



NHMRC PROJECT GRANTS FUNDING RULES

for funding commencing in 2013

Applications open on 7 December 2011 and close at 17:00 hrs (AEDT) on 14 March 2012

Late applications will not be accepted.

This document must be read in conjunction with the
*NHMRC Project Grants Advice and Instructions to
Applicants for funding commencing in 2013.*

ACRONYMS

ARC	Australian Research Council
ANZCTR	Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry
BRA	Broad Research Area
CIA	Chief Investigator A
CI	Chief Investigator
CT	Clinical Trials
CT-GRP	Clinical Trials Grant Review Panel
DRCs	Direct Research Costs
GRP	Grant Review Panel
IGRP	Indigenous Grant Review Panel
NFFC	Not For Further Consideration
NI	New Investigator
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
PRA	Peer Review Area
PSP	Personnel Support Package
RAO	Research Administration Officer
RGMS	Research Grants Management System
RC	Research Committee
WCI	Wage Cost Index

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Overview

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is Australia's leading funding agency promoting the development and maintenance of public and individual health standards. It is established under the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992* (the NHMRC Act), which is available on the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/organisation-overview/nhmrcs-role>.

The object of the NHMRC Act is to make provision for a national body to pursue activities designed to:

- raise the standard of individual and public health throughout Australia;
- foster the development of consistent health standards between the States and Territories;
- foster medical research and training and public health research and training throughout Australia; and
- foster consideration of ethical issues relating to health.

The *NHMRC Strategic Plan 2010 – 2012* (Strategic Plan) describes the agency's strategic objectives and provides the context within which its funding schemes operate. NHMRC's strategy for health and medical research is to invest in the highest quality research, as determined through peer review, across the four pillars of health and medical research: biomedical, clinical, public health and health services research.

Further information on the Strategic Plan can be found at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/nh132syn.htm>.

The NHMRC Project Grants Funding Rules for funding commencing in 2013 incorporates the NHMRC Universal Funding Rules. The Universal Funding Rules were designed to provide investigators and Research Administration Officers (RAOs) ease of access and consistency across funding schemes. The Funding Rules in Part 1 of this document apply specifically to the Project Grants Scheme only. The Funding Rules in Part 2, the NHMRC Universal Funding Rules, apply to all NHMRC funding schemes, including the Project Grants Scheme.

This document, Part 1 and Part 2, must be read in conjunction with the '*Project Grants Advice and Instructions to Applicants for funding commencing in 2013.*'

PART 1 – FUNDING RULES SPECIFIC TO PROJECT GRANTS

1. Introduction

The Project Grants Scheme is the NHMRC's main avenue of support for individuals and small teams of investigators undertaking health services, public health, clinical and biomedical research in Australian universities, medical schools, hospitals and other research institutions.

1.1 Further Information

Enquiries about the content of the 2012 Project Grants Funding Rules (for funding commencing in 2013) should be addressed to your Administering Institution's Research Administration Officer (RAO) in the first instance.

If further assistance is required, please contact the Research Help Centre on 1800 500 983 or by email at help@nhmrc.gov.au. Alternatively, go direct to the Project Grants funding scheme webpage on the NHMRC website: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply/projects/index.htm>

Enquiries about the 2012 Project Grants Funding Rules for funding commencing in 2013 may also be addressed to the Research Help Centre at:

NHMRC National Health and Medical Research Council
GPO Box 1421
Canberra ACT 2601

2. Significant changes to the 2012 application round

Applicants should note the following changes to the Project Grants Funding Rules introduced this year:

- Universal Funding Rules to provide investigators ease of access and consistency across all NHMRC funding schemes – refer Part 2 of this document;
- Role and level of contribution of Chief Investigators – refer Part 1, Section 4.4.1;
- Track Record assessment – refer Part 1, Section 10.1:
 - 'relative to opportunity' and 'career disruption' – refer Part 2, Sections 3.6 and 3.7 of the Universal Funding Rules;
- Not For Further Consideration process – refer to Part 1, Section 10.2;
- Descriptors of NHMRC's Priority Area, Strategic Plan and Special Initiatives for 2012 – refer Part 1, Section 7;
- *NHMRC Project Grant Category Descriptors* – refer [Appendix A](#);
- Eligibility for Personnel Support Package (PSP) – refer [Appendix B](#);
- Recording time commitment to the project – refer [Appendix B](#).

3. Objectives

The Project Grant scheme aims to fund research leading to improved health of all Australians.

To achieve this aim the scheme provides support for projects with the following attributes:

- Investigator-initiated research across all fields of research, from basic research through to research in clinical and community settings, relevant to health; and

- Single investigators or small teams of investigators (up to ten investigators) and early career investigators (new investigators).

The scheme also identifies and supports research in the following areas:

- NHMRC's Priority Research Area of Indigenous Health;
- NHMRC Strategic Plan Initiatives to build Australian research effort in areas identified in the current NHMRC Strategic Plan; and
- NHMRC Special Initiative Areas where NHMRC has received additional funding for particular areas of health and medical research, and where Research Committee has advised of its relevance to the goals of NHMRC.

4. Description of Project Grants

A Project Grant is an agreement with an eligible Australian Administering Institution specifying financial support for specific investigators to undertake a defined research project.

Administering Institutions are responsible for supporting the indirect costs of the research project and for administering the grant, which includes accepting financial responsibility for the grant.

4.1 Level of funding

There is no specific limit to funding for each application under the NHMRC Project Grant scheme. Applicants are advised to justify clearly the requested budget, paying particular attention to any research cost(s) which may be atypical for the particular field of research (Refer to the following web-link:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/file/grants/funding/funded/manage/policy/direct_research_costs.pdf).

NHMRC funding is provided by the Australian Government under the *NHMRC Funding Agreement* (refer to <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement>).

4.2 Duration of funding

Applicants for NHMRC Project Grants may apply for funding of between one and five years duration, but the period must be justified within the application.

Besides the requirement that the funding request be between one and five years, NHMRC does not prescribe the duration of Project Grants. The Grant Review Panel (GRP) will recommend the duration of the grant, taking into consideration:

- The detailed research plan and budget to cover the proposed research plan; and
- Any milestones and/or funding conditions.

NOTE: Investigators applying for grants awarded by other funding bodies, for example Cancer Australia, must refer to the relevant guidelines as specific conditions on the level and duration of funding and the items supported may differ. These guidelines can be found at the relevant link provided in Part 1, Section 8.

4.3 Advice on whether to apply to the NHMRC or the Australian Research Council

In some instances, applicants may not be clear about whether their application is more appropriately considered by the NHMRC or the Australian Research Council (ARC).

Applicants should note that:

- The ARC has revised its definition of medical and dental research, which is available from the ARC website at <http://www.arc.gov.au/>. At the time of certifying an ARC Discovery Project submission, Administering Institutions are to ensure that the submission is not medical and dental research according to ARC's definition.
- NHMRC will assess all applications submitted for support of health and medical research.

4.4 Chief Investigators and Research Teams

Apart from the specific exclusions and other conditions noted below and in Part 1, Section 5, NHMRC Project Grants are available to all investigators working in any field of research relevant to health.

4.4.1 Chief Investigators

The maximum number of Chief Investigators (CIs) allowed on a Project Grant is ten (CIA-CIJ).

The role and level of contribution of each CI must be described and justified in the Project Grant application. PhD students may be included as CIs in exceptional circumstances if appropriate for the proposed research project.

Unless support for personnel is being sought on the grant, funding for a grant depends on the continuing employment of each of the CIs over the period of the grant.

4.4.2 Chief Investigator A

The Chief Investigator A (CIA) takes the lead role in the conduct of the research project, and is the investigator who takes responsibility for completion and lodgement of the application. The contribution of a CIA will be reviewed by the GRP to determine whether it is adequate for the research proposed.

It is generally required that, at the time of application submission, the CIA is an Australian citizen or is a permanent resident of Australia. It is also required that the CIA is based in Australia for the duration of the grant.

NHMRC may waive the requirement to be an Australian citizen or permanent resident where it can be demonstrated that the research is based in Australia and will benefit health and medical research in Australia. Requests to waive this requirement need to be made through the Research Administration Office of the Administering Institution and should be emailed to help@nhmrc.gov.au and marked for the Director, Project Grants Section by 20 January 2012.

NOTE: Applicants who have applied for and received waivers for existing NHMRC grants, must again seek a waiver for the 2012 Project Grants application round.

Exception: A CIA who is a New Zealand citizen is not required to seek a waiver if they are based in Australia for the duration of the grant.

4.4.3 Chief Investigators (CIB to CIJ)

Investigators who are not Australian citizens or permanent residents in Australia are eligible to apply for a Project Grant as a CIB to CIJ. If they are based in Australia for the duration of the grant,

they may be eligible to request a personnel support package. For further information on personnel support packages refer to [Appendix B](#) and to: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/project-grants/budget-mechanism-project-grant-funding-commencing-2012>

CI's based overseas are not eligible to draw a salary from a Project Grant. (Applicants addressing the Strategic Plan Initiative *Global Health* should refer to special eligibility criteria in Part 1, Section 5.3).

4.4.4 Associate Investigators

An Associate Investigator (AI) is defined as an investigator who provides intellectual input into the research and whose participation warrants inclusion of their name on publications.

Associate Investigators are not able to draw a salary from a Project Grant.

There are no restrictions on individuals who may be named as an AI on Project Grant applications. However, the maximum number of AIs who can be named is ten per application.

The CIA must seek agreement from AIs for AIs to be named on the application. However the AI is not required to endorse the final application.

