



# Investigator Grants 2027 Guidelines

Opening date:	3 June 2026
Closing date and time:	5:00pm ACT local time on 29 July 2026
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"><li>▪ Phone: 1800 500 983 (+61 2 6217 9451 for international callers)</li><li>▪ Email: <a href="mailto:help@nhmrc.gov.au">help@nhmrc.gov.au</a></li></ul> <p>NHMRC will not respond to any enquiries relating to this grant opportunity submitted after 1:00pm ACT local time on 29 July 2026.</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>
Date grant opportunity guidelines released:	3 June 2026
Type of grant opportunity:	Targeted competitive

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# 1. Investigator Grants 2027 processes

## NHMRC's Investigator Grant 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. NHMRC works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program according to the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024 (CGRPs)*.



## 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.



## 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 2027 grant opportunity.

Applicants must read these grant opportunity guidelines before filling out an application.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant scheme/grant opportunity
- the eligibility, assessment criteria, and how to apply
- 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 grant opportunity.

GrantConnect ([www.grants.gov.au](http://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 2027 grant opportunity will be undertaken in accordance with the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024](#) (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. The [NHMRC International](#)

[Engagement Strategy \(2023-2026\)](#) 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/or improves the health of Australians.

The specific objectives of this Investigator Grant 2027 grant opportunity are outlined in section 2.2 below.

## 2.2. Investigator Grant 2027 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 are:

- support the research program of the highest-performing 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 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.

### 2.2.1. Structure of the scheme

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 (**Tables 1 and 3**). 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**). Recipients of an L Investigator Grant will have the title ‘NHMRC Leadership Fellow’.

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 Level	RSP Tier	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	

### 2.2.2. Considerations before applying

NHMRC expects that applicants will have an appropriate level of research experience for their selected Level (see [Appendix D](#)).

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, NHMRC expects Administering Institutions will carefully scrutinise applications to ensure that the applicant’s track record will be competitive with the highest-performing researchers at their career stage.

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](#)).

### 2.2.3. Priorities and funding with other organisations

Information on specific funding priorities that apply to this Investigator Grant 2027 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 2027 Guidelines:

- [Section 13.1](#) Information about fraud and corruption has been added.
- [Appendix H](#) Guide to Applicants, [section 6.11.1.1](#) outlines requirements for the use of identifiable images in applications.

- The *Statement on Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation in Health and Medical Research* is being embedded in application and assessment processes (see [section 7.5](#)) including:
  - The Investigator Grants 2027 application form in Sapphire includes a new mandatory question about the integration of sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and/or sexual orientation in the proposed research (see [section 6.2](#) of [Appendix H](#)).
  - The score descriptor for the Knowledge Gain assessment criterion includes an additional component on the appropriateness of how sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and/or sexual orientation are integrated in the proposed research and/or the strength of the justification for why any of these Variables are not integrated (see [Appendix B](#)).
- [Appendix A](#) Chief Investigators must retain evidence, consistent with AIATSIS guidance, of their identification as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person and must provide this evidence to NHMRC, if requested.
- The RSP for EL1 grantees awarded in this grant opportunity, has increased from \$50,000 to \$75,000 per annum (see [section 3.1](#)).<sup>1</sup>
- The ‘Exemplar career information’ Appendix has been removed.
- Full time Investigator Grant awardees will be able to submit post-award variation requests to vary their FTE commitment to their grants in 3 categories (professional, career disruption, and personal – other, see [section 3.3](#) and [section 12.2.2](#)). Variation requests submitted for personal – other reasons will be available for all active grants, effective 1 January 2027.
- [Appendix D](#) Statements of Expectations, has been updated to assist applicant selection of the most appropriate Investigator Grant Level, and to support peer reviewers in their assessment of applicants’ justification of their Level selection.
- Investigator Grant applications are separated into 5 funding competitions (EL1, EL2, L1, L2, and L3), with separate pools of funding for each competition. In previous rounds, applications were separated into 3 funding competitions (EL1, EL2, and Leadership combined) (see [section 8.2](#)). This change has been introduced to improve outcomes and further support mid-career researchers applying at the Leadership levels by ensuring they are only in competition against peers at the same career stage.

## 3. Grant amount and grant period

### 3.1. Grants available

The provisional funding allocation for the Investigator Grants 2027 round is between \$430 million and \$440 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 1 January 2028.

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

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<sup>1</sup> The \$50,000 annual RSP amount for EL1 applicants has remained unchanged since the scheme’s inception in 2019.

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 CIA 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 depends 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	\$207,064	\$400,000
	L2	\$194,924	
	L1	\$167,220	
Emerging Leadership	EL2	\$127,360	\$200,000
	EL1	\$89,523	\$75,000

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 variations 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 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) commitment to research.<sup>2</sup> This research must include research aimed at achieving the objectives of the Investigator Grant.

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

Applicants 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.

### 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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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 it during the grant (see [section 12.2](#)).

At application or upon request for FTE 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 status.<sup>3</sup>

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, which must include research aimed at achieving the objectives of the Investigator Grant.<sup>4</sup>

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. Variations to Investigator Grants FTE commitment

Grant recipients may submit a grant variation request to adjust their FTE commitment at any time after the grant has been awarded.

All requests to adjust a grant recipient's FTE commitment will be considered by NHMRC on a case-by-case basis and must be made through the Administering Institution.

Further details are at [section 12.2.2](#).

### 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

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

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 12.2.2.1](#). 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.

### **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 for 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 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 up to 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.

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

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 (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 29 July 2026 (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 (see [Section 4](#)) 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 round.<sup>5</sup> For the 2027 funding round, this includes the 2027 Investigator Grant round, closing in July 2026 (i.e. [this grant opportunity](#)), and the 2027 Ideas Grant round, expected to close in April/May 2027. 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 at [Appendix E](#).

Eligibility for existing [Investigator Grant holders](#) to apply for and/or hold an Investigator or Ideas Grant is based upon the Investigator Grant's 'actual' end date of the held grant (in Sapphire) at time of applying for a new Investigator or Ideas Grant. 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.

<sup>5</sup> For example, in the 2027 funding round for funding commencing in 2028 (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.

Investigator Grant holders cannot apply for an Ideas Grant unless they are in the final year of the Investigator Grant at the time of application.<sup>6</sup>

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 commence (see [section 4.3.5](#) for further details).

CIAs 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 Investigator Grant. The CIA is not required to relinquish any part of their existing Investigator Grant, nor are they able to relinquish their existing grant for the purposes of taking up the new Investigator Grant early. They will complete 2x 5-year Investigator Grants. 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 MRFF Investigator Grants will be considered equivalent to NHMRC Investigator Grants.<sup>7</sup> 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 is subsequently offered an Ideas Grant(s) to the maximum of NHMRC grants that they are eligible to hold, the Investigator Grant 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 awarded, 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 awarded.

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.

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<sup>6</sup> As with all references to dates relating to Investigator Grants eligibility, these dates refer to the 'actual' grant dates, at time of applying for a new Investigator or Ideas grant.

<sup>7</sup> Investigator Grants awarded in 2019 and 2020 via the Investigator Grants: Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Priority Round.

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](#) and the eligibility tool on the [NHMRC website](#).

### 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. 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. 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 F](#).

