



**Australian Government**

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**National Health and Medical Research Council**

# **Program Framework**

*Revised as of 240206*

For the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research -  
Rounds 4&5

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## **PART A – Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Policy**

### **A.1 Definition of ‘Capacity Building’ and ‘Population Health Research’ under the Program**

#### **Capacity Building**

For the purposes of this paper, capacity building involves strengthening individual researchers within research teams, through professional support, training, infrastructure support and collaborations, so as to develop independent researchers who can subsequently apply for their own research funding.

#### **Population Health Research**

In this paper, the term Population Health Research is used broadly to encompass all areas and disciplines of public health and health service delivery research, where the focus is on improving health and well being at the population level.

### **A.2 Background**

Although there are some clearly identifiable leaders and excellent Australian centres in the field of population health research, there has been limited opportunity to develop centres of critical mass in population health research to provide career development for new researchers. Therefore, there is a need to build capacity within this segment of the research workforce. The NHMRC established the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research (CBGPHR) program in 2001 in response to this need.

The program was initially established as a time limited initiative to fund five grant rounds. The program contributed over \$9 million in 2002 to fund four grants under Round One. In Round Two (2003) just under \$12 million was awarded to fund five grants and in Round Three (2004) just over \$12 million was awarded to fund five grants. For details of the grants funded under these Rounds see [www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/funded/outcomes/pophealth.htm](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/funded/outcomes/pophealth.htm).

### **A.3 Merging of Two Rounds of Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research**

Following a review of the first three rounds of the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research program, Research Committee of the NHMRC decided that the final two grant rounds will be advertised together in 2005. It was also decided that the program objectives would be refined to better address the perceived gaps in population health research capacity remaining after the first three rounds of awards.

While the first three rounds of the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research program have been successful in supporting capacity building in population health, these grants had a strong quantitative epidemiological/biostatistics emphasis. Applicants in Rounds 4 & 5 are invited from the full range of population health research (including relevant social sciences). This call encourages applications for broadly based collaborative multidisciplinary research activity, which might incorporate qualitative as well as quantitative components, and collaborations between population health researchers, other social research disciplines and policy makers or health practitioners.

In short, it is expected that applications will be received from multidisciplinary teams of lead applicants with strong records of achievement in population health research who propose to support

the development of team investigators to become independent researchers. This will be particularly valuable in research fields that address a priority gap in population health research, whether it relates to a research discipline, a population sub-group or a health area.

Examples of population health priorities include, but not limited to, research that aims to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; disadvantaged socio-economic groups; remote populations; new migrants or other ethnic groups; global health issues; key health services; population health methodologies; including methods for the systematic review and synthesis of research based evidence; understanding of broader social determinants of health; methods for evaluation of complex interventions; priority setting methods in health; and, evidence synthesis in public health. Preference will be given to grant applications with disease or health focus in a National Research Priority and/or a National Health Priority area.

#### **A.4 Funding**

Merging Rounds 4 and 5 of the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Program will result in a total of \$20 million being available for a total of eight or more grants. A further \$2.5 million is available for a suitable proposal for research that focuses on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and aims to build capacity in the Indigenous research work force.

The NHMRC reserves the right not to allocate funds if there are insufficient suitable proposals. If there are sufficient applications suitable for allocating the currently available funding, no more funding will be provided following the conclusion of these rounds.

#### **A.5 Aim**

In establishing the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research, the aim of the NHMRC's Research Committee is to build capacity of *individual researchers* within supportive teams across the full range of population health and health services research.

The Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research aim is distinct from the NHMRC Health Services Research Program, which seeks to encourage capacity of health services to meet the needs of populations through innovative and robust *research*.