4.5 Consent to be a Chief Investigator

The CIA must seek agreement from other CI's (CIB-CIJ) to be named on the application. The CIA will provide written evidence (e.g. an e-mail) to the RAO of all CI's' endorsement of the application. The RAO will then certify the application is true and correct and submit the application in the Research Grants Management System (RGMS). The RAO will not be authorised to submit the application to NHMRC until all Chief Investigators have completed this step.

5. Eligibility

To be eligible for NHMRC Project Grant funding commencing in 2013:

a) At the time of application submission, the CIA must be an Australian citizen or a permanent resident of Australia. It is also required that the CIA must be based in Australia for the duration of the grant.

b) Individuals are limited to holding a maximum of six NHMRC Project Grants as a CI. Program Grant holders should refer to Part 1, Section 5.2.

The maximum number of applications a CI (CIA-CIJ) may submit in any year will be six, less the number of NHMRC Project Grants that are scheduled to continue in the year that any new grants will commence (i.e. 2013). For example, if an investigator, at the time of submission of application holds three NHMRC Project Grants, one of which will finish at the end of the year in which applications close (i.e. 2012), the investigator may submit up to four applications.

Where a CI (CIA-CIJ) has submitted applications in excess of the maximum number of grants and applications for which he/she is eligible, all applications that include that investigator as a CI will be automatically ineligible (refer Part 2, Section 3.5). It is the responsibility of CI's to ensure that this condition is adhered to prior to submission of an application. Applicants and RAOs should not assume that RGMS will manage this aspect of eligibility.

- c) CIs must have fulfilled all obligations from previous NHMRC grants, particularly the completion of required progress and final reports.

5.1 Eligibility criteria for Chief Investigators on an application for New Investigator funding:

NHMRC seeks to provide support each year to investigators who have previously not received significant research funding. All CIs on an application for New Investigator (NI) funding:

- a) Must not be named as a CI¹ on a previously funded NHMRC grant, or international equivalent², which included funding for research support (e.g. Project Grant, Program Grant, Development Grant etc.);
- b) Must not be named as a CI or equivalent on a previously supported Australian Research Council (ARC) grant, or international equivalent, which included funding for research support (e.g. Discovery Grant etc.);
- c) May have held a salary-only award from any funding source including NHMRC (e.g. NHMRC Career Development Award, Early Career Fellowship Award or Training Award); and
- d) May have received research funding of any level and type from sources other than NHMRC, ARC and their international equivalents.

Applicants unsure of their eligibility can seek a formal ruling by emailing NHMRC. Applicants should clearly outline details of any previously received funding and their role on the funded project(s). Emails should be marked for attention of Director, Project Grants Section and must be submitted to help@nhmrc.gov.au by 1 February 2012.

5.2 Eligibility criteria for holders of current Program Grants

- a) For Program Grant holders:
 - i. A CI on an existing Program Grant is not permitted to hold, or apply for more than one Project Grant.
 - ii. At least one CI on any such Project Grant or Project Grant application must not be a CI on a Program Grant receiving funding in any year in which the Project Grant is funded.³
- b) Investigators who are applying for, or may apply for, a Program Grant must refer to the most recent Program Grant Funding Policy to determine their eligibility to hold, or to apply for additional Project Grants.
- c) An investigator can be a part-time CI on two Program Grants. Where this is the case, the investigator will be considered a full-time Program Grant CI for the purpose of determining eligibility to apply for and hold a Project Grant and Part 1, Section 5.2.a (above) applies.

5.3 Special criteria for applications addressing the Strategic Plan Initiative 'Global Health'

Applications seeking funding under the Strategic Plan Initiative *Global Health* should note the following:

¹ For the purposes of Part 1, Section 5.1, CI does not include investigators who were a Co-Investigator on an NHMRC Program Grant.

² International equivalents include Medical Research Council in the United Kingdom, United States National Institutes Health, Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Human Frontier Science Program.

³ Program Grant holders cannot be the only CIs on a Project Grant, or the sole CI on a Project Grant.

- a) As for all Project Grant applications, the CIA must be based in Australia;
- b) Assessment of the team's track record will be made primarily on the track record of the Australian-based CI(s);
- c) The application may seek salary support for one or more CIs based in developing countries of Asia and the Pacific; and
- d) Equipment and Direct Research Costs (DRCs) may include support (other than salary) for CIs based in developing countries of Asia and the Pacific.

For additional information refer to the following web-link:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/file/grants/funding/funded/manage/policy/direct_research_costs.pdf

For the purposes of this Strategic Plan Initiative, eligible developing countries are those in Asia or the Pacific declared by the Minister for Foreign Affairs for the purposes of the Overseas Aid Gift Deduction Scheme (refer http://www.ausaid.gov.au/ngos/devel_list.cfm).

6. Use of NHMRC funds

6.1 Access to NHMRC funding

NHMRC seeks to promote collaboration between investigators and to remove artificial barriers that prevent multidisciplinary and multi-organisational proposals. However, the NHMRC funds only the direct costs of a research project.

Project Grant applicants are required to:

- a) Make a case for NHMRC Project Grant funding in accordance with these Funding Rules; and
- b) Declare the sources, duration and level of funding already held for research in a particular area of the application.

NHMRC funds may be used for:

- a) Supporting personnel, where the level of personnel support package requested matches the roles and responsibilities of the position, rather than the expertise of a specific occupant of the position (Appendix B);
- b) Equipment that is unique to the project and is essential for the project to proceed;
- c) DRCs for the purchase of research materials (not personnel) required to conduct the proposed research; and
- d) Costs of animal agistment that are a direct requirement of the research project.

NHMRC does not fund:

- a) Research infrastructure that an institution with research as part of its mission would be expected to supply;
- b) Institutional overheads and administrative charges; or
- c) The indirect costs of research.

Further information on the use of NHMRC Funding is available at Appendix B and:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement>

6.2 Funding to support overseas research activities

Applicants may request funding to support specific research activities to be undertaken overseas. In doing so the applicants must clearly demonstrate that:

- a) The research activity is critical to the successful completion of the project; and
- b) The equipment/resources required for the research activity are not available in Australia.

Funding for research support staff who are based overseas may only be considered where this is essential to achieve the aims of the research.

6.3 Registration of clinical trials

All NHMRC funded clinical trials must be registered in the Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (ANZCTR), or equivalent, prior to commencement of the clinical phase.

Applicants proposing to undertake a randomised controlled trial may request the administrative charge payable for the registration of the trial. Requests for funding of trial registration must be justified in the DRC component of the application.

Information pertaining to the ANZCTR, or equivalent, and how to register can be found at <http://www.anzctr.org.au>.

6.4 Co-funding of Clinical Trials

NHMRC will only be able to fund a limited number of clinical trials and may require applicants to find co-funding as a prerequisite for NHMRC support.

The Clinical Trial Grant Review Panels (CT-GRPs) can consider applications in advance of a commitment of support from a co-funder: in any such situation NHMRC will provide the applicant with a response indicating whether the application would be funded if co-funding became available within the following 12 months.

Evidence of the financial commitment of co-funder(s) will be required prior to approval by the Minister for Health and Ageing of support for a co-funded CT.

For a more detailed explanation on the use of NHMRC funds and to prepare the budget in the application, refer to Appendix B of this document and NHMRC website:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/project-grants>.

7. Call for Applications in the NHMRC's Priority Area, Strategic Plan Initiatives and Special Initiatives for 2012

In addition to the general aims of the Project Grant Scheme, each year the scheme is used to identify and support additional research. Further details are provided at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/project-grants>. In 2012, the following areas will be supported:

<i>NHMRC's Priority Research Area</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous Health
The <i>Strategic Plan Initiative Areas</i> identified in the <i>NHMRC Strategic Plan 2010-2012</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a Self-improving Health System • Ageing and Health • Chronic Disease • Mental Health • Genomic Medicine and Frontier Technologies • Planning for Emerging Infectious Disease Threats • Examining Alternative Therapy Claims • Global Health • Health Consequences of Climate Change
<i>Special Initiatives</i> for 2012 (additional funding available from other funding partners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asbestos-related Diseases • Electromagnetic Fields • Hearing Loss Prevention

Strategic Plan Initiatives are those health areas identified in the Strategic Plan and in which NHMRC seeks to build a stronger Australian research effort.

Special Initiatives are those health areas in which NHMRC has received additional research funding from other parties, tied to these particular fields.

Applicants will have the opportunity to indicate whether their application addresses the Priority Research Area, a Strategic Plan Initiative or a Special Initiative. All applications will be assessed to determine whether they address these areas and this will be taken into consideration when NHMRC determines funding recommendations.

All applications for Project Grant support, regardless of whether an application is agreed by NHMRC to address a Strategic Plan Initiative or Special Initiative, are peer reviewed in the same manner.

7.1 NHMRC Priority Research Area – Indigenous Health

In 2012, NHMRC is again seeking applications that relate to the improvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health as a priority research area. All Indigenous Health research applications will be assessed against the Project Grant assessment criteria (refer to Part 1, Section 10.1).

Applications are also required to address NHMRC's *Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians* (refer to Part 1, Section 10.3).

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

- *Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians* available at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/file/grants/indighth.pdf>;
- *Values and Ethics - Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* available at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e52syn.htm>; and
- *The NHMRC Road Map II: A strategic framework for improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through research* available at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r47>

8. Funding by Other Organisations

In 2012, organisations offering funding through the NHMRC Project Grants funding scheme include:

Cancer Council: <http://www.cancervic.org.au/grantprocess>

Cancer Australia: <http://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/>

Heart Foundation: http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/Professional_Information/Research/Available_Funding/Grants-in-aid/Pages/default.aspx

Applicants are able to choose whether to apply for funding from only one organisation or funding from several organisations.