### 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 the [NHMRC Direct Research Costs Guidelines](#).

Recipients of an Investigator Grant cannot vary off these existing NHMRC grant(s) unless requests comply with the [NHMRC Grant Variations 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.<sup>89</sup> The term 'non-NHMRC grant' covers competitive funding received from any source other than NHMRC (including MRFF).

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<sup>8</sup> CIAs with non-NHMRC grants that provide salary(ies) with a total value  $\leq 20\%$  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.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

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 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 commence.<sup>10</sup> A summary of the Categories and Levels of Investigator Grant for which current or previous Investigator Grant recipients may apply is at [Appendix F](#).

#### 4.4. Emerging Leadership applicants – PhD census date

As at 29 July 2026 (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.

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).<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>12</sup> 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 (29 July 2026 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 does not comply with eligibility criteria or other requirements as set out in these guidelines

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<sup>10</sup> 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](#)).

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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 6.8.4](#) of [Appendix H](#)).

- 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) (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 [NHMRC Direct Research Cost 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 the [NHMRC 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 Ageing) 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 one has been successful, 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, the applicant will be required to withdraw the application in train.

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 2027 are assessed by peer reviewers 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
<b>Publications</b>	35%	10-year assessment timeframe*
<b>Research impact and pathway to impact</b>	20%	Emphasis is on the CIA’s recent and/or ongoing contributions to realising, sustaining and/or maximising the impact
<b>Leadership</b>	15%	10-year assessment timeframe*

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

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 H](#)).

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). See [Appendix B](#) for more information.

## 7. How to apply

### 7.1. Overview and timing of grant opportunity processes

Wednesday 3 June 2026	Applications open in Sapphire
5:00pm ACT local time - Wednesday 1 July 2026	Minimum data due in Sapphire
5:00pm ACT local time - Wednesday 29 July 2026	Applications close in Sapphire
August – November 2026	Anticipated peer review period
March 2027*	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 5:00pm ACT local time on 29 July 2026.

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](mailto: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, is incapacitated due to an unforeseen medical emergency, such as life-threatening injury, accident or death.<sup>13</sup>

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.

## 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 H](#).

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).

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>).

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

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

### 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 2027 are outlined in [Appendix H \(Section 3\)](#) and within Sapphire.

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<sup>13</sup> 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).

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 H](#).

## 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 funders, research institutions, researchers, consumers, communities, community organisations, community members and other members of the public 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, community members, researchers and representatives from consumer organisations, research institutions and funders to develop the Statement.

To complement the Statement, NHMRC has released a Support and resources document 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 resource throughout all stages of research, including the planning and preparation of grant applications, the conduct of research and the evaluation of outcomes.

The Statement and the support and resources are 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 [Appendix B](#)).

## 7.5. Consideration of Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation

The [Statement on Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation in Health and Medical Research](#) has been developed to improve health outcomes for all people in Australia by ensuring the evidence base that informs our health care system considers sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation (the Variables). It provides a guide for researchers to consider the Variables at all stages of their research project. Applicants for NHMRC funding:

- must consider sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation at all stages of every research project
- should use consistent definitions and classifications according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' [Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables](#).

In addition, applicants are expected to integrate sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and/or sexual orientation in their proposed research where appropriate. The application form includes a mandatory question on integration of the Variables (see [section 6.2](#) of [Appendix H](#)). Here applicants must indicate which of the Variables are integrated in the proposed research and

summarise how they will be integrated, or they must justify why any/all of the Variables have not been integrated. For some research projects it may not be relevant to address all or any of these Variables. If the relevant Variables are being integrated into the proposed research, then this should also be detailed within the Grant Proposal (in addition to this section of the form).

Information provided on the Variables in both the response to the application form question and, where applicable, the Grant Proposal will be considered when the application is scored against the [relevant assessment criteria](#). Applicants may choose to include or exclude the Variables in their application, provided they offer a sound, evidence-based justification for their decision. Assessors should give equal consideration to both approaches, focusing on the strength and validity of the rationale rather than the presence or absence of the Variables.

The [Statement on Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation in Health and Medical Research](#) provides definitions and better practice prompts for considering the Variables by research life-cycle stage, from question setting and design through to conduct, analysis, reporting and translation and implementation. Further information and supporting resources are available on the NHMRC [gender equity webpage](#).

## 7.6. 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)*. We will investigate any false or misleading information and may exclude your 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.**

### 7.6.1. 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.

### **7.6.2. 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.
- Where the CIA is not an Australian or New Zealand citizen or permanent resident, they will have the requisite work visa in place at the time of accepting the successful grant and will be based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period.
- 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.

## **7.7. 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 ([help@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto: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 ([help@nhmrc.gov.au](mailto:help@nhmrc.gov.au)), clearly outlining the reasons for not withdrawing the application.

## 7.8. 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.

## 7.9. 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](mailto: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 must 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 rank ordered lists of applications for each competition, 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 (see [section 2.2](#)), 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](#) and [Appendix B](#)).

The Investigator Grant peer review process also includes an assessment review stage that aims to improve the transparency, accountability and robustness of peer review. More details are available in the Investigator Grants 2027 Peer Review Guidelines.

The overall scores from the assessment review stage 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 5 funding competitions (EL1, EL2, L1, L2, and L3), with separate pools of funding available for each competition. L1, L2, and L3 applicants are further separated into 2 cohorts – one for men and the other for women and non-binary applicants. NHMRC aims to fund an equal number of grants in the 2 cohorts for each funding competition.

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 media 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.

#### 10.1.1. Persistent Identifiers

The CIA must have a valid [ORCID](#) in their Sapphire profile for the grant to commence.

### 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 Grant Variations 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 Grant 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 Grant 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 5:00pm ACT local time on 29 July 2026.

## 12.2. Processes specific to Investigator Grants 2027

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, that should be submitted prior to the start date, to defer the commencement date ([section 12.1](#)).

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 4.3.4](#)).

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 2028. If the successful CIA holds an Investigator Grant ending later than 31 December 2027, their new Investigator Grant will commence no earlier than 1 January of the year immediately after their existing Investigator Grant is scheduled to conclude.<sup>14</sup> 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 2028 or on 1 January of the year immediately after the existing Investigator Grant is scheduled to conclude, the Administering Institution should submit a variation, prior to the start date, to defer the commencement date (see [section 12.1](#)). Grant recipients should note that deferrals of less than 12 months will cause asynchrony with the scheme and potentially affect eligibility for subsequent funding rounds.

### 12.2.2. Adjustments to Full Time Equivalent (FTE) commitment

Investigator Grant recipients (full-time and Professional part-time) may request to adjust their FTE commitment to the grant at any time after the grant has been awarded. There are 3 categories of FTE variation: 'professional' (see [section 3.3.2](#) and [section 12.2.2.1](#)), 'career disruption' (see [Appendix C](#) and [section 12.2.2.2](#)), and 'personal - other' (see [section 12.2.2.3](#)). Each category has distinct requirements and offers different options to CIAs.

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<sup>14</sup> 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](#)).

CIA's **cannot** increase their salary or RSP above their awarded grant for any reason (e.g. CIAs awarded a Professional part-time Investigator Grant at 0.6 FTE cannot vary their FTE to >0.6 FTE, for the life of the grant). However, CIAs awarded a full-time Investigator Grant, and who later vary their grant in any category (including for 'professional' reasons), are able to return to a full-time FTE.

