2026 NHMRC Investigator Grants for Funding in 2027
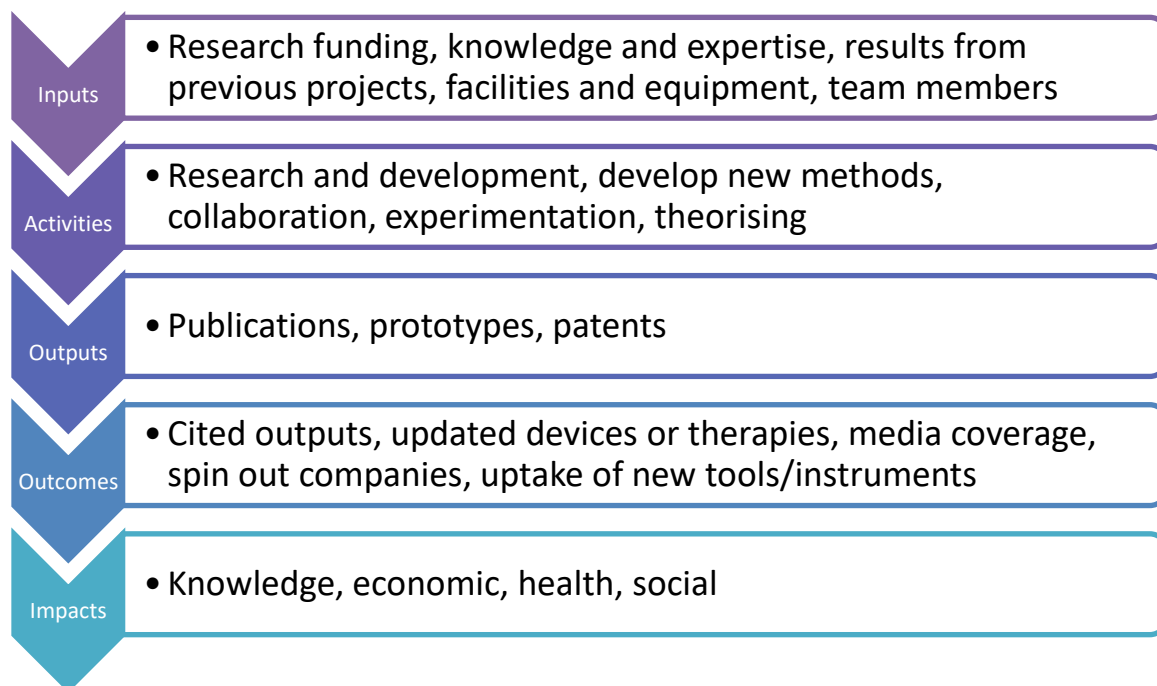# Guide to Writing your Research Impact Case Study

Key Changes

The 'Research impact and pathway to impact' assessment criteria have been revised, reducing three sub-criteria to two:

- Reach and Significance of the Impact (10%)

- Applicant's Contribution to the Impact (10%)

What is Research Impact?

Research Impact is defined in the NHMRC 2026 Investigator Grant Guidelines as *'the verifiable outcomes that research makes to knowledge, health, the economy and/or society. Impact is the effect of the research <u>after</u> it has been adopted, adapted for use, or used to inform further research.'* In essence, it is change that results from the outputs and outcomes of research.

Inputs	• Research funding, knowledge and expertise, results from previous projects, facilities and equipment, team members
Activities	• Research and development, develop new methods, collaboration, experimentation, theorising
Outputs	• Publications, prototypes, patents
Outcomes	• Cited outputs, updated devices or therapies, media coverage, spin out companies, uptake of new tools/instruments
Impacts	• Knowledge, economic, health, social

Research Impact Case Study

Overview

The two sub-sections of the Research Impact Case Study should form a clear and coherent story that links you to the research impact. The NHMRC asks you to outline your pathway to impact, that is, the actions and strategies you took to achieve impact, such as stakeholder engagement, translation activities, collaborations, and implementation.

