NHMRC’s process for considering involvement in International activities

1. Informal discussion between potential partner organisation and the NHMRC CEO.

2. CEO seeks advice and in-principle support from Research Committee and Council.

3. Formalisation through a cooperative agreement.

4. Depending on the nature of the activity there may be a need for further decision making prior to implementation.

5. Further advice will be sought from Research Committee if the activity is a jointly funded call for research, or other activity that requires NHMRC to expend research funding.

6. NHMRC may organise a scientific workshop to inform the further development of implementation of an activity.

7. NHMRC may conduct the activity jointly with a partner organisation/s; nominate an NHMRC representative; or arrange for routine reporting by existing Australian participants.
Steps in considering NHMRC participation in an international activity

1. Initial contact with potential partners is usually made with or by, the NHMRC CEO, who begins informal negotiations.1

2. The activity is assessed for: relevance to the aims and objectives of the NHMRC specified in the NHMRC Act; relevance to the priority actions and major health issues identified in the NHMRC Strategic Plan; the value and benefit of the activity in the context of the existing portfolio of NHMRC activities; and the cost of participation. If it seems likely that the activity will be able to proceed, the CEO obtains in-principle support from NHMRC Research Committee and Council.2

3. The activity may need to be formalised through a cooperative agreement, such as a memorandum of understanding.

4. Depending on the nature of the activity, further decision making may be needed to develop the proposal.

5. Further advice will be sought from Research Committee if the activity is a jointly funded call for research, or other activity that requires NHMRC to expend research funding. An example is advice being sought from Research Committee on the aims, objectives and budget of a joint call for collaborative research projects.

6. NHMRC may organise a scientific workshop to inform the further development of implementation of an activity.

7. NHMRC may work with a partner to implement the agreed activity, such as in the case of a joint call for research.

Where NHMRC is a member of a multi-lateral organisation, the CEO will convey NHMRC’s view to that organisation. An example is GACD where the CEO is a member of the governing Board and in that capacity will convey NHMRC’s views and agreement. Where timelines permit, the CEO will bring proposals to Research Committee and Council prior to agreeing as a Board member. In theory, this might not always be possible due to timing issues, but this problem has not yet arisen.

Where NHMRC agrees to provide a representative to participate in activities other than research funding, the CEO may:

- assign a member of ONHMRC staff;
- nominate a member of an NHMRC Principal Committee; or
- ask a member of the Australian research community,

to keep in touch with the partner/activity group as a nominee of the CEO.

Where an activity already has Australian participants and formal NHMRC representation is not required, NHMRC may request that the Australian participants regularly report to NHMRC. An example of this approach is the International Rare Diseases Research Consortium (IRDiRC).

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1 The functions of the CEO are:

(a) in the name of the NHMRC, to inquire into, issue guidelines on, and advise the community on, matters relating to:

(i) the improvement of health; and
(ii) the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease; and
(iii) the provision of health care; and
(iv) public health research and medical research; and
(v) ethical issues relating to health; and

(b) to advise, and make recommendations to, the Commonwealth, the States and the Territories on the matters referred to in paragraph (a); and

(c) to make recommendations to the Minister on expenditure:

(i) on public health research and training; and
(ii) on medical research and training;

including recommendations on the application of the Account; and

(d) any other functions conferred on the CEO in writing by the Minister; and

(e) any other functions conferred on the CEO by this Act, the regulations or any other law; and

(f) any functions incidental to any of the foregoing

2 Function of the NHMRC

The function of the NHMRC (other than the CEO) is to assist the CEO in the performance of his or her functions.
Reports from the CEO’s nominees are considered by NHMRC Principal Committees and Council, either as separate agenda items or via inclusion within the CEO’s Reports.