When reducing FTE commitment (in any category), the CIA must continue to devote at least 80% of that FTE commitment to research, which must include research aimed at achieving the objectives of the Investigator Grant.<sup>15</sup>

CIAs seeking to undertake any part of their Investigator Grant on a part-time basis should seek the advice of their Research Administration Officer, and the [NHMRC Grant Variations Policy](#), to ensure they request the correct variation category for their circumstances.

All requests for FTE variation must be submitted through the Administering Institution.

### 12.2.2.1. Requests to adjust FTE commitment (professional)

Investigator Grant recipients (Full-time and Professional part-time) may vary their FTE to undertake other professional activity ('professional'). For information on 'other professional activity' refer to [section 3.3.2](#).

CIAs reducing their FTE for professional reasons will have the option to:

- request to reduce their FTE commitment to the grant in line with their increased FTE commitment to their other professional activity (no change in the grant term, salary funding reduced pro rata)
- request to reduce their RSP in line with their FTE reduction, or maintain their awarded RSP amount.

CIAs who reduce their FTE for professional reasons should note that:

- the duration of the grant will not be extended
- the flexibility options outlined in [section 12.2.2.2](#) will not be available
- the minimum duration of the FTE variation will be 90 calendar days
- they may return to their originally awarded FTE
- they may not increase their salary or RSP above their original awarded grant for any reason.

Where a CIA on a reduced FTE for 'professional' reasons experiences a career disruption, the suite of flexibility options outlined in [section 12.2.2.2](#) will be available to them. For further information, see the [NHMRC Grant Variations Policy](#).

Requests for 'professional' variation to FTE must be supported by the Administering Institution. The Administering Institution must retain evidence demonstrating that the requested FTE relates to the CIA's 'other professional activity' and if requested, make this evidence available to NHMRC.

### 12.2.2.2. Requests to adjust FTE commitment (career disruption)

Investigator Grant recipients (full-time and Professional part-time) who experience career disruption(s) (see [Appendix C](#)) during the term of their grant, can request to vary their FTE commitment (0.0 FTE - 0.8 FTE).

Requests to change FTE commitment due to a career disruption must be supported by the Administering Institution. The Administering Institution must retain evidence demonstrating that

<sup>15</sup> For example, if the CIA's FTE commitment is 0.6 FTE, then 80% (0.48 FTE) of that commitment must be directed towards research.

the requested FTE relates to circumstances defined as a career disruption and if requested, make this evidence available to NHMRC.

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 amount)<sup>16</sup>
- 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 funding<sup>17</sup>
- fully suspend the grant (salary and RSP) for awarded FTE career disruptions (extends the grant term in line with the period of suspension, no change to total funding).

These flexibility options are available to all Investigator Grant holders who experience a career disruption (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.

Salary that is redirected to RSP cannot be returned to the CIA's salary during the approved grant variation period, irrespective of whether the CIA increases their FTE commitment to the grant.

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 (see [section 3.3.2](#)).

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 of 1 January 2026.

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.<sup>18</sup>

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 Full time Investigator Grant CIAs, however, their calculation of salary redistribution or grant term extension will be based off the awarded FTE and RSP.<sup>19</sup>

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

<sup>16</sup> Redirected salary funds treated the same as RSP funds (see Direct Research Cost Guidelines).

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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).

grant variation prior to a career disruption that impacts the CIA's capacity to work. For further details please see the [NHMRC Grant Variations Policy](#).

### 12.2.2.3. Requests to adjust FTE commitment (personal – other)

Investigator Grant recipients (full-time and Professional part-time) have the option to vary their FTE commitment (between 0.2 – 0.8 FTE) at any time after their grant has been awarded, effective from 1 January 2027.

Where variation requests are made under the category of 'personal – other' (i.e. not a career disruption ([section 12.2.2.2](#)) or professional part-time ([section 12.2.2.1](#) and [section 3.3.2](#))):

- the salary component of the grant will be reduced (or increased, where applicable) pro rata
- the RSP component of the grant will not be varied
- the duration of the grant will not be extended
- the flexibility options outlined in [section 12.2.2.2](#) will not be available
- the minimum duration of the FTE variation will be 90 calendar days
- the CIA may return to their originally awarded FTE
- the CIA may not increase their salary or RSP above their original awarded grant for any reason.

A CIA may not reduce their FTE under the category of 'personal – other' to take up an 'Other appointment', and must follow the guidance set out at [section 3.3.4](#).

Where a CIA on a reduced FTE for 'personal – other' reasons experiences a career disruption, the suite of flexibility options outlined in [section 12.2.2.2](#) will be available to them. For further information, see the [NHMRC Grant Variations Policy](#).

### 12.2.2.4. 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 Grant Variations 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).

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

- career disruption (see [section 12.2.2.2](#) 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.

### 12.2.2.5. 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.

### 12.3.3. Registration of clinical trials

Research involving clinical trials must be registered in the Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (ANZCTR) or equivalent before recruitment of the first participant. Information on how to register your clinical trial is available at [www.anzctr.org.au](http://www.anzctr.org.au). Cohort studies can be registered in the ANZCTR and successful grantees are encouraged to register their study with the registry, if applicable.

## 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 the [NHMRC 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](mailto: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 2027 Peer Review Guidelines* and on [GrantConnect](#).

### 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 included in applications is generally regarded as confidential information (other than information used when publishing or announcing funding outcomes) and will be received by NHMRC on the basis of a mutual understanding of confidentiality. Applicants should recognise that some information may be disclosed where required or authorised by law.

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.

NHMRC will publicly disclose the names and titles of all CIs for all grants awarded from all NHMRC schemes and all MRFF initiatives administered by NHMRC on both the NHMRC website and [GrantConnect](#). Each CI’s ORCID iD (where available) will be published on the NHMRC website.

## 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 <a href="#">AIATSIS website</a> . 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"> <li>• being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent</li> <li>• identifying as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, and</li> <li>• being accepted as such by the community in which you live, or formerly lived.</li> </ul>
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 (CGRPs)</i>	The CGRPs establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-

Term	Definition
	corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration. Under this overarching framework, non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertake grants administration based on the mandatory requirements and key principles of 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 <a href="#">NHMRC Funding Agreement</a> and the Schedule to the Funding Agreement.
funding round	Collectively refers to the Investigator and Ideas Grant opportunities commencing funding in the same year. For the 2027 funding round, this includes the Investigator Grants 2027 round, closing in July 2027 (i.e. this grant opportunity), and the Ideas Grants 2027 round, expected to open in early 2027. CIs can hold a maximum of up to 2 grants concurrently from the Investigator and Ideas Grant schemes.
grant	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
grant activity	Defined as 'Research Activity' in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
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	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 <a href="http://www.grants.gov.au">www.grants.gov.au</a>

Term	Definition
	<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 <a href="#">Department of Health, Disability and Ageing</a> website.
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.
The Variables	The term ‘the Variables’ will be used in some instances as an abbreviation of the term ‘sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation’. This is intended to improve readability only and is not intended to describe (or exclude) any groups of people.
value with money	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

Term	Definition
	<p>public resources and determined from a variety of considerations.</p> <p>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"> <li>• the quality of the project proposal and activities</li> <li>• fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives</li> <li>• that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government’s outcomes being achieved, and</li> <li>• the potential grantee’s relevant experience and performance history.</li> </ul>

# Appendix A NHMRC structural priorities, Investigator Grants 2027 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% 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](#). 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.