There is no need to try to encapsulate your whole career and/or every impact your research has ever achieved.

Impact is a deep dive into one aspect of your research achievements – select examples that show contributions towards impact that were **proactive, targeted and effective**. Remember that Leadership is discussed elsewhere in your application and is where you profile your track record more broadly.

Type of Impact

In Sapphire you must select which of the four research impact types – knowledge, health, economic, social – you will be assessed on. You may select more than one. However, do not select impact types for which you cannot make a **credible, evidence-based case.**

The overall research impact score is determined holistically and on balance across the four impact types (it is not additive). This means that **an applicant with one type of impact can score as well as or better than an applicant with multiple types of impact**. A strong case for one type is better than a weak case for several.

Timing

This section is about what you *have* done, not what you *will* do. You should therefore use the **past tense** ('this research *changed* clinical practice') rather than the present tense ('this research *is changing* clinical practice'). You should not use the future tense ('this research *will change* clinical practice').

Providing dates (years) can make your narrative more concrete and credible, and help assessors understand the sequence of events and, ideally, the causal links between them. But be strategic: don't use dates if they will disadvantage you – e.g., if they make the impact appear other than 'recent'.

Choosing an example

There is no requirement for the research impact case to align with the research proposal/vision in the application. These components are assessed independently against separate criteria. You should therefore provide your best example of impact, to demonstrate your ability to lead or contribute to impactful research.

Formatting

Keep entries concise, compelling, and visually appealing. Use sub-headings, and white space between paragraphs for ease of reading by assessors. Inserting a white space between two paragraphs only uses two characters.

No text formatting (e.g., bold, italics, bullets) is supported in Sapphire fields. The only way to make something stand out is by using ALL CAPS, so you may, for example, want to use ALL CAPS for subheadings. Aim for short, sharp paragraphs rather than a 'wall of text'.

Reach and Significance (10%)

Describe the research impact and outline with corroborating evidence its reach and significance.

Definitions of reach and significance are given in the guidelines.

- Reach: the extent, spread, breadth, and/or diversity of the beneficiaries

- Significance: degree to which the impact enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or change the performance of policies, practices, products, services, culture, understanding, awareness or wellbeing of the beneficiaries.
    - NOT the prevalence or magnitude of the issue

Ask yourself:

- Who benefited? Could be groups, subpopulations or sectors, e.g., patients, health systems, policymakers.

- How broadly? Localities, regions, countries

- What changed? This is the before vs after, e.g., new guidelines, better outcomes, cost savings

Evidence

- Use metrics as evidence of impact, not of your own track record of publications. How you use metrics here is different from how you may have used them in the past. Here are some points to consider:
    - You are supposed to be 'demonstrating the benefits emerging from adoption, adaption or use of new knowledge to inform further research, and/or understanding of what is effective'. Metrics cannot, by themselves, demonstrate such benefits; however, they can be used as evidence (along with other kinds of evidence) to help substantiate claims made about such benefits.
    - A particularly useful tactic is to follow up the sources of your citations. Finding out who cited your work and where they are based will help you describe the reach. Finding out why they cited your work will help you describe the benefits arising from your research, and therefore its significance.
    - Consider the category descriptors for reach and significance. These emphasise recognition of the new knowledge nationally and 'across multiple countries'; influence beyond the specific field of research; and influence in developing a new field(s) of research recognised nationally or 'across multiple countries/beneficiaries'.

- Useful tools for finding evidence of reach and significance, especially regarding knowledge impact, include Web of Science, InCites, SciVal, Scopus, Altmetrics, and Lens (also for patents).

Applicant's Contribution (10%)

Outline with corroborating evidence your contribution to realising, sustaining and/or maximising impact.

Don't forget that the assessors are required to judge your contribution *relative to opportunity* and relative to your field of research.

Explain:

- Your specific role in enabling impact (e.g., leading a trial, developing a model, authoring guidelines)
- Concrete actions you took (e.g., translating findings, engaging stakeholders)
- Why your contribution was critical, even in team efforts.