#### **A.6 Program Objectives (as revised in Rounds 4 & 5)**

The Program seeks to provide flexible support for individuals with the aim of building and strengthening teams of excellent population health researchers to:

- pursue broadly based collaborative multidisciplinary research activity, which might incorporate qualitative as well as quantitative components, and collaborations between population health researchers, other social research disciplines and policy researchers;
- contribute new knowledge at a leading national and international level in important areas of health and medical research;
- develop novel ideas and approaches;
- tackle problems for which longer term stable funding is essential;
- provide training and career development opportunities within the team;
- assist teams in becoming more competitive at the program grant level;
- assist researchers to become independently competitive at the project level; and
- increase the number of high quality applications in population health research across all NHMRC funding schemes and to other competitive research funding agencies, resulting in an

increase in research output.

### **A.7 Expert Assessment Panel**

The Strategic Research Initiatives Working Committee has established an Expert Assessment Panel to assess applications.

The membership of the Expert Assessment Panel, comprising both national and international experts, will be revised if necessary to enable expert assessment of the more broadly based collaborative multidisciplinary proposals expected in Round 4 & 5. As stated in the Objectives, applications are expected from qualitative as well as quantitative researchers, and collaborations between population health researchers, other social research disciplines and policy practitioners are strongly encouraged.

The Expert Assessment Panel will short list and assess applications based on the selection criteria at Attachment A. In keeping with NHMRC's move towards stream-lined grant review processes, the former external peer review processes and rejoinder from applicants will not apply in Rounds 4 & 5.

### **A.8 Further Information**

Further information on the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research – Rounds 4 & 5 is available on the NHMRC website at [www.nhmrc.gov.au](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au). Submitters are advised to read the supporting documentation before making any enquires. Enquires about the program objectives and scope should be directed to Professor Justin Beilby at (08) 8303 5193. Administrative questions should be directed to Gillian Treloar at (02) 6289 9129.

## **PART B – Submission and Assessment process**

### **B.1 Eligibility**

#### **B.1.1 Administering Institution**

The NHMRC can only pay funds to an NHMRC registered Administering Institution. Therefore, if your proposed Administering Institution is not yet registered with the NHMRC, it must do so.

The NHMRC will recognize only one institution as the Administering Institution. The Administering Institution must have in place policies and procedures for the management of public funds and the proper conduct of research in relation to ethics and good scientific conduct. Further information on the requirements for NHMRC Administering Institution is available at:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/policy/admininst.htm>

#### **B.1.2 Applicant Teams**

It is anticipated that the applicant teams may be multidisciplinary in nature.

Applicant teams should have a record of undertaking significant and competitive research. It is expected that applications will be submitted by groups of lead applicants seeking funding to support other individuals (team investigators) to work within their teams. Team investigators might be individuals who are in the process of establishing their careers, or more senior researchers recruited on a full or part time basis to provide particular skills to the group.

Grants awarded under this scheme primarily provide salary support to (a) develop capacity within research teams by bringing in new expertise, and (b) increase the strength and diversity of the research workforce by enabling less experienced researchers to become independent.

Small and large research teams may apply (with equal preference). The Expert Assessment Panel will assess the budget to ensure that it is commensurate with the size of the research team and scope of the proposal and will look to ensure that the balance between the lead applicants and team investigators can deliver the appropriate level and form of capacity building support.

Key Personnel must have Australian Citizenship or permanent residency status. The majority of the research project is to be undertaken within Australia. However, international partners may be included in the team.

For more detailed information on eligibility requirements, please refer to the “*FAQs on applying for NHMRC funding under the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Program*” at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/apply/faqs/faqs06.htm>.

#### **B.1.3 Holders of NHMRC and other grants**

Submitters that are current holders of NHMRC and/or other research grants (including previous Capacity Building Grant holders) are eligible to apply for funding under the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research program. However, they must be able to demonstrate that:

- the proposed capacity building project is new and the funding sought does not duplicate funding gained separately for the same purpose;

- the application team is able to meet the agreed project deliverables; and
- key personnel will have sufficient time available to commit to the project.