Chief Investigators must retain evidence, consistent with AIATSIS guidance, of their 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.<sup>20</sup>

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 Categories (L1, L2 and L3), 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 may 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 2027 priority areas

In addition to these priorities, NHMRC may award Investigator Grants 2027 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 12.3](#) of the Guidelines.

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<sup>20</sup> 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.

## 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.

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 2027 Score Descriptors

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.

The objectives of the Investigator Grant are:

- support the research program of the highest-performing 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 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.

### Assessment of Investigator Grant applications

Applications for Investigator Grants 2027 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 indicators					
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. <sup>^</sup>	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 developing candidate. You are somewhat satisfied by their response (with some moderate to significant weaknesses throughout). In your view, the candidate has demonstrated they are developing towards being capable of conducting research with positive impact but that they, and their proposed research, do not yet meet your expectations of what you would consider to be a 'good' researcher or research.	a poor candidate OR an applicant who hasn't addressed the assessment criteria or corroborated 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 Somewhat Moderately	Limited Marginal Poor Not (well) evidenced Not addressed

<sup>^</sup>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.

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

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 G](#)) or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers (see [section 8.1.3](#)).

### Industry relevant experience

NHMRC recognises 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. Peer reviewers should, where relevant, consider industry-relevant skills, experience and achievements in their assessment of applicants' track records, relative to opportunity (see [Appendix G](#)).

### 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.

### 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 H](#)). 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 criterion (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 descriptors	Score indicators					
Relative to opportunity, the applicant's career stage and area of research, there is sufficient evidence that, overall:	7 Highest performing	6 Outstanding	5 Above expectations	4 At expectations	3 Below expectations	2-1 Poor (2) <b>OR</b> not addressed or evidenced (1)
• the quality <sup>^</sup> of the nominated publications is:	of the highest standard	outstanding	above expectations	at expectations	below expectations	marginal/poor, <b>OR</b> not (well) evidenced
• the contribution to science of the nominated publications is:	paradigm-shifting or transformative	majorly influential or significant	very important	important	somewhat important	limited <b>OR</b> 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 <b>OR</b> not (well) evidenced/justified

<sup>^</sup>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 will be reminded:

- 1) To assess eligible nominated publications (i.e. all nominated publications 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.

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

- 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**).

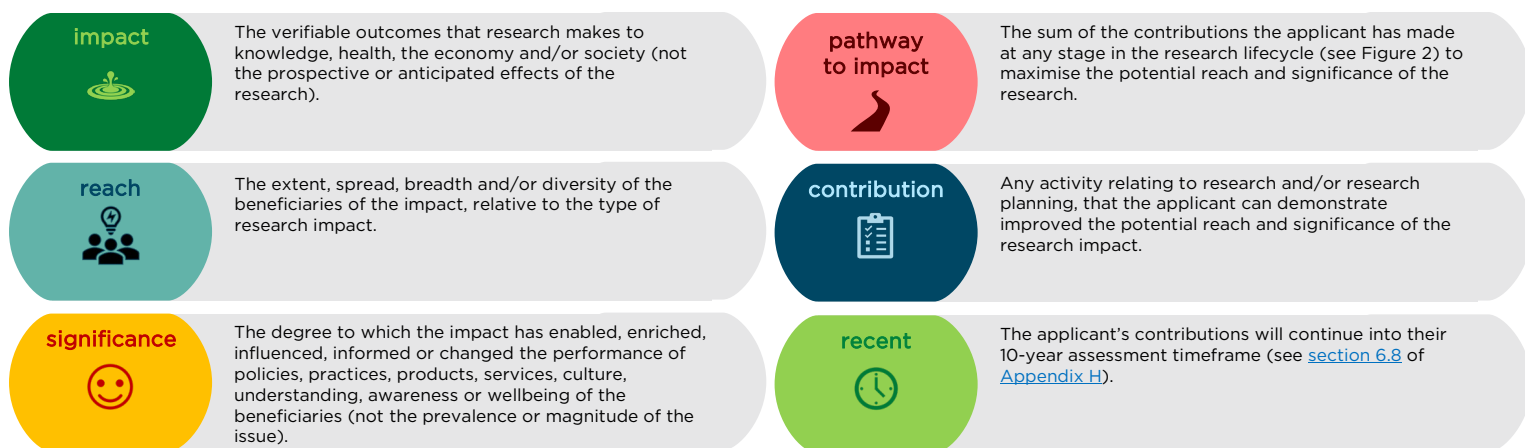
The research ‘discovery’ or ‘finding’ alone is not assessed. Rather, the assessment of ‘Research impact and pathway to impact’ focuses on:

- 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)	
<p><b>Knowledge impact</b> – 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ recognition of research publications (for example, citation metrics, particularly field weighted)</li> <li>▪ sharing of research data, software or code</li> <li>▪ contribution to registries or biobanks</li> <li>▪ awards/prizes and conference presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ uptake of research tools and techniques</li> <li>▪ creation of intellectual property and/or patents</li> <li>▪ a paradigm shift in a research field or evidence of uptake of the research by other disciplines</li> <li>▪ creation of a new area of research</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health impact</b> – 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ policy or program adopted</li> <li>▪ a clinical guideline adopted</li> <li>▪ international or national practice standards adopted</li> <li>▪ improved service effectiveness</li> <li>▪ Phase I, Phase II and Phase III clinical trial outcomes reported</li> <li>▪ improved productivity due to research innovations (for example, reduced illness, injury)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ quality-adjusted life years (QALYs), disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), potential years of life lost, patient reported outcome measure and other relevant indicators</li> <li>▪ 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))</li> <li>▪ research report – commissioned by Government, Industry or Other; Technical Report; and Textbook</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economic impact</b> – 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>	<p><b>Healthcare system savings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ reduction in Medicare Benefits Schedule/ Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme costs</li> <li>▪ improved productivity due to research innovations (for example, reduced illness, injury)</li> <li>▪ improved service effectiveness</li> <li>▪ personalised medicines</li> </ul> <p><b>Product development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a research contract with an industry partner and an active collaboration</li> <li>▪ granting of a patent</li> <li>▪ execution of a licensing agreement with a company</li> <li>▪ income from intellectual property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ raising funding from venture capital or other commercial sources or from government schemes that required industry co-participation</li> <li>▪ successful transition from start-up company (public market flotation, merger or acquisition)</li> <li>▪ development of pre-good manufacturing practice prototype</li> <li>▪ successful generation or submission of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a regulatory standard data set</li> <li>– applications for pre-market approval of a medical device</li> <li>– a new drug or device for registration (for example, by Food and Drug Administration, European Medicines Agency, Therapeutic Goods Administration)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ product sales</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social impact</b> – 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ uptake or demonstrated use of evidence by decision makers/policy makers</li> <li>▪ qualitative measures demonstrating changes in behaviours, attitudes, improved social equity, inclusion or cohesion</li> <li>▪ improved environmental determinants of health</li> <li>▪ improved social determinants of health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ changes to health risk factor</li> <li>▪ improved health outcomes understanding and/or uptake for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities</li> <li>▪ dissemination of research to consumers and the community via mainstream and/or specialist media</li> <li>▪ capacity building of community members or health service partners</li> </ul>

