



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

GENERAL PRACTICE CLINICAL RESEARCH PROGRAM

*Priority Driven Research Grants
Round 2*

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PART A - GENERAL PRACTICE CLINICAL RESEARCH PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

A.1 BACKGROUND

The General Practice Clinical Research Program is funded under the Australian Government's Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHC RED) Strategy (Phase 2). The PHCRED Strategy is a program that has been funded since 2000 to improve Australia's capacity to undertake high quality primary healthcare research.

The Government's investment of more than \$100 million in the Strategy between 2001-2009 is an acknowledgement of the world-wide gap in high quality primary health care research, and the need to develop and expand the existing primary health care research workforce in order to address the deficit.

The key components of the Strategy include:

- The Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI) which is tasked with providing leadership in primary health care research;
- The Research Capacity Building Initiative (RCBI) which provides funding to University Departments of General Practice and Rural Health to provide training and support in primary health research for early career researchers;
- A program of training awards, and investigator-initiated and priority-driven clinical research grants administered by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC); and
- The Primary Health Care Research and Information Service (PHCRIS) which provides support in the area of information dissemination and knowledge exchange.

A call for research under Round 1 of the priority driven research grants was conducted in 2004/05 with successful projects commencing in October 2005. A list of the successful applicants and their projects can be seen at www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/funded/outcomes/strategic.htm

This Program Framework governs the call for priority-driven clinical research under Phase 2 of the PHCRED Strategy and will fund research projects which will commence in 2007.

A.2 AIM

The *General Practice Clinical Research Program* aims to fund policy-relevant, priority-driven research that leads to better health outcomes through improved clinical practice. A subsidiary aim of the program is to build research capacity.

A.3 DEFINITION OF ‘GENERAL PRACTICE’ UNDER THE PROGRAM

For the purpose of this Program, ‘General Practice’ is defined as that part of the health care system that is specifically concerned with the provision of primary care services. It is a person’s first point of contact with the health care system, and ideally provides:

- continuity of care;
- comprehensive care; and
- care that is well co-ordinated within the community.

Projects funded under this Program will need to be based in General Practice and/or primary care team settings where there is no access to General Practitioners, such as some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care settings and some rural and remote settings.

Please note: Projects targeting secondary or tertiary health care services delivered in General Practice will not be considered under this Program.

A.4 OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The main objective of the Program is to fund research in nominated areas of high policy priority that will generate high quality evidence to inform primary care policy and practice.

Scope

‘Clinical research’ under the program is defined as research that involves:

- evaluation of the effectiveness of drugs, devices and procedures in General Practice;
- design and testing of protocols for screening, diagnosis and treatment;
- analyses of clinical decision-making and decision support tools;
- evaluation of prevention, patient education and self-care activities that takes into account the broader social and environmental context; and
- interaction between the GP/primary health care provider and consumers.

A.5 POLICY RELEVANCE

This Program will fund research that is policy-relevant and significant both in terms of disease burden and the potential to support high-quality policy and clinical practice. Research projects should therefore identify policy and/or practice issues which would be informed by the outcomes of the proposed research.

A.6 RESEARCH FOCUS

At the inception of the PHCRED Strategy, it was decided that research priorities under the program would support Australian Government policy and priorities.

Research priorities for this call for research were identified by the Department of Health and Ageing through an internal Departmental consultation process overseen by an internal panel with clinical and policy expertise. Carried out in early 2006, and drawn from the broad theme area of 'Chronic Disease' these priorities were selected based on an assessment of:

- the extent and impact of the underlying problem;
- the problem within the context of clinical general practice;
- the potential benefit of undertaking the research, including the potential impact of the research findings for future health policy; and
- the feasibility of conducting the research within a three-year timeframe.

This process aimed to identify a small number of priorities that could feasibly be targeted within the available budget and was not intended to capture every possible area of policy relevance.

The research priorities identified through this process are at **Attachment A**.

All of these identified priorities are of equal importance, and grants will be awarded to proposals of the highest scientific merit, subject to the availability of funds.

It is essential that research proposals clearly respond to the areas of research focus. Applications that do not observe this requirement will be excluded from the process.

A.7 APPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

Proposals for research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People must address *The Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians* which are available at www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/files/indighth.pdf.

In developing research proposals, researchers are advised to refer to the following documents:

- i. *Values and Ethics - Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* available at www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e52syn.htm
- iii. *The NHMRC Road Map: A Strategic Framework for Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health through Research* available at: www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r28syn.htm

A.8 RESEARCH INVOLVING CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE POPULATIONS

Research involving populations with distinct ethnic, cultural, linguistic, social or religious backgrounds should demonstrate an awareness of, and respect for, characteristics, values and traditions that may be particular to those populations.

