	20%	Emphasis is on the CIA’s recent and/or ongoing contributions to realising, sustaining and/or maximising the impact
Leadership	15%	10-year assessment timeframe*

*Further details of the ‘10-year assessment timeframe’ for publications and leadership are in [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix G](#).

Track records are assessed relative to opportunity, taking into consideration any valid career disruptions and other relative to opportunity considerations, where applicable (see [Appendix C](#) and [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix G](#)).

NHMRC acknowledges the dynamic nature of ‘impact’. As such, the assessment of research impact and pathway to impact emphasises the applicant’s ‘recent’ and/or ongoing contributions to realising, sustaining and/or maximising the impact (see [Appendix B](#)).

It is recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants often make additional valuable contributions to policy development, clinical/public health leadership and/or service delivery, community activities and linkages, and are often representatives on key committees. If applicable, these contributions will be considered when assessing research output and track record.

6.2. Knowledge Gain

NHMRC defines 'Knowledge Gain' for the Investigator Grant scheme as the quality of the proposed research and significance of the knowledge gained. It incorporates theoretical concepts, hypothesis, research design, identification and mitigation of risk, robustness and the extent to which the research findings will contribute to the research area and health outcomes (by advancing knowledge, practice or policy).

7. How to apply

7.1. Overview and timing of grant opportunity processes

Wednesday 4 June 2025	Applications open in Sapphire
5:00pm ACT local time - Wednesday 2 July 2025	Minimum data due in Sapphire
5:00pm ACT local time - Wednesday 30 July 2025	Applications close in Sapphire
August – November 2025	Anticipated peer review period
February 2026*	Anticipated notification of outcomes

*Date is indicative and subject to change.

Applications must be submitted electronically using Sapphire (unless otherwise advised by NHMRC).

The budget calculation date on which salary and RSP reductions will be calculated for Investigator Grant applications will be 5:00 pm ACT local time on 30 July 2025.

Electronic submission requires Administering Institutions and the CIA to register for an account in Sapphire. Applicants who are not registered can submit a new user request via the login page of Sapphire.

Applicants should refer to the [Sapphire Learning and Training Resources](#) for detailed user instructions or contact their RAO or NHMRC's Research Help Centre for further assistance.

Late applications will not be accepted.

7.2. Application extensions

Requests for application extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be submitted by email to help@nhmrc.gov.au before the application closing date and time. Requests will only be considered for:

- unforeseen circumstances, e.g. natural calamities such as bushfires, floods or cyclones
- exceptional circumstances that affect multiple researchers, e.g. power and/or internet network outages, or
- where an applicant, or a member of their immediate family,¹⁵ is incapacitated due to an unforeseen medical emergency, such as life-threatening injury, accident or death.

Extensions will be for a maximum of 7 calendar days. This is to ensure that subsequent peer review processes and approval of funding recommendations are not delayed, especially as eligibility decisions for some NHMRC schemes depend on an applicant's success with other schemes.

Requests for extensions submitted after the scheme close date and time will not be considered.

¹⁵ Immediate family comprises a spouse, child, parent or sibling. It includes de facto, step and adoptive relations (e.g. de facto, step or adopted children).

7.3. Application requirements

The application must contain all information necessary for assessment without the need for further written or oral explanation or reference to additional documentation. Further information on what can and cannot be included and guidance for each component of the application is provided in [Appendix G](#).

Reference to additional documentation should be taken to include, but not be limited to, links to external websites, apart from references to journal articles, guidelines, government reports, datasets and other outputs that are only available online. Where links are included, provide the URL in full (e.g. the NHMRC website <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au>).

For the purposes of providing evidence for claims made against the Research impact and pathway to impact criterion, applicants may include references to external websites, where this is necessary to corroborate their claim(s).

All details included must be current at the time of submission, as this information is relied on during assessment.

7.3.1. Minimum data requirements

Minimum data must be entered in Sapphire by the specified due date. **Applications that fail to satisfy this requirement will be ineligible and will not proceed.** Applicants must complete the required fields with correct information. Applications containing placeholder text (including in the application title) such as “text”, “synopsis” or “xx” at minimum data may be ineligible. The minimum data deadline will not be extended.

Applicants are discouraged from making any changes to minimum data fields following the minimum data deadline as NHMRC uses minimum data to identify appropriate peer reviewers to assess the application. Incorrect minimum data may result in less suitable peer reviewers assessing the application.

Minimum data fields for Investigator Grants 2026 are outlined in [Section 3](#) of [Appendix G](#) and within Sapphire.

RAOs are not required to certify applications for the purpose of minimum data. Applications are only to be certified once complete and ready for submission.

Applications must comply with all content and formatting requirements. Incomplete or non-compliant applications may be ineligible.

Additional requirements and guidance for each component of the application are outlined in [Appendix G](#).

7.4. Consumer and community involvement

The *Statement on Consumer and Community Involvement in Health and Medical Research* (the Statement) has been developed because of the important contribution consumers make to health and medical research. The Statement’s purpose is to guide research institutions, researchers, consumers and community members in the active involvement of consumers and community members in all aspects of health and medical research. The Consumers Health Forum of Australia Ltd (CHF) and NHMRC worked in partnership with consumers and researchers to develop the Statement.

To complement the statement, NHMRC has released a Toolkit with resources on consumer and community involvement in, and expectations of, health and medical research. Researchers are

encouraged to consider the benefits of actively engaging consumers and to use this Toolkit throughout all stages of research, including the planning and preparation of grant applications, the conduct of research and the evaluation of outcomes.

Further information on CHF, the Statement and the Toolkit is available on the [NHMRC webpage on consumer and community engagement](#). Consumer and community involvement in the proposed research will be considered, as relevant, as part of the applicable assessment criteria (see [Section 6](#)).

7.5. Certification and submission

Once complete, applications must be electronically certified and then submitted to NHMRC through the RAO of an NHMRC Administering Institution using Sapphire.

All parties to certification are responsible for ensuring that the application is complete and accurate. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)*. NHMRC will investigate any false or misleading information and may exclude the application from further consideration.

Certification is required firstly by the CIA and then by the Administering Institution RAO by the specified due date or the application will be ineligible and excluded from further consideration.

Once submitted to NHMRC, the application is considered final and no changes can be made.

7.5.1. CIA certification

The following assurances, acknowledgements and undertakings are required of the CIA before submitting an application:

- All required information has been provided and is complete, current and correct.
- All eligibility and other application requirements have been met.
- All personnel contributing to the grant activity have familiarised themselves with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#), the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#), the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes](#) and other relevant NHMRC policies concerning the conduct of research, and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with those policies.
- The application may be excluded from consideration if found to be in breach of any requirements, in accordance with the guidelines.

And if funded,

- The research will be carried out in strict accordance with the conditions governing NHMRC grants at the time.
- The Head of Department of the Administering Institution (and Participating Institution/s, if applicable) will ensure the appropriate facilities will be available.
- The research may be used for internal NHMRC quality evaluations/reviews.

7.5.2. Administering Institution certification

The following assurances, acknowledgements and undertakings are required of the Administering Institution before submitting an application:

- Reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the application is complete and correct and complies with all eligibility and other application requirements.
- CIA is an Australian or New Zealand citizen or permanent resident at the time of accepting the successful grant.

- CIA will be based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period, or 50% of the funding period if CIA is an NHMRC Emerging Leadership Fellow.
- The appropriate facilities and salary support will be available for the funding period.
- Approval of the grant activity by relevant institutional committees and approval bodies, particularly for ethics and biosafety, will be sought and obtained before the commencement of the research, or the parts of the research that require their approval.
- Arrangements for the management of the grant have been agreed between all institutions associated with the application.
- The application is being submitted with the full authority of, and on behalf of, the Administering Institution, noting that under section 136.1 of the *Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995*, it is an offence to provide false or misleading information to a Commonwealth body in an application for a benefit. This includes submission of an application by those not authorised by the Institution to submit applications for funding to NHMRC.

Administering Institutions must ensure that the RAO is authorised to certify and submit applications. Where a researcher is a nominated position holder for the Administering Institution, the Administering Institution is to manage Conflict of Interest and separation of duties and ensure the researcher does not certify their own application.

7.6. Retracted publications

If a publication relevant to an application is retracted after the application has been submitted, the applicant must promptly notify their RAO. The RAO must advise NHMRC at the earliest opportunity of the retraction by email (to help@nhmrc.gov.au) with an explanation of the reasons for the retraction.

In addition, where the publication forms part of the applicant's track record, the applicant must immediately record that information in their Profile in Sapphire.

If an application is largely dependent on the results of a retracted publication, the applicant should also consider withdrawing the application. If, under these circumstances, an applicant chooses not to withdraw the application, the RAO must advise NHMRC in writing (to help@nhmrc.gov.au), clearly outlining the reasons for not withdrawing the application.

7.7. Withdrawal of applications

Applications may be withdrawn at any time by written notice from the Administering Institution's RAO to NHMRC.

An application may be 'marked for deletion' by the applicant in Sapphire before the close of the round. This authorises NHMRC to delete the application once the grant opportunity has closed. The application will not be deleted while the grant opportunity remains open for application submission.

7.8. Questions during the application process

Applicants requiring further assistance should direct enquiries to their Administering Institution's RAO.

All policy enquiries must be submitted in writing by the Administering Institution's RAO to NHMRC's Research Help Centre. Policy enquiries from applicants will be re-directed to the RAO. Frequently asked policy questions will be addressed via the scheme's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document, which will be updated on [GrantConnect](#) as required and should be reviewed before submitting a query.

NHMRC's Research Help Centre details:

Phone: 1800 500 983 (+61 2 6217 9451 for international callers)

Email: help@nhmrc.gov.au

Refer to the [Research Help Centre webpage](#) for opening hours.

8. The grant selection process

8.1. Assessment of grant applications

NHMRC considers applications through a targeted competitive grant process. Applications are required to meet eligibility requirements as set out in these guidelines and are assessed against the assessment criteria (see [Section 6](#)) by independent peer reviewers. Overall assessment scores are used to produce a rank ordered list of applications, on which funding recommendations will be based.

As per section 12 of the CGRPs, the extent to which applications represent value with relevant money is considered as part of the broader score descriptors in [Appendix B](#). This consideration guides assessment of applications against the scheme's objectives and intended outcomes ([Section 2](#)), the relative value of the grant sought, the quality of the proposed research and the track record or capability of the applicant(s).

8.1.1. Who will assess applications?

NHMRC's peer review process is designed to provide a rigorous, fair, transparent and consistent assessment of the merits of each application to ensure that only the highest quality research that provides value with money is recommended for funding.

Applicants must not seek to identify or make contact about their application with anyone who is directly engaged with its assessment, in keeping with NHMRC's principles of impartial and independent peer review. Seeking to influence the process or outcomes of peer review may constitute a breach of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) and may result in the application being excluded from consideration.

8.1.2. Investigator Grants assessment process

NHMRC will conduct peer review for this funding round in accordance with the following principles:

- **Fairness.** Peer review processes are fair and seen to be fair by all.
- **Transparency.** Applies to all stages of peer review.
- **Independence.** Peer reviewers provide independent advice. There is also independent oversight of peer review processes by independent Chairs and Observers, where relevant.
- **Appropriateness and balance.** There is appropriate experience, expertise and representation of peer reviewers assessing applications.
- **Research community participation.** Persons holding taxpayer-funded grants should willingly make themselves available to participate in peer review processes, whenever possible, in accordance with the obligations of the Funding Agreement.
- **Confidentiality.** Participants respect that confidentiality is important to the fairness and robustness of peer review.
- **Impartiality.** Peer review is objective and impartial, with appropriate processes in place to manage disclosures of interest.

- **Quality and excellence.** NHMRC will continue to introduce evidence-based improvements into its processes to achieve the highest quality decision-making through peer review.

Peer reviewers will independently undertake an assessment of applications against the assessment criteria (see [Section 6](#)).

The overall scores from assessments will be used to produce a rank ordered list of applications, on which funding recommendations will be based.

Further information on the assessment process is in the accompanying peer review guidelines.

8.1.3. Health research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

As part of NHMRC's stated commitment to advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, NHMRC has requirements and processes designed to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research is of the highest scientific merit and is beneficial and acceptable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Applicants proposing to undertake research which specifically relates to the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, or which includes distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, biological samples or data, must refer to the following documents in formulating their proposal:

- [Road map 3: A strategic framework for improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health through research](#)
- [Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders](#), and
- [Keeping Research on Track II](#), which is a companion document on how the values and principles outlined in the [Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders](#) can be put into practice in research.

To qualify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, at least 20% of the research effort and/or capacity-building must relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Qualifying applications must address NHMRC's *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* as follows:

- **Community engagement** – the proposal demonstrates how the research and potential outcomes are a priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with relevant community engagement by individuals, communities and/or organisations in conceptualisation, development and approval, data collection and management, analysis, report writing and dissemination of results.
- **Benefit** – the potential health benefit of the project is demonstrated by addressing an important health issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This benefit can have a single focus or affect several areas, such as knowledge, finance and policy or quality of life. The benefit may be direct and immediate, or it can be indirect, gradual and considered.
- **Sustainability and transferability** – the proposal demonstrates how the results of the project have the potential to lead to achievable and effective contributions to health gain for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, beyond the life of the project. This may be through sustainability in the project setting and/or transferability to other settings such as evidence-based practice and/or policy. In considering this issue, the proposal should address the relationship between costs and benefits.

- **Building capability** – the proposal demonstrates how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and researchers will develop relevant capabilities through partnerships and participation in the project.

Peer reviewer(s) with specific expertise in Indigenous health research will evaluate how well the application addresses the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* and ensure the research is being undertaken in a culturally appropriate manner. This evaluation is not given a numerical score but is a yes/no determination that will be taken into consideration in the overall assessment of the application, using the assessment criteria outlined in [Section 6](#) (it does not alter the weighting of the assessment criteria). Confirmation of qualifying applications will be used for reporting measures by NHMRC.

8.2. Funding recommendations

Rank ordered lists will be used to ensure that NHMRC awards grants on merit while also meeting its obligation to support a gender diverse and inclusive health and medical research workforce (see [Appendix A](#)).

To help support outstanding investigators at all career stages, Investigator Grant applications are separated into 3 funding competitions (EL1, EL2 and Leadership), with separate pools of funding available for each competition, as in previous rounds. Leadership applicants are further separated into 2 funding competitions – one for men and the other for women and non-binary applicants, with a target to fund an equal number of grants in the 2 cohorts.

Structural priority funding will be allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and researchers at all Levels, as in previous rounds. Structural priority funding will also be applied as required to fund high-quality ‘near-miss’ women and non-binary EL1 and EL2 applicants (see [Appendix A](#)).

Additional funding may also be directed towards early and mid-career researchers (EL2 and L1) to address low funded rates at these Levels and historically poor retention rates in the health and medical research workforce among this cohort.

Further details on the gender measures are available on the [Working towards gender equity in Investigator Grants webpage](#).

8.3. Who will approve grants?

In accordance with paragraph 7(1)(c) of the NHMRC Act, NHMRC’s CEO or their delegate makes recommendations on expenditure from the MREA to the Minister with portfolio responsibility for NHMRC. The Minister, acting on the advice of the CEO, determines expenditure from the MREA (subsection 51(2) of the NHMRC Act).

9. Notification of application outcomes

NHMRC will advise applicants and their nominated Administering Institution’s RAO of the outcome of the application as early as possible, following the approval of grants. Advice of outcomes may occur before the approval of grants if an application has been assessed as uncompetitive or excluded for other reasons.

NHMRC may advise applicants and their Administering Institution’s RAO of the outcome [under media embargo](#). This means that the information must not be made public until the embargo is lifted. During the media embargo period, applicants must not publicise the information or post comments about their or the grant opportunity’s grant outcomes in public domains such as social forums, websites, journals or newspapers.

10. Successful grant applications

CIAs whose applications are approved for funding will have access to a letter of offer through Sapphire. Administering Institutions responsible for administering approved applications will also have access to the letter of offer and to the Schedule to the Funding Agreement. The Administering Institution is responsible for accepting the Schedule through the online signing/acceptance process within Sapphire.

NHMRC's CEO or delegate may withdraw or vary an offer of a grant if they consider that it is reasonably necessary to protect Commonwealth revenue.

10.1. Information required from grantees

Grantees may be required to supply additional information about their grant activity before payments commence. This will be stated in the Schedule to the Funding Agreement, relevant grant opportunity guidelines or letter of offer.

10.2. Obligations and approvals

NHMRC-funded grant activities must comply with [applicable guidelines, laws and approval requirements](#).

Institutions applying for NHMRC funding (both Administering and Participating Institutions) must also be aware of their obligations under the [National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse – Grant Connected Policy](#). Relevant institutions that have been named in an application for the Redress Scheme or named in the Royal Commission, and have not joined the Redress Scheme, will be ineligible to receive NHMRC funding.

Note: NHMRC-funded research with ethics and biosafety considerations must be referred for approval to the relevant institutional committees and approval bodies.

10.3. NHMRC Funding Agreement

All grants are offered in accordance with the [Funding Agreement](#) (with any conditions specified in Schedules and these guidelines), which is a legal agreement between NHMRC and the Administering Institution. Schedule(s) are accepted by the Administering Institution electronically in accordance with the provisions of the Funding Agreement.

A grant will not commence, nor grant funds be paid, until:

- the Funding Agreement between NHMRC and the Administering Institution is in place, and
- the appropriate Schedule to the Funding Agreement is executed in accordance with clause 2.3 of the Funding Agreement.

10.3.1. Responsible and ethical conduct of research

NHMRC expects the highest levels of research conduct and integrity to be observed in the research that it funds. Under the Funding Agreement, NHMRC funded research must be conducted in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

10.4. NHMRC policies

Under the Funding Agreement, it is the responsibility of Administering Institutions and CIs to be aware of, and comply with, all relevant [legislation and policies](#) relating to the conduct of the grant activity. This includes adhering to the key principles and applicable requirements of the CGRPs and the published grant opportunity guidelines.

10.5. Payments

Payments will commence once all outstanding obligations (e.g. conditions, eligibility rules or data requirements specified in the Schedule to the Funding Agreement, relevant grant opportunity guidelines or letter of offer) have been met by the CIA and the Administering Institution.

10.6. Suspension of grants

NHMRC funding may be suspended for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, requests made by the CIA. Variations will generally only be granted if allowed in the grant opportunity guidelines and the NHMRC [Grantee Variation Policy](#).

Funding may also be suspended by NHMRC, in circumstances as set out in the Funding Agreement, including when there has been a failure to comply with a Policy or Guideline, or on the basis of a Probity Event or an investigation of an alleged breach of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (including research misconduct, where this term is used).

10.7. Tax implications

All amounts referred to in these guidelines are exclusive of GST, unless stated otherwise.

Administering Institutions are responsible for all financial and taxation matters associated with the grant.

11. Announcement of grants

Grant outcomes are publicly listed on the [GrantConnect website](#) within 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by the CGRPs.

12. How we monitor your grant activity

12.1. Variations

A variation is a change (including a delay) to a grant. There are specific circumstances under which grantees are to report and seek approval of a variation to an NHMRC grant (including the grant activity) relative to the peer reviewed application. Requests must comply with the grant opportunity guidelines and the *NHMRC Grantee Variations Policy*. Requests to vary the terms of a grant are to be made to NHMRC via the Grantee Variation portal in Sapphire. For information on grant variations see the [NHMRC Grantee Variations Policy](#).

Grant variations cannot be used as a means to meet NHMRC eligibility requirements.

The budget calculation date on which salary and RSP reductions will be calculated for Investigator Grant applications will be 5:00 pm ACT local time on 30 July 2025.

12.2. Processes specific to Investigator Grants 2026

Additional administrative obligations and processes specific to Investigator Grant holders are outlined in the following sections. Unless otherwise stated, these are in addition to the general requirements set out in these guidelines, the NHMRC Funding Agreement and on the [NHMRC website](#).