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) score indicators <sup>21</sup>					
	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)
Relative to opportunity, the applicant's career stage and area of research, there is robust verifiable evidence of:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a <b>Knowledge</b> impact that has led to new knowledge within the field that is:</li> </ul>	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 <b>OR</b> not (well) evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>influence on the FoR/research that is:</li> </ul>	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	of limited importance within the specific FoR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an influence on the development of a new field that is:</li> </ul>	central or crucial and recognised internationally	major or significant and recognised nationally	very important	important	somewhat important	marginal <b>OR</b> not (well) evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a <b>Health</b> impact that has led to a development that has improved health or health systems, services, policy, programs or clinical practice that is:</li> </ul>	paradigm-shifting or transformative	major or significant	very important	important	somewhat important	marginal <b>OR</b> not (well) evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>had an impact on health that was:</li> </ul>	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 <b>OR</b> not (well) evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>led to the improvement of the health of Australia's Indigenous people (where relevant) that was:</li> </ul>	transformative	major or significant	very important	important	somewhat important	marginal <b>OR</b> not (well) evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>led to a change in health systems, services that was:</li> </ul>	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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an <b>Economic</b> impact that has led to the development of a service delivery or system change, device, therapeutic or change in clinical practice that is:</li> </ul>	transformative	major or significant	very important	important	somewhat important	limited <b>OR</b> not (well) evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the generation of commercial income that is:</li> </ul>	significant	very good	good	somewhat good	adequate	limited <b>OR</b> not (well) evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a reduction in healthcare costs that is:</li> </ul>	transformative	major or significant	very good	good	adequate	limited
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a <b>Social</b> impact that has led to changes in social well-being, equality or social inclusion that are:</li> </ul>	major, for many people internationally <b>OR</b> transformative, for a smaller number of people nationally/internationally	significant, for many people nationally <b>OR</b> major, for a smaller number of people nationally	very important, for people nationally <b>OR</b> significant, for people at the state/territory or national level	important, for people nationally <b>OR</b> 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

<sup>21</sup> For the assessment of 'Reach and significance of research impact' elements in Table 4, 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.

Reviewers will be reminded to 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 their 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 5 funding competitions (EL1, EL2, L1, L2, and L3), with separate funding pools. In this way, Investigator Grant applicants are not in direct competition with other applicants at different career stages

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

Score descriptors	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) OR not addressed or evidenced (1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>proactive and deliberate:</li> </ul>	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	integrated into their research planning and/or activities was adequate	poorly integrated OR not (well) evidenced/not integrated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>targeted:</li> </ul>	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 adequately and only 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"> <li>effective:</li> </ul>	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 evidenced/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 H](#))

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

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. References used as verifiable evidence of impact do not need to be provided as full citations. 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 H](#)).

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 'Obligations in relation to Confidential Information' 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**. 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 H](#)). 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 descriptors	Score indicators					
	7 Highest performing	6 Outstanding	5 Above expectations	4 At expectations	3 Below expectations	2-1 Poor (2) OR not addressed or evidenced (1)
Relative to opportunity, the applicant's career stage and area of research, the applicant demonstrates proactive leadership in:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>research mentoring that is:</li> </ul>	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	adequate, and only somewhat beneficial, appropriate and effective	poorly articulated OR not addressed or evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>research programs and team leadership that is:</li> </ul>	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	adequate, and only somewhat effective in transforming the team and/or program environment	poorly articulated OR not addressed or evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>institutional leadership (at any level – e.g. local, school/faculty/department or organisation/institute-wide), that:</li> </ul>	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 only somewhat effective in improving the research workplace	is poorly articulated OR not addressed or evidenced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>research policy and professional leadership that is:</li> </ul>	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	only somewhat effective, creating some changes in the conduct of research	poorly articulated OR not addressed or evidenced

Peer reviewers will be instructed to not take into consideration Leadership track record information from outside of the applicant's 10-year assessment timeframe (see [section 6.8](#) of [Appendix H](#)).

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
  - appropriately integrate sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and/or sexual orientation into the research and/or justify why any Variables are not integrated
  - 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 appropriateness of sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and/or sexual orientation into the research and/or the justification for why any Variables are not integrated
- 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 and global health research (see [NHMRC's International Engagement Strategy 2023-2026](#)). Where the 5-year research plan/vision proposes research that is predominantly in, or on, international populations, applicants should articulate how it advances global health and medical knowledge, builds Australia's research capability and/or achieves better health outcomes for the Australian community.

**Table 7. Knowledge gain score descriptors (30%)**

Score descriptors	Score indicators					
	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 applicant's research proposal demonstrates that the proposed research:						
▪ is supported by a reasoned hypothesis/rationale that is:	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	adequate and only somewhat justified, with 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	adequate, somewhat sound and appropriate with moderate to significant weaknesses	lacking clarity in some aspects OR notably weak
▪ 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
▪ 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 OR of no importance to advance the research or health area*
▪ has integrated sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation:	entirely appropriately and/or has fully justified why any Variables are not integrated	extremely appropriately and/or has an extremely strong justification for why any Variables are not integrated	very appropriately and/or has a very strong justification for why any Variables are not integrated	appropriately and/or has a strong justification for why any Variables are not integrated	somewhat appropriately and/or only somewhat justified why any Variables are not integrated	inappropriately and/or has a flawed justification OR with no justification for why any Variables are not integrated
▪ 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 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 only 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 only 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 insufficient
▪ 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	only 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 be instructed to 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, peer reviewers' 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 H](#)).

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 %FTE)<sup>22</sup> due to circumstances classified as career disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 90 calendar days or more.<sup>23</sup>

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 H](#)).

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.

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<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of Investigator Grant eligibility, 0.2 FTE is equivalent to 1 standard business day per week (approximately 7.5–7.6 hours).

<sup>23</sup> 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* (the Statements) at **Table 1** describe the typical attributes expected of applicants at each Investigator Grant Level. They are a guide for applicants, Administering Institutions and peer reviewers (i.e. ‘scheme participants’) to help determine the most appropriate Category and Level for prospective Investigator Grant applicants.<sup>24</sup>

The Statements support the Investigator Grant scheme to achieve its objective to fund the ‘highest-performing researchers at all career stages’. It is essential that scheme participants act in good faith when determining the most appropriate Level for an applicant, with specific reference to the guidance provided below.

Applicants are required to provide a Category and Level justification that outlines how their attributes align with their selected Level. Peer reviewers are required to consider these justifications holistically, and to adjust their scores as necessary, where they feel applicants have applied at an inappropriate Level (see below). The typical attributes expected of applicants at each Level fall into 4 themes. In order of prominence, these themes are:

- **Research achievements, roles and responsibilities**

What is the quality and impact of the applicant’s research outputs and research-related work? What is the significance of the applicant’s contributions, and the extent of positive impact on health and medical research, the health system, economy, and/or the health of the population? What level of autonomy and/or initiative do they demonstrate in conceiving and directing their research project(s) and what is their role within their research group? This is the primary consideration for determining the most appropriate Investigator Grant Level for applicants.

- **Professional esteem and leadership**

What is the value and significance of the applicant’s leadership in their scientific discipline (e.g. in research policy and activity on advisory committees), as well as leadership roles (including supervision/mentoring) within their department, centre, institution or organisation, that extend beyond their research?

- **Academic level**

What is the appointable academic level(s) of the applicant?

NHMRC recognises that individuals can achieve academic promotion for a range of reasons in addition to their research achievements (e.g. teaching and learning, administration, community engagement). Therefore, Investigator Grant Levels are not strictly correlated with academic levels.