The research project should provide for appropriate consultation and community involvement to ensure that the research is acceptable and beneficial to the individuals and communities concerned and that the outcomes of the research are sustainable. Applicants are advised to refer to the *Statement on Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research* and the accompanying Model Framework and Consumer Resource Pack which are available at www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r22syn.htm

The design and implementation of research projects should be culturally competent. A practical guide to cultural competence is provided in the NHMRC publication *Cultural Competency in Health: a guide for policy, partnerships and participation*, which is available at www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/hp25syn.htm

A.9 FUNDING

There is a total of \$5.2 million available for grants under this call for research. The proposed budget should be commensurate with the scope and objective of the research plan. Applicants must be aware that the process is expected to be highly competitive and that value for money will be assessed. It is expected that several grants will be funded under this Program.

It is intended that the funding available will be used to fund several grants under the Program.

Projects must not be longer than 3 years duration and are expected to be able to commence in mid 2007. Most proposals are expected to be of 2-3 years duration however, projects of a smaller scope and duration will also be considered.

A.10 FURTHER INFORMATION

Applicants are advised to read the supporting documentation before making any enquiries. Enquiries about the program objectives and scope should be directed to Professor Doris Young on (03) 8344 4533. Administrative questions should be directed to Ms Pat Doyle on (02) 6217 9387 or by email to pat.doyle@nhmrc.gov.au

Further information on the Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development (PHCRED) Strategy is available at www.phcris.org.au/phcred/index.php

A.11 DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH

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.

The ARC and NHMRC acknowledge 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.

The ARC and NHMRC therefore encourage 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 six-month period, s/he 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.

PART B - APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The application process for General Practice Clinical Research Grants (Round 2) will be undertaken in one stage and will require the submission of a **full application**.

An indicative timeline for the application process is provided at Attachment B. It should be noted that the timeline may be subject to change and any changes will be notified through the NHMRC website.

B.1 ELIGIBILITY

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 recognise 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 Institutions is available at: www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/policy/admininst.htm

Research Team

The NHMRC encourages applications from multi-disciplinary teams. Applications do not need to necessarily demonstrate that the proposed team has a history of working together. However, they should be able to show that the composition of the team is viable and be able to explain how they will ensure productive working partnerships.

Key Personnel must have Australian Citizenship or permanent Australian residency status.

The majority of the research project is to be undertaken within Australia. However, international partners may be included in teams.

Holders of NHMRC and other grants

Applicants who are current holders of NHMRC and/or other research grants are eligible to apply for funding under the General Practice Clinical Research Grants Program. However, they must be able to demonstrate that:

- the proposed research project is new;
- the proposed research project does not duplicate work funded from another source;
- the consortium is able to meet the agreed project deliverables; and
- key personnel will have sufficient time available to commit to the project.

Intellectual Property

Institutions and research teams 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 www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/policy/ipmanage.htm

Research teams must ensure that there is a written agreement between participating organisations on the ownership of intellectual property and associated rights in relation to the research supported by the General Practice Clinical Research Grants program.

B.2 SUBMISSION OF FULL APPLICATION

Applicants must give a detailed account of the proposed research project. This may include supporting documentation outlining the commitment of all partners, whether cash, in-kind or other. Where applications include collaborations with researchers, consumers and service providers all parties will be required to confirm that they are aware of and willing to participate in the research projects.

Applicants are also required to submit an implementation plan which outlines how the research will translate into health services or practice and how stakeholders will be informed about the research findings and outcomes.

Applicants should use the *Guide to Applicants* and *Full Application Form* to submit their proposal. Proposals must be submitted **electronically and in hard copy** in accordance with the instructions contained in the *Guide to Applicants*.

Documentation is available from the NHMRC website at:
www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/apply/granttype/strategic/index.htm

B.3 ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This process is expected to be highly competitive and applicants should take steps to ensure the competitiveness of their application.

The Review Panel will assess all applications against the Selection Criteria listed at Attachment C.

Applications addressing issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health or access to health services will be concurrently assessed by the Indigenous Health Research Panel against *The Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians*.

The Review Panel will consider assessments from expert panel members and the Indigenous Health Research Panel when making recommendations for funding. Applicants will not be given information about the assessments and there will be no rebuttal process.

B.4 GENERAL PRACTICE CLINICAL RESEARCH PROGRAM REVIEW PANEL

The General Practice Clinical Research Program Review Panel is composed of members drawn from diverse disciplines and with research expertise in, or highly relevant to, clinical General Practice.

The main functions of the Review Panel will be to:

- provide expert advice on research;
- assess proposals; and
- provide to the Department of Health and Ageing a ranked list of recommended proposals.

B.5 PRIVACY OF INDIVIDUALS

Documents containing personal information are handled and protected in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988*, 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 Act allows.

B.6 CONFIDENTIALITY

Section 80 of the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992* requires Council and committee members, and staff assisting committees or the Council not to disclose confidential commercial information, unless the disclosure is made in the performance of duties under the 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 Grant and the funding awarded, are published in the NHMRC Annual Report and are available through the NHMRC website. The NHMRC may also release information about the areas of research of the grant and a brief description of the grant provided by the applicant.

B.7 SELECTING SUCCESSFUL GRANT RECIPIENTS

In assessing and ranking proposals, the Review Panel will consider:

- whether the proposal responds directly to the nominated areas of research focus;
- the **full** application against the assessment criteria;
- assessments from experts on the Review Panel and, where applicable, from the Indigenous Health Research Panel;
- the feasibility of the proposal against the objectives of the project;
- the degree of congruence between the proposed work and budget;
- the research methodology; and
- the budget sought.