If an applicant chooses to apply for funding from the NHMRC and one of the organisations listed above, and the application is ranked as fundable by the NHMRC, the NHMRC has the first option to fund the application.

Applications for NHMRC funding must comply with all NHMRC funding criteria.

Applicants must comply with any additional, specified criteria from the relevant funding organisation. Please refer to the web-links for information on additional criteria that may apply.

Applications for funding from only the Cancer Council, Cancer Australia or the Heart Foundation, and not the NHMRC, are exempt from:

- the specific eligibility criteria found in Part 1, Section 5 of this document and
- from making a case for NHMRC funding as stated in Part 1, Section 6.

9. Submitting an application

All applications must be submitted electronically using NHMRC's Research Grant Management System (RGMS) <https://www.rgms.nhmrc.gov.au/>.

Applicants who are not yet registered on RGMS should contact help@nhmrc.gov.au for more information. For more information please refer to Part 2, Section 3 of the Universal Funding Rules.

9.1 Submission of Applications

Applications for Project Grants open on Wednesday 7 December 2011 and close at 17:00 hours (AEDT) on Wednesday 14 March 2012.

Applications must be submitted by the advertised closing date and time. Late applications will not be accepted.

Applicants should check whether their Administering Institution has a submission date in advance of the NHMRC closing date.

Applications must be certified and submitted by a NHMRC registered Administering Institution. Intending applicants and institutions should refer to the *NHMRC Administering Institutions Policy* at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/admininst.htm>.

Once submitted to NHMRC, the application will be considered final and no changes can be accepted.

As indicated at Part 1, Section 4.5, a CIA must seek agreement from other CIs (CIB-CIJ) to be named on the application. The CIA will provide written evidence (e.g. an email) to the RAO of the endorsement of the application by all named CIs. The RAO will then certify and submit the application in RGMS. The RAO will not be authorised to submit the application to NHMRC until all CIs have completed this step.

10. Assessment

All Project Grant applications are regarded by NHMRC as new applications for funding. Applications undergo rigorous peer review, whereby they are subject to scrutiny and evaluation by others who are expert in the field(s) of the application. Assessors and GRPs will bring their expertise and experience to the evaluation of the merit of applications for funding. Therefore, applicants can expect that any matter relevant to the scientific quality, significance and innovation, and applicant track record(s) may be brought to the consideration of their application by assessors and the GRP.

In developing their applications, applicants should take into account the nature of peer review: assessors and GRPs may draw as appropriate from the research literature and from their breadth of knowledge in the relevant discipline(s) and field(s). Issues not relevant to the scientific quality, significance and/or innovation, and track record are not to be considered (see also Part 2, Section 6).

10.1 Assessment Criteria

Applications for Project Grants are assessed by peers according to the three internationally benchmarked assessment criteria of:

1. Scientific quality;
2. Significance and/or Innovation; and
3. Track record - relative to opportunity.

The following paragraphs describe the criteria.

1. Scientific Quality (50%)

This includes the clarity of the hypotheses or research objectives, the strengths and weaknesses of the study design and feasibility.

The research proposal may be assessed in terms of, but not limited to:

- a) Clarity of the hypothesis or research objectives: including
 - i Has the method/framework/approach been partially tested?
 - ii What outcome is sought in the proposed study? What exactly is the outcome measure?
 - iii Is it well integrated and adequately developed?
- b) Is there a clear and appropriate research plan? Consider also:
 - i What are the strengths and weaknesses of the study and its design?
 - ii Have any major pitfalls or problems been overlooked? Have alternative approaches been considered?
 - iii Is the plan well informed by knowledge of the literature?
 - iv Is the design appropriate for the aims of the research?
- c) Feasibility
 - i Will the research plan successfully address the stated hypothesis or research objectives?
 - ii Are the goals concrete and achievable?
 - iii Is the investigating team appropriate – is it capable of achieving the goals? Does it have the right skills and expertise?

2. Significance and/or Innovation (25%)

This includes the potential to increase knowledge about human health, disease diagnoses, or biology of agents that affect human health, or the application of new ideas, procedures, technologies, programs or health policy settings to important topics that will impact on human health.

Note: Applications do not need to be rated on both significance and innovation. Truly innovative ideas and research may not reveal their significance until sometime in the future (this is the case for many Nobel Prize winning discoveries). Similarly research of the highest significance e.g. important randomised clinical trials or public health intervention studies, may use 'tried and true' methods only, yet be of immense significance to health. GRPs will use peer review judgement.

Applications may be assessed in terms of, but not limited to the following questions:

- a. Is the problem important?
- b. Will the work or research have an impact?
- c. Is the proposed research new/novel or creative (has imagination been used)?
- d. How will scientific knowledge be advanced?
- e. What will be the effect of the study on the concepts or methods that drive this field?
- f. Does the research challenge existing models or develop new technologies or new study methods?
- g. How well does the proposal describe the new ideas, procedures, technologies, programs or health policy settings?

3. Track Record – relative to opportunity (25%)

The Universal Funding Rules provide more detailed descriptions of “relative to opportunity” and “career disruption”, refer to Part 2, Sections 3.6 and 3.7.

Track record is considered in terms of whether an applicant’s previous research demonstrates that the investigator(s) is capable of achieving the proposed project and/or ability to deliver the proposed project in terms of having the appropriate mix of research skills and experience. Where an application involves a CI team, the track record of all CIs is considered and will be assessed relative to opportunity (including career stage), based on relevance to the research being proposed and taking into account time commitment.

Track record may encompass the national and international standing of the applicant(s) based upon their research achievements, including but not limited to:

- *Research outputs* – most recent significant publications; publications that illustrate innovation and significance to past accomplishments; impact or outcome of previous research achievements, including effects on health care practices or policy; awards or honours in recognition of achievements;
- *Contribution to discipline or area* - invitations to speak at international meetings, editorial appointments, specialist and high level health policy committee appointments; and
- *Other research-related achievements*, such as:
 - Influence on clinical/health policy or practice, or provision of influential advice to health authorities and government.
 - Impacts on health via the broad dissemination of research outcomes; e.g. via mainstream media, the community or industry involvement.

Track record is considered in relation to opportunity – with regard to factors such as career disruption, administrative and clinical/teaching load, and typical performance (including publications) for the field in question. For Project Grants, Track Record will be judged on the most recent five years, except as described for career disruption (Refer Part 2, Section 3.7).

The track record of CI(s) and other key personnel listed on the application, **relative to opportunity**, may be assessed in terms of:

- a. Record of achievement, relative to opportunity;
- b. Contribution to their field of research; and
- c. Their national and/or international reputation in their fields.

In considering the above assessment criteria, applicants are advised to refer to the description of the scoring categories provided in Appendix A.

Retracted Publications

If a publication relevant to an application is retracted after the application has been submitted, applicants must advise NHMRC of the retraction at the earliest opportunity by email (help@nhmrc.gov.au) or when submitting their response to assessor reports, with an appropriate explanation regarding the retraction. Applicants are required to send this information to NHMRC through their RAO office.

If an application is largely dependent on the results of a retracted publication, applicants should also consider withdrawing the application. If, under these circumstances, applicants choose not to withdraw the application, they should make their reasons clear in their response to assessor reports (Refer to Part 2, Section 3.2.)

Where the publication forms part of an applicant's Track Record, that information must be immediately recorded in their Profile & CV in RGMS (Refer to Part 2, Section 3.1).

10.2 Assessment Process

Applicants will have the opportunity to indicate their preferred Peer Review Area (PRA) in RGMS (refer to the *Project Grants Advice and Instructions to Applicants* document – *Guide to Peer Review Process*), for NHMRC's consideration. NHMRC will use this information to assist in directing applications to a peer review panel. These are preliminary allocations only. NHMRC will use research expertise to review these allocations prior to assigning them to GRPs.

Applicants will have the opportunity to indicate their preferred Peer Review Area (PRA) in RGMS (refer to the *Project Grants Advice and Instructions to Applicants* document, for NHMRC's consideration.

Applicants also have the opportunity to select the Broad Research Area (BRA) most relevant to their application:

- Basic Science
- Clinical Medicine and Science
- Health Services Research
- Public Health

Details on applications to be assessed by the Indigenous Grant Review Panel (IGRP) and the Clinical Trials panels can be found at Part 1, Sections 10.3 and 10.4 respectively.

Applications will be allocated to a Grant Review Panel (GRP), which will assess each application against the assessment criteria. NHMRC will seek reviews from external assessors for all Project Grant applications.

Prior to the GRP meeting, applicants will have an opportunity to respond to the reviews provided by external assessors and Primary Spokespersons.

NHMRC will collate the scores provided by the Primary and Secondary Spokespersons for each application, to identify those applications assessed to be among the bottom third of applications considered by each GRP. These applications will be considered by the GRP for removal in advance of the detailed GRP discussion (the Not For Further Consideration [NFFC] Process). The GRP will assign all remaining applications to one of the scoring categories detailed at [Appendix A](#).

NHMRC may seek additional advice on any grant application.

Once the GRPs have categorised and ranked applications, NHMRC seeks advice from RC and Council on the total allocation of expenditure for the Project Grant Scheme and on the extent of support for applications within the Priority, Strategic Plan Initiative and Special Initiative areas.

NHMRC and its committees do not challenge the category or the ranking of individual grants, subsequent to the GRP views. On advice from RC and Council, the NHMRC Chief Executive Officer will make funding recommendations to the Minister.