Where an Investigator Grant recipient is unable to meet the general and/or Investigator Grant specific requirements, the Administering Institution must submit a variation, prior to the start date, to defer the commencement date ([section 12.1](#)). Retrospective variations cannot be accepted.

NHMRC must be notified if a CIA's employment circumstances change following submission of an application for an Investigator Grant or during an Investigator Grant, for example, a change of employer or additional employment responsibilities being undertaken, a period spent overseas or receipt of a non-NHMRC grant that affects Investigator Grant salary (see [section 4.3](#)).

Requests to vary the terms of a Grant should be made to NHMRC via the Grantee Variation portal in NHMRC's grant management system, Sapphire.

12.2.1. Acceptance and commencement of an Investigator Grant

An Investigator Grant awarded through this Grant Opportunity is expected to commence on 1 January 2027. If the successful CIA's held Investigator Grant ends later than 31 December 2026,¹⁶ their new Investigator Grant will commence no earlier than 1 January of the year immediately after their existing Investigator Grant is scheduled to conclude. CIAs cannot relinquish their existing Investigator Grant for the purposes of taking up their new Investigator Grant early, but must complete their existing Investigator Grant before commencing their new Investigator Grant.

Where an Investigator Grant recipient is unable to meet the requirement to commence on 1 January 2027 or on 1 January of the year immediately after the existing Investigator Grant is scheduled to conclude, the Administering Institution must submit a variation, prior to the start date, to defer the commencement date (see [section 12.1](#)). Grant recipients should note that deferments of less than 12 months will cause asynchrony with the scheme and potentially affect eligibility for subsequent funding rounds.

12.2.2. Adjustments to FTE commitment

Requests to adjust a grant recipient's FTE commitment will be considered by NHMRC on a case-by-case basis and must have the support of the Administering Institution.

Investigator Grant recipients may request to adjust their FTE commitment to the grant where they experience a career disruption or to enable them to conduct research while maintaining other professional activity ('Professional part-time'). For information on 'other professional activity' refer to [section 3.3.2](#).

CIAs awarded a professional part-time Investigator Grant may request to reduce their FTE commitment where they experience a career disruption or to increase their FTE dedicated to 'other professional activity'. Where professional part-time CIAs reduce their FTE for a career disruption, they have access to the same career disruption flexibility options as other Investigator Grant CIAs (see [section 12.2.2.1](#)), however, their calculation of salary redistribution or grant term

¹⁶ All references to held Investigator Grants in this section are based on the held Investigator Grant's 'actual' end date (in Sapphire) at time of application (see [section 4.3](#)).

extension will be based off the awarded FTE and RSP.¹⁷ Professional part-time CIAs cannot increase their awarded FTE or RSP for any reason.

12.2.2.1. Requests to adjust FTE commitment for career disruptions

Investigator Grant holders who experience career disruptions (see [Appendix C](#)) during the term of their grant, can request to vary their FTE commitment (0 FTE – 0.8 FTE) at any time following the acceptance of their offer of a grant.

These CIAs will have the option to:

- request to reduce their salary payment in-line with the reduction in FTE commitment to the grant (no change in the grant term, salary funding reduced)
- redirect the unused salary to the grant's RSP (no change to the grant term or total funding amount¹⁸)
- extend the term of the Investigator Grant pro-rata (with the reduction in FTE commitment) for up to an additional 2 years. Salary will be reallocated to reflect the increased grant duration resulting from the change in FTE commitment with no change to the grant funding¹⁹
- fully suspend the grant (salary and RSP) for 1 FTE career disruptions (extends the grant term in line with the period of suspension, no change to total funding).

These flexibility options will be available to all Investigator Grant holders (irrespective of when they were awarded their grant) from 1 January 2026.

CIAs may choose **one** of the above options at a time, however, all options can be accessed on the same Investigator Grant so long as these are not taken up concurrently.

These options **are not** retroactive. They will apply to disruptions occurring during the term of the grant from the implementation date. There will be no 'back-payments' for grant holders who reduced their FTE commitment for career disruptions prior to the implementation date.

The minimum period for a grant variation that adjusts the CIA's FTE due to a career disruption (0 FTE – 0.8 FTE) is 3 months, or 90 days FTE for a non-consecutive and/or non-related ('stand-alone') disruption, whichever is longer.²⁰

NHMRC acknowledges the dynamic nature of career disruptions, and that these circumstances can be unplanned. As such, NHMRC understands it will not always be possible for CIAs to submit a grant variation prior to a career disruption that impacts the CIA's capacity to work. For further details please see NHMRC's [Grantee Variation Policy](#).

12.2.2.2. Suspension of an Investigator Grant

NHMRC funding may be suspended for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, requests made by the CIA. Variations will generally only be granted if allowed in the grant opportunity guidelines and the NHMRC [Grantee Variation Policy](#).

Funding may also be suspended by NHMRC, in circumstances as set out in the Funding Agreement, including when there has been a failure to comply with a Policy or Guideline, or on the

¹⁷ For example, a professional part-time CIA awarded at 0.6 FTE who experiences a 0.8 FTE career disruption, allowing them to work at 0.2 FTE, will have the calculation of their salary redistribution to the RSP, or extension of their Investigator Grant pro rata, based off the difference between what they were awarded, and the FTE of their declared disruption (i.e. 0.6 FTE (awarded FTE) minus 0.2 FTE (current FTE) = 0.4 FTE (%FTE used for calculation)).

¹⁸ Redirected salary funds treated the same as RSP funds (see Direct Research Cost Guidelines)

¹⁹ Where a CIA reduces their %FTE commitment to a level lower than what would allow enough time to receive their full awarded salary, this unused salary will be redirected to the grant's RSP.

²⁰ For example, where a CIA experiences a 'stand-alone' career disruption requiring a reduction to 0.5 FTE commitment to the grant, the minimum period for the grant variation request would be 180 calendar days.

basis of a Probity Event or an investigation of an alleged breach of the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (including research misconduct, where this term is used).

NHMRC will consider a request to suspend an Investigator Grant, on a case-by-case basis, under the following circumstances:

- career disruption (see [12.2.2.1](#) above and [Appendix C](#))
- temporary other appointments (see [section 3.3.4](#))
- time overseas as an EL Investigator Grant recipient.

An Investigator Grant recipient that has been approved to suspend both salary and RSP (full suspension) will have the 'actual' end date moved by a period of time equal to the duration of the period of the suspension. Requests to suspend a grant must be supported by the Administering Institution. Grant recipients should note that full suspensions of less than 12 months will cause asynchrony with the scheme and potentially affect eligibility for subsequent funding rounds.

12.2.2.3. Suspension of Investigator Grant for time overseas as an Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant recipient

EL grant recipients who are overseas for the purposes of their EL grant (see [section 3.3.5.1](#)) may apply to suspend their grant (salary and RSP) for up to 2 years, to complete their overseas research, but not for non-research vocational reasons or pursuits unrelated to the Investigator Grant. Such grant recipients must have the support of both their overseas and Australian Administering Institution and **have established an independent means of financial support for the duration of the additional overseas time.**

12.2.3. Parental leave

Parental leave provided for under State and Territory legislation is the responsibility of the Administering Institution.

An Investigator Grant does not make available additional funds to those provided in the original Investigator Grant to cover conditions of employment including parental leave.

12.3. Reporting

Administering Institutions are required to report to NHMRC on the progress of the grant and the use of grant funds. Where an institution fails to submit reports (financial or otherwise) as required, NHMRC may take action under the provisions of the Funding Agreement. Failure to report within timeframes may affect eligibility to receive future funding.

12.3.1. Financial reports

[Annual financial reports](#) are required in a form prescribed by NHMRC. At the completion of the grant or upon transfer to a new Administering Institution, a financial acquittal is also required.

12.3.2. Non-financial reports

The Funding Agreement requires the CIA to prepare [reports](#) for each grant activity. While having outstanding obligations from previous NHMRC grants does not disqualify applicants from applying for other NHMRC grants, it is a condition of funding that outstanding obligations from previous NHMRC grants, including submission of a Final Report, have been met before commencement of a new grant.

Information included in the Final Report may be publicly released. Use of this information may include publication on the [NHMRC website](#), publicity (including release to the media) and the promotion of research achievements.

The Administering Institution is also required to provide NHMRC with any other report in respect of any research activity within the timeframe, in the format and containing the information requested by NHMRC. All information provided to NHMRC in reports may be used for internal reporting and reporting to government. This information may also be used by NHMRC when reviewing or evaluating funded research projects or funding schemes, or designing future schemes.

12.4. Evaluation of the Investigator Grant scheme

NHMRC undertakes periodic evaluations of the performance and administration of its grant opportunities to determine their effectiveness and to identify where improvements can be made.

12.5. Open Access Policy

All recipients of NHMRC grants must comply with all elements of [NHMRC's Open Access Policy](#) as a condition of funding.

13. Probity

13.1. Fraud and corruption

NHMRC as a Commonwealth agency is subject to the Commonwealth Fraud and Corruption Control Framework 2024, under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), and is serious about preventing, detecting and responding to fraud and corruption.

Under the Commonwealth *Criminal Code Act 1995*, it is an offence to provide false or misleading information to a Commonwealth body in an application for a benefit.

NHMRC manages fraud and corruption matters in alignment with the [NHMRC Fraud and Corruption Control Framework](#).

13.2. Complaints process

As per the [NHMRC Complaints Policy](#), applicants or grantees can lodge a formal complaint about an NHMRC process related to funding via their Administering Institution's RAO and in writing to NHMRC Complaints Team at: complaints@nhmrc.gov.au. Complaints must be lodged within 28 days of the relevant NHMRC decision or action. NHMRC will provide a written response to all complaints. NHMRC will not review the merits of a funding decision, but it will investigate complaints about the administrative process followed to reach a funding decision.

If applicants or grantees are dissatisfied with the response from the NHMRC Complaints Team, they can raise their concerns with the [NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints](#). Note that the Commissioner of Complaints does not undertake a merits review.

Applicants or grantees can complain to the Commonwealth Ombudsman if they do not agree with the way NHMRC has handled their complaint. The Ombudsman will not usually consider a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with NHMRC and, where relevant, the Commissioner of Complaints.

13.3. Conflicts of interest

NHMRC is committed to ensuring that interests of any kind are dealt with consistently, transparently and with rigour, in accordance with sections 16A and 16B of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 (made under the subsection 29(2) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act)).

Applicants are not required to declare actual or perceived interests.

To manage any conflicts of interest with applicants, NHMRC requires peer reviewers to declare interests, actual or perceived, and sign deeds of confidentiality. Peer reviewers declare any direct or indirect, pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest, which is reviewed by NHMRC, before being granted full access to an application. Any peer reviewer who is determined by NHMRC to have a 'high' conflict of interest will not be able to participate in the review of that application.

By managing any conflict, NHMRC maintains objectivity, impartiality and integrity in the assessment of applications. Further information about the conflict of interest process is available in the *Investigator Grants 2026 Peer Review Guidelines*.

13.4. Privacy: confidentiality and protection of personal information

NHMRC treats applicants' personal information in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and the *Privacy Act 1988*. The [NHMRC Privacy Policy](#) details the types of personal or sensitive information that may be collected by NHMRC and how it will be handled. Applicants need to familiarise themselves with the NHMRC Privacy Policy before providing personal information to NHMRC.

Information that is generally regarded as confidential information is application information and any other information specifically identified as such by applicants and grantees, and will be received by NHMRC on the basis of a mutual understanding of confidentiality.

NHMRC may disclose personal and/or confidential information to:

- overseas entities, Australian, State/Territory or local government agencies, organisations or individuals where necessary to assess an application or to administer a grant
- the peer review committee and other Commonwealth employees and contractors to help NHMRC manage the grant scheme effectively
- employees and contractors of NHMRC to research, assess, monitor and analyse schemes and activities
- employees and contractors of other Commonwealth agencies for relevant purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery
- other Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government agencies in reports and consultations
- NHMRC approved Administering Institutions' Research Administration Offices
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- the responsible Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, and
- a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

In addition, NHMRC will provide certain limited personal information of the Chief Investigator/s included in an application to Administering Institutions for the purpose of certification of eligibility requirements.

13.5. Freedom of information

NHMRC as a Commonwealth agency is subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and is committed to meeting the Australian Government's transparency and accountability requirements. Freedom of information laws facilitate the general public's access to documents held by national government agencies, including application and funding documentation relating to NHMRC researchers. This right of access is limited where documents, or parts of documents, are exempt under the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Researchers are to familiarise themselves with [NHMRC's Freedom of Information procedures](#) before submitting an application.

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent	Identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent follows the advice given on the AIATSIS website (https://aiatsis.gov.au/family-history/you-start/proof-aboriginality). This states that government agencies and communities usually accept 3 'working criteria' as confirmation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent• identifying as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, and• being accepted as such by the community in which you live, or formerly lived.
assessment criteria	The specified principles or standards against which applications will be judged. These criteria are used to assess the merits of proposals and, in the case of a competitive granting opportunity, to determine applicant rankings.
Chief investigator (CI)	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
Chief investigator A (CIA)	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
<i>Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024</i> (CGRPs)	The CGRPs establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration.
date of effect	This will depend on the particular grant. It can be the date on which the schedule to a grant agreement is executed or the grant is announced, whichever is later.
eligibility criteria	The principles, standards or rules that a grant applicant must meet to qualify for consideration of a grant.
final year	The final 12 calendar months of a grant.
Funding Agreement	For NHMRC MREA grants, the grant agreement is the NHMRC Funding Agreement and the Schedule to the Funding Agreement.
funding round	Collectively refers to the Investigator, Synergy and Ideas Grant opportunities commencing funding in the same year.
grant	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
grant activity	Defined as "Research Activity" in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.

Term	Definition
grant opportunity guidelines	All the documents published on GrantConnect under the grant opportunity. Also referred to as guidelines in this document.
grant opportunity	Refers to the specific grant round or process where a Commonwealth grant is made available to potential grantees. Grant opportunities may be open or targeted and will reflect the relevant grant selection process.
grant program	A group of one or more grant opportunities under a single entity Portfolio Budget Statement Program. This is referred to as a scheme in this document.
GrantConnect	<p>GrantConnect is the Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRPs. It is available at www.grants.gov.au.</p> <p>Non-corporate Commonwealth entities (such as NHMRC) must publish grant opportunities on GrantConnect to meet the grant publishing requirements under the CGRPs.</p> <p>Where information is published in more than one location, and there are inconsistencies, GrantConnect is the authoritative, auditable information source.</p>
grantee	An individual/organisation that has been selected to receive a grant. For NHMRC's purposes, grants are awarded to the Administering Institution for the benefit of the grant recipients (however described).
Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA)	A 'Special Account' established under section 49 of the NHMRC Act, through which Government appropriated funds are used to pay NHMRC grants.
Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)	The MRFF was established in 2015 by the <i>Medical Research Future Fund Act 2015</i> (MRFF Act). Refer to the Department of Health, Disability and Aging website: https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/medical-research-future-fund .
peer reviewers	Individuals (peers) with appropriate knowledge and expertise who review grant applications.
Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Program	Described within the entity's PBS, PBS programs each link to a single outcome and provide transparency for funding decisions. These high-level PBS programs often comprise a number of lower level, more publicly recognised programs, some of which will be Grant Programs (schemes). A PBS Program may have more than one Grant Program (scheme) associated with it, and each of these may have one or more grant opportunities.
Probity Event	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
Sapphire	NHMRC's electronic, secure system that allows research administrators, applicants, assessors, grant holders and NHMRC staff to manage all aspects of the granting lifecycle.
Schedule	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
value with money	<p>Value with money in this document refers to 'value with relevant money' which is a judgement based on the grant proposal representing an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources and determined from a variety of considerations. When administering a grant opportunity, an official (including peer reviewers) should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of the project proposal and activities

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives • that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government's outcomes being achieved, and • the potential grantee's relevant experience and performance history.

Appendix A. NHMRC structural priorities, Investigator Grants 2026 priorities and funding organisations

NHMRC structural priorities

Each year, NHMRC identifies structural priorities for funding to help achieve its broader goals.

Applications that meet structural priorities may be funded in order of merit, supplementary to applications within the budget for the grant opportunity, based on advice from NHMRC's Research Committee. NHMRC's current structural priorities are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers
- Gender equity – female and non-binary lead investigators
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research and researchers

NHMRC is committed to improving the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and encourages applications that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. Accordingly, NHMRC is committed to allocating at least 5 per cent of the annual allocation from its Medical Research Endowment Account to research directed at improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Support for health and medical research and research translation is central to achieving improvements in this area. It is also important to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, and how this diversity relates to health issues in these communities. NHMRC has a target of 3.4% of NHMRC grants awarded annually be led by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researcher.

Applicants identifying as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent are asked to indicate this in their Sapphire profile.

Identification of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent follows the advice provided on the AIATSIS website (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/family-history/you-start/proof-aboriginality>). This states that government agencies and communities usually accept 3 'working criteria' as confirmation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, namely:

- being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- identifying as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, and
- being accepted as such by the community in which you live, or formerly lived.

Administering Institutions must retain evidence, consistent with AIATSIS guidance, of a Chief Investigator A's identification as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person and must provide this evidence to NHMRC, if requested.

Gender equity – female and non-binary lead investigators

As the Australian Government's lead agency for funding health and medical research, NHMRC is committed to achieving gender equity in its grant program. Funding outcomes have highlighted the underrepresentation of female chief investigators across many of NHMRC's funding schemes. By providing structural priority funding for female lead investigators, NHMRC is seeking to give more outstanding female researchers the opportunity to receive funding and to encourage more to apply. Non-binary lead investigators are included in the gender equity structural priority to

recognise that non-binary people in the research workforce, like women, may have been affected by systemic disadvantage.²¹

Following NHMRC's national consultation during 2022 on options to reach gender equity in the Investigator Grant scheme, NHMRC has implemented additional special measures under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* for the Investigator Grant scheme to address systemic disadvantage faced by women and non-binary applicants.

The following special measures were implemented to improve gender equity in the 2023 round:

- use structural priority funding for women at the Emerging Leadership levels of the scheme (EL1 and EL2) to the extent necessary to achieve gender equity targets
- for the Leadership Category (L1, L2 and L3 combined), award an equal number of grants by gender
- include non-binary researchers alongside women in both gender equity interventions.

Combined, these special measures will support a gender diverse and inclusive health and medical research workforce to take advantage of the full range of talent needed to build a healthy Australia.

Further details on these additional measures are available on the [NHMRC website](#).

Early and mid-career researchers

Additional funding will be directed towards early and mid-career researchers (EL2 and L1) to address low funded rates at these Levels and historically poor retention rates in the health and medical research workforce among this cohort.

Investigator Grants 2026 priority areas

In addition to these priorities, NHMRC may award Investigator Grants 2026 that:

- address other defined structural priorities
- are funded with partner organisations.

Special Awards

Details of NHMRC awards will be available on the [NHMRC website](#).

Minister's Medal

The Commonwealth Health Minister's Award for Excellence in Health and Medical Research is a \$50,000 grant awarded to the top-ranked Emerging Leadership Level 2 (EL2) Investigator Grant applicant in recognition of their outstanding achievement and potential in the field of health and medical research. The award supplements the Investigator Grant research support package to provide additional support for the recipient's research. The funds must be spent in accordance with [Section 5](#) and reported on as per [Section 12](#) of the Guidelines.

Investigator Grant priority areas funded by other organisations

Investigator Grant may be funded by or in conjunction with other organisations. These grants offer opportunities to researchers whose work is particularly relevant to the priorities and research interests of the partner organisations.

Some funding partners may require a separate application to be provided to them, or may have specific criteria and requirements, in addition to those of NHMRC. Applicants are to contact the funding partner to identify any additional requirements.

²¹ Non-binary applicants and applicants who use a relevant term to describe their gender in the "I use a different term" free text field within their Sapphire profile will be placed in the female/non-binary ranked list.

For the purposes of the *Privacy Act 1988*, applicants and other persons whose details appear in grant applications (e.g. other investigators) need to be aware that NHMRC may provide their personal information, including all pertinent application documentation and peer review outcomes, to the funding organisation(s) nominated by the applicant. The purpose of providing this information is to enable potential funding partners to assess the application's eligibility for funding under the funding organisation's policies.