- **Years post-PhD**

How long has the applicant been in active research since their PhD pass date (adjusted for career disruptions)?

NHMRC recognises that some applicants experience significant breaks in their research careers after obtaining their PhD (or equivalent), and/or complete their PhD at different stages through their research career, depending on research area. The number of years since an applicant passed

<sup>24</sup>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.

their PhD is therefore the least significant consideration when determining the appropriateness of their selected Level.

Peer reviewers should consider the applicant’s attributes in their order of prominence, and avoid relying solely, or too heavily, upon one attribute theme (e.g. years post-PhD) when determining appropriateness of selected Level.

The Statements below outline the expected attributes of applicants at each Level. These descriptions provide broad benchmarks, but it is not essential that all elements are met. These **are not** eligibility requirements.

**Table 1.** Typical attributes expected of applicants at each Level (the Statements)

**Leadership Level 3 (L3)**

L3 Investigator Grant recipients will be leading international authorities in their research area and will typically:

1. have made 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. They will have extensive experience in leading a major independent research program(s) involving national and international collaborative networks
2. have made national and international contributions through leadership in their scientific discipline (e.g. in research policy and on advisory committees). They will have significant leadership roles within their department, centre, institution or organisation, that extend beyond their research, and have extensive experience of supervision, mentoring and promotion of early and mid-career researchers
3. be appointable at Academic level E
4. be more than 20 years post-PhD (or equivalent).

**Leadership Level 2 (L2)**

L2 Investigator Grant recipients will be leading national and rising international authorities in their research area and will typically:

1. have made 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. They will have experience in leading an independent research program(s) involving national collaborative networks
2. have made national and possibly international contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g. research advisory boards, peer review). They will have leadership roles within their department, centre, institution or organisation that extend beyond their research, and have experience of supervision, mentoring and promotion of early and mid-career researchers
3. be appointable at Academic level D or E (or equivalent)
4. be between 15- and 20-years post-PhD (or equivalent).

**Leadership Level 1 (L1)**

L1 Investigator Grant recipients will be national authorities in their research area and will typically:

1. have made original contributions that are of major benefit to health and medical research, the health system, economy and/or the health of the population. They will be able to independently conceive and direct research programs, coordinate a team of researchers and generate national collaborations
2. have made national contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g. public advocacy, peer review, research advisory boards or professional societies). They will have made contribution(s) within their department, centre, institute or organisation that extend beyond their research (e.g. membership of regulatory or management committees), and have experience of supervision, mentoring and promotion of early and mid-career researchers,
3. be appointable at Academic level C or D (or equivalent)
4. be between 10- and 15-years post-PhD (or equivalent).

### Emerging Leadership Level 2 (EL2)

EL2 Investigator Grant recipients will be recognised for their expertise in their research area and will typically:

1. have made original contributions of influence in their field of expertise and be able to contribute to the conception and direction of research projects, while developing independence. They will have made national contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g. public advocacy, community leadership, peer review and professional societies)
2. have made contributions within their department, centre, institution or organisation (e.g. organising journal clubs, seminar series etc.), and have experience in supervising a small research team, including research students
3. be appointable at Academic level B (or equivalent)
4. be between 5- and 10-years post-PhD (or equivalent).

It is also expected that Emerging Leadership 2 applicants will be working within a larger team under the mentorship of more senior researchers.

### Emerging Leadership Level 1 (EL1)

EL1 Investigator Grant recipients will be beginning to gain recognition in their research area and will typically:

1. have made original contribution(s) in their field of expertise, and be able to contribute to the conception of research projects. They will have made scientific contributions within their region, state or territory (e.g. community leadership, state level contribution to a professional society).
2. have made contributions within their department, centre, institution or organisation (e.g. organising journal clubs, seminar series etc.), and have limited but developing supervision of research staff and students
3. be appointable at Academic level A or B (or equivalent)
4. be between 0- and 5-years post-PhD (or equivalent).

It is also expected that Emerging Leadership 1 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).<sup>25</sup> This should clearly explain why they have applied for their selected Level, with specific reference to the 4 themes above. 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.

NHMRC acknowledges there are circumstances that may warrant an applicant applying outside of the expected/typical year-range, post-PhD pass date.<sup>26</sup> Where the applicant's research experience and performance don't align with the descriptions for their selected Level, applicants should provide the context of any career circumstances and or career disruptions from when they passed their PhD (including from outside of the '10-year assessment timeframe').

### Applicants applying at an inappropriate Level

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 Level.

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 intended to

<sup>25</sup>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).

<sup>26</sup>Where eligibility requirements are met.

support peer reviewers in using their best judgement in their expert opinion, and is **not intended to be prescriptive**.

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

Scenario	Suggested score adjustment
Applicant better fits the description of another <b>Level</b> (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 evaluating the applicant against L2 attributes at Table 1 and benchmarked with L2 assigned applications for the Track Record criteria).
Applicant better fits the description of another <b>Category and Level</b> (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, if they feel the applicant has applied at a lower <b>Category and Level</b> than appropriate (e.g. if the applicant fits a score of 6, when evaluated against the attributes of the <b>Category and Level</b> 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 <b>Category and Level</b> than necessary.

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

## Appendix E Eligibility for Investigator or Ideas grant schemes (2027 funding round)

		Grants eligible to apply for in the 2027 funding round (for funding commencing 2028)
Grants held on 1 January 2028 <sup>^</sup>	<i>No Investigator or Ideas Grants held</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1x Investigator Grant, <b>OR</b></li> <li>▪ 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) <b>OR</b></li> <li>▪ 1x Ideas Grant, <b>OR</b></li> <li>▪ 2x Ideas Grants</li> </ul>
	<i>1x Ideas Grant</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1x Investigator Grant (50% reduction to RSP*), <b>OR</b></li> <li>▪ 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) <b>OR</b></li> <li>▪ 1x Ideas Grant</li> </ul>
	<i>1x Ideas Grant and 1x Investigator Grant (in final year)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1x Investigator Grant (50% reduction to RSP*)</li> </ul>
	<i>1x Ideas Grant and 1x Investigator Grant (not in final year)</i>	Not eligible to apply for any Investigator or Ideas Grants
	<i>2x Ideas Grants</i>	Not eligible to apply for any Investigator or Ideas Grants
	<i>2x Ideas Grants and 1x Investigator Grant (in final year)</i>	Not eligible to apply for any Investigator or Ideas Grants
	<i>2 x Ideas Grants and 1x Investigator Grant (not in final year)</i>	Not eligible to apply for any Investigator or Ideas Grants
	<i>1x Investigator Grant (in final year)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1x Investigator Grant</li> </ul>
	<i>1x Investigator Grant (not in final year)</i>	Not eligible to apply for any Investigator or Ideas Grants

<sup>^</sup>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 <sup>d</sup>	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 <sup>a</sup>	Eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD <sup>a</sup>	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Early Career Fellowship<sup>b</sup></i>	Not eligible	Eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD <sup>a</sup>	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Translation of Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship</i>	Not eligible	Eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD <sup>a</sup>	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Career Development Fellowship Level 1</i>	Not eligible	Eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD <sup>a</sup>	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible
<i>Career Development Fellowship Level 2<sup>c</sup></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

<sup>a</sup> Or equivalent

<sup>b</sup> Including NHMRC-ARC Dementia Research Development Fellowships.

<sup>c</sup> Including Boosting Dementia Research Leadership Fellowship Scheme.