10.3 Additional criteria for Indigenous Health applications

Part B of the application includes the question ‘*Does this research proposal include Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health research and/or capacity building?*’ Applicants who select ‘YES’ will need to address the *Criteria for Health and Medical Research for Indigenous Australians* (The Indigenous Criteria) in their application (refer: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/file/grants/indighth.pdf>) and will have their application initially reviewed by Indigenous Health research experts to determine whether the application should be assessed as an Indigenous health research application and, therefore, whether it will be assessed by the Indigenous Health Grant Review Panel (IGRP).

In scoring applications against the assessment criteria, the IGRP will use its discretion, experience and expertise to reflect the relative strength of the application in terms of how well it addresses and meets The Indigenous Criteria.

NHMRC will take advice provided by the IGRP into account when determining funding recommendations.

10.4 Clinical Trials

The Clinical Trial (CT) Grant Review Panels will assess applications where an applicant identifies in their application (*Part A: Ethics* and/or *Part A – A-RC: Research Classification*) that the research proposal involves a clinical trial and where the scale and scope of the application is substantial.

The CT-GRPs may also review other applications where NHMRC determines that it has the appropriate expertise. Applications for larger cohort studies and population studies may also be referred to these panels.

NHMRC will only be able to fund a limited number of very large CTs and may require applicants to find co-funding as a prerequisite for NHMRC support.

For further information regarding CT applications, refer to Part 1, Section 6.4.
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A CT should be considered as the evaluation of any health care intervention (including prevention, early detection, treatment, health service, behavioural change and pharmaceutical) in a human population with disease or at risk of disease.

The CT will usually involve the comparison of a new treatment or intervention against a standard care/management assessing the impact of each on health outcomes or intermediate endpoints, using a controlled design. A trial could also involve early phase 1 or phase 2 trials without a control group.

Investigators whose applications are being assessed by the CT-GRPs will be able to specify modifications to their proposal in their Applicant Response in response to assessor reports. Applicants are not permitted to add named investigators to the research team as part of the

Applicant Response; however applicants may indicate their intention to involve additional expertise.

11. Approvals to be obtained prior to funding commencing

Project Grants provided by NHMRC are often awarded for research that involves the use of humans, animals or genetically modified organisms. All of these activities require oversight by the Administering Institution. Table 1 summarises the approvals that may need to be obtained before funding for a Project Grant can commence. Table 2 lists other considerations that Project Grant applicants must take into account during development of research proposals.

In order to ensure that all research is conducted both ethically and accountably, funding for a Project Grant will not commence until the Administering Institution's RAO has notified NHMRC that all relevant ethical and other approvals have been granted and have been provided to the Administering Institution's Research Office. **No funding will be provided on the basis of a provisional approval.**

Where an ethics clearance or regulatory approval is not required until the latter years of a Project Grant and the relevant committee cannot review the proposal without the results of the preliminary findings of the research then, in these exceptional circumstances, NHMRC approval can be sought for the funds to be released. These requests will be considered by NHMRC on a case by case basis. Any research that requires ethics clearance/regulatory approval must not occur until the required approvals are in place.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain the relevant approval required for the project and to forward this to the Administering Institution's Research Office.

The NHMRC reserves the right to request any information in relation to ethical and other approvals and to withdraw the offer of funding if the relevant approvals are not obtained by **1 July** in the year that funding is to commence.

Table 1: Summary of Approvals and Licenses to be obtained by Project Grant applicants

<i>Applicants proposing research involving</i>	<i>Action to be taken by Applicants</i>
Human Research	Projects funded by NHMRC that involve human participants must be reviewed by a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in accordance with the <i>National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (the National Statement)</i> . Consideration must also be given to the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> . The National Statement is available on the NHMRC website at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e35 .
Animal Research	Projects funded by NHMRC that involve the use of animals must be reviewed and approved by an Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) in accordance with the <i>Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (the Animal Code)</i> . The Animal Code is available on the NHMRC website at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea16 .
Generation or use of genetically modified	Applicants proposing to undertake research involving genetically modified organisms (GMO) must ensure that all the requirements of the <i>Gene</i>

organisms (GMOs)	<i>Technology Act 2000 and Gene Technology Regulations 2001</i> have been met. In the first instance, applicants should seek advice from their Institutional Biosafety Committee on the level of authorisation needed for any proposed GMO research. Information on the gene technology regulatory scheme, including the Act and Regulations, is also available from the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator website www.ogtr.gov.au .
Human Embryo Research	Research involving certain human embryos requires a licence issued by the Embryo Research Licensing Committee of the NHMRC in accordance with <i>Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002</i> and <i>Prohibition of Human Cloning for Reproduction Act 2002</i> For further information about the legislation refer to the NHMRC website at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ and http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/prohibit .

Table 2: Other considerations relevant to Project Grant Applicants

<i>Applicants proposing research involving</i>	<i>Guidelines to be considered by Applicants</i>
Health Research Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	Ethical applications for projects that involve the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples should be developed with reference to the <i>Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research</i> (2003) Further information is available from the NHMRC website at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e52 .
Use of Carcinogenic or Highly Toxic Chemicals	All projects that involve the use of carcinogenic or highly toxic chemicals must adhere to the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) guidelines, <i>National Code of Practice for the Preparation of Material Safety Data Sheets</i> . Further information is available from the Safe Work Australia web site at http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/
Use of datasets for research purposes	The use of datasets for research purposes must comply with the <i>Minimum Guidelines for Health Registers for Statistical and Research Purposes</i> . Further information is available from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website at: http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6442467282
Open Access	Refer to Section 17.2 of this document and NHMRC policy on the dissemination of research findings, which is available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/dissemination-research-findings
Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research	The <i>Statement on Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research</i> (the Statement) has been developed because many consumers and researchers recognise the contribution that consumers can make to health and medical research. The Consumers Health Forum of Australia Inc (CHF) and the NHMRC worked in partnership with consumers and researchers to develop the Statement in recognition of the contribution that consumers can make to research, as well as their right to participate in research. Researchers are encouraged to consider the benefits of actively engaging consumers in their proposed research. Applicants should refer to the CHF and NHMRC Statement available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r22-r23-r33-r34

12. Reporting on NHMRC Project Grant

12.1 Annual Progress Reports and Financial Reports

Annual progress and financial reports will be required by 31 March of each year in the form prescribed by NHMRC. At the completion of the grant, a final report and financial acquittal will be required by 30 June of the following year. These final reports will be regarded by NHMRC as public documents and will be placed in the public domain. The reporting requirements can be found at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/project-grants>.

NHMRC may suspend payment of further instalments of any current grant until the appropriate reports have been received and assessed as satisfactory.

Where an institution fails to submit satisfactory reports, NHMRC may withhold the remainder of the institution's payments under the scheme for the current year or initiate recovery of funding.

12.2 Dissemination of Scientific Findings

To maximise the benefits from research and as broadly as possible allow access by other researchers investigators and the wider community, NHMRC encourages investigators and Administering Institutions to

- Promote responsible publication and dissemination of the research findings;
- Disseminate all research findings; and
- Disclose research support accurately.

Section 4 of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, outlines these and other responsibilities of Institutions and Investigators, which apply to all forms of dissemination. This document is available at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r39>

NHMRC strongly supports investigators depositing their data and any publications arising from a research project in an appropriate subject and/or institutional repository wherever such a repository is available to the investigator(s). Any research outputs that have been or will be deposited in appropriate repositories should be identified in the Final Report.

Grant recipients must ensure that they comply with NHMRC policy on the dissemination of research findings, which is available at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/dissemination-research-findings>.

13. Resources

13.1 NHMRC Resources

For NHMRC Resources please refer to Part 2, Section 14.1 of the Universal Funding Rules.

13.2 External Funding Agencies Resources

Cancer Council at: <http://www.cancervic.org.au/grantprocess>

Cancer Australia at: <http://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/research-and-funding>

Heart Foundation at: <http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/research/funding/Pages/default.aspx>

Department of Health and Ageing at: <http://www.health.gov.au/>

Hearing Loss Prevention at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-hear-policyparameters>

PART 2 - NHMRC UNIVERSAL FUNDING RULES

1. Introduction

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is Australia's leading funding agency promoting the development and maintenance of public and individual health standards. It is established under the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*, (the NHMRC Act) which is available on the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/organisation-overview/nhmrcs-role>.

The object of the NHMRC Act is to make provision for a national body to pursue activities designed to:

- raise the standard of individual and public health throughout Australia;
- foster the development of consistent health standards between the States and Territories;
- foster medical research and training and public health research and training throughout Australia; and
- foster consideration of ethical issues relating to health.

The *NHMRC Strategic Plan 2010 – 2012* (Strategic Plan) describes the agency's strategic objectives and provides the context within which its funding schemes operate. NHMRC's strategy for health and medical research is to invest in the highest quality research, as determined through peer review, across the four pillars of health and medical research: biomedical, clinical, public health and health services research.

Further information on the Strategic Plan can be found at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/nh132>.

NHMRC will only support excellence in research because the best outcomes flow from the best research. NHMRC is committed to all research relevant to health (including biomedical, clinical, public health and health services research) and recognises that multidisciplinary approaches are needed to solve the complex problems of health.

These rules apply to all NHMRC funding schemes. They were designed to provide researchers and the Research Administration Officers (RAOs) ease of access and consistency across funding schemes. They must be read in conjunction with the scheme specific *Funding Rules* and *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* documents.

2. Enquiries

Enquiries about the content of NHMRC *Funding Rules* should be addressed to your Administering Institution's RAO in the first instance. If further assistance is required, please contact the Research Help Centre on 1800 500 983, or at help@nhmrc.gov.au or refer to the relevant funding scheme web page on the NHMRC website: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/types-funding>.