In the event that a funding partner is unable to fulfil its obligation to a co-funded grant, NHMRC will continue to support the Investigator Grant recipient under the conditions that would have been awarded by NHMRC.

Any additional benefits that may have been provided by the funding partner, including Investigator Grant grants that may have been fully funded by the funding partner, will not be supported by NHMRC.

The following organisations are expected to partner with NHMRC in funding grants under this grant opportunity:

- MS Australia
- Cerebral Palsy Alliance
- Cancer Council Queensland.

Appendix B. Investigator Grants 2026 Score Descriptors

Applications for Investigator Grants 2026 are assessed by peer reviewers on the extent to which they address the assessment criteria:

- Track record, relative to opportunity (70%), including selected Level
 - Publications (35%)
 - Research impact and pathway to impact (20%)
 - ‘Reach and significance’ of the research impact (10%)
 - ‘Applicant’s contribution’ to the research impact (10%)
 - Leadership (15%)
- Knowledge Gain (30%).

NHMRC defines ‘track record’ for the Investigator Grant scheme as the value of an individual’s past research achievements, relative to opportunity, using evidence (not prospective achievements). Track records are assessed relative to opportunity, taking into consideration selected Level and any career disruptions, where applicable (see [Appendix C](#)).

NHMRC defines ‘knowledge gain’ for the Investigator Grant scheme as the quality of the proposed research and significance of the knowledge gained. It incorporates theoretical concepts, hypothesis, research design, robustness and the extent to which the research findings will contribute to the research area and health outcomes (by advancing knowledge, practice or policy).

Score descriptors

Score descriptors are used as a guide to scoring an application against each of the assessment criteria. Peer reviewers will consistently refer to these score descriptors to ensure thorough, equitable and transparent assessment of applications.

NHMRC strives to use a consistent range of adjectives in the descriptions of each score, across category descriptors. This is to help provide clarity and consistency for peer reviewers on what is expected at each score. However, due to the varying difficulty of addressing some elements of the assessment criteria, this is not always appropriate. In some instances, multiple adjectives are used within the description of a single score. This is to allow peer reviewers to consider the applicant’s performance along a range of excellence against the assessment criteria, as opposed to relying upon single adjectives.

While the score descriptors provide peer reviewers with some benchmarks for appropriately scoring each application, they are a guide to a ‘best fit’ outcome only, and it is not essential that all descriptors relating to a given score are met.

Performance indicators

The performance indicators (**Table 1**) can be used together with the score descriptors to further understand what is expected of applicants at each score. Performance indicators are designed to allow peer reviewers to anchor their expectations of applicants around the objectives of the scheme. Investigator Grants, for example, fund the ‘highest-performing researchers at all career stages.’ Therefore, these indicators are primarily framed around the expectation that awardees will be leaders in their research fields, relative to their career stage and, where relevant, their opportunities to conduct research.

The performance indicators provide peer reviewers with descriptions that address 3 broad ‘elements’ of independent assessment (quality of the proposed research, the potential for impact,

and the demonstrated capability of the applicant(s)). As such, not all descriptions in the performance indicators will be relevant for each assessment criteria.

As with category descriptors, performance indicators provide peer reviewers with some benchmarks for descriptions relating to a given score.

Table 1. Performance indicators

Performance indicator					
With reference to what the assessment criteria is asking (and where relevant, having consideration for the applicant's opportunities for research, their research field, access to resources and/or career stage), the applicant has demonstrated in their response, that they are:					
7 Highest performing	6 Outstanding	5 Above expectations	4 At expectations	3 Below expectations	2-1 Poor (2) OR not addressed or evidenced (1)
as strong a candidate as could reasonably be expected. You are entirely convinced by their response (there is no real need to change or alter in any way). In your view, the candidate has demonstrated they are fully capable of conducting research with significant positive impact and that they, and their proposed research, would be comparable with the best similar research or researchers anywhere in the world.	an incredibly strong candidate. You are extremely convinced by their response (with only a small number of minor weaknesses). In your view, the candidate has demonstrated they are exceedingly capable of conducting research with significant positive impact and that they, and their proposed research, would be comparable with the best similar research or researchers anywhere in Australia. [^]	a very strong candidate. You are very satisfied by their response (with only a small number of weaknesses). In your view, the candidate has demonstrated they are very capable of conducting research with significant positive impact and that they, and their proposed research, exceed your expectations of what you would consider to be a 'good' researcher or research.	a good candidate. You are mostly satisfied by their response (with some moderate weaknesses throughout). In your view, the candidate has demonstrated they are quite capable of conducting research with significant positive impact and that they, and their proposed research, meet your expectations of what you would consider to be a 'good' researcher or research.	a satisfactory candidate. You are somewhat satisfied by their response (with some moderate to significant weaknesses throughout). In your view, the candidate has demonstrated they may be capable of conducting research with positive impact but that they, and their proposed research, do not meet your expectations of what you would consider to be a 'good' researcher or research.	developing to the standard of a satisfactory candidate OR not able to adequately address the assessment criteria or corroborate their statements/claims
Key adjectives used in score descriptors					
Paradigm-shifting Transformative Central or Crucial Highest Fully Entirely	Extremely Outstanding Major(ly) Significant(ly)	Very	Important Well Good	Adequate Satisfactory Somewhat	Limited Marginal Poor Not (well) evidenced Not addressed

[^]NHMRC acknowledges that in some research areas, the best Australian research and researchers are the benchmark internationally. In these instances, peer reviewers are encouraged to align the applicant's response to a score of 7 for this element. When applicants simultaneously meet the descriptions for multiple scores (e.g. an applicant who satisfies the description of 'very strong' simultaneously satisfies the description of 'good'), peer reviewers are encouraged to consider aligning the applicant's response with the higher score.

Assessing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions

It is recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants make additional valuable contributions to policy development, clinical and public health leadership and/or service delivery, community activities and linkages, and are often representatives on key committees. If nominated by the applicant, these contributions should be considered when assessing research output and track record.

Track record, relative to opportunity (70%), including selected Level Publications (35%)

Applicants should nominate up to 10 of their best publications from within their 10-year assessment timeframe (see [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix G](#)). The focus on up to 10 nominated publications, rather than the applicant's total list of publications from their 10-year assessment timeframe, is to ensure emphasis of the publications track record assessment is on the **quality and contribution to science**, rather than quantity of publications.

Each nominated publication has an accompanying explanation field for the applicant to describe its quality, contribution to science, and the applicant's contribution.

Additional track record elements (e.g. conference participation, awards, patents, publications not already nominated in the applicant's Top 10), may only be introduced in these explanations where they:

- support the applicant's claims of quality and contribution to science
- are a direct result of the nominated publication
- are verifiable by the peer reviewer.

Applicants must explain the link between the nominated publication and the additional track record information being introduced.

Peer reviewers will be instructed to ignore additional track record information provided in the publication explanation field where they are not satisfied that it is directly linked to the nominated publication or where it is outside of the assessment of the publications criteria (e.g. career publication metrics). Field weighted metrics and citation metrics may be included within the explanation field.

Where possible, references to publications within the entry fields should be provided as a complete citation. Where this is not possible, include sufficient citation information to locate the publication, such as authors, publication title, journal name, year and digital object identifier. The applicant must ensure that citation details are correct, particularly the ordering of the authors on the paper. Where it is identified that an applicant has misrepresented the publication citation in their application, the assigned peer reviewers may be advised not to consider this publication in their assessment. The matter may also be referred to NHMRC's Ethics and Integrity section if there are any research integrity concerns, as outlined in the Factsheet - [Concerns about research integrity arising during NHMRC peer review](#).

Publications (and other research outputs such as patents) outside the applicant's 10-year assessment timeframe (see [section 6.8](#)), can be referred to in the research impact section if relevant.

Applicants may nominate any publication type that best illustrates their involvement, the quality of the research and its contribution to science. Applicants can also nominate pre-prints in their top 10.

A preprint is a complete and public draft of a scientific document, yet to be certified by a journal through peer review. To be considered in this category, a preprint:

- must be available in a recognised scientific public archive or repository such as arXiv, bioRxiv, Peer J Preprints, medRxiv, etc.
- should be uniquely identifiable via a digital object identifier (DOI). For preprints that are incrementally updated as work progresses, each version should have a unique DOI and only the latest version of the work should be included in the grant application.

When choosing what publication date to use, use the most recent version of the publication. For example:

- if referencing the preprint, use that date
- if the preprint is subsequently published in a journal, use that date
- for an early view publication that does not yet have a volume/edition/page number, use that date
- when the early view publication is subsequently given a volume/edition/page, use that date.

Peer reviewers will assess nominated publications, including accompanying explanations, with reference to the below score descriptors, to form a judgement on their overall quality and contribution to science, including the applicant's contribution to each.

Table 2. Publications score descriptors (35%)

Score descriptor	Score					
Relative to opportunity, the applicant's career stage and area of research, there was sufficient evidence that, overall:	7 Highest performing	6 Outstanding	5 Above expectations	4 At expectations	3 Below expectations	2-1 Poor (2) OR not addressed or evidenced (1)
the quality^ of the nominated publications was:	of the highest standard	outstanding	above expectations	at expectations	below expectations	marginal/poor, OR not (well) evidenced
the contribution to science of the nominated publications was:	paradigm shifting or transformative	majorly influential or significant	very important	important	somewhat important	limited OR not (well) evidenced/justified
the author's contribution to most/all publications was:	central or crucial	majorly influential or significant	very important	important	somewhat important	limited OR not (well) evidenced/justified

[^]quality refers to characteristics such as the rigour of design, appropriate use of methods, analytical strength of interpretations and significance of outcomes, rather than the number of publications or the standing of the journals in which they are published.

Reviewers should remember:

- 1) To assess eligible nominated publications (i.e. all allowable publication types and from within the applicant's 10-year assessment timeframe), including accompanying explanations, to form a judgement on their overall quality and contribution to science, including the applicant's contribution to each.
- 2) That publication quality refers to characteristics such as the rigour of experimental design (both qualitative and quantitative), appropriate use of statistical methods, reproducibility of results, analytical strength of interpretations and significance of outcomes, rather than the number of publications or the standing of the journals in which they are published.
- 3) To use score descriptors to appropriately score each application, noting score descriptors are only a guide to a 'best fit' outcome, and it is not essential that all descriptors relating to a given score are met.
- 4) If appropriate, adjust scoring for relative to opportunity considerations or for applicants applying at an inappropriate Level ([Appendix D](#)).
- 5) To ignore additional track record information supplied in the publication explanation field (e.g. conference participation, awards, patents and publications not already nominated in the applicant's 'Top 10') that has not been shown to be as a direct result of the nominated publication (see [section 6.10.1](#) of [Appendix G](#)).

According to feedback from Investigator Grant peer reviewers, applicants who scored well for the publications criteria:

- were first/last author on at least some of their nominated publications
- showed a clear upwards career trajectory
- clearly described and substantiated their role in the described work and nominated publications
- justified the quality, significance and impact of their nominated publications.

Research impact and pathway to impact (20%)

It is important to NHMRC's mission to build a healthy Australia that NHMRC-funded research positively effects the health and wellbeing of Australians. To help achieve this, Investigator Grant applicants are required to demonstrate a verifiable example of where they worked to help ensure their research has had a significant impact, as a key indicator of their potential for future success (key definitions at **Figure 1**).

The research 'discovery' or 'finding' alone is not assessed. Rather, the assessment of 'Research impact and pathway to impact' focuses on:

- the **'reach and significance'** of the impact (10%)
- the **'applicant's contribution'** to realising the impact (10%).

Applicants are expected to demonstrate their contribution to the claimed impact along a 'pathway to impact' (see **Figure 2**). Applicants may include multiple programs of research within a single coherent impact narrative when addressing the research impact assessment criteria. The impact can result from multiple collaborations, projects or research programs that together make an impact. Whether the impact is derived from one or more research programs, applicants should create a single coherent narrative for their 'pathway to impact' to allow a robust assessment. Peer reviewers are asked to consider the recency of the applicant's contribution to the impact at the score descriptors (**Table 5**).

It may assist applicants to better understand the concept of 'impact' by reviewing one or more of [NHMRC's impact case studies](#). These case studies outline the 'translation journey' of a selection of NHMRC-funded research projects and show that the creation of knowledge is vital, but also that there are many other activities necessary to generate impact.

Figure 1: Key definitions



Table 3. Types of research impact and examples of evidence of research impact

Type of impact	Examples of evidence (not exhaustive and in no particular order)	
Knowledge impact – research that has contributed to new knowledge and/or demonstrable benefits emerging from adoption, adaption or use of the discovery to inform further research, and/or understanding of what is effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognition of research publications (for example, citation metrics, particularly field weighted) sharing of research data, software or code contribution to registries or biobanks awards/prizes and conference presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uptake of research tools and techniques creation of intellectual property and/or patents a paradigm shift in a research field or evidence of uptake of the research by other disciplines creation of a new area of research
Health impact – research that has contributed to improvements in health through new therapeutics, diagnostics, disease prevention or changes in behaviour; or improvements in disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment, management of health problems, health policy, health systems, and quality of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> policy or program adopted a clinical guideline adopted international or national practice standards adopted improved service effectiveness Phase I, Phase II and Phase III clinical trial outcomes reported improved productivity due to research innovations (for example, reduced illness, injury) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quality-adjusted life years (QALYs), disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), potential years of life lost, patient reported outcome measure and other relevant indicators relative stay index for multi-day stay patients, hospital standardised mortality ratio, cost per weighted separation and total case weighted separation (also relevant for economic impact (health care system savings)) research report – commissioned by Government, Industry or Other; Technical Report; and Textbook
Economic impact – research that has contributed to improvements in the economic performance of the nation in which the research program was conducted, and/or for which the impact was intended, through creation of new industries, jobs or valuable products, or reducing health care costs, improving efficiency in resource use, or improving the welfare/well-being of the population within current health system resources. An economic impact may also contribute to social or health impacts, including human capital gains and the value of life and health.	<p>Healthcare system savings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduction in Medicare Benefits Schedule/ Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme costs improved productivity due to research innovations (for example, reduced illness, injury) improved service effectiveness personalised medicines <p>Product development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a research contract with an industry partner and an active collaboration granting of a patent execution of a licensing agreement with a company income from intellectual property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> raising funding from venture capital or other commercial sources or from government schemes that required industry co-participation successful transition from start-up company (public market flotation, merger or acquisition) development of pre-good manufacturing practice prototype successful generation or submission of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a regulatory standard data set applications for pre-market approval of a medical device a new drug or device for registration (for example, by Food and Drug Administration, European Medicines Agency, Therapeutic Goods Administration) product sales
Social impact – research that has contributed to improvements in the health of the society, including the well-being of the end user and the community. This may include improved ability to access health care services and to participate socially (including empowerment and participation in decision making) and to quantify improvements in the health of society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uptake or demonstrated use of evidence by decision makers/policy makers qualitative measures demonstrating changes in behaviours, attitudes, improved social equity, inclusion or cohesion improved environmental determinants of health improved social determinants of health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> changes to health risk factor improved health outcomes understanding and/or uptake for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities dissemination of research to consumers and the community via mainstream and/or specialist media capacity building of community members or health service partners

Figure 2. The research lifecycle and the pathway to impact



Reach and significance of the research impact (10%)

The applicant must demonstrate (with verifiable evidence) the reach and significance of the claimed research impact, framed against one or more of the 4 research impact types (see **Table 3**).

It is the reach and significance of the impact that determines the score (as outlined in the score descriptors at **Table 4**), not whether the applicant has framed their impact around one or more impact types. Research impact also includes research that leads to a decision not to use a particular diagnostic, treatment or health policy.

There is no requirement for the applicant's research impact to align with their 5-year research vision/plan. NHMRC recognises that changes in research area or field are a valid career path and/or progression.

Table 4. Reach and significance of the research impact (10%)

Score descriptors	Leadership (and Emerging Leadership) ²² score indicators					
Relative to opportunity, the applicant's career stage and area of research, there is robust verifiable evidence of:	7 Highest performing	6 (7) Outstanding	5 (6) Above expectations	4 (5) At expectations	3 (4) Below expectations	Poor 2 (3) OR not addressed or evidenced 1 (2-1)
▪ a Knowledge impact that has led to new knowledge within the field that is:	paradigm-shifting or transformative and recognised internationally	major or significant and recognised nationally	very important and recognised across multiple fields	important within the field	somewhat important within the field	Recognised sporadically OR not (well) evidenced
▪ influence on the FoR/research that is:	transformative and beyond the specific FoR	major or significant and beyond the specific FoR	very important and somewhat beyond the specific FoR	important within the specific FoR	somewhat important within the specific FoR	limited importance within the specific FoR
▪ an influence on the development of a new field that is:	central or crucial and recognised internationally	major or significant and recognised nationally	very important	important	somewhat important	marginal OR not (well) evidenced
▪ a Health impact that has led to a development that has improved health or health systems, services, policy, programs or clinical practice that is:	paradigm shifting or transformative	major or significant	very important	important	somewhat important	marginal OR not (well) evidenced
▪ had an impact on health that was:	transformative with moderate reach or major with extensive reach	major with moderate reach or significant with extensive reach	significant with moderate reach or very important with extensive reach	very important with moderate reach or important with extensive reach	important with limited reach or somewhat important with moderate reach	limited OR not (well) evidenced
▪ led to the improvement of the health of Australia's Indigenous people (where relevant) that was:	transformative	major or significant	very important	important	somewhat important	marginal OR not (well) evidenced
▪ led to a change in health systems, services that was:	transformative, scalable/sustainable in a large number of communities	major or significant, scalable/sustainable in multiple communities	very important, scalable/sustainable in some communities	important, possibly scalable and sustainable in a small number of communities	somewhat important and possibly sustainable in a small number of communities	marginal and with limited evidence of scalability
▪ an Economic impact that has led to the development of a service delivery or system change, device, therapeutic or change in clinical practice that is:	transformative	major or significant	very important	important	somewhat important	limited and/or not (well) evidenced
▪ the generation of commercial income that is:	significant	very good	good	somewhat good	adequate	limited and/or not (well) evidenced
▪ a reduction in healthcare costs that is:	transformative	major or significant	very good	good	adequate	limited
▪ a Social impact that has led to changes in social well-being, equality or social inclusion that are:	major, for many people internationally OR transformative, for a smaller number of people nationally/ internationally	significant, for many people nationally OR major, for a smaller number of people nationally	very important, for people nationally OR significant, for people at the state/territory or national level	important, for people nationally OR very important, for a smaller number of people at the local, state/territory level	somewhat important, for a smaller number of people at the local, state/territory level	marginally important, for people at the local, state/territory level

²² For the assessment of research impact, different 7-point scales are used for Emerging Leadership and Leadership applicants. This is to recognise that early and mid-career researchers will have had less time to accumulate research impact than more senior researchers.

Peer reviewers will consider in their assessments (based on the corroborating evidence provided):

- 1) The reach and significance of the research impact in:
 - a. informing knowledge to advance research
 - b. improving products, processes, behaviours/prevention, policies, practices
 - c. improving the nation's economic performance and/or
 - d. improving the health and well-being of the community.
- 2) The verifiable impact of the research (including research that leads to a decision not to use a particular diagnostic, treatment or health policy), rather than the prospective or anticipated effects/outcomes of the research (e.g. a prospective publication linked to the applicant's research program is not demonstrated or corroborated impact).
- 3) That an applicant's research impact may not necessarily align with the applicant's 5-year research proposal/vision. NHMRC acknowledges that shifting to a different research area is a valid career trajectory and can be a sign of career progression.

According to feedback from previous Investigator Grant peer reviewers, applicants who scored well for the reach and significance research impact criterion:

- clearly described and evidenced/corroborated their research impact claims
- used tangible examples to illustrate the change (impact) that occurred as a direct result of the research
- clearly identified an impact beyond the initial research discovery or finding
- included evidence that the impact had significant benefits.