For current holders of NHMRC grants, it is anticipated that the percentage of NHMRC research time each lead applicant is able to commit to the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research is commensurate with time required to produce excellent mentoring, skills development and other support. The level of participation will be taken into account in the assessment process and the Expert Assessment Panel will look at this aspect in detail on a case by case basis.

#### **B.1.4 Intellectual Property**

Institutions and consortia are expected to have appropriate policies and procedures in place to identify, protect and manage intellectual property arising from the research. These policies and procedures must comply with the National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research released by the NHMRC. This document is available on the NHMRC website at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/policy/ipmanage.htm>

Multidisciplinary groups must ensure that there is a written agreement between participating organizations on the ownership of intellectual property and associated rights in relation to the research supported by the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research program.

#### **B.2 Application Process**

Applicants should use the ‘*Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Rounds 4 & 5 Full Application Form*’. Applications must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the specifications contained in the ‘*Advice and Instructions for Applicants for Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Rounds 4 & 5*’. These documents are available on the NHMRC website at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/apply/granttype/strategic/pophealth.htm>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander related applications are required to consider both the NHMRC’s *Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians* which can be found at: <http://nhmrc.gov.au/publications/files/indighth.pdf> and the priorities identified through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Agenda Working Group outlined in the *NHMRC’s Road Map for Improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* which can be found at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r28syn.htm>. Applications relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health may contact Gail Garvey for further clarification at [gail.garvey@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:gail.garvey@newcastle.edu.au) or (02) 4921 5632.

Applicants are permitted an additional 12,000 characters in which to address the Indigenous criteria, minimum 12 point font. These pages are to be included in an Attachment to the Application. An Indigenous Health Research Panel will review the application against these criteria as part of the review process.

#### **B.3 Assessment Process**

In accordance with new NHMRC policy, applications will not be assessed by external peer assessors. The membership of the Expert Assessment Panel will be expanded to ensure appropriate expertise is available on the Panel to assess the quality and rigour of applications against the program selection criteria at Attachment A. Panel members may only seek external assessment/advice on content-specific or technical issues where the composition of expertise on the Panel is unable to review a

specific aspect/component of an application. There will be no rejoinders for Panel reviews.

Applications including issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health will be concurrently assessed by the Indigenous Health Review Panel against the *Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians*. The Expert Assessment Panel will consider reports from Panel members and the Indigenous Health Review Panel when making recommendations for short listing for interview.

Once the applications have been short listed for interview, one lead applicant and one team investigator from each of the short listed teams will be invited to interview by the Expert Assessment Panel in Sydney on 27-30 June 2006 at NHMRC expense. The Applicant team may choose to include four additional members at interview, at the applicant team's expense. Following interview, the Expert Assessment Panel will consider all information provided to them and make funding recommendations to the NHMRC and Minister for Health and Ageing. As Rounds 4 & 5 are expected to complete this funding program, the Expert Assessment Panel will not be providing reports to unsuccessful applicants, as has occurred in the past.

A timeline for application and assessment processes is provided at Attachment B.

#### **B.4 Budgets**

Grants of up to \$500,000 per annum, up to a maximum of five years, will be awarded. Budgets should comprise a package of support which will provide a flexible environment to build both the team's research capability and its record of achievement. As mentioned in B.1.2 Applicant Teams, there is no preference for a particular team size. The Expert Assessment Panel will assess the budget to ensure that it is commensurate with their size and scope of the proposal and will look to ensure that the balance between the lead investigators and team investigators can deliver the appropriate level and form of capacity building support.

The Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research are **primarily** intended for salary and professional development support for team investigators. Information has been provided on NHMRC Personnel Support Packages (PSPs) to be used *as a guide* to the application's salary allocation in *FAQ's on applying for NHMRC funding under the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Program* at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/apply/faqs/faqs06.htm>. Where it can be justified, additional funds of up to \$12,500 may be sought for use by each team investigator for a variety of purposes, including travel and the purchase of small items of equipment.

Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research **are not intended** for salary support for lead applicants, however some expenses for lead applicants may be sought. These expenses would need to be justified in the proposed budget as being directly associated with achieving the research program's outcomes, and would also need to be cost effective.

The Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Expert Assessment Panel will critically review the proposed budgets against the scope of research and the capacity building plan and reserves the right to recommend changes to the budget if warranted. It should also be noted that each Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research is a one line grant and that no further funding will be available in addition to the initial conditions of the grant awarded.

For more detailed information on the budget process, please refer to the "*FAQs on applying for NHMRC funding under the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Program*" at

## **B.5 Successful Applicants**

The conditions of award for the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research (CBGPHR) program will be set out in a Deed of Agreement between the Commonwealth and the Administering Institution.

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

- The Deed of Agreement being in place;
- The appropriate Schedule being signed; and
- All required ethics clearances and approvals having been obtained.

Ultimate contractual responsibility for the conduct of individual research projects under this program will rest with the Administering Institution awarded research grant funding.

## **B.6 Unsuccessful Applicants**

Please note that unsuccessful applicants will not receive a report from the Expert Assessment Panel.

Applicants may contact the NHMRC to seek clarification with regard to the outcome of their application for funding under the Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Program – Rounds 4 & 5.

Complaints can only be considered against administrative processes and not the merits of a particular decision. The Grounds of Complaint are listed at section 58 of the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*. The Act is available at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/role/index.htm>

A person whose interests are affected may at any time lodge a formal complaint under section 59 of the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992* to:

NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints  
GPO Box 9848  
MDP 33  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

The complaint must:

- be in writing;
- be signed by the complainant;
- describe the action complained about; and
- specify the nature of and grounds for the complaint.

## **B.7 Reporting and Evaluation**

An initial six month report is required from Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research recipients to assess whether the grant is up and running appropriately.

Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research recipients will be also required to provide an annual report against milestones for the team investigators supported under the research program. This annual report will be used in evaluating the:

- progress of team investigators;
- effectiveness of the program; and
- expenditure of funds in relation to the program's objectives.

If it is determined that the aims of the program are not being achieved the Capacity Building Grant in Population Health Research may be suspended or terminated.

After five years, a final report against the overall objectives of the proposal is required.

## **B.8 Important Notes**

- i. The NHMRC reserves the right not to make a grant recommendation to the Minister if applications are not of sufficient research merit and/or do not meet the specified criteria.
- ii. The Minister will determine the number of research grants funded and the level of funding allocated to each grant. The Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Expert Assessment Panel will critically review all budgets.
- iii. Research funded by the NHMRC must comply with established guidelines, including the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice*, which can be found at: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/policy/researchprac.htm>
- iv. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander related grants are also required to comply with the following guidelines and applications need to consider these:
  - *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>
  - *Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians* available at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/files/indighth.pdf> and
  - *Road Map for Improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* available at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r28syn.htm>
- v. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that a copy of the application is referred to the relevant institutional ethics committee or other approval body.
- vi. The NHMRC will advise the Lead Applicant A, via the Administering Institutions' Research Office, of the outcome of their application as early as possible following approval by the Minister.
- vii. For further information, the institution's Research Office should be contacted in the first instance. Enquires about the program objectives and scope should be directed to Professor Justin Beilby at (08) 8303 5193. Administrative questions should be directed to Gillian Treloar at (02) 6289 9129.

## ATTACHMENT A - SELECTION CRITERIA FOR CAPACITY BUILDING GRANTS IN POPULATION HEALTH RESEARCH ROUNDS 4&5

Applicants will be assessed against four criteria:

1. Record of achievement of lead applicants (30%)
2. Extent to which the proposal will build capacity (50%)
3. Achievability (15%)
4. Value for money (5%)

### 1. **Record of achievement of the lead applicants (30%)**

Lead applicants' record of achievement in population health and health service research, including:

#### **A. Academic Recognition (12%)**

- i. Publications in the last five years;
- ii. Total number of publications over the last ten years;
- iii. Ten best career publications irrespective of year; and
- iv. Competitive grants over the last five years.