Applicants must not contact grant review panel members or external assessors in relation to their application, or the peer review process. Doing so may constitute a breach of *The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007* (the Code) (refer to subsection 2d) and the application may be excluded from further consideration. Applicants are to direct any queries concerning the peer review process to their Institution's Research Office.

3. Submitting an Application

All applications must be submitted electronically using NHMRC's Research Grant Management System (RGMS). <https://www.rgms.nhmrc.gov.au/>.

Applicants who are not yet registered on RGMS should contact help@nhmrc.gov.au for more information.

When completing an application, refer to - *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* documents available from <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding>.

For help in learning to use RGMS, applicants are advised to use RGMS Tutor, a training tool, available at the RGMS Library within RGMS at: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding>.

The application should contain all information necessary for assessment without the need for further written or oral explanation, or reference to additional documentation. All details included must be current at the time of application, as this will be used as the prime source of information available to the peer review panel.

Applications must be certified and submitted by an NHMRC registered Administering Institution. Further information on becoming an Administering Institution can be found in the *NHMRC Administering Institutions Policy* at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/admininst.htm>.

It is important to check the closing dates for the funding schemes you wish to apply to. The closing dates for NHMRC funding schemes which can be found at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/funding-calendar>.

Applicants should note that Administering Institutions may have a submission date well in advance of NHMRC's closing date, and should consider relevant institutional timeframes when preparing the application.

Applications submitted after the closing date will not be considered by NHMRC. Once submitted to NHMRC, the application will be considered final and no changes will be permitted.

Further information in relation to the completion of the application is located in the Library section of RGMS.

Retracted Publications

If a publication relevant to an application is retracted after the application has been submitted, applicants must advise NHMRC of the retraction at the earliest opportunity by email (help@nhmrc.gov.au) with an appropriate explanation regarding the retraction. Applicants are required to send this information to NHMRC through their RAO.

In addition, where the publication forms part of the applicant's Track Record, that information must be immediately recorded in their Profile & CV in RGMS.

If an application is largely dependent on the results of a retracted publication, applicants should also consider withdrawing the application. If, under these circumstances, applicants choose not to withdraw the application, they should make their reasons clear in their communications with NHMRC.

3.1. Profile and CV

RGMS provides an online Profile and CV function. This function must be used when applying for all types of grants in RGMS. Relevant information from the Profile and CV will be uploaded automatically into the application form. It is therefore important that the Profile and CV are up to date.

NHMRC has made a significant investment to ensure that RGMS has sufficient capacity for all applicants to have adequate access to the system to prepare their applications in a timely manner. However, congestion management may be necessary during times of extreme load on the system. To avoid any inconvenience applicants are encouraged to complete their Profile and CV as early as possible following the opening of applications for the funding round.

3.2. Withdrawal of Applications

Applicants may withdraw their application at any time in writing, through their Administering Institution's Research Office to NHMRC.

3.3. Incomplete, False or Misleading Applications

All details in the application, particularly concerning any successful grants and other current applications, must be current at the time of application.

If an application is incomplete or contains information that is considered misleading, it will be excluded from any further consideration for funding.

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. Such action can be punishable by up to 12 months imprisonment. If an application contains information that is false or misleading, it will be excluded from any further consideration for funding.

Examples of false or misleading information in an application include, but are not restricted to:

- a) providing a dishonest statement regarding time commitments to the research for which support is being sought;

- b) providing incomplete or inaccurate facts regarding other sources of funding;
- c) providing fictitious track records; and
- d) falsifying claims in publication records (such as describing a paper as accepted for publication when it has only been submitted).

If NHMRC believes that omissions or inclusion of misleading information are intentional, it may refer the matter for appropriate legal action.

3.4. Responsible Conduct of Research and Research Misconduct

NHMRC expects the highest levels of research conduct and integrity to be observed in the research that it funds. Institutions that administer grants, as well as Chief Investigators, are bound by the conditions of the *NHMRC Funding Agreement* (Funding Agreement), and through this agreement by the requirements of the Code available at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r39>.

The purpose of the Code, which was issued by NHMRC in partnership with the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia, is to guide institutions and researchers in responsible research practices. The Code promotes integrity in research and provides a mechanism by which a breach of the Code or an incident of research misconduct can be resolved.

All institutions should have a mechanism in place to handle and investigate research misconduct. All staff should be aware of this process. Researchers who become aware of research misconduct should follow the process outlined in the Code and can report on scientific misconduct by completing an e-form available from the NHMRC website at: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/contact-us/complaint-form>.

Administering Institutions are required to inform NHMRC of cases of research misconduct and NHMRC may exclude these applications from further assessment if the applicant is found to have committed serious research misconduct.

3.5. Removal of Applications

NHMRC reserves the right, at its absolute discretion, to remove applications from further consideration.

Exclusion of applications may take place at any time during the assessment process if they contravene these *Funding Rules*.

The application must:

- a) be submitted using RGMS by the advertised closing date;
- b) declare the source, duration and level of funding already held for research in the particular area of the application;
- c) be certified and submitted through the appropriate Research Office of an NHMRC approved Administering Institution;
- d) be within the specified page limits; and
- e) be formatted (including font sizes and margins) as specified in the *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* document.

Applications may be excluded under the following circumstances:

- a) the application is clearly of a standard that will not gain support via the competitive funding scheme (note: NHMRC would only determine an application to be non-competitive on advice from a review panel);
- b) the application does not comply with the eligibility criteria specified in either this document or scheme specific *Funding Rules*;
- c) the application includes any incomplete, false or misleading information;
- d) the application is inconsistent with the objectives of the NHMRC Act and the purposes of the Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) (refer to sections 3 and 51 of the NHMRC Act);
- e) the application does not comply with the requirements of these rules, scheme specific *Funding Rules*, or the *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* document; and
- f) the application involves researcher/s against whom a finding of research misconduct has been made.

3.6. Relative to Opportunity

Peer reviewers' consideration of relative to opportunity may take into account the amount of time spent as an active researcher; career disruption (see section 3.7); available resources; clinical, administrative or teaching workload; relocation of an applicant and his/her research laboratory or clinical practice setting; restrictions on publication associated with time spent working in other sectors (e.g., industry, policy and government) and the typical performance of researchers in the research field in question.

A number of the assessment criteria for NHMRC funding schemes are assessed relative to opportunity. This reflects NHMRC's aim that assessment processes accurately measure an applicant's track record relative to stage of career, including consideration as to whether productivity and contribution is commensurate with the opportunities available to the applicant.

3.7. Career Disruption

Career disruption represents a special category within the assessment of relative to opportunity, and includes pregnancy; major illness; and carer responsibilities including parental leave. Employment outside the research sector including time spent working in industry; clinical, administrative or teaching workload; relocation of laboratory or clinical practice setting or other similar circumstances that impact upon research productivity are not considered to be career disruption and are considered under relative to opportunity (see section 3.6).

4. Confidentiality and Privacy

Section 80 of the NHMRC Act prevents NHMRC Officers (including staff and members of NHMRC Council and committees) from disclosing commercial-in-confidence information acquired in the course of their duties and relating to matters under consideration by NHMRC, unless the disclosure is made in the performance of duties under the NHMRC Act. Information which may properly be regarded as confidential commercial information should be designated as such.

Information comprising the names of successful grant applicants and their Administering Institutions, together with the title of the research project and the funding awarded, may be published in the NHMRC Annual Report and are available through NHMRC's website. NHMRC may also release information about the areas of research of the grant, funding partners and a brief description of the grant. This

information is provided by the applicant in response to the question on the application form designated as Media Summary.

4.1. Privacy

Documents containing personal information are handled and protected by NHMRC in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988* (the Privacy Act), which sets standards for the collection, storage, use and disclosure of, and access to, personal information. Personal information is disclosed only with permission of the individual to whom it relates or where the Privacy Act allows.

4.2. Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

NHMRC is subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (The FOI Act) and is committed to meeting the Australian Government's transparency and accountability requirements. Recent changes to the FOI legislation have implications for the way in which NHMRC responds to and reports on, requests for information under the FOI Act.

However NHMRC remains committed to maintaining the confidentiality of grant applications, the peer review process and the privacy of people participating in peer review and will be working with the Australian Information Commissioner in relation to the conditional exemptions under the FOI Act.

5. Outcome of Application

NHMRC will advise applicants via RGMS on the nominated Administering Institution's Research Office of the outcome of the application as early as possible following approval of funding. This advice may initially be provided on a confidential basis. If so, NHMRC will regard any breach of this confidentiality as a serious matter.

NHMRC will publish the following information on its website for all successful grants:

- a) Application Identity;
- b) All Chief Investigator names;
- c) Administering Institution;
- d) Scientific title and/or simple title;
- e) Broad Research Area;
- f) Funding partners (if relevant); and
- g) Total funding awarded and duration.

NHMRC may publish this information in a manner that allows it to be searched and viewed in a variety of ways, including by Chief Investigator name, State, Institution and/or Application ID.

The media summary may also be published.

6. Objections and Complaints in Relation to the Outcome of Funding Applications

Applicants may contact NHMRC seeking clarification on the outcome of their application for funding, or to state an objection to any part of the process. The objection must be lodged in writing through the

Administering Institution's Research Office and be received within four weeks of the date on the letter notifying the outcome of the application.

The objection should be directed to the Complaints Officer at:
Complaints Officer
National Health and Medical Research Council
GPO Box 1421
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Or via email to: complaints@nhmrc.gov.au.

The NHMRC will provide a written response to all objections.

The NHMRC policy on complaints can be found at:
<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/contact-us/complaint-form>.