Applicant's contribution to the research impact (10%)

The applicant must outline their contribution to realising, sustaining and/or maximising their claimed impact.

Applicants will be assessed on the extent to which they can demonstrate their contribution to achieving the impact was:



To provide flexibility for applicants who join research projects and/or programs at different stages, applicants are not required to provide examples of their contributions from each stage of the research lifecycle (**Figure 2**). Applicants are also not required to outline each of their contributions along the pathway to impact. Applicants should outline their key example(s), that best demonstrate the CIA's proactive, deliberate, targeted and effective contributions to help realise, sustain and/or maximise the reach and significance of the claimed impact. Applicants should include sufficient examples of their contributions to allow for a robust assessment against the score descriptors at **Table 5**.

The progression of the pathway to impact is determined by the movement of the research project or program between and along the stages of the research lifecycle. This relationship is represented in **Figure 2**. This image is illustrative only. NHMRC recognises that each 'pathway to impact' is unique, often non-linear or multidirectional, and the underpinning research projects/programs will not always move sequentially through the research lifecycle (i.e. from conception through to dissemination).

NHMRC acknowledges the dynamic nature of 'impact'. It may be difficult to identify when precisely an 'impact' was realised, and the reach and significance may continue to evolve over time as the applicant continues to contribute to sustaining and/or maximising the benefit of their discovery or finding. Additionally, there may be factors outside of the applicant's control which contribute to the reach and significance of the impact.

As such, the assessment of research impact emphasises the applicant's 'recent' or ongoing contributions to realising, sustaining and/or maximising the impact. The emphasis on recent applicant contributions ensures that NHMRC peer review continues to focus on the applicant's recent track record achievements as the best/strongest indicator of their potential for future success. Focussing on recent research achievements also helps to ensure equitable assessment for applicants of all career stages.

NHMRC acknowledges that achieving impact is not solely the responsibility of a single researcher, and that multiple individuals will be involved (research collaborators, intermediaries, regulators, consumers/end users etc.). Whether the applicant is part of a small or large team, their task is to create a single coherent narrative of their most significant contributions along a 'pathway to impact'.

Equity in assessment

NHMRC understands that the expectations of applicants when addressing the research impact criteria will vary, based on their career stage, area of research and opportunities to conduct research. To support the fair assessment of applicants, track record score descriptors require peer reviewers to consider these factors when aligning applicant responses to the most appropriate score in a manner that reflects standard practices and expectations within the applicant's research field. NHMRC also acknowledges that early and mid-career researchers have had less time to accumulate research impact. To support the assessment of applicant's 'relative to opportunity', peer reviewers are provided 2 separate scoring scales to assess 'reach and significance of research impact' for Emerging Leadership and Leadership applicants (as indicated by the parentheses at **Table 4**). Investigator Grant applications are also separated into 3 funding competitions (EL1, EL2 and Leadership), with separate funding pools. In this way, EL1, EL2 and Leadership Investigator Grant applicants are not in direct competition.

Table 5. Applicant's contribution to the research impact (10%)

Score descriptor	Score indicators					
Relative to opportunity, the applicant's career stage and area of research, the applicant demonstrated that their contribution along the pathway to impact was:	7 Highest performing	6 Outstanding	5 Above expectations	4 At expectations	3 Below expectations	2-1 Poor 2 (3) OR not addressed or evidenced 1 (2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proactive and deliberate: 	fully integrated into their research planning and/or activities	extremely well integrated into their research planning and/or activities	very well integrated into their research planning and/or activities	well integrated into their research planning and/or activities	integration into their research planning and/or activities was satisfactory	poorly integrated OR not (well) evidenced/not integrated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> targeted: 	timed optimally for maximum benefit and with the most appropriate stakeholders	timed strategically and with extremely appropriate stakeholders	timed very well and with appropriate stakeholders, with only a few omissions	timed well and with appropriate stakeholders, but with some notable omissions	timed satisfactorily and with somewhat appropriate stakeholders, but with notable omissions	timed poorly, with limited stakeholders OR not (well) evidenced/considered/conducted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective: 	recent* or ongoing contributions that were essential to realising the impact	recent* or ongoing contributions that were extremely influential for realising the impact or less recent^ contributions that were essential for realising the impact	recent* or ongoing contributions that were very important for realising a recent* impact or less recent^ contributions that were extremely influential for realising the impact	recent* or ongoing contributions that were important for realising a recent* impact or less recent^ contributions that were very important for realising the impact	recent* or ongoing contributions that were somewhat important for realising a recent* impact or less recent^ contributions that were important for realising impact	poorly evidence/justified in realising the impact or less recent^ contributions that were somewhat important for realising impact OR in relation to an impact where the applicant's contributions occurred more than 20 years ago

* continuing into the applicant's 10-year assessment timeframe (see [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix G](#))

^ wholly outside the applicant's 10-year assessment timeframe but less than 20 years ago

Remember: Only where the applicant cannot demonstrate any contributions to realising, sustaining and/or maximising the impact within their 10-year assessment timeframe, should the reviewer consider the applicant's contributions to be 'less recent'.

Evidence for impact claims

Applicants are required to provide verifiable evidence that is sufficient and strong enough to demonstrate their claims. Applicants may use the same evidence across the 2 research impact sub-criteria if appropriate. Any references that are required as verifiable evidence of the impact need not be provided as a complete citation. For example, it would be sufficient to note the publication title and year to prove the existence of a publication. Applicants are provided with a separate field in the application form to list references/evidence for their research impact claims (see [Appendix G](#)).

Peer reviewers will decide whether the impact claims have been sufficiently demonstrated and corroborated. A poorly corroborated or non-corroborated research impact should receive a score of '1', in alignment with the score descriptors. Research impact evidence may include the adoption or adaptation of existing research.

An applicant who does not wish to provide research impact evidence because it is not in the public domain, or because it is commercially sensitive, may describe the evidence within their application, noting that it is commercially sensitive, without making it available. Any such evidence should be provided to RAOs who should ensure that such evidence is retained by their office to be made available to NHMRC, if requested.

In considering whether to provide such evidence, applicants should note that all NHMRC peer reviewers enter into a Deed of Confidentiality prior to the commencement of the peer review process, which prohibits the discussion of applications or disclosure of any information contained therein, outside of their appointment as a peer reviewer. In addition, NHMRC staff are required under the APS Code of Conduct to observe rigorous confidentiality in relation to their day-to-day work.

Verification of evidence provided against research impact claims

Peer reviewers may verify evidence provided by applicants. Peer reviewers will not seek evidence to support the research impact claims of an applicant who has not provided evidence.

Applicants should also note that, for corroborating evidence, it is the quality of the evidence provided, not the quantity, that should be considered. Applicants only need to provide evidence sufficient and strong enough to verify the claims, not all evidence that may be on the public record. Examples of evidence are listed in **Table 3** above. Evidence examples may be relevant to more than one research impact type.

Leadership (15%)

The Investigator Grant scheme funds leaders in their research areas, at their career stage. Applicants are required to provide a single narrative that outlines their leadership achievements and their ability to identify and contribute to positive change (for example, organisational or behavioural/cultural change). Applicants should frame their response around one or more of the 4 leadership elements:

- **Research Mentoring** – activities that support fellow researchers (from within or beyond the applicant's research group), to develop their research careers. Examples may be drawn from:
 - formal and informal stewardship of the next generation of researchers
 - supervising, mentoring and/or training
 - career development of staff and/or students
 - identifying, training and nurturing talent
 - fostering collaboration among junior researchers

- **Research Programs and Team Leadership** – activities that contribute to creating better working environments within research programs and/or teams. Examples may be drawn from:
 - creating diverse, inclusive, and collaborative learning environments
 - engagement with the broader community and public advocacy
 - providing opportunities for appropriate research and non-research training
- **Institutional Leadership** – activities that demonstrate the applicant’s commitment to improving their research workplace. Examples may be drawn from:
 - driving behavioural and cultural change
 - identifying and mitigating risks
 - contribution(s) to department, centre, institute or organisation
 - improving equity and diversity
- **Research Policy and Professional Leadership** – activities that demonstrate initiative in helping to improve the conduct of research. Examples may be drawn from:
 - improving research quality standards
 - driving innovation and multi-dimensionality in research
 - improving academic reporting standards
 - contribution to the peer review of publications and grant applications, nationally and/or internationally.

NHMRC recognises that a broad range of leadership contributions are necessary to create an environment that enables research excellence and stewardship, and that based on a researcher’s working environment, work history and level of seniority, examples of leadership will vary. The inclusion of 4 leadership elements is intended to support applicants of all backgrounds, research environments or career stage, to articulate a strong leadership narrative. The examples listed under each element (above) are illustrative only. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate their strongest examples of leadership.

It is the clarity of the applicant’s narrative and the strength of their demonstrated leadership examples that determines the applicant’s score, not how many of the leadership elements their narrative addresses.

Peer reviewers will use their judgement, expertise and experience, with reference to the below score descriptors, when reviewing the applicant’s leadership narrative, to assess the applicant’s overall leadership performance. This will include consideration of the applicant’s career stage, field of research, institution and the applicant’s responses to the career overview and career context sections of the application.

The examples listed under each leadership element above are illustrative only, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate their strongest examples of leadership throughout their narrative.

Peer reviewers will ignore Leadership track record information that falls outside of the allowable ‘10-year assessment timeframe’ (see [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix G](#)). Applicants are advised not to provide Leadership track record information that carries over the allowable 10-year assessment timeframe. However, where applicants do list Leadership track record information that carries across the 10-year timeframe (for example, ‘I have mentored 20 students since 2004’), peer reviewers should use their judgement in determining what subset of that leadership track record information to consider in their assessment. In the above example, peer reviewers might decide to reduce the number of claimed students mentored in proportion to how much additional time was being claimed (that is, halve the number of students mentored to 10, as the time period claimed was double the allowable 10-year timeframe).

Table 6. Leadership score descriptors (15%)

Score descriptor	Score					
Relative to opportunity, the applicant's career stage and area of research, the applicant demonstrates proactive leadership in:	7 Highest performing	6 Outstanding	5 Above expectations	4 At expectations	3 Below expectations	2-1 Poor (2) OR not addressed or evidenced (1)
▪ research mentoring that is:	of the highest standard, entirely beneficial and transformative	outstanding, extremely beneficial, appropriate and effective	very good, very beneficial, appropriate and effective	good, beneficial, appropriate and effective	satisfactory, somewhat beneficial, appropriate and effective	poorly articulated OR not addressed or evidenced
▪ research programs and team leadership that is:	of the highest standard, decisive, strategic, inclusive, collaborative and transformative	outstanding, creating an extremely conducive team and/or program environment	very good, driving change and improving team and/or program cohesion	good, improves the team and/or program environment	satisfactory, somewhat effective in transforming the team and/or program environment	poorly articulated OR not addressed or evidenced
▪ institutional leadership (at any level – e.g. local, school/faculty/department or organisation/institute-wide), that:	creates a paradigm-shift that improves the research workplace	has significant influence in improving the research workplace	is very effective at improving the research workplace	is effective in improving the research workplace	is somewhat effective in improving the research workplace	is poorly articulated OR not addressed or evidenced
▪ research policy and professional leadership that is:	entirely effective, creating paradigm-shifts in the conduct of research	extremely effective, creating extremely impactful changes in the conduct of research	very effective, creating very impactful changes in the conduct of research	effective, creating impactful changes in the conduct of research	somewhat effective, creating some changes in the conduct of research	poorly articulated OR not addressed or evidenced

Remember: Do not take into consideration Leadership track record information from outside of the applicant's 10-year assessment timeframe (see [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix G](#)).

According to feedback from Investigator Grant peer reviewers, applicants who scored well for the Leadership criteria were able to provide evidence for their leadership role(s) in their field and/or institution.

Knowledge gain (30%)

NHMRC defines '**knowledge gain**' for the Investigator Grant scheme as the **quality of the proposed research** and **significance of the knowledge gained**. It incorporates theoretical concepts, hypothesis, research design, robustness and the extent to which the research findings will contribute to the research area and health outcomes (by advancing knowledge, practice or policy).

In their response to the knowledge gain criterion, applicants are asked to:

- describe the **research vision/plan** for the next 5 years of their research career
- outline the proposed research objectives, basic methodologies and expected outcomes
 - describe the importance of the vision/plan in addressing an issue to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of issue)
- outline the **proposed new research** to be undertaken with the Investigator Grant
 - describe the planned outcomes of the proposed new research and its potential significance
 - where relevant, provide details of ongoing and/or completed research that informs, and/or provides context for, the proposed new research
 - outline how engagement along a research impact pathway will be embedded into the design and planning of the proposed new research
 - outline a risk management strategy that identifies and mitigates potential risks to the success of the research (e.g. scientific, technical, financial, compliance/regulatory, operational)
 - describe the support for the proposed new research (e.g. access to technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, access to additional expertise and funding necessary to achieve proposed outcomes)
 - justify that the proposed new research can be achieved with the available time, and funding from the Investigator Grant (i.e. that it is feasible)

For the assessment of 'knowledge gain' peer reviewers will consider:

- the clarity and justification of the research hypotheses/rationale
- the strengths and weaknesses of the scientific framework, study design, methods and analyses, including the reproducibility and applicability of the proposed research and research design
- the feasibility of the proposed new research, taking into account the applicant's justification of how the research can be achieved with the time and money available from the grant
- whether the proposal tackles a major question addressing an issue of critical importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of issue)
- the access to the technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, access to additional expertise and funding necessary to achieve the proposed outcomes
- the degree to which research impact was integrated into the research design and plan
- the strength of the risk management strategy for the proposed research
- the potential for significant and transformative changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues
- the potential research outputs including intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.

The assessment of knowledge gain is of the proposed new research outlined in the research proposal. Where details of previous and/or concurrent research (not funded by the Investigator Grant) are outlined in the research proposal, this may help the peer reviewer to contextualise the

proposed new research. This may assist the reviewer to better understand the rationale for the proposed research and to determine its feasibility.

Peer reviewers will make no distinction in their assessment of the 5-year research vision/plan, between applicants who have held (or currently hold) an Investigator Grant, and those applicants who have not.

The significance of the study is not a measure of the prevalence/incidence of the health issue (for example, cancer versus sudden infant death syndrome) but the extent to which the study will address the health issue.

Within the experimental design of the proposal, applicants should include sufficient information to demonstrate that robust and unbiased results will be produced.

Applicants are not required to justify their research proposal with line-by-line budget justifications, however, as outlined above, they should provide a justification that the proposed new research can be accomplished with the available time and money. This is to assist reviewers in their assessment of the feasibility of the expected outcomes in the research proposal. Investigator Grant CIAs retain the flexibility to pursue important new research directions as they arise, adjust their resources accordingly, and to form collaborations as needed, rather than being restricted to the scope of a specific research project.

NHMRC encourages international collaboration in health and medical research to contribute to global health, achieve better outcomes for the Australian community and build Australia's research capability (see [NHMRC's International Engagement Strategy 2023-2026](#)).

Table 7. Knowledge gain score descriptors (30%)

Score descriptor	Score indicators					
The applicant's research proposal demonstrates that the proposed research:	7 Highest performing	6 Outstanding	5 Above expectations	4 At expectations	3 Below expectations	2-1 Poor (2) OR not addressed or evidenced (1)
▪ is supported by a reasoned hypothesis/rationale that is:	as of the highest standard and fully justified	outstanding and extremely well justified	very strong and very well justified, with few minor weaknesses	strong and well justified, with a few minor concerns	satisfactory and somewhat well justified, with some moderate concerns	poor OR not (well) justified
▪ has a scientific framework, design, methods and analyses that are:	of the highest standard, fully developed and appropriate	outstanding, extremely well developed and appropriate with only a small number of minor weaknesses	very strong, very well developed and appropriate with a small number of weaknesses	strong, sound and appropriate with some moderate weaknesses	satisfactory, somewhat sound and appropriate with some moderate to significant weaknesses	lacks clarity in some aspects OR contains notable weaknesses
▪ has a risk management strategy that identifies and mitigates potential risks to the success of the research (e.g. scientific, technical, financial, compliance/regulatory, operational) that is:	entirely appropriate, identifies all risks and has a comprehensive mitigation plan	extremely appropriate, identifies most risks and has a thorough mitigation plan	very appropriate, identifies several risks and has a very good mitigation plan	appropriate, identifies some risks and has a good mitigation plan	somewhat appropriate, identifies a small number of risks and has a mitigation plan	poor OR not appropriate or addressed
▪ demonstrates that it addresses an issue that is:	of critical importance to advance the research or health area*	of considerable importance to advance the research or health area*	very important to advance the research or health area*	of importance to advance the research or health area*	somewhat important to advance the research or health area*	of marginal importance to advance the research OR health area*
▪ has or has access to technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities that are:	of the highest quality, fully aligned with the proposed research and access was fully evidenced / justified	outstanding, extremely well aligned with the proposed research and access was extremely well evidenced / justified	very good, well aligned with the proposed research and access was very well evidenced / justified	good, mostly aligned with the proposed research and access was mostly evidenced / justified	adequate, somewhat aligned with the proposed research and access was somewhat evidenced / justified	poorly aligned with the proposed research OR access was not explained / justified
▪ includes plans to contribute to maximising the potential impact of the proposed research (along the impact pathway), that are:	fully integrated into each stage of the research lifecycle and optimally targeted to maximise the potential benefit	extremely well integrated into each stage of the research lifecycle and extremely well targeted to maximise the potential benefit	very well integrated into each stage of the research lifecycle and very well targeted to maximise the potential benefit	well integrated into each stage of the research lifecycle and mostly targeted to maximise the potential benefit	somewhat integrated into most stages of the research lifecycle and somewhat targeted to maximise the potential benefit	marginal or poor, OR not appropriate or addressed
▪ will result in changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues & outputs^ that are:	entirely transformative or of critical significance	extremely influential or of major significance	very influential, or very significant	influential, or significant	somewhat influential, or moderately significant	unlikely to be significant OR not (well) justified
▪ if required, has access to additional funding necessary to achieve proposed outcomes that is:	already secured or fully evidenced / justified that it will be obtained	extremely well justified / evidenced that it will be obtained	very well justified / evidenced that it can be obtained	well justified / evidenced that it can be obtained	somewhat justified / evidenced that it may be obtained	poorly justified / evidenced or unlikely to materialise OR lacks sufficient funding
▪ if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve proposed outcomes that is:	of the highest quality, entirely appropriate and fully aligned with the proposed research	outstanding, extremely appropriate and extremely well aligned with the proposed research	very good, very appropriate and very well aligned with the proposed research	good and aligned with the proposed research	good and somewhat aligned with the proposed research	poorly aligned with the proposed research OR not well articulated

* (not the prevalence or magnitude of the issue)

^ outputs may include but not limited to, intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing

Peer reviewers will focus more on the scientific quality and potential for impact of the proposed (new) research outlined in the research proposal. They will **focus less** on whether existing/ongoing research has funding. Research that is not funded by the Investigator Grant can be included in the Research Proposal to help provide context for the proposed new research. However, your assessment is of the proposed new research.

According to feedback from previous Investigator Grant peer reviewers, applicants who scored well for the knowledge gain criterion:

- described a program of research that is achievable/feasible within the 5-year timeframe, and not just a set of disparate projects
- provided a clear research proposal with well-justified rationale/methods/hypothesis with a strong vision for the future
- made clear statements on the expected outcomes of the research and how it would be a significant progression on current activities, with a clear trajectory
- didn't assume knowledge (avoided jargon and obscure acronyms).

Appendix C. NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy

Purpose

NHMRC's goal is to support the highest quality research that will lead to improvements in health over the short or long term. Peer review by independent experts is used to identify well-designed feasible projects that address a significant question and are undertaken by researchers with demonstrated capacity to perform high quality research.

In most NHMRC grant schemes, peer reviewers are asked to assess the track record of the applicants as well as the proposed research. However, NHMRC recognises that not all research careers are the same and therefore peer reviewers are asked to assess track records 'relative to opportunity', taking into account circumstances that have affected the applicant's research productivity.