Here you really need to put yourself 'centre stage'. Be explicit about what you did versus what others did. Wherever possible, highlight where you *led* or *initiated*, or were in some way *instrumental.*

Evidence

- Make sure you emphasise *your contribution* to metrics (e.g., the number or proportion of papers on which you were *first* or *senior* author).
- Remember that this section is not about your track record *in general*; it is about your contribution to the impact. **Leadership** is where you discuss aspects of your track record in general.

Putting it all together

There is flexibility in how you describe your pathway to impact. Whichever way you choose to tell your story, use a logical easy-to-follow structure. Where possible, signpost the sub-criteria and mirror how the reviewers will assess impact.

Option 1:

1. Define the problem: briefly state the issue your research addressed.
2. Describe the impact: explain what changed because of your research focusing on measurable, meaningful results, and always in the past.
3. Demonstrate reach and significance: explain who was affected, how widely, and why it mattered.
4. Detail your contribution: be clear about the role you personally played.

Option 2

1. Define the problem: briefly state the issue your research addressed.
2. Detail your contribution: explain the steps you took to address the problem, being clear about the role you personally played.
3. Describe the impact: explain what changed because of your research focusing on measurable, meaningful results, and always in the past.
4. Demonstrate reach and significance: explain who was affected, how widely, and why it mattered.

Corroborating Evidence

You need to substantiate your research impact case study with verifiable evidence of any claim you make. Evidence can be **qualitative** (e.g. testimonials) or **quantitative**.

Note that the 2026 NHMRC Investigator Grant Guidelines advise it is the **quality** of the corroborating evidence provided, not the quantity, that is most relevant. Applicants only need to

provide evidence that is sufficient to verify the claims, not all evidence that may be on the public record.

Given the character limits, you will need to abbreviate your references, but not to the point that no one else could possibly verify them. E.g.:

- For some publications that appear in your top 10, some of the title, journal name, page numbers, and year of pubs may suffice. For others you might use the DOI.

- Testimonials can be referenced as '(email, DD/MM/YYYY)'; many testimonials will not be on the public record, but they are verifiable.

If you have evidence that is not in the public domain or because it is commercially sensitive, you may describe the evidence within the application and just note that it is not publicly available. You will need to make the evidence available if requested.

Using academic publications as evidence

Using publications as corroborating evidence requires thought and strategy. Let's say you have a first author paper with 324 citations in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology:*

- The 324 citations are evidence of **reach**. If you 'unpack' those 324 citations to demonstrate that they came from – say – 213 organisations, 22 countries, and 41 different research areas, you will have shown that (as per the category descriptors) the new knowledge you produced has been recognised 'across multiple countries' and has had 'influence beyond the specific field of research'. Best of all, follow up the sources of citations to find out how your research has been adopted, adapted, or otherwise used by other researchers, from academic institutions and/or industry.

- The fact that you were first author on the paper is evidence of **your contribution.**

Appendix One: Impact Case Study Checklist

	Evaluative Framework	Support
☐	Has the research problem been described?	What was the problem?
☐	Has the context been set?	"Prior to the research …. As a result of the research …."
☐	Has category descriptor wording been used?	The NHMRC Investigator Grant Guidelines Category Descriptors delineate what a "7" should look like.
☐	Has an impact statement been made?	One sentence to describe the key impact.
☐	What is the impact type?	Stated after the context sentence.
☐	Have you opened with knowledge impact first?	If more impact types are selected, knowledge impact sets the stage for all other forms of impact.
☐	Have you used the right type of metrics to support the impact type?	FWCI, and/or other citation data to show reach (extent) and depth (materiality/how much) Used altmetrics or similar, testimonials, reports … other forms of verifiable data over and above citation data.
☐	If more than one impact type, is evidence provided for both and are they clearly categorised?	Be careful; evidence is for the specific impact type in each case, and not something that is on the pathway to impact.
☐	Have you used past tense?	If the research activities are not described in past tense, it suggests that the work is still happening so cannot have contributed to impact.
☐	Does the response describe the journey?	The response needs a clear beginning and then describes growth of the research program that led to the impact.
☐	Have the significance/novelty/innovations been described for each step of the journey?	This is needed to show the step-changes; useful in supporting contribution and overall is important in selling the idea that you are competitive for an Investigator Grant.
☐	Have you discussed collaborations? (ideally multidisciplinary)	This is important to show growth and reach.
☐	If the impact type is more than Knowledge Impact, does the journey show the expansion?	This may be only one or two sentences but needs to show the growth into these other areas to link back to the impact statement.
☐	Are all types of contribution considered?	Leadership; engagement, intellectual contribution, content knowledge and expertise Skills, methodologies, techniques, technical innovations Collaborations and networks Training, supervision and mentoring