6.1. Formal Complaints to the Commissioner of Complaints

The NHMRC Act provides for the Commissioner not to investigate a complaint where the complainant has not initially approached the CEO for resolution.

If an applicant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may lodge a formal complaint with the NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints, as detailed in Part 8 of the NHMRC Act.

A person whose interests are affected may at any time lodge a complaint under section 59 of the NHMRC Act. Section 61 of the NHMRC Act provides the Commissioner of Complaints with discretion, including where a complainant has not approached the CEO with the complaint, to choose not to investigate and refer the complaint to the CEO.

Complaints to the Commissioner should be addressed to:
NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints
National Health and Medical Research Council
GPO Box 1421
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Formal complaints can be mailed to the above address, or sent by email as a PDF letter to complaints@nhmrc.gov.au.

Complaints must be in writing, be signed by the complainant, describe the action complained about and specify the nature of and grounds for the complaint.

Complaints can only be considered against administrative process and not the merits of a particular decision. The grounds of complaint are detailed at section 58 of the NHMRC Act and are that:

- a) the action involved a breach of the rules of natural justice;
- b) the action was induced or affected by fraud;
- c) there was no evidence or other material to justify the action;
- d) an irrelevant consideration was taken into account in relation to the action;
- e) a relevant consideration was not taken into account in relation to the action;
- f) in the course of the action a discretionary power was exercised for a purpose other than the purpose for which the power is conferred;
- g) the action involved the exercise of a discretionary power in bad faith;

- h) in the course of the action, a personal discretionary power was exercised at the direction of another person;
- i) the action involved the exercise of a discretionary power in accordance with a rule or policy without regard to the merits of the particular case; or
- j) the action involved any other exercise of a power in a way that constitutes abuse of the power.

Complainants are advised to contact their RAOs prior to making a complaint to the Commissioner.

7. Approvals to be Obtained Prior to Funding Commencing

Funding for an NHMRC Grant (other than Research and Practitioner Fellowships and TRIPs) will not commence until all relevant approvals, particularly in relation to ethics and biosafety, have been received from the appropriate institutional committees and lodged with the Administering Institution's Research Office prior to the commencement of the research. Provisional approvals are not acceptable and no funding will be provided on the basis of a provisional approval.

The grant offer may be withdrawn if ethics approvals are not obtained within six months of the original grant commencement date.

Applicants must ensure that where appropriate, a copy of the application is referred to the relevant institutional committees or approval bodies.

The Research Administration Officer, who is responsible for the application, must advise NHMRC when clearances have been granted by the relevant committees.

NHMRC reserves the right to request further information in relation to decisions made in response to an application for ethics committee or biosafety committee approval.

Where an ethics clearance or regulatory approval is not required until the latter years of a Grant and the relevant committee cannot review the proposal without the results of the preliminary findings of the research then, NHMRC approval can be sought for the funds to be released. These requests will be considered by NHMRC on a case by case basis.

8. Approvals and Licenses

8.1. Research Involving Humans

Research funded by NHMRC that involves human participants must be reviewed by a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) or an institutional low risk review process in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007* (the National Statement). Consideration must also be given to the Privacy Act.

The National Statement is available on the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e72>.

Human research, in this context, includes research involving any human tissue, no matter what the source, and also includes research in which there is any intervention (physical or psychological) in the normal lives of humans.

All research involving the administration of drugs, chemical agents or vaccines to humans must be considered by a HREC to assess the appropriateness of their use. If such research is part of a clinical trial, then it falls under the responsibility of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) which administers the Clinical Trials Notification/Exemption schemes. Further information on these schemes can be obtained from the TGA:

<http://www.tga.gov.au/industry/clinical-trials.htm>.

In the case of multi-centred clinical trials, the relevant institutions and their HRECs may agree that the primary ethical and scientific assessment be made at one institution/organisation, with copies of the approvals being sent to the other institutions/organisations involved. Further information on multi-centre research approval is provided in the National Statement.

8.2. Human Embryo Research

Research involving certain human embryos requires a licence issued by the Embryo Research Licensing Committee of NHMRC in accordance with *Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002* and *Prohibition of Human Cloning for Reproduction Act 2002*.

For further information about the legislation refer to the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications-0>; and <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/prohibit>.

8.3. Use of Personal Information in Research

Section 95 of the Privacy Act provides that the CEO of NHMRC may, with the approval of the Commissioner, issue guidelines for the protection of privacy in the conduct of medical research.

Any research involving humans that uses personal information held by Commonwealth agencies where identified information needs to be used without consent from the individual(s) involved should abide by NHMRC guidelines approved under Section 95 of the Privacy Act (Section 95 guidelines). In these situations, the proposed medical research must be approved by a properly constituted HREC in accordance with the Section 95 guidelines.

NHMRC guidelines approved under Section 95A of the Privacy Act (Section 95A guidelines) are broader than the Section 95 guidelines and apply to the collection, use and disclosure of health information held by organisations in the private sector for the purposes of research or the compilation or analysis of statistics, relevant to public health or public safety, without the consent of the individual(s) involved. Under the Section 95A guidelines, a HREC must give approval for the use of this information.

8.4. Research Involving Animals

Research funded by NHMRC that involves the use of animals must be reviewed and approved by a properly constituted Animal Ethics Committee in accordance with the *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 2004* (the Animal Code). The Animal Code is available on the NHMRC website at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea16>.

8.5. Generation or Use of Genetically Modified Organisms

Applicants proposing to undertake research involving genetically modified organisms (GMO) must ensure that all the requirements of the *Gene Technology Act 2000* and *Gene Technology Regulations 2001* have been met.

In the first instance, applicants should seek advice from their Institutional Biosafety Committee on the level of authorisation needed for any proposed GMO research. Information on the gene technology regulatory scheme, including the Act and Regulations, is also available from the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator website at:

<http://www.ogtr.gov.au>.

9. Considerations Relevant to NHMRC Funded Research

9.1. Health Research Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Ethics applications for research that involves the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples should be developed with reference to the Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research (2003). Further information is available from the NHMRC website at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e52>.

9.2. Use of Carcinogenic or Highly Toxic Chemicals

All research that involves the use of carcinogenic or highly toxic chemicals must adhere to the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission guidelines, *National Code of Practice for the Preparation of Material Safety Data Sheets 2nd Edition 2011*. Further information is available from the Safe Work Australia web site at:

<http://safeworkaustralia.gov.au/>.

9.3. Use of Cultured Cell Lines for Research

Concern exists within the scientific community regarding the impact of contamination with mycoplasma and other cells in eukaryotic cell lines and the use of incorrectly characterised cells lines, on the validity of research outcomes. NHMRC recommends that researchers employ quality assurance procedures to ensure their eukaryotic cell lines are free from mycoplasma.

9.4. Use of datasets for research purposes

The use of datasets for research purposes must comply with the *Minimum Guidelines for Health Registers for Statistical and Research Purposes*. Further information is available from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website at:

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/9792>.

9.5. Nagoya Protocol

Applicants should be mindful of the Nagoya protocol and the likelihood of Australia becoming a signatory. The protocol seeks to establish a legally-binding framework for biotechnology researchers and other scientists to gain access to genetic resources. It also establishes a framework for researchers and developers to share any benefits from the use of genetic resources, or traditional knowledge associated with those resources, with the provider country. More information can be obtained at:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/science/access/biological-diversity.html>.

10. Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research

The Statement on *Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research* (the Statement) has been developed because many consumers and researchers recognise the contribution that consumers can make to health and medical research. The Consumers Health Forum of Australia Inc (CHF) and NHMRC worked in partnership with consumers and researchers to develop the Statement in recognition of the contribution that consumers can make to research, as well as their right to participate in research. Researchers are encouraged to consider the benefits of actively engaging consumers in their proposed research. Applicants should refer to the CHF and NHMRC Statement available at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r22-r23-r33-r34>.

11. Administration of NHMRC Grants

Any enquiries regarding the administration of NHMRC grants should be directed firstly to the applicant's RAO, then by email to postaward.management@nhmrc.gov.au.

11.1. Employment at NHMRC Administering Institutions

The *NHMRC Administering Institution Policy* states "...to administer NHMRC funds all institutions must:

- Employ Chief Investigator A (CIAs) named on research grants funded by NHMRC or researchers who are awarded NHMRC Fellowships, or have appointed the CIA to an academic position through that university's academic appointment process; and
- Establish formal agreements with institutions employing, or responsible for, other Chief Investigators on grants funded by NHMRC."

Further information can be obtained from the *NHMRC Administering Institution Policy* which is available at <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/admininst.htm>

11.2. NHMRC Funding Agreement

All grants are offered in accordance with the conditions specified in the Funding Agreement which is an agreement between NHMRC and the Administering Institution. In signing the Signature Block for Schedules, the Administering Institution is agreeing to the conditions contained in the Funding Agreement and the Schedule.

Details of the Funding Agreement can be found at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement>.

A grant may not commence, nor grant funds be expended, prior to:

- the Funding Agreement between NHMRC and the Administering Institution being in place; and
- the appropriate Signature Block for Schedules being signed by the signatories to the Funding Agreement, or an appropriate delegate, and signed and executed by NHMRC.

11.3. Payments

Subject to appropriations provided by the Commonwealth Department of Finance and Deregulation, payment of funds will be made to Administering Institutions in regular instalments, in accordance with approved payment arrangements made for assistance provided from the MREA. Funds must be used only for the purposes approved and detailed in the Funding Agreement and its Schedule.

11.4. Research Misconduct

Research funded by NHMRC must comply with the Code, which can be found at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r39>.