#### **B. Evidence of Capacity Building (12%)**

- i. Record of achievement and previous experience in the provision of support, training (particularly at the level identified in the proposal) and team building over the last five years; and
- ii. Five leading achievements in capacity building at the team investigator (individual) level, and reasons for choices.

#### **C. Research Outcomes (6%)**

- i. Evidence of existing links with other researchers (including those from other research disciplines), evidence of leadership roles, recognised national contributions, and roles as a constructive and effective change agent;
- ii. Translation of outcomes into policy and service delivery;
- iii. Research outcomes over the last five years;
- iv. Five leading achievements in research, and reasons for choices; and
- v. Five leading achievements in translation of research findings, and reasons for choices.

### 2. **Extent to which the proposal is designed to build capacity in population health research (50%)**

The key elements of the proposal assessed against this criterion are the proposed research, and professional development it will allow including:

#### **A. Proposed professional development opportunities included in the Capacity Building Plan (30%)**

Extent to which the proposed outcomes will increase population health researcher capacity in Australia, including:

- i. A strong learning and development plan, including areas such as personal training programs, mentoring, co-mentoring and skills support.

- ii. Extent to which expected outcomes are likely to result in an increase in the:
  - a. number of independent investigators;
  - b. critical mass of the research team;
  - c. diversity and/or strength of population health research in Australia.
- iii. Extent and level to which team investigators will be provided with a research environment that is nationally/internationally competitive;
- iv. Degree to which team investigators will be part of a multidisciplinary team;
- v. Extent to which team investigators will have opportunities to learn from experts in their field and participate in national/international fora and networks; and
- vi. Extent to which the proposal would foster or strengthen networks between the team investigators and one or more of the following:
  - a) other researchers;
  - b) policy or health service delivery providers; and
  - c) community stakeholders.

**B. Proposed research program (10%)**

Extent to which the proposed research program is evidence-based, significant, competitive and relevant to areas of priority in Australia including:

- i. Significance in terms of contribution to evidence base, development of better understanding or methods and/or by leading to improvements in health outcomes, etc.;
- ii. Extent and level to which the research is nationally/internationally competitive; and
- iii. Identification and justification of research priority area.

**C. Opportunities offered to fill a priority gap in capacity (10%)**

Extent to which the proposal will develop researcher capacity in areas of priority in Australia including:

- i. Identification and justification of priority gap in population health research (See, for example, areas described in the Program Framework).

**3. Achievability of the proposal's research and capacity building outcomes (15%)**

Extent to which the proposal is achievable, including:

- i. Extent to which required skills and broader competencies are available in the team;
- ii. Time commitment of lead applicants;
- iii. Links with key organizations;
- iv. Infrastructure available;
- v. Governance and management proposals in place;
- vi. Strong capacity building plan for team investigators proposed; and
- vii. Nominated milestones and the mechanism for monitoring progress against these milestones.

**4. Value for money (5%)**

Extent to which the proposal is value for money.

(This criterion will be assessed by the working group with reference to information provided in the application form about the budget, research proposal and research team. Applicants do not need to provide a response to this criterion in the application form).

## ATTACHMENT B – TIMELINE FOR APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
Capacity Building Grants in Population Health Research Round 4 & 5 advertised	Saturday 14 January 2006
Applications close	Thursday 23 March
Meeting/Teleconference of Expert Assessment Panel to short list applications for interview.	Thursday 15 June
Short-listed applicants notified about interviews and travel arrangements made	Monday 19 June
Meeting of Expert Assessment Panel to interview short-listed applicants and make funding recommendations	Monday to Wednesday 27-30 June <sup>1</sup>
Funding recommendations made to Minister of Health and Ageing	Friday 25 August
Applicants advised of outcomes and grants commence	September/October

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<sup>1</sup> Due to conflicting work schedules of EAP members, 27-30 June is the earliest date for interviews.