B.8 SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

The conditions of award for the General Practice Clinical Research Program Grants will be set out in a Schedule to the 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.

B.9 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Applicants may contact the NHMRC seeking clarification with regard to the outcome of their application for funding under the General Practice Clinical Research Program.

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 1421
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.

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* which is available at:
www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/policy/commissioner.htm

B.10 EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

The General Practice Clinical Research Program Review Panel will monitor the progress of the funded projects via progress reports, the final report and site visits if required. Successful applicants may also be expected to participate in evaluation and dissemination activities for the General Practice Clinical Research Program.

B.11 IMPORTANT NOTES

- i. The NHMRC reserves the right not to make a grant recommendation to the Delegate if applications are not of sufficient research merit and/or do not meet the specified criteria.

- ii. The General Practice Clinical Research Program Review Panel reserves the right to broker collaborations and/or communicate with researchers to refine proposals as required.
- 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: www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/policy/researchprac.htm
- iv. 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.
- v. Proposals that are specifically targeted towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research will be 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 www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e52syn.htm
 - Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians available at www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/files/indighth.pdf; and
 - The NHMRC Road Map: A Strategic Framework for Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health through Research available at: www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r28syn.htm

GENERAL PRACTICE CLINICAL RESEARCH PROGRAM RESEARCH PRIORITIES

1. What are culturally appropriate approaches in General Practice to screening and early intervention for mental health and social and emotional wellbeing issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
2. What are effective primary health care strategies for assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to quit smoking?
3. What are culturally appropriate interventions in mainstream General Practice to improve chronic condition health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (in answering this question, researchers should focus on a high prevalence chronic condition in an under-researched Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population group eg. urban communities, older patients).
4. How does assessment of the absolute risk of an acute cardiovascular disease event affect:
 - General Practice clinical processes;
 - patient health outcomes;
 - the number of people diagnosed with cardiovascular disease; and
 - patient care, including lifestyle interventions and the prescribing of medicines such as cholesterol lowering drugs.
5. What effective interventions through General Practice can enhance self-management of chronic conditions in children and adolescents?
6. Which interventions through General Practice support the improvement, achievement and maintenance of healthy weight in children at risk, or who are already overweight or obese?
7. What are effective interventions through General Practice to maintain the health and well-being of carers of people with chronic disabling illness?
8. What are effective interventions through General Practice to maintain the health and well-being of carers of people receiving palliative care, including the impact of bereavement?

Attachment B

INDICATIVE TIMEFRAME

1. Call for Research – FULL application NHMRC Website and National Press	25 November 2006
2. Closing date for submissions	19 February 2007
3. Assessment of applications by Review Panel	7 May 2007
4. Review Panel meeting - Recommendations made	14 May 2007
5. Recommendations sent to the Department of Health and Ageing	18 May 2007
6. Recommendations sent to the Minister for Health and Ageing	31 May 2007
7. Advice to applicants/official announcement of successful grant recipients	June 2007

SELECTION CRITERIA

All eligible proposals will fall within the aim, scope and research focus of this funding program and be assessed against the following criteria.

1. *Research objectives and relevance (15%)*

- clear research hypotheses;
- congruence of the proposed research with the nominated research priority/s;
- the capacity of the proposed research to generate new knowledge which is capable of informing policies and practice.

2. *Quality and feasibility of the proposed research methodology (30%)*

- high quality research;
- involvement of general practice researchers¹ and clinicians
- structured opportunities for early career researchers to be trained in GP research;
- appropriateness of the chosen research methodology to the stated research objectives;
- feasibility of the proposed research methodology;
- appropriate timelines, milestones and outcome measures.

3. *Quality and feasibility of partnerships and collaborations (15%)*

- partnerships with key stakeholders including service providers, consumers and policy advisers and the impact upon outcomes;
- commitment to the proposed research program of the key personnel and partners,
- demonstrated understanding and involvement of key stakeholders in all stages of research (including service providers, consumers and policy advisers) from project development through to implementation.

4. *Track record of the research team (20%)*

- relevant composition of the research team;
- commitment, skills and experience of relevant key personnel;
- demonstrated previous success in research with an impact on policy and practice;
- ability, experience and commitment to developing the career of early career researchers;
- ability and commitment to building capacity in primary health care research;
- relevant grant funding history.

Additional requirements for the Team Leader

- experience in organising and setting up productive collaborations and partnerships;
- experience in managing a multi-disciplinary team;
- success in academic leadership.

5. *Value for money (5%)*

- cost effectiveness of the proposal;
- timing of outcomes;
- justification for the budget, including equipment and facilities.

¹ Researchers from any clinical or research discipline who are engaged in research in General Practice as defined in the policy framework.

6. *Strategies for evidence-based change (15%)*

- use of evidence-based strategies and processes in the planned implementation of findings;
- potential for translation of the research findings into policy and practice.