The Funding Agreement contains provisions for the handling of allegations of research misconduct. Applicants and grant holders are referred to the NHMRC policy on *Actions to be Taken in Response to Research Misconduct Involving NHMRC Funding*. This is available on the NHMRC website at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement>.

11.5. Intellectual Property

Unless otherwise approved by NHMRC, applicants must agree to comply with the *National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research (2001)* available at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/intellectual-property-management>.

12. Reporting on NHMRC Grants

12.1. Progress Reports and Financial Reports

Annual progress and financial reports will be required in a form prescribed by NHMRC. At the completion of the grant, a final report and financial acquittal will be required within six months after the period of funding ends.

Additional reporting requirements and reporting exemptions may apply: please check the specific *Funding Rules* for the scheme (e.g. People Support Schemes).

NHMRC has designated Section A of the End of Grant – Final Report as information that NHMRC may publicly release. Use of this information may include publication on the NHMRC website, publicity (including release to the media), and the promotion of research achievements.

All information provided to NHMRC in progress and final reports may be used for internal reporting and reporting to government. This information may also be used by NHMRC when reviewing or evaluating funding schemes, or designing future schemes.

The reporting requirements are included in the Schedule to the Funding Agreement and can also be found at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/progress-and-final-reporting>.

NHMRC may suspend payment of further instalments of:

- the relevant grant, and/or
- all grants held by the Chief Investigator A, and/or
- all grants administered by that Administering Institution until the appropriate reports have been received and assessed as satisfactory.

In addition, where an institution fails to submit satisfactory reports as required, NHMRC may also terminate funding and determine that all or part of the funding must be repaid. Alternatively, NHMRC may withhold the remainder of the Institution's payments under the scheme for the current year or initiate recovery of funding.

13. Open Access Statement

13.1. Dissemination of Scientific Results

The Australian Government makes a major investment in research to support its essential role in improving the wellbeing of our society. To maximise the benefits from research, findings need to be disseminated as broadly as possible to allow access by other researchers and the wider community.

NHMRC acknowledges that researchers take into account a wide range of factors in deciding on the best outlets for publications arising from their research. Such considerations include the status and reputation of a journal or publisher, the peer review process of evaluating their research outputs, access by other stakeholders to their work, the likely impact of their work on users of research and the further dissemination and production of knowledge. Taking heed of these considerations, both organisations want to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the research supported by their grants, in the most effective manner and at the earliest opportunity.

NHMRC encourages researchers to consider the benefits of depositing their data and any publications arising from a research project in an appropriate subject and/or institutional repository wherever such a repository is available to the researcher(s). If a researcher is not intending to deposit the data from a project in a repository within a twelve-month period, they should include the reasons in the project's Final Report. Any research outputs that have been or will be deposited in appropriate repositories should be identified in the Final Report.

Section 4 of the Code, outlines these and other responsibilities of Institutions and researchers, which apply to all forms of dissemination.

Grant recipients must ensure that they comply with NHMRC policy on the dissemination of research findings, which is available at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/dissemination-research-findings>.

14. Resources

14.1. NHMRC Resources

The role of NHMRC at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/organisation-overview/nhmrcs-role>.

Access the Research Grants Management System (RGMS) at:

<http://www.rgms.nhmrc.gov.au/>.

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007 at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r39>.

Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea16>.

Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians at:
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/your-health/indigenous-health>.

NHMRC Administering Institutions policy at:
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/admininst.htm>.

NHMRC complaints handling policy:
<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/contact-us/complaint-form>.

NHMRC Funding Agreement at:
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement>.

NHMRC policy on the dissemination of research findings:
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/dissemination-research-findings>.

NHMRC Strategic Plan 2010-2012 at:
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/nh132>.

Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research at:
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e52>.

14.2. Legislation

Criminal Code Act 1995 at:
<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2010C00842>.

Freedom of Information Act 1982 at:
<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2011C00138>.

National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992 (NHMRC Act) at:
<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2010C00734>.

Privacy Act 1988 at:
<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2011C00157>.

Prohibition of Human Cloning for Reproduction Act 2002 (PHCR Act) at:
<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2008C00694>.

Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002 (RIHE Act) at:
<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2008C00689>.

NHMRC Project Grant Category Descriptors

The following category descriptors are used to score an application against each of the assessment criteria: 1) Scientific Quality, 2) Significance or Innovation and 3) Track Record, relative to opportunity. The process of consistently referring GRP members to these descriptors is vital to ensuring equity, thoroughness and process consistency both within and across all GRPs. The Category Descriptors provide GRP members with indicators that can be sampled to guide appropriate scoring of each application.

APPENDIX A

Worthy of Funding

<i>Category</i>	<i>Scientific Quality</i>	<i>Significance of the Expected Outcomes OR Innovation of the concept</i>	<i>Track Record – relative to opportunity</i>
7 Outstanding by International Standards	the proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has objectives that are well-defined, highly coherent and strongly developed • is a near flawless design • is without question highly feasible 	the planned research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addresses an issue of utmost importance to human health • will translate into fundamental outcomes in the science and/or practice of clinical medicine or public health or fundamental changes in health policy • will likely be the subject of invited plenary presentations at international meetings, often with relevance across several fields • is highly innovative and introduces advances in concept • will almost certainly result in highly influential publications. 	relative to opportunity, the applicant team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the main, comprises the most outstanding researchers in the country for their peers/cohort • is highly recognised for their contribution to their field of research • members have very strong records of other research-related achievements • members have strong international reputations or are well on the way to developing them • members hold leadership positions in highly regarded scientific or professional societies • has a track record that is highly relevant to the proposed research
6 Excellent	the proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is clear in its intent and logical • is excellent in design • is apparently highly feasible 	the planned research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addresses an issue of major importance to human health • could be the subject of invited plenary presentations at international and national meetings • is innovative with respect to the question being addressed and the approach to it • is very likely to result in highly influential publications. 	relative to opportunity, the applicant team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a record of achievement that places them in the top 10% of peers/cohort • members are recognized for their strong contributions to their fields of research • members have good and growing international reputations • members have clear positions of leadership, or are emerging leaders, in their field • members hold leadership positions in well regarded scientific or professional societies • members have track records that are very relevant to the proposed research

Worthy of Funding

Not Worthy of Funding

<i>Category</i>	<i>Scientific Quality</i>	<i>Significance of the Expected Outcomes OR Innovation of the concept</i>	<i>Track Record – relative to opportunity</i>
5 Very Good	the proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has clear objectives • raises only minor concerns regarding study design • will likely be successfully achieved 	the planned research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addresses an issue of considerable importance to human health • could be the subject of invited plenary presentations at national specialty meetings • may contain at least one innovative idea • may result in several influential publications 	relative to opportunity, the applicant team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a record of achievement, that places them well above average for their peers/cohort • members are well recognized for their contributions to their fields of research • members have growing national reputations and their research appears frequently at national meetings members have track records in fields relevant to the proposed research
4 Good	the proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is sound in terms of its objectives • contains several areas of concern in the experimental design • raises some concerns about successful completion. 	the planned research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addresses an issue of some importance to human health • may have some novel aspects, while others underpin or extend existing knowledge. • may result in some strong or influential publications 	relative to opportunity, the applicant team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • members have solid records of achievement • members have made contributions to their fields of research • contains one or more CIs with an existing or emerging national reputation, albeit in a niche area • members have track records that are consistent with the proposed research
3 Marginal	the proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is satisfactory in terms of its objectives, but may not be successful with all of them • has a number of areas of significant concern • contains several study design problems or flaws 	the planned research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addresses an issue of some concern to human health • has relatively little novelty • is not particularly innovative 	relative to opportunity, the applicant team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • members have published a number of works in a field relevant to this application in the last 5 years, but many have been less productive than might reasonably be expected • is deficient in some areas of expertise that will be required to successfully complete the proposed research • members have limited track records in the field of the proposed research

**Not Worthy
of Funding**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Scientific Quality</i>	<i>Significance of the Expected Outcomes OR Innovation of the concept</i>	<i>Track Record – relative to opportunity</i>
2 Unsatisfactory	the proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides a program of research which will at best, only incrementally advances current knowledge contains a research plan which does not seem to be feasible in several areas	the planned research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses an issue of only marginal concern to human health only follows behind previously well documented and studied concepts or previously well used approaches 	relative to opportunity, the applicant team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> has not published more than a few works in relevant other fields of research is heavily underpowered in terms of relevant expertise required to successfully complete the research program members have track records which do not relate well to the proposed research
1 Poor	the proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> will not advance current knowledge in the field raises major concerns about the feasibility of the research plan contains a study design which is inadequate in a number of areas 	the planned research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not address an issue of concern to human health is not innovative or significant 	relative to opportunity, the applicant team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is not productive to any significant extent in relevant fields does not have the expertise or capacity to successfully complete more than a small fraction of the program of research members do not have relevant track records in the field of the proposed research

This table shows the percentage of applications received in 2010 and 2011 which were assessed to be in the fundable categories (4-7):

Category	7	6	5	4
2010	-	9.96%	25.12%	34.45%
2011	0.1%	8.40%	37.50%	49.50%

USE OF NHMRC FUNDS AND BUDGET

Introduction

NHMRC funds the direct costs of the research proposal based on advice from peer review. This document is designed to assist Project Grant applicants in identifying resources that can or cannot be funded using NHMRC funds, and to assist applicants in the preparation of the budget component of their Project Grant application.

Applications addressing the Strategic Plan Initiative *Global Health – Health Issues in our Region* should also refer to special eligibility criteria in Part 1, Section 5.3 of the Funding Rules.

Level of funding

There is no specific limit to funding that may be requested in applications under the NHMRC Project Grant scheme.