<sup>d</sup> 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 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:

- 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).
- 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).
- 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.
- 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	Intellectual Property	Collaboration with an industry partner	Established a start-up company	Product to market	Clinical trials or regulatory activities	Industry participation
<b>Advanced</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>National phase entry and prosecution or specified country application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executed a licensing agreement with an established company</li> <li>Significant research contract with an industry partner</li> <li>Long term consultancy with an industry partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieved successful exit (public market flotation, merger or acquisition)</li> <li>Raised significant (&gt;\$10m) funding from venture capital or other commercial sources (not grant funding bodies)</li> <li>Chief Scientific Officer, Executive or non-executive role on company boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce sales</li> <li>Successful regulator submission to US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), European Medicines Agency, TGA etc.</li> <li>Medical device premarket submission e.g. FDA 510(k) approved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase II or Phase III underway or completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major advisory or consultancy roles with international companies</li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) or 'international application'</li> <li>Provisional patent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established a formal arrangement such as a consultancy or research contract and actively collaborating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporated an entity and established a board</li> <li>Has raised moderate (&gt;\$1m) funding from commercial sources or government schemes that required industry co-participation (e.g. ARC Linkage, NHMRC Development Grant)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generated regulatory standard data set</li> <li>Successful regulatory submission to Therapeutic Goods Administration or European Conformity (CE) marking</li> <li>Medical device: applications for pre-market approval</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase I underway or completed</li> <li>Protocol development</li> <li>Patient recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advisory or consultancy role with a national company</li> </ul>

<b>Preliminary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IP generated</li> <li>• Patent application lodged</li> <li>• Invention lodged with Disclosure/s with Technology Transfer/Commercialisation Office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approached and in discussion with an industry partner under a non-disclosure agreement. No other formal contractual arrangements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiated licence to IP from the academic institution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed pre-good manufacturing practice (GMP) prototype and strong supporting data</li> <li>• Established quality systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug candidate selected or Investigative New Drug application filed</li> <li>• Preclinical testing</li> </ul>	
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# Appendix H Investigator Grants 2027 Guide to Applicants

## 1. Preparing an application

The following sections provide additional advice about parts of the application that are specific to Investigator Grants 2027.

- Refer to the [Sapphire Learning and Training Resources](#) for general instructions on how to apply for a grant in Sapphire.
- Investigator Grants 2027 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 (the 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 the [NHMRC 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 2027 ([section 5.7](#))
- Completed application form (Investigator Grants 2027)
- Grant Proposal as an attachment ([section 6.11](#)).

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](#) 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
  - 5 Research Keywords
- Chief Investigator A (complete CIA Role and Name)
- Category and Level.

Minimum data must be entered into Sapphire by 5:00pm ACT local time 1 July 2026. Applicants are to refer to [section 7.3.1](#) 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 Grants 2027 application form:

- There is a new mandatory question in the Sapphire application form about the integration of sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and/or sexual orientation in the proposed research ([section 6.2](#)).
- Applicants must describe how sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and/or sexual orientation are integrated in the proposed research within the Research Proposal component of the Grant Proposal, where relevant ([section 6.11](#)).
- A new subsection has been added to [section 6.11.1](#) (Formatting requirements) to provide clear requirements for the inclusion of identifiable images of people in grant applications. The new section clarifies when identifiable images may be used, outlines consent and attribution requirements, and reinforces applicants' obligations under privacy, ethical and copyright frameworks.
- There is a new mandatory declaration in the Sapphire application form about the use of identifiable images, supported by new requirements in GTA [section 6.11.1.1](#) (Use of identifiable images).

## 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(s) 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. Your title, gender and 'My Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent status' are also used in grant administration, and these must be current.

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. 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 the Investigator Grants scheme

The following sections provide advice about parts of the application that are specific to the 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 (for those named on the application) 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' (for those named on the application) 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 Grants 2027 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. 2027 Investigator Grants for funding commencing in 2028. 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 may contain pre-filled information that cannot be edited. If not, select the requested duration of your grant (in years) with reference to any limits specified in the grant opportunity guidelines. All Investigator Grants have a duration of 5 years at the time of application, for further information please see [section 3.2](#) of the 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 /or 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 will 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.

Applicants need to address each Indigenous Research Excellence Criterion as set out in [section 8.1.3](#) of the guidelines.

### **Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation**

This question is for applicants to indicate whether sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation (the Variables) are or are not being integrated in the proposed research by selecting 'Yes' or 'No' for each Variable. Further information must be provided in the free text box for each Variable. If applicants select 'No', they must provide a scientifically sound and evidence-based justification for why the Variable is not integrated in the proposed research. If applicants select 'Yes', they must summarise how the Variable is being integrated in the proposed research. In addition to the response to this question, applicants must detail how the relevant Variable(s), if any, are integrated in the proposed design, conduct, analysis, reporting and/or translation and implementation of the research within the relevant section of the Grant Proposal. Information on the Variables in both the response to this question and in the Grant Proposal, where applicable, will be considered by assessors when scoring applications against the assessment criteria.

Where relevant, a high-quality description of how sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and/or sexual orientation are integrated into a research project should include:

- which of the Variables are relevant to the research question(s) and which research participants/subjects will be included to reflect this
- the target distribution of participants/subjects by the relevant Variable(s) and why this distribution has been selected to answer the research question(s)
- planned strategies for meeting the target distribution of population groups (e.g., inclusive eligibility criteria, strategies for recruiting and retaining participants or procuring, managing and storing/housing subjects)
- the plan for collecting, analysing and presenting data by the relevant Variable(s), including use of the ABS 2020 Standard, where appropriate.

The above should be summarised in response to the application question, with more detail provided in the Grant Proposal as required. The appropriateness of the described target distribution of participants/subjects by the relevant Variable(s) depends on the research question(s). There may be scientifically sound and evidence-based justifications for focusing on a single population group for one or more of the Variables. This will be considered by assessors when scoring applications against the assessment 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.

### **Does your application include any identifiable images of people?**

Select 'Yes' or 'No'.

If yes is selected, you must have obtained written valid consent to use any identifiable images of a person, particularly children, or have appropriate usage rights for use of stock or published images. Usage rights must be detailed in the figure caption for each image.

Have you provided details of the usage rights or consent status in the figure caption(s)?

Select 'Yes' or 'No'.

### **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](mailto: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](#).

### Further guidance on 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 ‘+’ 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](mailto: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.

### Field(s) of Research:

Click '+' 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 '+' 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 the [NHMRC 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 or New Zealand citizen, or a permanent resident of Australia, or have an appropriate work visa in place 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 holds 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](#) and [Section 4](#) 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 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 [sections 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 am an NHMRC grant holder (not fellow) and wish to retain my PSP ([section 4.3.3](#))'*

*'I hold a non Australian government grant with a salary component greater than 20% of my selected Investigator Grant salary 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.

### **I am currently receiving salary/salaries from a non-NHMRC grant(s) that will provide salary support beyond the year the Investigator Grant is to commence**

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 assessment timeframe (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
- any career disruptions and their impact on the applicant's research trajectory.

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, but cannot extend beyond when the applicant commenced research.<sup>27</sup> 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](#)).

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](#)))

<sup>27</sup>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 commenced research.

- 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](#)) 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 PhD pass date 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](#))
- any career disruptions and their impact ([section 6.8.4](#)).