The purpose of this document is to outline NHMRC's Relative to Opportunity Policy with respect to:

- peer review of applicant track records
- eligibility to apply for Emerging Leadership (EL) Investigator Grants.

Policy approach

NHMRC considers relative to opportunity to mean that peer reviewers should assess an applicant's track record of research productivity and professional contribution in the context of their career stage and circumstances, by taking into consideration whether the applicant's productivity and contribution are commensurate with the opportunities available to them.

The policy has 2 components:

- **Career circumstances** – personal or professional circumstances affecting research productivity (not meeting the definition of a career disruption – see below). These circumstances are taken into account in track record assessment.
- **Career disruption** – a prolonged interruption to the ability to work due to pregnancy, illness/injury and/or carer responsibilities. Career disruptions are taken into account in track record assessment and in determining an applicant's eligibility to hold an Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant (in terms of years since their PhD pass date).

In addition to NHMRC's principles of peer review, particularly fairness and transparency, the following principles support this objective:

- **Research opportunity:** Researchers' outputs and outcomes should reflect their opportunities to advance their career and the research they conduct.
- **Fair access:** Researchers should have access to the funding available through NHMRC's grant program consistent with their experience and career stage.
- **Career diversity:** Researchers with career paths that include time spent outside academia should not be disadvantaged. NHMRC recognises that time spent in other sectors, such as industry, may enhance research outcomes for both individuals and teams.

NHMRC expects that peer reviewers will give clear and explicit attention to these principles to identify the highest quality research and researchers. NHMRC recognises that life circumstances can be varied and therefore it is not possible to implement a formulaic approach to applying relative to opportunity considerations during peer review.

Consideration of career circumstances during peer review of grant applications

Under the *Relative to Opportunity Policy*, researchers' career circumstances are considered during track record assessment. This aims to take into account salient research opportunity considerations over the course of a research career and is not intended to address minor changes to life circumstances.

Career circumstances do not extend the 10-year assessment or eligibility timeframes (see below and [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix G](#)).

Circumstances considered during peer review include, but are not limited to:

Research

- research role(s) and responsibilities, career stage, and amount of time spent as an active researcher.

Resources and facilities

- available resources and facilities, including:
 - the extent to which any additional research personnel and/or collaborators contribute to the applicant's research program
 - situations where research is being conducted in remote or isolated communities.

Professional responsibilities

- clinical, administrative and/or teaching workload
- time employed in other sectors
- building relationships of trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over long periods.

Personal circumstances

- disability (including mental health conditions and psychosocial disability) or illness (that do not meet the definition of career disruption – see below)
- caring responsibilities that do not interrupt the applicant's career for an extended period (that do not meet the definition of a career disruption) but still affect research productivity
- for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, community obligations including 'sorry business'
- relocation overseas, including to pursue work opportunities (may be related to either CIA or their immediate family).

Other circumstances

- relocation of an applicant and their research laboratory or clinical practice setting
- periods of unemployment
- calamities, such as pandemics (including increased caring responsibilities or the need to supervise children's education at home during the COVID-19 pandemic), bushfires or cyclones.

Relative to opportunity considerations do not include:

- minor (or short-term) changes that occur during the normal course of conducting research (e.g. broken equipment or delayed ethics approval)
- minor (or short-term) medical conditions, or
- recreational leave or general administrative activities related to research, such as preparation of grant applications and publications or committee-related activities.

Consideration of career disruption during peer review and in determining eligibility for Emerging Leadership Investigator Grants

A career disruption is defined as a prolonged interruption to an applicant's capacity to work, due to:

- pregnancy
- major illness/injury
- carer responsibilities.

To qualify as a career disruption, the period of disruption must be a continuous absence from work for 90 calendar days or more, and/or continuous, long-term, part-time employment (with defined %FTE²³) due to circumstances classified as career disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 90 calendar days or more²⁴.

The period of career disruption is used:

- to extend the '10-year eligibility timeframe', when determining an applicant's eligibility for an Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant, commensurate with its duration
- to extend the '10-year assessment timeframe', allowing for the inclusion of additional track record information for assessment of an application
- for consideration of track record relative to opportunity by peer reviewers.

In determining eligibility of EL Investigator Grant applicants, the 10-year limit on the number of years post-PhD is extended commensurate with the period of the career disruption. This timeframe is not extended for any other career circumstances (i.e. that do not meet the definition of a career disruption – see above). This means that, for applicants with one (1) year of career disruption(s), their '10-year eligibility timeframe' to apply at the EL Level will extend to 11 calendar years, prior to the application close date. Career disruptions also extend the '10-year assessment timeframe' (see above and [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix G](#)).

Note: The '10-year assessment timeframe' can be extended back to when the applicant commenced research. The '10-year eligibility timeframe' can be extended back to the applicant's PhD pass date.

²³ For the purposes of Investigator Grant eligibility, 0.2 FTE is equivalent to 1 standard business day (approximately 7.5–7.6 hours).

²⁴ For example, an applicant who is employed at 0.8 FTE due to essential childcare responsibilities would need to continue this for at least 450 calendar days to achieve a career disruption of 90 calendar days.

Appendix D. Statements of Expectations

The *Statements of Expectations* describe the typical attributes expected of applicants at each Investigator Grant Level. They are to be used as a guide for applicants, Administering Institutions and peer reviewers to determine the most appropriate Category and Level for the Investigator Grant applicant. They are not eligibility requirements.²⁵

The typical attributes expected of applicants at each Level (**Table 1**) fall into 4 categories (in order of prominence):

- research achievements, roles and responsibilities
- standing in their research area
- academic Level
- years' post-PhD.

NHMRC recognises that individuals can achieve academic promotion for a range of reasons unrelated to their research career (e.g. teaching and learning, administration, community engagement). Therefore, Investigator Grant Levels are not strictly correlated with academic levels. Additionally, some applicants experience significant breaks in their research careers after obtaining their PhD. NHMRC expects that all 4 categories of attributes will be considered holistically when determining the most appropriate Level for the applicant.

The descriptors provide a broad benchmark and it is not essential that all elements be met.

Table 1. Typical attributes expected of applicants at each Level

<p>Leadership Level 3 (L3)</p> <p>It is expected that L3 Investigator Grant recipients will typically be more than 20 years post-PhD (or equivalent, see section 4.2) and appointable at Academic Level E, and be leading international authorities in their research area with demonstrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• significant original contributions of major importance that have had a positive impact on health and medical research, the health system, economy and/or the health of the population• experience in leading a major independent research program(s) involving national and international collaborative networks• national and international contributions through leadership in their scientific discipline (e.g. in research policy and on advisory committees)• extensive supervision, mentoring and promotion of early and mid-career researchers• significant leadership roles within their department, centre, institution or organisation, that extend beyond their research.
<p>Leadership Level 2 (L2)</p> <p>It is expected that L2 Investigator Grant recipients will typically be between 15- and 20-years post-PhD (or equivalent, see section 4.2) and appointable at Academic Level D or E (or equivalent), and be leading national and rising international authorities in their research area with demonstrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• substantial and original contributions that are of major benefit to health and medical research, the health system, economy and/or the health of the population• experience in leading an independent research program(s) involving national collaborative networks

²⁵ Applicants must be ≤10 years of their PhD pass date (adjusted for career disruptions where present) to be eligible to apply at the Emerging Leadership Category, See [section 4.2](#) of the Guidelines.

- national and possibly international contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g. research advisory boards, peer review)
- supervision, mentoring and promotion of early and mid-career researchers
- leadership roles within their department, centre, institution or organisation that extend beyond their research.

Leadership Level 1 (L1)

It is expected that L1 Investigator Grant recipients will typically be between 10- and 15-years post-PhD (or equivalent, see [section 4.2](#)) and appointable at Academic Level C or D (or equivalent), and be national authorities in their research area with demonstrated:

- original contributions that are of major benefit to health and medical research, the health system, economy and/or the health of the population
- ability to independently conceive and direct research programs, coordinate a team of researchers and generate national collaborations
- national contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g. public advocacy, peer review, research advisory boards or professional societies)
- supervision, mentoring and promotion of early and mid-career researchers
- contribution(s) within their department, centre, institute or organisation that extend beyond their research (e.g. membership of regulatory or management committees).

Emerging Leadership Level 2 (EL2)

It is expected that EL2 Investigator Grant recipients will typically be between 5- and 10-years post-PhD (or equivalent, see [section 4.2](#)) and appointable at Academic Level B (or equivalent), and be recognised for their expertise in their research area with demonstrated:

- original contributions of influence in their field of expertise
- ability to contribute to the conception and direction of research projects, while developing independence
- experience in supervising a small research team
- national contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g. public advocacy, community leadership, peer review and professional societies)
- contributions within their department, centre, institution or organisation (e.g. organising journal clubs, seminar series etc.).

It is also expected that Emerging Leadership applicants will be working within a larger team under the mentorship of more senior researchers.

Emerging Leadership Level 1 (EL1)

It is expected that EL1 Investigator Grant recipients will typically be between 0- and 5-years post-PhD (or equivalent, see [section 4.2](#)) and will be beginning to gain recognition in their research area with demonstrated:

- original contribution(s) in their field of expertise
- ability to contribute to the conception of research projects
- scientific contributions within their region, state or territory (e.g. community leadership, state level contribution to a professional society)
- limited but developing supervision of research staff and students
- contributions within their department, centre, institution or organisation (e.g. organising journal clubs, seminar series etc.).

It is also expected that Emerging Leadership applicants will be working within a larger team under the mentorship of more senior researchers.

Justifying Level selection

All applicants are required to provide a justification of their selected Category and Level in the application form (applicant Level justification). This should clearly explain why they have applied for their selected Level, which may be particularly important when the applicant's research experience and performance don't align with the descriptions for their selected Level. Applicants who have previously held an NHMRC Fellowship or Investigator Grant are restricted from applying at comparatively less senior Investigator Grant Levels (see [section 4.3.2](#) of the Guidelines).

NHMRC expects that applicants will consider the expected attributes at each Level holistically and carefully, before applying at their most appropriate Level, to help achieve parity and fairness for all Investigator Grant applicants. NHMRC acknowledges there are circumstances that may warrant an applicant applying outside of the expected/typical year-range, post-PhD pass date²⁶.

The justification should be reviewed by the Administering Institution prior to submission of the application, to ensure that it adequately justifies the applicant's selected Level.

The applicant Level justification will be considered by peer reviewers.

Applicants applying at an inappropriate Level

Since the *Statements of Expectations* were updated in 2021, the incidence of applicants applying from outside of the expected year-range (post-PhD) for their selected Level has reduced. NHMRC acknowledges there are circumstances that may warrant an applicant applying outside of the expected/typical year-range, post-PhD pass date. There is no evidence that applicants who apply 'down' to a Level with less experienced applicants (years' post-PhD passed date) are more competitive than the remaining applicants at that Level²⁷.

However, where a peer reviewer determines an applicant has not applied at the most appropriate Level, the guidance at **Table 2** is designed to assist them in determining the most appropriate and consistent score adjustments for the track records of their assigned applications. This guidance is **not intended to be prescriptive**.

Table 2. Guidance for implementing score adjustments for applicants at an inappropriate Level

Scenario	Suggested score adjustment
Applicant better fits the description of another Level (per the <i>Statements of Expectations</i>) where reviewer has other assigned applications.	Reviewer may consider benchmarking this applicant with other assigned applicants at the Level they feel is most appropriate (per the <i>Statements of Expectations</i>) for the Track Record criteria (e.g. for an applicant who has applied at L1, who you feel matches the description of an L2, consider benchmarking applicant against other assigned L2 applications for the track record criteria).
Applicant better fits the description of another Level (per the <i>Statements of Expectations</i>) where reviewer does not have other assigned applications.	Reviewer may consider applying the score one (1) lower than the matching track record score descriptor, when benchmarked against other applicants at the applied Level, if they feel the applicant has applied at a lower Level than appropriate (e.g. if the applicant fits a score of 6, when benchmarked at the Level they have applied, consider giving the applicant a score of 5 for that criterion). Alternatively, reviewer may consider giving the score one (1) higher than the matching score descriptor, if they feel the applicant has applied at a higher Level than necessary.

Note: The guidance above is not relevant for the scoring of knowledge gain, which is not assessed 'Relative to Opportunity'.

²⁶ Where eligibility requirements are met.

²⁷ Applicants applying 'down' into a Level with less experienced applicants (years' post-PhD pass date) are less than half as likely to secure funding than less experienced applicants who apply 'up' into the same Level.

Appendix E. Eligibility for Investigator or Ideas grant schemes (2026 funding round)

		Grants eligible to apply for in the 2026 funding round (for funding 2027)
Grants held on 1 January 2027 [^]	No Investigator or Ideas Grants held	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1x Investigator Grant, OR 1x Investigator Grant + 1x Ideas Grant (If you are offered the Investigator Grant, you are not eligible to be listed as a CI (CIA-CIJ) on any Ideas Grant application in the same funding round) OR 1x Ideas Grant, OR 2x Ideas Grants
	1x Ideas Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1x Investigator Grant (50% reduction to RSP*), OR 1x Investigator Grant (50% reduction to RSP*) + 1x Ideas Grant (If you are offered the Investigator Grant, you are not eligible to be listed as a CI (CIA-CIJ) on any Ideas Grant application in the same funding round) OR 1x Ideas Grant
	1x Ideas Grant and 1x Investigator Grant (in final year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1x Investigator Grant (50% reduction to RSP*)
	1x Ideas Grant and 1x Investigator Grant (<u>not</u> in final year)	Not eligible to apply for any Investigator or Ideas Grants
	2x Ideas Grants	Not eligible to apply for any Investigator or Ideas Grants
	2x Ideas Grants and 1x Investigator Grant (in final year)	Not eligible to apply for any Investigator or Ideas Grants
	2 x Ideas Grants and 1x Investigator Grant (<u>not</u> in final year)	Not eligible to apply for any Investigator or Ideas Grants
	1x Investigator Grant (in final year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1x Investigator Grant
	1x Investigator Grant (<u>not</u> in final year)	Not eligible to apply for any Investigator or Ideas Grants

[^]Eligibility of the held grant is based on whether the CI holds an Investigator Grant (use 'actual' end date) or Ideas Grant (use 'original' end date). See [section 4.3](#) and the [NHMRC Eligibility web tool](#) for more details. Synergy Grant applications and/or grants do not impact the CI's eligibility to apply for and/or hold an Investigator or Ideas Grant.

*For the period of overlap with the Ideas Grant

Appendix F. Eligibility of current or previous NHMRC Fellows for an Investigator Grant

Highest NHMRC Fellowship Level previously or currently held ^d	Investigator Grant salary level				
	<i>Emerging Leadership Level 1 (EL1)</i>	<i>Emerging Leadership Level 2 (EL2)</i>	<i>Leadership Level 1 (L1)</i>	<i>Leadership Level 2 (L2)</i>	<i>Leadership Level 3 (L3)</i>
<i>No previous NHMRC Fellowship</i>	Eligible if ≤10 years post- PhD ^a	Eligible if ≤10 years post- PhD ^a	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Early Career Fellowship^b</i>	Not eligible	Eligible if ≤10 years post- PhD ^a	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Translation of Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship</i>	Not eligible	Eligible if ≤10 years post- PhD ^a	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Career Development Fellowship Level 1</i>	Not eligible	Eligible if ≤10 years post- PhD ^a	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Career Development Fellowship Level 2^c</i>	Not eligible	Not eligible	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Practitioner Fellowship Level 1</i>	Not eligible	Not eligible	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Senior Research Fellowship Level A</i>	Not eligible	Not eligible	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Senior Research Fellowship Level B</i>	Not eligible	Not eligible	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Practitioner Fellowship Level 2</i>	Not eligible	Not eligible	Not eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Principal Research Fellowship</i>	Not eligible	Not eligible	Not eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Senior Principal Research Fellowship</i>	Not eligible	Not eligible	Not eligible	Not eligible	Eligible
<i>Australia Fellowship</i>	Not eligible	Not eligible	Not eligible	Not eligible	Eligible

^a Or equivalent

^b Including NHMRC-ARC Dementia Research Development Fellowships.

^c Including Boosting Dementia Research Leadership Fellowship Scheme.

^d Including MRFF Next Generation Clinical Researchers Program Fellowships funded via the NHMRC Practitioner, Career Development and Translating Research into Practice Fellowship schemes.

Case studies

Dr A completed a PhD 13 years ago and has never held an NHMRC fellowship. They are eligible to apply for an Investigator Grant at Leadership Level 1, 2 or 3.

Dr B completed a PhD 7 years ago and currently holds an NHMRC Early Career Fellowship. They are eligible to apply for an Investigator Grant at Emerging Leadership Level 2 or at Leadership Level 1, 2 or 3.

Dr C has held an NHMRC Senior Research Fellowship Level A before taking a 2-year career break. They are eligible to apply for an Investigator Grant at Leadership Level 1, 2 or 3.

Appendix G. Investigator Grants 2026 Guide to Applicants

1. Preparing an application

The following sections provide additional advice about parts of the application that are specific to the Investigator Grants 2026 grant opportunity.

- Refer to the [Sapphire Learning and Training Resources](#) for general instructions on how to apply for a grant in Sapphire.
- Investigator Grant 2026 scheme-specific policy and instructions for applying in Sapphire (grey boxes) are provided in this Appendix.
- For further assistance during the application process, refer to [Section 7](#) in the grant opportunity guidelines.

1.1. Use of generative artificial intelligence in grant applications

Applicants are to exercise caution when using generative artificial intelligence tools in the preparation of grant applications, as per NHMRC's [Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Grant Applications and Peer Review](#).


2. Application requirements

A complete application is comprised of:

- Completed mandatory sections of 'My Profile' ([Section 5](#)) and 'My Profile' Requirements for Investigator Grants 2026 ([section 5.7](#)).
- Completed application form (Investigator Grants 2026)
- Grant Proposal as an attachment ([section 6.10.2](#)).

Applications must comply with all requirements as set out in the grant opportunity guidelines. Failure to adhere to any of these requirements may result in non-acceptance or exclusion of your application (refer to [section 4.5](#) of the guidelines).

3. Minimum data requirements

Minimum data must be entered in Sapphire by the specified due date. Applicants must complete the required fields with correct information and are discouraged from making changes to this information after the minimum data due date. NHMRC uses this information to identify peer reviewers who are best suited to assess the application. Minimum data are indicated in Sapphire by a flag () and are comprised of:

- Application title (not denoted by a blue flag)
- Administering Institution
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health research focus (yes/no)
- Project synopsis
- Privacy agreement (both tick boxes ticked)

- Research Classification:
 - Broad Research Area
 - Field(s) of Research
 - Peer Review Areas
 - Research Keywords (minimum of 5)
- Chief Investigator A (complete CIA Role and Name)
- Category and Level.

Minimum data must be entered into Sapphire by 5:00pm ACT local time 2 July 2025. Applicants are to refer to [section 7.3](#) of the guidelines for further information.

Failure to meet this deadline will result in the application being ineligible and not proceeding. The Minimum Data deadline will not be extended.

RAOs are not required to certify applications for the purpose of minimum data. Applications only require certification once complete and ready for submission to NHMRC.

4. Key changes

Applicants need to note the following changes for the Investigator Grant application form:

- The revised research impact criteria maintains a single text field for applicants to provide a single coherent narrative for their contributions along a pathway to impact. A second text field is provided for references / evidence to help corroborate claims made in the impact narrative.
- There is a single text field (8000 characters) for the applicant to provide their single coherent leadership narrative (see [section 6.10.1](#)).
- The applicant's response to knowledge gain should make clear the distinction between the proposed new research, and the broader 5-year research vision/plan, or other ongoing work that provides context for the new research the applicant is proposing (and will be assessed on) (see [section 6.10.1](#)).

5. 'My Profile' requirements

Within your profile in Sapphire, there is mandatory information that must be provided and/or updated before an application is submitted (refer to [Section 7](#) of the guidelines). This information includes personal details, academic/research interests and peer review information.