Applicants are advised to clearly justify the requested budget paying particular attention to any research cost(s) which may be atypical for the particular field of research (refer to:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/file/grants/funding/funded/manage/policy/direct_research_costs.pdf).

The GRP advises NHMRC of a budget for each application in categories 5, 6 and 7. The GRPs also advise NHMRC of a budget for applications in category 4 which are identified as NIs, Indigenous Health, and selected Strategic Plan Initiatives/Special Initiatives. The GRP's recommendation is based on the budget requested by the applicant, the requirements of the proposal as assessed by the GRP and its knowledge of the costs associated with the research.

Project Grant applicants are required to:

- make a case for NHMRC Project Grant funding in accordance with the Funding Rules document *NHMRC Project Grants Funding Rules for funding commencing in 2013*, and
- declare the sources, duration and level of funding already held for research in the same area as the research being proposed in this application.

Where co-funding has already been secured, applicants should indicate the components of the budget for which NHMRC support is being sought.

Duration of funding

Applicants for NHMRC Project Grants may apply for funding of between one and five years duration, but the period must be justified within the application (refer Part 1, Section 4.2).

The GRP will recommend the duration of the grant after considering the applicant's justification for the duration of research.

NOTE: Researchers applying for grants awarded by other funding bodies must refer to the relevant guidelines as specific conditions on the level and duration of funding and the items supported may differ. These guidelines can be found at the relevant link provided in *NHMRC Project Grants Funding Rules for funding commencing in 2013*.

Use of funds

For Project Grant budgets (excluding any equipment component) grantees may expend the funds as necessary to support the research project provided that:

- grant funds are applied only to achieve the approved research objectives of the grant;

- all expenditure complies with the Guidelines for Direct Research Costs (refer to http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/grants/funding/funded/manage/policy/direct_research_costs.pdf)
- all expenditure is in accordance with the requirements of the Funding Agreement for Research Activities, noting that use of funding for some purposes is expressly excluded in the Agreement;
- funding approved for specific pieces of equipment must be used for such purposes;
- funding is not to be used to provide infrastructure as this is to be provided by the Administering Institution;
- funding is not to be used to supplement the difference between PSP salaries (as advised by NHMRC) and salaries that have been determined through enterprise bargaining agreements;
- annual financial statements itemise expenditure, including Salaries, Equipment and Direct Research Costs.

Budget considerations

There are three areas to consider when preparing a budget proposal:

- support for personnel engaged in the conduct of the research;
- direct research costs, (which include animal agistment costs); and
- equipment costs necessary to conduct the research.

These and other budget considerations are discussed below.

Support for Personnel

Personnel Support Packages (PSPs) are designed to contribute to salary and salary on-costs (e.g. payroll tax, workers compensation, leave loading, compulsory and contributory superannuation and long service leave) of personnel.

NHMRC does not provide support for CI salary support other than as PSPs at levels 1-5. Investigators seeking salaries outside of the range of PSP1 to PSP5 must do so via NHMRC's People Support schemes (i.e. Research or Practitioner Fellowships). Information about NHMRC People Support schemes can be found at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/fellowship-awards/people-support>

Associate Investigators are not permitted to draw salary from a Project Grant.

Funds to support personnel are provided as single line PSPs. The level of PSP requested in an application should match *the roles and responsibilities of the position, rather than the expertise of a specific person* whom the CIs might intend to appoint to the position. Information on PSP amounts can be found at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/project-grants/budget-mechanism-project-grant-funding-commencing-2012>.

All applicant CIs must indicate the proportion (per cent) of their total NHMRC research time that they will commit to NHMRC-funded research for the currently submitted grant application. Further information on how to indicate the amount of time proposed to be devoted to the grant, should it be awarded, is provided in the *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* document.

Applicants may apply for a full PSP provided that 80 per cent or more of the occupant's time will be devoted to the Project. NHMRC expects that up to 20 per cent of an applicant's time will be spent on administrative and other research-related tasks. Applicants must apply for the exact proportion of a PSP that is required for the research being proposed.

An annual indexation will be applied to PSPs, based on the Australian Government Wage Cost Index (WCI).

Support for Non-Australian Personnel

Investigators who are not Australian citizens or permanent residents in Australia:

- Are eligible to apply for a Project Grant as CIB to CIJ;
- Are permitted to request a PSP if they are based in Australia for the duration of the grant; but
- Are **not** permitted to request a PSP if they are based overseas.

Funding for research support staff who are based overseas may only be considered where this support is essential to achieve the aims of the research.

Casual computing and similar casual staff requirements, which will be contracted at hourly rates, should be included under DRCs.

Direct Research Costs

Direct Research Costs (DRC) are awarded for the purchase of research materials (not personnel) required to conduct the proposed research. For example: items such as consumables, printed materials, microfilms, survey or field expenses, purchase costs for animals and computing charges.

DRCs are available in one or more quanta of \$5,000. Individual items of equipment costing less than \$10,000 must be requested as DRC.

All requests for funds must be fully justified, especially requests for:

- programming, preparation and data storage or the hire of external computer time. Funds will not be provided for the hire of computer time on a computer within the applicant's institution,
- travel costs associated with the conduct of field research;
- covering the liability insurance for human clinical trials; and
- administrative charges associated with registration of clinical trials.

NHMRC will not consider requests for conference travel.

Applicants should refer to the following web-link for further information concerning DRC's:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/file/grants/funding/funded/manage/policy/direct_research_costs.pdf

Animal Agistment Costs

Requests for animal agistment costs must be fully justified in the DRC component of the application form.

The NHMRC will support the costs of animal agistment that are a direct requirement of the research project. Animal agistment costs may include the costs of food and caging, and of experimental breeding, during the course of the project. For information on animal agistment costs, consult your Administering Institution. The purchase of animals should be included in DRC.

Funds will be provided for the full purchase price of non-human primates. Applicants should contact the relevant non-human primate breeding colony to obtain information about the terms and conditions associated with the purchase of animals and agistment fees.

The NHMRC will not support infrastructure costs that should normally be provided by the Animal House of the host institution (such as administration or support of Animal House staff) regardless of whether or not the institution has its own Animal House.

An annual indexation will be applied to DRC, based on the WCI.

Equipment

Where an applicant is requesting funding for an item of equipment, the equipment must be unique to the project and essential for the project to proceed. Equipment requests must not include the type of apparatus normally provided from institutional funds such as freezers, etc.

Applicants must provide details as to why the equipment is not being provided by their institution.

For each item of equipment requested, a written quotation must be received and held with the Research Office of the Administering Institution and must be made available to the NHMRC on request.

The applicant must ensure the Administering Institution is prepared to meet all service and repair costs in relation to equipment awarded.

Funds will not be provided for the purchase of computers except where these are an integral component of a piece of laboratory equipment or are of a nature essential for work in the field. For example: a computer which is dedicated to data collection from a mass spectrometer, or used for the manipulation of extensively large datasets (i.e. requiring special hardware) may be supported.

Individual items of equipment costing less than \$10,000 must be requested as **DRCs**. Applicants may not seek funding for equipment totalling more than \$80,000 for the entire period of the grant.

Equipment-only applications are not acceptable as Project Grant applications. Further information regarding equipment-only grants can be obtained from the Research Office of the Administering Institution.

An annual indexation will be applied to equipment, based on the WCI.

Medicare Claims

The following information relates to health services Project Grant applications having clinical relevance in order to attract Medicare benefits.

Medicare is governed by the *Health Insurance Act 1973* which sets out the services attracting benefits. Subsection 19(5) of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* provides that benefits are for where services are clinically relevant for the treatment of the patient. Clinical relevance is a matter of judgement for the patient's medical practitioner.

Where a range of services or tests are carried out by the patient's medical practitioner as part of the deliberate management of the patient's health, Medicare rebates are payable.

However, a range of tests offered to a patient by a clinic for which there is no apparent clinical necessity, as determined by a medical practitioner, do not attract benefits.

In light of this information, Medicare rebates would not be available for patient visits to General Practitioners as part of a research project, where such visits would not be deemed clinically relevant for the treatment of the patient.

Funding to support overseas research activities

Applicants may request funding to support specific research activities to be undertaken overseas. In doing so the applicants must clearly demonstrate that:

- the research activity is critical to the successful completion of the project; and
- the equipment/resources required for the research activity are not available in Australia.

Funding for research support staff who are based overseas may only be considered where this is essential to achieve the aims of the research.

Infrastructure, Indirect Costs and Institutional Overheads

The NHMRC Project Grants scheme does not fund:

- the indirect costs of research; or
- research infrastructure; or
- institutional overheads and administrative charges (levied to pay for institutional research infrastructure).

This policy applies regardless of whether the institution, department, unit or individual investigator is in receipt of any form of Commonwealth or State support for research infrastructure.

Research infrastructure includes facilities necessary to the research endeavour that a responsible institution with research as a part of its mission would be expected to supply as a prerequisite to its engagement in research, and includes:

- Physical space and all the services associated with it;
- Furniture for research staff;
- Administrative services;
- Office services and consumables that are not specific to the research project;
- Laboratory services and consumables that are not specific to the research project;
- Animal house facilities;
- Computer networks and basic network utilities; and
- Personal computers, related network peripherals and software needed for communicating, writing, and undertaking simple analyses.

Research infrastructure does not include:

- Office services and consumables that are specific to the project;
- Individual human research subjects or research animal services specific to the project;
- Laboratory services and consumables that are specific to the project;
- Computer network facilities required to meet project specific needs;
- Personal computers, related network peripherals and software required to meet project specific needs; and
- Other items of equipment that are required to meet project specific needs.