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 (29 July 2026).

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 the 10-year period (taking into account any career disruptions) preceding the closing date of the scheme, including:

- key appointments/roles (including time spend 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 (29/07/2026) 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 2027 round, which closes on 29/07/2026, enter 29/07/2016 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 29/07/2026, enter 29/07/2015 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.

The 10-year assessment timeframe can be extended (commensurate with career disruption(s)), up until when 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 career context statement that outlines the applicant's overall opportunities to conduct and disseminate/translate research, over the last 10 years (or since they commenced research if fewer than 10 years).

Specifically, this statement should outline the applicant's:

- research roles and responsibilities
- PhD-pass date (or equivalent), and time spent as an active researcher (within the last 10 years)
- 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](#) (refer to section above).

It should **not include**:

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

Peer reviewers will be advised to ignore information provided in the career context field that is out of scope, including sensitive details of career disruptions, and 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 career circumstances that enabled or restricted their research productivity, relative to the typical performance of researchers in their field and at their career stage (not including career disruptions). In describing their career circumstances, applicants should focus on the impacts on their active research time, their ability to form and maintain collaborations, and their ability to apply for/secure research funding.

Career circumstances include, but are 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. Applicants should not describe personal or sensitive details of the circumstance when describing the impact on their research. Peer reviewers are advised to ignore any personal or sensitive information in their assessments.
- **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 career 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 career circumstances may extend beyond the duration of the causative event (e.g. a flood) and the full extent/effect of the circumstance can be included for consideration by peer reviewers. As such, applicants can outline a career circumstance 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.

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](#)). The impact of career disruptions outside of the 10-year assessment time frame may be included, to help provide context on the applicant's broader career trajectory.

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](#)).

Note 3: Applicants should **not** provide any sensitive, personal, or confidential details of their circumstances (e.g. sensitive details of an illness). These details **will not** be considered by peer reviewers.

### 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 ( $\geq 90$  days) 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 select the type of career disruption.
- Applicants should outline the duration of the disruption(s) (including the full-time equivalent) and the associated impact on their research career/trajectory (e.g. the impact on their available time to conduct research, their ability to build or maintain key collaborations, or their apply for/secure research funding due to the disruption).
- **Do not** provide personal or sensitive details in relation to the career disruption. Peer reviewers are instructed to ignore personal/sensitive details of career disruptions in their assessments.

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 you believe should be taken into account for your application must be entered in this section of the application form. Career disruption information in your Profile will not be used.

To create a career disruption record, enter the Start and End dates. Select a 'Reason'. Enter the FTE of the career disruption.

### Impact on research

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.

Describe the impact on your career trajectory (i.e. the opportunity cost) by outlining the impact the disruption(s) had on your active research time, your ability to form and maintain collaborations, and your ability to apply for/secure funding for your research.

**Do not** provide any personal or confidential details 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 '⊕'.

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 your Start and End dates and FTE information as 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](#)).

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).

## 6.11. Grant proposal

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, you can drop the file, or select 'browse' and upload the correct file. Click 'Save' to ensure the Grant Proposal file is correctly saved as part of the application.

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 [section 6.11.1](#) (below). 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 [section 6.11.2](#). Applicants should note that peer reviewers will, as part of their assessment, consider the reproducibility and applicability of the proposed research and research design. Within the experimental design of the proposal, applicants need to include sufficient information to demonstrate that robust and unbiased results will be produced.

### **6.11.1. Formatting requirements**

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

The grant proposal must be saved and uploaded as a PDF file. The PDF file must:

- not exceed 2 MB in size
- be named using the following: Applicant's Surname\_File Name (e.g. Smith\_Grant Proposal)
- be A4 in size
- include the Application ID and Applicant surname in the header
- include the page number in the footer
- have 2 cm top, bottom, left and right margins
- be written in English.

NHMRC recommends a minimum of 12 point Times New Roman font. Applicants must ensure the font is readable. At least single line spacing must be used.

All images and figures within the grant proposal must be appropriately referenced.

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.

Additionally, the version number increases on each resubmission to an RAO and subsequent return to an applicant by an RAO.

Details to be addressed in the grant proposal and associated page limits are set out in [section 6.11.2](#).

All images and figures within the grant proposal must be appropriately referenced.

### 6.11.1.1. Use of identifiable images

Applicants must abide by the following requirements when including images of people in grant proposals. Identifiable images of a person must only be included where the image is essential to the grant proposal and provides important context that cannot reasonably be conveyed through text alone. Examples may include images necessary to explain a research method, intervention setting or diagnostic feature. Identifiable images of a person included for illustrative, promotional or decorative purposes are not appropriate and should not be included in grant proposals.

Images of individuals are treated as personal information under the [Privacy Act 1988](#) where the person's identity is clear or can reasonably be worked out from that image. Images of individuals may also contain sensitive information if, for example, the individual's racial or ethnic origin or religious beliefs is apparent. An identifiable image of a person is any photograph, scan or other visual recording in which an individual can be recognised, or could reasonably be recognised, either directly or indirectly by the individual themselves or by others. An image remains identifiable even if the face is blurred, cropped, masked or partially obscured, and the individual could reasonably be recognised by themselves or others.

Where an identifiable image of a person is included in a grant proposal, applicants must:

Include a figure title or caption for the image

Reference the image in the body of the grant proposal text

Include **one** of the following three statements for each image in the figure caption, as appropriate:

- Valid, written consent has been obtained for the use of this image.
- Reuse rights have been secured for the use of this stock or published image.
- This is an AI-generated image.

Comply with copyright and licensing requirements when using stock or published images.

#### Consent requirements

Unless using a stock or published image, applicants must obtain free, prior and valid written consent before application submission for all identifiable images of a person, consistent with applicable ethical requirements, including the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#).

Particular care is required when images include children or persons at increased risk of harm, in line with the National Statement's requirements for consent involving limited or developing

capacity. Where an image relates to a child, applicants should carefully consider that the child will usually not have the opportunity to withdraw consent when they get older.

Consent documentation must not be uploaded as part of the application unless explicitly requested by NHMRC however copies of consent documentation should be retained so that they can be provided to NHMRC if requested.

### Legal and policy obligations

NHMRC is required to comply with the [Privacy Act 1988](#), the [Commonwealth Child Safe Framework](#), and [NHMRC's Privacy Policy](#) and [NHMRC's Child Safe Policy](#). The *Privacy Act 1988* protects the personal information of both adults and children alike. The inclusion of an identifiable image of a person without appropriate consent and/or appropriate reuse rights in applications to NHMRC may give rise to obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988*, including the Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme in certain circumstances.

Applicants and Administering Institutions are responsible for ensuring that personal information is not inadvertently or intentionally disclosed without written valid consent.

### Consequences of non-compliance

NHMRC may deem an application ineligible where an application contains an identifiable image of a person without appropriate consent and/or appropriate reuse rights.

## 6.11.2. Grant proposal components

### 6.11.2.1. Research proposal

This has a page limit of 5 pages (including references, references cited in this document must be listed in the separate References section).

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](#).

### 6.11.2.2. References

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 7.6](#) 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.
- A checklist for applicants applying for NHMRC funding is provided at [Section 8](#).
- 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 7.6](#).
- 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 the CIA is 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 minimum data and application lodgement.
- Update your Sapphire 'My Profile' in accordance with requirements set out in this document ([section 5.7](#)).
- 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.
- 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.**

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