☐	No general track record stats	Track record stats are used in the Leadership section, elsewhere in the NHMRC Investigator Grant application.
☐	If applicable, have you made relative to opportunity clear?	This is particularly relevant for ECRs, clinician researchers, and allied health disciplines.

Appendix Two: Types of Research Impact and Examples of Evidence of Research Impact

This table is taken directly from the Investigator Grants 2026 Guidelines.

Impact Type	Description of Research Impact	Examples of Evidence (not exhaustive)
Knowledge	New knowledge, demonstrating the benefits emerging from adoption, adaptation or use of new knowledge to inform further research, and/or understanding of what is effective.	- Recognition of research publications (e.g. citation metrics, particularly field-weighted). - Data sharing. - Contribution to registries or biobanks. - Prizes and conference presentations. - Uptake of research tools and techniques. - Evidence of uptake of the research by other disciplines.
Health	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.	- 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 trials underway or completed. - Improved productivity due to research innovations (e.g. reduced illness, injury). - Quality-adjusted life years, disability- adjusted life years, potential years of life lost, patient reported outcome measures, or other relevant indicators. - Relative stay index for multi-day say patients, hospital standardised mortality ratio, cost per weighted separation and total case weighted separation. - Reports (including community and government)

Economic	Improvements in the nation's economic performance through creation of new industries, jobs, or valuable products, or reducing health care costs, improving the welfare/well-being of the population within the current health system resources. An economic impact may also contribute to social or health impacts, including human capital gains and value of life and health.	**Health care system savings** • Reduction in Medicare Benefits Schedule/Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme costs. • Improved productivity due to research innovations (e.g. reduced illness, injury). • Improved service effectiveness. • Personalised medicines. **Product development** • A research contract with an industry partner and an active collaboration • Granting of a patent • Execution of a licensing agreement with an established company • Income from intellectual property • Raising funding from venture capital or other commercial sources or from government schemes that required industry co-participation • Successful exit from start-up company (public market flotation, merger or acquisition) • Development of pre-good manufacturing practice prototype • Successful generation or submission of: A regulatory dataset Applications for pre-market approval of a medical device A new drug or device for registration (e.g., by the Food and Drug Administration, European Medicines Agency, Therapeutic Goods Administration). • Product sales
Social	Improvements in the health of society, including the wellbeing of the end user and the community. This may include improved ability to access health care	• Uptake or demonstrated use of evidence by decision makers/ policy makers • Qualitative measures

	services, to participate socially	demonstrating changes in behaviours, attitudes, improved social equity, inclusion or cohesion
		• Improved environmental determinants of health
		• Improved social determinants of health
		• Changes to health risk factors

Appendix Three: Impact Case Study Planning Template

The problem the research aimed to address was…

Articulate the problem that you aimed to address and the state of play of your field prior to your research program.

Outputs and outcomes

Example shown in italics

Year	*2017*					
Publication	*Wixey 2017 Placenta.*					
Discovery	*First review to describe the association between inflammation and brain impairment in the FGR newborn.*					
Led to	*Undertaking original studies in the FGR piglet to test this hypothesis. 2017-2020 Children's Hospital Foundation grant (CIB) to examine inflammation in the FGR newborn.*					

Example from Julie Wixey, 2021 Investigator grant.

Overall, these findings showed that…

Describe where the field is as a result of this research.