Mandatory Profile information is indicated in Sapphire.

5.1. About my profile

Provide your primary institution name under Primary Institution. If this is an Administering Institution, the RAO will have access to view your profile (including your gender). You may also allow the RAO to edit your profile.

Note: to update your Primary Institution name in Sapphire, go to 'Account Settings', 'Personal details' and click on 'Primary Institution'.

5.2. Personal information

Provide your most current details in this section. It is important that your title, names, gender, phone and email details are up to date as these are the details on which NHMRC relies when contacting you.

Gender information is essential for the application of gender equity measures (see [Appendix A](#)). Please ensure you have indicated your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status as this information is used for the application of priority funding. Short-term support to Facilitate International Indigenous Researcher Networks is also available to Emerging Leadership (EL1 and EL2) NHMRC Investigator Grant recipients who identify as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent (see [section 6.9](#)).

5.3. Academic information

Indicate whether you have a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and, if applicable, the pass date (year) of your thesis (not the date of conferral).

5.4. Peer review information

Select a Broad Research Area that best aligns with your expertise.

Basic Science Research: seeks to understand the biological processes that underpin health and disease at the molecular, cellular, organ system and whole body levels. It may be conducted in vitro, in vivo and/or in silico. It may use, but is not limited to, cells, tissues or other materials of human origin or from relevant animal models.

Clinical Medicine and Science Research: seeks to improve the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of human diseases and conditions. It may involve interaction with patients and/or the use of clinical diagnostic materials or patient data.

Health Services Research: seeks to understand and improve the effectiveness, quality, safety, social and environmental dimensions of health care including access, distribution, timeliness and efficiency.

Public Health Research: seeks to improve the health of a population through the prevention of disease, prolongation of life and promotion of health and wellbeing. It includes research to understand the social, behavioural, environmental and other determinants of health and disease.

Accurate and up-to-date peer review information helps reduce peer review burden and ensures applications are allocated to the reviewers with the most relevant expertise. When completing this section, consider your relevant skills and expertise to review grant applications, rather than the field of your current research.

Select 5 to 10 Research Keywords most applicable to your main area of research. You can also provide further detail about your research interests or areas of expertise. This could include, but is not limited to, your research methodologies, areas of student supervision and areas in which you have published.

Select up to 3 Peer Review Areas (PRAs) that best describe your research interests, 1 being the most relevant and 3 being the least relevant.

You can add as many Fields of Research as required to describe your expertise (minimum 3 required). Indicate when you started your research in that field, the classification of the research

(e.g., primary), and whether the research is current or terminated. Individuals are encouraged to list all relevant Fields of Research. Only current Fields of Research will be displayed.

Note: An opportunity is provided in the application to select research areas, fields of research and keywords that best describe your research proposal, as opposed to your personal research interests. The above information about your personal research interests will not determine the peer reviewers selected for your application.

5.5. Unavailability calendar

Peer review is an integral part of NHMRC funding schemes. NHMRC grant recipients have obligations to contribute to the assessment of applications (as outlined in the *NHMRC Funding Agreement*). If you are not available to act as a peer reviewer, include a statement detailing your reasons and the period for which you are unavailable. To maintain the list of available peer reviewers within Sapphire, NHMRC requests that all applicants update their availability routinely. This will avoid unnecessary contact if you are unavailable.

5.6. Contributions to NHMRC

Indicate the role you have contributed to NHMRC, if you have previously participated in an advisory, peer review, guideline development or other NHMRC activity requiring expert input via formal appointment.

Click '+' to start a new entry to specify the below:
Select a 'Contribution Role', from the drop-down menu
Indicate the year in which you held the Contribution Role.
Indicate the number of times you acted in that role in each year.
You will need to create a new entry for each type of contribution in a particular year.

5.7. 'My Profile' requirements specific to Investigator Grant scheme

The following sections provide advice about parts of the application that are specific to Investigator Grant scheme.

For the purposes of this grant opportunity, you are only required to complete the sections outlined below:

- Title
- Gender
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status

If you enter more information than is required, only the required information will be imported into your application.

It is important that relevant 'My Profile' information is up to date at the time of application submission, as it is used to contact applicants, imported into the application and used by peer reviewers. It may also be used for analyses of NHMRC's funding profile and to capture grant outcomes. 'My Profile' information can be updated at any time. However, any changes made to

'My Profile' after Chief Investigator A (CIA) certification will not appear in the submitted application.

Instructions for entering 'My Profile' information in Sapphire are provided in the [Sapphire Learning and Training Resources](#).

Note: You are required to list research outputs in relevant subsections of your profile. You are encouraged to link the entered research output to NHMRC Grant IDs, where applicable.

6. Application form requirements

The following sections of the application form are specific to Investigator Grant scheme and must be completed as part of your application. Step-by-step instructions for entering application details in Sapphire are provided in the [Sapphire Learning and Training Resources](#).

6.1. Creating an application

Click '+ New Application' to create an application.

Grant Opportunity

Select the grant round you wish to apply for (e.g. 2026 Investigator Grants for funding commencing in 2027). The application title will be used to identify the application at all times during the assessment process and needs to accurately describe the nature of the research proposal.

The title should not be in all capitals, contain placeholder text, or include the name of the grant opportunity or the applicant. The title should indicate the subject of the application. The title will be used to allocate your application to suitable peer reviewers, peer reviewers to declare interests, and published in the release of grant opportunity outcomes.

Instructions on how to change your application title can be found in the [Application section of Sapphire Help](#).

6.2. Application details

All fields on this page marked with a flag (🚩) must be completed to meet minimum data requirements.

Application Identification Number (APP ID)

Each application will have its own unique Application Identification Number (Application ID), which is automatically generated by Sapphire and pre-filled in the application. Use this Application ID number (e.g. 2345678) to identify your application when referring to it in any correspondence.

Administering Institution

Select your Administering Institution by entering 3 characters to start searching. There can be only one Administering Institution for each application. You must ensure that the institution you choose as your Administering Institution is the correct institution for your application. If in doubt, contact the RAO at your proposed Administering Institution.

Grant Duration

This section contains pre-filled information that cannot be edited. All Investigator Grants have a duration of 5 years at the time of application, for further information please reference [section 3.2](#) of the grant opportunity guidelines.

Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander Health Research

This question enables you to identify research that specifically investigates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health issues. It is also designed to enable NHMRC to identify those research proposals that will require assessment of the proposed research against the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria*.

Only select 'Yes' if you can demonstrate that at least 20% of your research effort and capacity building relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

If you have answered 'Yes' to this question, you will be required to provide details of how your application addresses the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* in the application form. Your application may be assessed against the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria*, using information you provide in the following text boxes: 'Community Engagement', 'Benefit', 'Sustainability and Transferability' and 'Building Capability'.

This information will be provided to peer reviewers if your application is confirmed by an assessor with expertise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health as meeting the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria*.

Project Synopsis

The synopsis should accurately, and briefly, summarise the research proposal. This information may be used to assign applications to peer reviewers. It may also be considered in the peer review process. Applicants must not provide additional track record information in the synopsis.

Plain English Summary

Describe the overall aims of the research and expected outcomes in simple terms that could be understood by the general public. Avoid the use of highly technical terms. This information may be used in grant announcements, media releases and other public documents, and by funding partners (where applicable) to determine whether the research proposal meets their priorities for funding. Applicants must not provide additional track record information in the Plain English Summary.

Privacy Agreement

NHMRC, as an agency subject to the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), is required to notify you about our collection, use and disclosure of your personal information. We do so by referring you to the [NHMRC Privacy Policy](#). Ensure that you have carefully read and understood the Privacy Policy before completing the application. If you require further clarification, contact the NHMRC Privacy Contact Officer via email (NHMRC.Privacy@nhmrc.gov.au) or letter (NHMRC, GPO Box 1421, Canberra ACT 2601).

Have you read and understood the NHMRC Privacy Policy?

Select 'Yes' or 'No'.

In addition, and in accordance with Australian Privacy Principle 8 in the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), we seek your consent to send your personal information (consisting of an "Application summary") overseas, for the purposes of peer-review of this application if required. NHMRC

uses the expertise of some peer assessors who reside overseas. While we make every effort to protect your personal information, assessors outside Australia are bound by their own country's laws and consequently we cannot provide assurance that your information will be handled in accordance with the same standards as required by the *Privacy Act 1988*, or that you would have similar remedies if your personal information is released in breach of local privacy laws.

Select 'Yes' or 'No'.

Partner organisation consent

Do you give consent to provide your application and assessment results to other partner organisations?

Select 'Yes' or 'No'.

If you wish to be considered for funding by a partner organisation, select 'Yes'. By selecting 'Yes' you are consenting to NHMRC providing your application and/or assessment information to potential funding partners if your application fits the funding partner's research funding objectives. For a list of funding partners, refer to this grant opportunity's information on

[GrantConnect](#).

Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria, where applicable

To qualify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, at least 20% of the research effort and capacity building must relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Complete this section if at least 20% of your research effort and capacity building relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and you answered 'yes' to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research question within Sapphire.

Applicants should ensure that they address each Indigenous Research Excellence Criterion as set out in [section 8.1.3](#) of the Guidelines and demonstrate:

- what proportion of the research effort will be directed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- that the Indigenous community were instrumental in identifying and inviting further research into the health issue and that the research outcomes will directly benefit the 'named' communities
- that there is a history of working together with the 'named' communities (e.g. co-development of the grant, involvement in pilot studies) or how the 'named' communities will have input/control over the research process and outcomes across the life of the project
- that there is opportunity for two-way capacity development for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous investigators
- that the above points are explicit throughout the application and not just addressed separately within the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria section.

6.3. Participating Institutions

In some cases, the institution that will administer your application may differ from the institution in which you will actually conduct the proposed research or your proposed research may be conducted at a collaborating institution in addition to your administering institution. For example, many universities administer research that will be conducted in an affiliated teaching hospital. Information on 'Participating Institutions' is required by NHMRC to enable peer

reviewers to identify potential institutional conflicts with your application and for grant administration purposes.

Research Institution

List the Participating Institution and department where the proposed research will be conducted.

To add more than one Participating Institution, press '+ Add' and complete the required information. If the Participating Institution does not appear in the list, email the institution name to the Research Help Centre (help@nhmrc.gov.au).

Research Effort (%)

If the research will be conducted at more than one institution, enter the Research Effort percentage (%) allocated to each Participating Institution and department. The percentages (%) entered must total 100%.

Note: If some or all of the proposed research will be carried out at your Administering Institution, create an entry with the Administering Institution and choose a percentage up to 100%. At least one institution must be listed.

6.4. Research classification

The details entered in this section will be used in the peer review process to assist with the allocation of your application to the most relevant peer reviewers for your application. It may also be used for analyses of NHMRC's funding profile.

Definitions for the 4 Broad Research Areas (BRAs) have been added to the application form in Sapphire to assist applicants in selecting the most appropriate BRA. These definitions will appear as help text (🔍) under Research Classification in the application.

All fields on this page marked with a flag (🚩) must be completed to meet minimum data requirements. You must make the selections that best describe your research proposal against each of the following fields:

Broad Research Area: Select a Broad Research Area that best describes the research outlined in your grant proposal. For example, research in the very early stages of developing a vaccine against a parasite should be categorised as basic science research instead of public health research.

Basic Science Research: seeks to understand the biological processes that underpin health and disease at the molecular, cellular, organ system and whole body levels. It may be conducted in vitro, in vivo and/or in silico. It may use but, is not limited to, cells, tissues or other materials of human origin or from relevant animal models.

Clinical Medicine and Science Research: seeks to improve the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of human diseases and conditions. It may involve interaction with patients and/or the use of clinical diagnostic materials or patient data.

Health Services Research: seeks to understand and improve the effectiveness, quality, safety, social and environmental dimensions of health care including access, distribution, timeliness and efficiency.

Public Health Research: seeks to improve the health of a population through the prevention of disease, prolongation of life and promotion of health and wellbeing. It includes research to understand the social, behavioural, environmental and other determinants of health and disease.

All fields on this page marked with a flag (🚩) must be completed to meet minimum data requirements. You must make the selections that best describe your research proposal against each of the following fields:

Field(s) of Research: Click '+ Add' to add rows for each Field of Research (FoR) that best describes the area of research of the application. The choice of FoRs and their proportions will assist in assigning appropriate assessors to the application.

- Select up to 3 Fields of Research that best reflect the nature of the research in the application.
- Allocate a percentage (%) against each FoR.
- Ensure the total percentage (%) equals 100%.

Peer Review Areas: Select 3 Peer Review Areas (PRAs) that best reflect the application's areas of research. PRAs must not be duplicated.

Research Keywords: Select 5 Research Keywords that are most applicable to the application's main area of research.

Burden of Disease: Select up to 3 Burden of Disease types that best describe the area of research of the application.

- Click '+ Add' to add rows for each additional Burden of Disease.
- You must allocate a percentage (%) of time against each.
- The percentage (%) total must not exceed 100%.

6.5. Ethics

If you answer 'Yes' to any of the questions, you will need to obtain ethics approvals and supply evidence of these to your research office in the event your application is funded. For further information, see [NHMRC's practical guidelines and advice on Ethics and Integrity](#).

6.6. Researcher

All fields for this section marked with a flag (🚩) must be completed to meet minimum data requirements.

Chief Investigators (CIA)

Applicants must have a Sapphire account in order to be listed on the application form. If the Chief Investigator cannot be located using the search function, they will need to complete a Sapphire Registration.

The 'Role' and corresponding 'Name' fields for Chief Investigator A must be completed to meet minimum data requirements. If you are naming yourself for a CI/AI role, 'Invitation Response' status will automatically change to Accepted.

As an applicant, you must activate a Sapphire account and/or submit a registration form at least 3 business days prior to minimum data. Noting account activation processes cannot be guaranteed in this time. Click 'Invite to Register & Manage Access' to invite a colleague to

complete Sapphire Registration and/or share your application with view/edit access. Enter the email address, followed by the tab key, select the corresponding option from the dropdown menu and click 'Submit'.

Category and Level

Select the Category and Level that you are applying for.

Category and Level justification

Provide your justification for the selected Category and Level of Investigator Grant. This response will be provided to peer reviewers and taken into account when reviewing the application. Refer to the Statements of Expectations at [Appendix D](#) for information on the requirements.

Maximum of 1000 characters including spaces and line breaks.

Chief Investigator Citizenship

Confirm by selecting 'Yes' that you are an Australian Citizen, a permanent resident of Australia, or a New Zealand citizen with Special Category Visa status at the time of acceptance and for the duration of the grant, as in accordance with [section 4.1.1](#) of the Guidelines.

Time Spent Overseas

Confirm by selecting 'Yes', that should you spend time overseas, it will be in accordance with [section 3.3.5](#) and [4.1.1](#) of the Guidelines.

6.7. Salary and 'other appointment' declarations

NHMRC expects that a CIA who receives a salary from their institution, or who hold leadership positions within their institution that involve substantial leadership/governance responsibilities, will not apply for a salary from NHMRC.

Applicants requesting a salary are required to provide declarations on their current salary support from any NHMRC grants (other than Fellowships) and/or non-NHMRC grants.

These declarations relate to budget eligibility policies outlined in [Section 3](#) of the Guidelines. Depending on the declarations made by the applicant, additional information will be requested within the form. NHMRC may request evidence of the declarations from your Administering Institution.

Holders of non-NHMRC grants that include salary support, will need to ensure that they enter the last day that they will be drawing salary in order for their Investigator Grant salary to be awarded appropriately.

Should an Investigator Grant be awarded and the non-NHMRC grant salary support be relinquished, responsibility for salary will not be transferred to NHMRC.

Applicants must ensure that all declarations are correct as they are used to determine the salary awarded. Investigator Grant salary calculations will be based on the declared other salary end date within the application, which must be correct at the time of application. CIAs must not plan to relinquish their non-NHMRC grant salary and transfer responsibility for their salary to NHMRC should the Investigator Grant be successful.

By making this application, including the declarations in relation to salary, you consent to your Administering Institution providing independent evidence to support these declarations, at the request of NHMRC.

Confirm, by selecting 'Yes', that by making this application, including the declarations in relation to salary and appointments, you consent to your Administering Institution providing independent evidence to support these declarations at the request of NHMRC.

Workload and FTE

Select your 'Workload' from within the drop-down menu.

Where a full-time workload is selected an FTE of 1.0 will be generated and is unable to be edited.

Where a part-time workload is selected an additional 'FTE' drop down will be provided.

The selected 'Workload' and 'FTE' will inform the percentage salary component awarded to the applicant where salary support is requested.

Part-time applicants, depending on their circumstances, may not require a full Research Support Package (RSP) in order to complete their research. Applicants have the option either to request 100% RSP or to reduce it in proportion to part-time status. All part-time applicants must indicate whether they are requesting 100% RSP or reducing it in proportion to part-time status.

Requesting a salary

In accordance with [section 3.1](#), [3.3.1](#), [3.3.2](#), [3.3.4](#), [4.3.3](#) and [4.3.4](#) of the Guidelines, indicate if you are requesting a salary.

A drop-down list will populate with 2 options. Considering your circumstances and the eligibility requirements listed in the Guidelines, please select the appropriate salary declaration option for your application:

'I am not requesting a salary'

'I am requesting a salary'

If salary support is not requested, an additional optional field will appear.

Select the option that best represents why you are not requesting a salary:

'I currently receive salary from my institution ([section 3.1](#))'

'I will hold an 'Other appointment' on 1 January of the year the Investigator Grant is due to commence ([section 3.3.4](#))'

'I hold a non-NHMRC grant(s) with a salary component greater than 20% of my selected Investigator Grant salary (for the period of overlap) which will not cease prior to the Investigator Grant end date ([section 4.3.4](#))'

'I do not require a salary'

If salary support is requested, additional mandatory fields must be completed.

I am receiving a PSP from NHMRC that will not end by 1 January of the year the Investigator Grant is to commence

Advise if you are receiving a PSP from NHMRC that will not end by 1 January of the year the Investigator Grant is to commence. When selecting 'Yes' to this question, you will be presented with, and asked to confirm, the following text on the Salary Declaration Summary page: 'I hold but will cease to draw salary support of an NHMRC PSP.'

NHMRC Fellowship holders do not need to indicate that they hold an active Fellowship as NHMRC will confirm this when calculating the application budgets.

Non-NHMRC grant

I will be receiving salary support from a non-NHMRC grant(s) that will overlap with the Investigator Grant.

By selecting 'Yes' for the non-NHMRC grant salary support field, you must provide the final date by which you will draw the non-NHMRC grant salary. If multiple grants with salary support are held, please enter the last expiring grant salary date.

Salary Declaration Summary

Confirm, by selecting 'Yes', that the summary declarations are correct at the time of application submission. The declarations will be used to determine the amount of salary support awarded.

Should you wish to edit your salary declarations, navigate back to the Researcher page

6.8. Relative to Opportunity

Peer review of applications to the Investigator Grant scheme includes assessment of the CIA's track record "relative to opportunity".

Criteria	Weighting	Assessment timeframe
Publications	35%	'10-year assessment timeframe' (see below)
Research impact	20%	Emphasis is on the CIA's recent and/or ongoing contributions to realising, sustaining and/or maximising the impact
Leadership	15%	'10-year assessment timeframe' (see below)

To assist peer reviewers in making this assessment, all applicants will be required to include:

- their career stage based on the time since completion of their PhD or equivalent
- a structured overview of their research career over the 10-year period (taking into account any career disruptions) up to the closing date of the scheme
- a career context summary outlining their career circumstances, opportunities for research and the associated impact on their research productivity
- details of any career disruptions and their impact.

Applicants nominate up to 10 of their best publications and their leadership track record achievements from the past 10 years, up to the application close date. This '10-year assessment timeframe' is extended commensurate with the period of valid career disruption(s), where present,²⁸ but cannot extend beyond when the applicant commenced research. This timeframe is not extended for career circumstances that do not meet the definition of a career disruption. For example, for applicants with a one-year career disruption, their '10-year assessment timeframe' will extend to 11 calendar years prior to the application close date. This is the same principle for determining eligibility of Emerging Leadership applicants (see [Appendix C](#)).

²⁸ The career disruption must have happened wholly or partially within 10 years of the application close date and after when the applicant commenced research. If there are more career disruptions that fall wholly or partially within this extended period, but still after when the applicant commenced research, the calendar days/months/years of the '10-year assessment timeframe' will be extended further, commensurate with the period of disruption. This will continue until there are no more career disruptions or the applicant's PhD pass date is reached.

Applicants also provide details of where they have contributed to a research impact along a pathway to impact, verified/corroborated with evidence. The discovery/finding that underpins the impact can be from any time in the applicant's career, however it is expected that the applicant will have made recent and/or ongoing contributions to realising, sustaining and/or realising the impact.

It is within the '10-year assessment timeframe' that applicants can:

- address career overview and career context (see [section 6.8.2](#) and [6.8.3](#))
- nominate career disruptions (for the purposes of assessment and peer review ([section 6.8.4](#)))
- nominate their 'up to' 10 best publications and leadership track record
- outline their 'recent or ongoing' contributions to realising, sustaining and/or maximising their claimed research impact (contributions outside the 10-year assessment timeframe can be included, but are considered 'less recent', see the Research Impact score descriptors at [Appendix B](#))
- provide their best leadership examples.

When outlining the impacts of RTO circumstances (including career disruptions), the applicant is to describe the impact on their career trajectory and research productivity (see [section 6.8.2](#), [6.8.3](#) and [6.8.4](#)) within and across the allowable '10-year assessment timeframe'. However, the causative event(s) (e.g. flood, accident/injury, disability, or illness), does not need to have occurred within the 10-year assessment timeframe.

Reviewers are to take into consideration all of the applicant's RTO circumstances when performing their track record assessment, including those that have extended the assessment timeframe (i.e. career disruptions), and those that have not (i.e. other career circumstances – see [Appendix C](#)).

To assist peer reviewers in making this assessment, all applicants will be required to include their career stage, based on the time since completion of their PhD or equivalent (see [section 6.8.1](#)).

For the 10-year assessment timeframe, but not prior to commencing research, applicants will provide:

- a structured overview of their research career up to the closing date of the scheme (including time spent completing the PhD, where this falls within the 10-year assessment timeframe) ([section 6.8.2](#))
- a career context summary outlining their career circumstances, opportunities for research and the associated impact on their research productivity ([section 6.8.3](#))
- details of any career disruptions and their impact ([section 6.8.4](#)).

Exemplar application information to illustrate the policy concept is provided in [Appendix H](#).

Information entered in the 'Relative to opportunity' section of the applicant's Profile in Sapphire will not be provided to peer reviewers. All relative to opportunity information should be included within the corresponding subsections below.

6.8.1. Career stage

Applicants must confirm whether they hold a PhD or equivalent (where "equivalent" is defined as a qualification or research experience that meets the level 10 criteria of the Australian Qualifications Framework Second Edition January 2013).

Do you hold a PhD or level 10 Criteria of Australia Qualification?

Enter your PhD thesis pass date or the date you obtained research qualifications equivalent to level 10 criteria of the Australian Qualifications Framework.

PhD Thesis Pass Date cannot be after the grant opportunity's close date (30 July 2025).

If the CIA holds multiple PhDs in a health and/or medical research field, eligibility to apply at the Emerging Leadership Level will be determined using the earliest awarded PhD, irrespective of whether the PhD still aligns with the CIA's area of research.

Confirm, by selecting 'Yes', that your Administering Institution holds evidence of your PhD thesis pass date or confirms that in its judgement, your qualification or research experience meets the level 10 criteria of the Australian Qualifications Framework Second Edition January 2013. If an applicant does not hold a PhD or equivalent, or has submitted their thesis but is yet to receive their conferral, they should select 'No'.

6.8.2. Career overview

Applicants must provide structured career information for their 10-year assessment timeframe, preceding the closing date of the scheme, but not prior to commencing research, including:

- key appointments/roles (including time spent completing the PhD, where this falls within the 10-year assessment timeframe)
- indicating whether they had any career disruption(s) (refer to [section 6.8.4](#))
- the category(ies) of circumstances described under career context (see below under [career context](#))
- estimated time involved in research (in FTE research-active years) for each role and overall, after taking into account career context circumstances and career disruption(s).

Applicants must create a new record for each role and select the relevant career context category(ies) of circumstances (from the list), applicable to that key appointment/role.

Where relevant, time spent completing a PhD is to be included in the calculation of applicant FTE research-active years.

An applicant who had no engagement in research during the period of their role/appointment, may leave the 'research' category unchecked and select from the other applicable categories.

Career Overview

To create a record, enter the Start and End dates for the first key appointment/role record.

Complete all fields and enter the approximate FTE research-active period in years for each role/appointment. For example, if employed for 10 years at FTE 0.8, record 8 years. Note that applicants may enter this as zero if they were not engaged in research during that period.

When entering their current position within the career overview section, applicants should include the closing date of the Investigator Grant scheme (30/07/2025) in the 'End Date' field.

Where the applicant's first key appointment/role began prior to their 10-year assessment timeframe (see [section 6.8](#)), enter the first day that falls within the 10-year timeframe into the 'Start Date'. Where the applicant has no career disruptions, this date will be 10 calendar years prior to the application close date (e.g. for the Investigator Grant 2026 round, which closes on 30/07/2025, enter 30/07/2015 in the 'Start Date' field). If the applicant has one year of career

disruption(s), this extends the 10-year assessment timeframe, commensurate to the period of disruption. In this scenario, with one year of career disruption, for a close date of 30/07/2025, enter 30/07/2014 into the 'Start Date' field. It is the applicant's responsibility to calculate the approximate FTE worked for each key role/appointment. The application form will sum these values for each role. This is intended to provide reviewers with additional context on the opportunity each applicant has had to conduct research with the 10-year assessment timeframe.

There are no restrictions on how far into the past the 10-year assessment timeframe can be extended (commensurate with career disruption(s)), up until the applicant commenced research. Therefore, there are no date restrictions within the application form on when a key appointment/role can be nominated. However, key appointments/roles **must not** be nominated from outside the 10-year assessment timeframe.

Applicants can include further details of these appointments/roles, including actual start date, within the 'Career Context' section of the application.

The overall estimated FTE (years) actively spent in research will be automatically calculated based on the FTE research-active period entered by the applicant for each role/appointment. This information is intended to provide additional context for peer reviewers on the researcher's opportunity to conduct research, within the 10-year assessment timeframe.

Note: To add additional records, click '+ Add'. To remove a record, select the one(s) you want to delete, and click '🗑️'.

6.8.3. Career context

Research (mandatory)

All applicants must provide a broad overview of their engagement in research over their 10-year assessment timeframe (up until they commenced research, if fewer than 10 years) to provide peer reviewers with context on the applicant's overall opportunities to conduct and disseminate/translate research.

Specifically, this overview should provide additional contextual information and overview on:

- research roles and responsibilities
- career stage and time spent as an active researcher
- how those circumstances affected or contributed to the applicant's research productivity relative to the typical performance of researchers in their field.

This information should align with the structured information provided in the [career overview](#) section above.

It should not include:

- a scientific summary of projects and outputs
- research activity as an undergraduate (e.g. Bachelor degree) student.

Peer reviewers will be advised to ignore information provided in the career context field that is out of scope, including additional track record information (as above).

The more specific applicants are about their career trajectory, the more helpful it will be for peer reviewers.

Other career context categories (optional)

Applicants may include other information about circumstances affecting their opportunities to undertake research, excluding career disruptions (which are described separately) including but not limited to:

- **Resources and facilities:** the resources and facilities available to the applicant (e.g. the extent to which additional research personnel contribute to the program, access to infrastructure)
- **Professional responsibilities:** employment situations such as research, teaching and administration, e.g. research only, teaching and research, research and administration, research in industry, research and business, project or program management, clinical, policy and part-time roles
- **Personal circumstances:** influence of personal circumstances not covered under career disruption, including disability, carer responsibilities, community obligations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants and any other personal circumstances that have affected the applicant's research productivity
- **Other circumstances:** other career or research circumstances, e.g. engagement with community as part of Indigenous health research, the influence of calamities such as COVID-19, unemployment and jury duty. Situations such as increased caring responsibilities or the need to supervise children's education at home during the COVID-19 pandemic can be considered as Other Circumstances as long as the impacts are described clearly.

The circumstances described should accord with a career context category and should include the approximate dates by month and year when those circumstances applied. Applicants must provide accurate information, verifiable by the Administering Institution if required, that reflects their individual circumstances and opportunities for research.

Applicants are encouraged, where possible, to provide factual and quantifiable information when describing their career circumstances and associated impacts. The more specific the information provided, the easier it will be for peer reviewers to understand the tangible effects on the researcher.

For example:

- 'Due to restrictions imposed by [specify the jurisdiction applying the restrictions] in response to the pandemic, my organisation's research laboratories in [specify location] were closed between X and Y dates.'
- 'Between X and Y dates I have needed to spend approximately 4 hours per day helping my 7-year-old child with their schooling'.

NHMRC recognises that the impact of an interruption or impediment may extend beyond the duration of the causative event (e.g. flood, injury or illness) and the full extent/effect of the circumstance can be included for consideration by peer reviewers. As such, applicants can outline an interruption or impediment that occurred outside of the 10-year assessment timeframe, where they can demonstrate that these continue to impact their research productivity and/or career trajectory, within their 10-year assessment timeframe.

Hypothetical career context summaries are provided in [Appendix H](#) to illustrate the concept. These summaries do not cover all circumstances that can be considered under the Relative to Opportunity Policy and do not cover all applicants' circumstances. The fictional information in the summaries should not be used as benchmarks for track record quality or successful grants.

To assess a track record relative to opportunity, peer reviewers are required to undertake a holistic assessment of submitted information against the assessment criteria and score descriptors, taking into account an applicant's specific circumstances.

Note 1: Applicants must not include circumstances considered under career disruption in this section, as they are covered separately in the career disruption section (refer to [section 6.8.4](#)).

Note 2: Applicants should not provide evidence of research outcomes and outputs in this section, as they are considered separately in track record assessment (refer to [section 6.10.1](#)).

Note 3: Applicants should not elaborate on confidential details of their circumstances (e.g. sensitive details of a medical illness).

Career Context

All applicants must outline their engagement in research spanning the last 10 years, including their career circumstances and how they contributed to research productivity (i.e. their ability to conduct and disseminate/translate research).

The claimed circumstances should accord with the Career Context category of the NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy and should include the periods of the circumstances (approximate dates by month and year).

Enter your broad career context statement in the free-text field provided.

This response will be provided to peer reviewers and taken into account when reviewing your application.

Maximum of 2000 characters including spaces and line breaks.

6.8.4. Career disruption

Career disruptions are prolonged interruptions (≥ 90 days FTE) to the ability to work due to pregnancy, illness/injury and/or carer responsibilities. Career disruptions that fall within the 10-year assessment timeframe will inform track record assessment and Emerging Leadership eligibility (see [Appendix C](#)).

- Applicants are to provide the type of career disruption.
- Applicants should outline the duration of the disruption(s) (including the full-time equivalent) and the associated impact.
- Specific details of the circumstances should not be provided.

Career disruptions extend the calendar-days/months/years of the 10-year assessment timeframe, commensurate with the period(s) of the disruption (see [section 6.8](#)). As a result, applicants may nominate publications and leadership track record from outside the past 10 calendar years, so long as they fall within their 10-year assessment timeframe.

Any career disruptions that applicants would like taken into account for their application must be entered in this section of the application form. Career disruption information in the applicant's Profile will not be used.

To create a career disruption record, enter the Start and End dates. Select a 'Reason' from the drop-down menu. Enter the FTE of the career disruption. For the purposes of eligibility, 0.2 FTE is equivalent to one standard business day (approximately 7.5 hours where a full-time working load is not disclosed).

Impact

Provide a brief explanation of the impact the career disruption has had on your research, research achievements and associated productivity relative to your career stage.

You should not describe the nature of the career disruption in this field.

This information will be provided to peer reviewers as part of the assessment of your application.

Maximum of 2000 characters including spaces and line breaks

You will then be asked to confirm if you hold evidence to support the career disruption and if you are able to provide it to NHMRC if requested. Note: To add additional records, click '+Add

Note: To add additional records, click '+Add'. To remove a record, select the one(s) you want to delete, and click '🗑️'.

Applicants and peer reviewers are advised that the day count of the claim calculator is indicative only, and that eligibility determinations will be calculated independently by NHMRC based on information entered into the application.

6.9. Strategic priorities and funding partners

Applicants are required to indicate their interest in their application being considered by funding partners. For research proposals that align with NHMRC's selection of funding partners, applicants can choose for their Investigator Grant to be funded by or in conjunction with other organisations (see [Appendix A](#)). Applicants will be able to choose from the following funding organisations:

- Cancer Council Queensland
- Cerebral Palsy Alliance
- MS Australia.

Note: Only indicate interest in Funding Organisations if your research aligns with the Funding Organisation eligibility.

Applicants in the EL category will be required to indicate if they are eligible for short-term support to Facilitate International Indigenous Researcher Networks (FIIRN supplement). Applicants who identify as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent may request the FIIRN supplement to support travel to international conferences and/or short-term international collaborative activities.

Funding Organisation

To indicate interest in Funding Partners please select 'yes' or 'no' for each of the following Funding Partners:

- Cancer Council Queensland
- Cerebral Palsy Alliance
- MS Australia

Strategic Priority Areas

Select 'Yes' or 'No' based on your eligibility for the FIIRN supplement.

If 'Yes' is selected, you will be asked to outline your proposed use of the funds for travel and/or for collaborative purposes. Applicants are required to provide a response of a maximum of 100 characters.

6.10. Track record (70%)

Applications will be assessed by peer reviewers on their track record, relative to opportunity (70%), including selected Level.

6.10.1. Top 10 in 10 (Publications)

Applicants are required to nominate up to 10 of their best publications from their '10-year assessment timeframe' (see [section 6.8](#) and [Appendix B](#)).

Each nominated publication should be accompanied by a separate written explanation that describes its quality, contribution to science, and the applicant's contribution.

Publications will be assessed against the score descriptors at **Table 2** of [Appendix B](#).

Top 10 in 10

Applicants provide the details of (up to) 10 of their best publications from within their 10-year assessment timeframe (see [section 6.8](#)). Publications outside the applicant's 10-year assessment timeframe will not be considered as part of the application assessment process.

The applicant must ensure that citation details are correct, particularly the ordering of the authors on the paper. Where it is identified that an applicant has misrepresented the publication citation in their application, assigned peer reviewers may be advised not to consider this publication in their assessment.

Each publication should be provided separately, i.e. one publication per free-text field. The explanation should outline why the publication was nominated, its quality and contribution to science, and your contribution to the publication:

- Publication 1-10 (max. 500 characters for citation)
- Explanation (max. 1000 characters).

6.10.2. Research impact and pathways to impact (20%)

Applicants are assessed based on:

- the **'reach and significance'** of the impact (10%)
- the **'applicant's contribution'** to realising, sustaining and/or maximising the impact (10%).

NHMRC defines the impact of research as the verifiable outcomes that research makes to knowledge, health, the economy and/or society. Impact is the effect of the research after it has been adopted, adapted for use, or used to inform further research.

Research impact is the verifiable outcomes from research and not the prospective or anticipated effects of the research. For example, a prospective publication linked to the applicant's research program is not demonstrated or corroborated impact.

The assessment of 'Research impact and pathway to impact' will be against the score descriptors at **Tables 4 and 5** of [Appendix B](#).

Indicate which of the following research impact types you would like considered in the assessment of your application (see Table 4 of [Appendix B](#)).

Select one or more impact types:

- Social impact
- Economic impact
- Health impact
- Knowledge impact

Note: It is the reach and significance of the impact that determines the score, not whether the applicant has framed their impact around one or more impact types.

The assessment of 'Research impact and pathway to impact' will be against the score descriptors at **Tables 4 and 5** of [Appendix B](#).

Applicants should provide robust, verifiable evidence (qualitative and/or quantitative, see examples at **Table 3** of [Appendix B](#)) to support the claimed research impact that can be independently assessed by peer reviewers.

Research impact claim

Outline the research impact claim in the free text field provided (8000 characters), framed around the 2 sub-criteria:

- the 'reach and significance' of the research impact (10%).
- the 'applicant's contribution' to realising the impact (10%).

Note: applicants should create a single coherent narrative for their 'pathway to impact' that addresses both sub-criteria, to allow a robust assessment. Applicants may choose to include headings to provide structure to their response. It is up to the applicant to determine how to structure their impact narrative.

References/evidence

All claims made in response to the research impact and pathway to impact criteria should be accompanied by robust and verifiable evidence (e.g. references/citations). This evidence can be provided in this free text field (2000 characters).

Any references that are required as verifiable evidence of the impact need not be provided as a complete citation. For example, it would be sufficient to note the publication title and year to prove the existence of a publication.

Applicants should note that it is the quality of the corroborating evidence provided, not the quantity, that is most relevant. Applicants only need to provide evidence sufficient and strong enough to verify the claims, not all evidence that may be on the public record.

6.10.3. Leadership (15%)

Applicants are required to provide a single narrative that outlines their leadership achievements and their ability to identify and contribute to positive change. This narrative should be framed around one or more of the 4 leadership elements (Research Mentoring, Research Programs and Team Leadership, Institutional Leadership and Research Policy and Professional Leadership – see [Appendix B](#)).

It is the clarity of the applicant's narrative and the strength of their demonstrated leadership examples that determines the applicant's score, not how many of the leadership elements their narrative addresses.

Peer reviewers will ignore leadership track record information that falls outside the applicant's 10-year assessment timeframe (see [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix G](#)).

The assessment of leadership will be against the score descriptors at **Table 6** of [Appendix B](#).

Leadership

Provide a single, coherent and compelling narrative that outlines your leadership achievements, framed against one or more of the 4 leadership elements.

Maximum of 8000 characters including spaces and line breaks.

6.10.4. Knowledge gain (30%)

NHMRC defines 'Knowledge gain' for the Investigator Grant scheme as the **quality of the proposed research** and **significance of the knowledge gained**. It incorporates theoretical concepts, hypothesis, research design, robustness and the extent to which the research findings will contribute to the research area and health outcomes (by advancing knowledge, practice or policy).

Applicants must not include in any part of their application:

- links to external websites, apart from references to journal articles, guidelines, government reports, datasets and other outputs that are only available online; where links are included, provide the URL in full (e.g. the NHMRC website <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au>). Applicants are asked not to use URL shorteners as this may create a security risk. For the purposes of providing evidence for claims made against the Research Impact criterion, applicants may include references to external websites, where this is necessary to corroborate their claim(s).
- publication metrics such as journal impact factors, consistent with the recommendations in the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment. If included, these metrics will be disregarded by peer reviewers when assessing an application.

The grant proposal must be written in English and submitted in a Portable Document Format (PDF) file, using NHMRC's Grant Proposal template, which will be available on GrantConnect. Applicants must use this template. The grant proposal must be uploaded into Sapphire.

Grant Proposal (Upload)

To upload your Grant Proposal PDF, select the 'Upload New' button followed by the 'Choose File' button. Select the PDF file you wish to upload and then click 'Start upload' to upload your Grant Proposal. Click 'Save' to ensure the application is submitted correctly.

To ensure that the document is displaying properly, applicants need to open a copy of the uploaded document by selecting the open icon to the right of the document name after the document has been saved in Sapphire.

Grant proposals that exceed the maximum limit of 7 pages, any additional pages will be disregarded from the application assessment process.

Naming and formatting requirements for the grant proposal, to ensure fairness and consistency across applicants, are listed in **Table 2**. Applications that fail to comply with these requirements may be excluded from consideration.

Details to be addressed in the grant proposal and associated page limits are set out in **Table 3**.

Table 2: Formatting requirements

Component	Component requirements
File format	The grant proposal must be saved and uploaded as a PDF file
File size	The PDF file MUST NOT exceed 2 MB in size
File name	<p>The PDF file must be named using the following: Applicant's Surname_Grant Proposal.pdf e.g. Smith_Grant Proposal.pdf</p> <p>Note: There is no requirement for applicants to include the application number in the filename. Sapphire will automatically add the application and grant proposal version number to the uploaded PDF.</p> <p>Additionally, the version number increases on each resubmission to an RAO and subsequent return to an applicant by an RAO.</p>
Page size	A4
Header	Application ID and Applicant surname must be included in the header
Footer	Page number must be included in the footer
Font	NHMRC recommends a minimum of 12-point Times New Roman font. Applicants must ensure the font is readable.
Margins	Pages must have 2 cm top, bottom, left and right margins.
Line spacing	Single
Language	English

Applicants are able to include tables and figures within their grant proposals. These must comply with the formatting requirements outlined in **Table 2**. All images and figures within the grant proposal must be appropriately referenced. Applicants must ensure any images of people (particularly children) are appropriately de-identified and/or note that informed consent has been given to use the image.

Table 3: Grant Proposal components

Component	Page Limit
Research Proposal (response to knowledge gain criterion)	5 pages
References	2 pages

Research Proposal – 5 pages

When drafting the response to the knowledge gain criterion, applicants should describe their **research vision/plan** for the 5-year term of the grant and outline the **proposed new research** to be undertaken with the Investigator Grant (see [Appendix B](#)).

The assessment of knowledge gain will be against the score descriptors at **Table 7** of [Appendix B](#).

References – 2 pages

References for the Research Proposal must:

- not exceed 2 pages (references that exceed the maximum limit of 2 pages, will have any additional pages disregarded from the application assessment process)
- provide a list of all references cited in the application in an appropriate standard journal format (NHMRC prefers the Author-date (also known as the Harvard System), Documentary-note and the Vancouver Systems)
- list authors in the order in which they appear in PubMed
- only include references to cited work
- be written in English.

7. Certifying your application

Once all 'My Profile' details, application form details and supporting documents have been entered/uploaded, the application can be certified and submitted in Sapphire. Certification is required by both the CIA and Administering Institution. Refer to [Section 7](#) of the guidelines for further details.

Before completing these steps:

- Review the application to ensure it is accurate and complete and meets all eligibility/application requirements.
- Applicants retain responsibility for confirming that their application satisfies the stated eligibility requirements.
- For funding schemes where the applicant has nominated a research budget, the summary tab automatically generates a summary of the requested budget from the relevant sections.
- A checklist for applicants applying for NHMRC funding is provided at [Section 8](#) of this Appendix.
- Ensure you have read and understood the assurances, acknowledgements and undertakings required of CIAs and Administering Institutions as part of this step. These are outlined in [Section 7](#) of the guidelines.
- Note that certification will lock down the application and prevent further editing. The final snapshot produced at this time will include relevant information from your 'My Profile'. Any subsequent changes to these areas of Sapphire will not appear in the application. If changes are needed after CIA certification but before submission to NHMRC, your RAO will need to reject the application in order for you to make the changes.
- Note that your personal information may be provided to another Administering Institution for the purpose of certifying the application where a researcher is either currently receiving NHMRC funding or is on a different and separate application for NHMRC funding.

Instructions for certifying and submitting an application in Sapphire are provided in the [Sapphire Learning and Training Resources](#).

Once submitted to NHMRC, your application will be considered final and no changes can be made unless the application is withdrawn for amendment before the closing date.

8. Checklist for applicants

Before creating an application:

- Ensure Sapphire Accounts for all CIs are active and mandatory 'My Profile' fields are complete.
- Familiarise yourself with the guidelines and [Sapphire Learning and Training Resources](#).
- Check closing date and time for application lodgement.
- Update your Sapphire 'My Profile' in accordance with requirements set out in this document.
- Read the relevant ethical guidelines/associated documentation if ethics approval is required for the proposed application.
- Inform your RAO of your intention to submit an application.
- Be aware of any Administering Institution internal deadlines and requirements for submission.

During the creation of an application:

- Check any minimum data requirements.
- Check eligibility requirements.
- Complete all parts of the application.
- Create and upload your Grant Proposal.
- Identify any Relative to Opportunity considerations, including Career Disruptions, where applicable, within your application.
- Consider any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander requirements for your application, including addressing any additional assessment criteria.
- Make sure all required attachments are uploaded.

Before submitting an application:

- Read and understand the [*Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018*](#). Submission of an application indicates that the Administering Institution and research team understand and will comply with the principles and responsibilities set out in the Code.
- Ensure your Administering Institution has agreement between all institutions, including international institutions, associated with the application about the management of the grant and involvement of nominated researchers.
- Ensure researchers who intend to be involved in the research have agreement from their organisation to be involved in the research activity as outlined/included in the application.
- Check your compliance with formatting and page requirements.
- Ensure any images of people (particularly children) are appropriately de-identified and/or note that informed consent has been given to use the image.
- Ensure any approvals or licences are acquired or applied for.
- Check all information is correct and complete.
- Familiarise yourself with your obligations should you be successful.
- Certify the application and ensure RAO certification and submission occur before the closing date and time.

Remember, your RAO is your primary contact for advice and assistance. RAOs will contact the Research Help Centre for further advice if required.

Appendix H. Exemplar career information

The following examples do not cover all circumstances that can be considered under the Relative to Opportunity Policy and do not cover all applicants' circumstances. The fictional information in the summaries should not be used as benchmarks for track record quality or successful grants.

The examples provided have timelines and dates that are relevant to the 2026 Investigator Grant round (i.e. the PhD census is Wednesday 30 July 2025). The intention of these examples is to provide RAOs and CIAs with some general guidance of how different career paths (including relative to opportunity, career disruptions and career diversity circumstances) may be represented within the application.

Example 1:		Early-career researcher with career disruptions		
CAREER STAGE				
PhD thesis pass or level 10 criteria date:		1/5/2014		
CAREER OVERVIEW				
Dates	Career history – Job title(s)	Career disruption (yes/no)	Career context categories	Approx FTE research-active period (years)
Dec 21 – July 25	The University of Kippax: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Associate LecturerPostdoctoral Research Fellow	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ResearchProfessional responsibilitiesOther	2.3
Jun 14 – Dec 21	Kambah Research Institute: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Postdoctoral Research Fellow	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ResearchOther	5
Aug 13 – May 14	Acton University: <ul style="list-style-type: none">PhD candidate	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Research	1
Overall estimated FTE (years) actively spent in research				8.3
CAREER CONTEXT SUMMARY				
As an early-career researcher, I have demonstrated research outcomes considered exceptional in my field despite limited opportunities for research. My first postdoctoral role was impacted by my career disruptions (Feb 2015–Jan 2016) and volunteer work (Feb–March 2014), I did not undertake research during this period. My successful PhD candidature provided excellent training in the field of neuroscience and the establishment of important collaborations, which led to my current fellowship position at the Kambah Research Institute. I currently lead an international program of research on neuronal signalling. During the first year of this fellowship, I volunteered at a hospital for 6 months (Jun 2014–Dec 2014), which enabled me to form collaborations with clinicians and involve consumers in my research. Since late-2021, I have successfully managed my research concurrent with my ongoing teaching activities (1.1 FTE years) but faced a significant				

disruption due to laboratory relocation (0.25 FTE year, Mar–May 2022) during which I lacked access to the flow cytometry equipment required for my core research using immunophenotyping, which has hindered my knowledge impacts. I nevertheless maintained some limited research productivity by training a high-quality PhD student to contribute to my secondary exploratory research using neuroimaging (see Publications section).

CAREER DISRUPTIONS				
Duration	Reason	Impact	FTE	Accumulated days
1/2/15 – 31/1/16	Pregnancy & Mat Leave	I had one year of leave which substantially delayed my major postdoctoral research project and limited my ability to network and attend conferences. I nevertheless published 3 papers in 2016, and 5 in 2017, demonstrating my strong upward trajectory. I also filed a patent application to protect IP developed in my work on neuropeptides, continued as primary supervisor of my PhD student and maintained international collaborations.	100	365
1/2/16 – 31/1/17	Carer responsibilities	I returned to work 2.5 days per week for this period. The impact of this reduced time working was limited student supervision, reduced grant activity (one grant successful obtained), declining national speaker invitations. However, I was able to maintain my research and continued producing outputs during this period.	50	182.5
1/2/18 – 1/3/20	Carer responsibilities	During this period, I was able to increase my working capacity. While working 4 days a week, I was able to leverage my research to produce a significant number of outputs however, my ability to attending conferences and expand networks was still limited.	20	224.8

Example 2:		Full-time early career researcher – With ‘Relative to Opportunity’ considerations		
CAREER STAGE				
PhD thesis pass or level 10 criteria date:		11/5/2018		
CAREER OVERVIEW				
Dates	Career history – Job title(s)	Career disruption (yes/no)	Career context categories	Approx FTE research-active period (years)
May 22 – July 25	Kaleen University: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Postdoctoral Researcher	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Research	3
May 21 – May 22	University of West Ryde:	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Research	1

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Postdoctoral Researcher 			
Aug 14 – May 15	Kaleen University: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Postdoctoral Researcher 	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research 	1.5
Overall estimated FTE (years) actively spent in research				5.5
CAREER CONTEXT SUMMARY				
<i>I am a full-time researcher and have demonstrated an increasing trajectory of high-quality research outputs (late-2018 onwards), I returned from overseas to Australia (May 2018–Nov 2018) to commence my full-time postdoctoral. Taking leave directly following the publication of my PhD work restricted my ability to attend conferences and expand my networks. Following my return to work, I re-established my research program by training new research personnel and renewing international collaborations. This rebuilding phase meant that the outputs of my research began to be realised from mid-2021 onwards. Compared to the formative stages as an independent researcher, once I was able to establish my own research laboratory and employ a research assistant (i.e. increased resources) I have demonstrated a strong and resilient upwards trajectory.</i>				
CAREER DISRUPTIONS				
Duration	Reason	Impact	FTE	Accumulated days
None	NA	NA	NA	NA

Example 3:		Full-time mid-career researcher – With career disruptions		
CAREER STAGE				
PhD thesis pass or level 10 criteria date:		22/3/2009		
CAREER OVERVIEW				
Dates	Career history – Job title(s)	Career disruption (yes/no)	Career context categories	Approx FTE research-active period (years)
Dec 18 – July 25	Aranda School of Health: Associate Lecturer <ul style="list-style-type: none">Senior Postdoctoral Research Fellow	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ResearchResources and facilities	6.5

Aug 14 – Dec 18	Aranda School of Health: • Postdoctoral Research Fellow	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Resources and facilities 	3.5
Overall estimated FTE (years) actively spent in research				10
CAREER CONTEXT SUMMARY				
<p><i>I am a mid-career researcher and since 2013 I have conducted my own full-time research program, under the guidance of a senior researcher, on diabetes management in rural Australia. While this program relies heavily on collaboration with culturally diverse stakeholders and produces non-traditional outputs (see Impact section), it has equipped me with excellent policy and research translation skills, resulting in internationally benchmarked outcomes. This has been achieved despite limited resources (working in a small rural research centre with limited access to imaging and computing facilities) and only the support of 3 part-time research Masters students. I still maintained high quality outputs (see Publications section), relative to opportunity, by collaborating extensively with researchers internationally, including the use of biobanks and supercomputers in Canada, USA and Germany. I also maximised my skills by furthering my research dissemination, policy and program advice and other translational roles (see Leadership section). Since 2018, I have gained a full-time PhD student and research assistant, which has demonstrably further improved quality of my publications (see publications) but my research environment (and associated limitations) noted above remains.</i></p>				
CAREER DISRUPTIONS				
Duration	Reason	Impact	FTE	Accumulated days
1/8/16 – 31/7/17	Carer responsibilities	Between August 2016 to July 2017, I had a 100% FTE career disruption where I was a primary carer. I returned to research from August 2017, however my ability to continue research, publish papers and produce outputs was completely halted. However, I have been able to demonstrate my excellent abilities through my significant health outcomes produced since returning to research full-time.	100	365

Example 4:		Full-time early career researcher – Impacted by COVID-19		
CAREER STAGE				
PhD thesis pass or level 10 criteria date:		22/5/2015		
CAREER OVERVIEW				
Dates	Career history – Job title(s)	Career disruption (yes/no)	Career context categories	Approx FTE research-active period (years)
Dec 22- July 25	The Royal Manuka Hospital:	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research	0.8

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laureate Professor • Neurologist (Director) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional responsibilities • Other 	
Jun 14 – Dec 21	Kambah Research Institute: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjunct Professor • Neurologist (Director) 	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Professional responsibilities 	3.25
Overall estimated FTE (years) actively spent in research				4.05
CAREER CONTEXT SUMMARY				
<i>I undertake 0.5 FTE research alongside medical practice. Despite my significant clinical commitments, I demonstrated high-quality outcomes by partnering with a large network of over 15 postdoctoral researchers nationally and internationally. I provided integral research direction and specialist methodological expertise on the clinical research component of multidisciplinary programs, while delegating responsibilities for conduct of the research, which allowed me to maximise research productivity while leading a large hospital team. My research contribution was reserved for cutting-edge programs with long lead times, so I was not prolific in academic outputs (relative to full-time researchers), but I focused on achieving quality research outcomes with demonstrated international impact and recognition (see Impact case studies and top 10 publications). Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has halted clinical recruitment across my programs in Australia and Asia, many of which were at a critical Phase 3 trial stage. Additionally, I took on the role of home schooling my two small children (Early-2020 – late 2021) during Melbourne lockdowns, which is reflected in my latest outputs. I have been unable to demonstrate the same trajectory of research growth and outcomes as in recent years due to the pandemic.</i>				
CAREER DISRUPTIONS				
Duration	Reason	Impact	FTE	Accumulated days
None	NA	NA	NA	NA
Example 5: Established senior researcher – With Career Disruptions				
CAREER STAGE				
PhD thesis pass or level 10 criteria date:		11/11/2024		
CAREER OVERVIEW				
Dates	Career history – Job title(s)	Career disruption (yes/no)	Career context categories	Approx FTE research-active period (years)
Dec 18 – May 24	Weetangara Institute:	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research 	2.4

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institute Director Senior Postdoctoral Research Fellow 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional responsibilities 	
Dec 17 – Dec 18	Gungahlin Sciences Pty Ltd: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Drug Development 	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional responsibilities 	0
Jun 14 – Dec 17	City Hospital: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Drug Development 	YES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Other 	2.3
Overall estimated FTE (years) actively spent in research				4.7
CAREER CONTEXT SUMMARY				
<p><i>I am a recognised expert in cancer research and have demonstrated high quality outputs despite limited opportunities to conduct research. I achieved significant health and economic outcomes (see Impact statement) through my internationally renowned cancer clinical trials in the formative years relevant to this summary (Jun 2014–Dec 2015) despite impacts of jury duty (0.25 FTE year in Jan–Mar 2015) and flood damage to my lab (0.25 FTE year in Oct–Dec 2016). The flood destroyed my experimental drug supplies and patient samples, which set back my research program by several years despite having contingency stock. I nevertheless achieved some productivity (albeit reduced) by leveraging the capabilities of my long-standing research group of 5 postdocs and 8 PhD students, to re-establish the program and to explore alternative lines of enquiry – see Publications section. Although my one-year secondment to industry (Dec 2017–2018) impacted my publication outputs, I used the opportunity to further my clinical trials and drug development and commercial outcomes (see Impact statement). I have spent the last 6 years (Dec 2018–May 2024) in management roles with significant administrative responsibility (3.6 FTE years), including workforce management, health policy advice and development of strategic plans. My engagement in scientific research was limited to occasional, but frequently cited, technical input and occasional collaborations, in the absence of research staff or funding.</i></p>				
CAREER DISRUPTIONS				
Duration	Reason	Impact	FTE	Accumulated days
1/3/15–31/10/15	Major illness	Formal reduction of working hours to part-time due to major illness at 50% FTE. Although I maintained some productivity working 2.5 days during my illness, it prevented my attendance at conferences and limited my opportunity for collaborations. It has also affected progress on a major NHMRC international collaborative grant.	50	123

Appendix I. Applicants with industry-relevant experience

Principles

NHMRC is committed to ensuring that knowledge from health and medical research is translated through commercialisation (e.g. by pharmaceutical or medical devices companies), improvements to policy, health service delivery and clinical practice.

Therefore, as a complement to other measures of research excellence (e.g. publication and citation rates), NHMRC considers industry-relevant skills, experience and achievements in its assessment of applicants' track records.

These measures recognise that applicants who have invested their research time on technology transfer, commercialisation or collaborating with industry, may have gained highly valuable expertise or outputs relevant to research translation. However, NHMRC acknowledges that these researchers will necessarily have had fewer opportunities to produce traditional academic research outputs (e.g. peer reviewed publications).

Therefore, peer reviewers will:

- appropriately recognise applicants' industry-relevant experiences and results
- allow for the time applicants have spent in commercialisation/industry for 'relative to opportunity' considerations (but not impacting eligibility to apply at the Emerging Leadership category).

Who might have industry experience or be preparing for industry experience?

Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Researchers who have left academia to pursue a full-time career in industry (e.g. in pharmaceutical, biotechnology or start-up companies). In such instances, outputs must be assessed 'relative to opportunity', as there may have been restrictions in producing traditional research outputs (such as peer reviewed publications), but highly valuable expertise gained or outputs produced relevant to research translation (such as patents or new clinical guidelines).
2. Academic researchers whose work has a possible commercial focus. These researchers might not have yet entered into commercial agreements with industry and have chosen to forego or delay publication in order to protect or extend their intellectual property (IP).
3. Academic researchers who have translated their discovery into a collaborative agreement with industry. The researcher may be collaborating with the company in further research and development; may have a licensing agreement; or may have licensed or assigned their IP to the company. A researcher may ultimately leave the academic institution and become Chief Executive Officer, Chief Scientific Officer, Chief Technology Officer, Scientific Advisory Board Member or consultant for a start-up or other company, based on their experience.
4. Academic researchers who are actively collaborating with companies, for example by providing expert research services for fees. Publications of such work might be precluded or delayed according to contract arrangements. The specialised nature of this research might also restrict publication to specialised journals only, as opposed to generalist journals.

Table 1. Relevant industry outputs

Level of experience/output	IP	Collaboration with an industry partner	Established a start-up company	Product to market	Clinical trials or regulatory activities	Industry participation
Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patent granted: consider the type of patent and where it is granted. It can be more difficult to be granted a patent in, for example, the US or Europe than in Australia, depending on the patent prosecution and regulatory regime of the intended market National phase entry and prosecution or specified country application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executed a licensing agreement with an established company Significant research contract with an industry partner Long term consultancy with an industry partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieved successful exit (public market flotation, merger or acquisition) Raised significant (>\$10m) funding from venture capital or other commercial sources (not grant funding bodies) Chief Scientific Officer, Executive or non-executive role on company boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce sales Successful regulator submission to US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), European Medicines Agency, TGA etc. Medical device premarket submission e.g. FDA 510(k) approved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase II or Phase III underway or completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major advisory or consultancy roles with international companies
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) or 'international application' Provisional patent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established a formal arrangement such as a consultancy or research contract and actively collaborating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporated an entity and established a board Has raised moderate (>\$1m) funding from commercial sources or government schemes that required industry co-participation (e.g. ARC Linkage, NHMRC Development Grant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generated regulatory standard data set Successful regulatory submission to Therapeutic Goods Administration or European Conformity (CE) marking Medical device: applications for pre-market approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase I underway or completed Protocol development Patient recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory or consultancy role with a national company

Preliminary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IP generated • Patent application lodged • Invention lodged with Disclosure/s with Technology Transfer/Commercialisation Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approached and in discussion with an industry partner under a non-disclosure agreement. No other formal contractual arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiated licence to IP from the academic institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed pre-good manufacturing practice (GMP) prototype and strong supporting data • Established quality systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug candidate selected or Investigative New Drug application filed • Preclinical testing 	
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