



Synergy Grants Outcomes 2019: Factsheet



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New Grant Program

- NHMRC's new grant program commenced on 5 December 2018 with the opening of the Investigator Grant scheme. The other three new schemes, Ideas Grants, Synergy Grants and Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grants, opened in March 2019. All outcomes of the first round of the four new schemes were announced by December 2019.
- The new grant program aims to:
 - encourage innovation and creativity in research
 - provide opportunities for talented researchers at all career stages to contribute to the improvement of human health, and
 - minimise the burden on researchers of application and peer review so that researchers can spend more time producing high quality research.
- NHMRC has established a framework for evaluating the new grant program and the outcomes from this first round of the four new schemes will be analysed holistically to determine whether the new grant program is meeting the stated objectives.
- Due to the nature of the capping and eligibility rules for some of the new schemes, it will take several years of transition before the full benefits of the new grant program are realised.

Synergy Grants

- The objective of the Synergy Grant scheme is to support outstanding multidisciplinary teams of investigators to work together to answer major questions that cannot be answered by a single investigator.
- The scheme provides five years of funding for high-performing research teams.
- This year's Synergy Grant funding allocation from the Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) totals \$50 million.

Synergy Grant Outcomes

- Ten high-performing health and medical research teams from across the country will be funded in this first round.
- The teams represent a diversity in career stages, research disciplines, disease focus and location where the research will be conducted.

	Applications	Funded	Funded rate
Applications/CIAs	64	10	15.6%

Application and grant team sizes

- As this is the first year of the new grant program, it is not possible to compare Synergy Grant outcomes directly with previous years. The Program Grant scheme is the closest comparator from the old grant program.
- There was a marked increase in the number of applicants in any Chief Investigator (CI) role in the 2019 Synergy Grant round (485 applicants) compared to the previous two Program Grant rounds (140 and 149 applicants in 2016 and 2017, respectively).
- Synergy Grant teams in 2019 are larger than teams in the previous two rounds of Program Grants.

	2016 – Program Grants	2017 – Program Grants	2019 – Synergy Grants
Average application team size	5.0	5.0	7.6
Average grant team size	4.8	5.5	6.9

Outcomes by Broad Research Area (BRA)

- NHMRC is committed to supporting a broad range of research from discovery science through to clinical research (including clinical trials), health services and public health research.

Broad Research Area	Applications	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion of grants awarded	Total Value
Basic Science	19	4	21.1%	40.0%	\$20,000,000
Clinical Medicine and Science	21	3	14.3%	30.0%	\$15,000,000
Health Services Research	15	2	13.3%	20.0%	\$10,000,000
Public Health	9	1	11.1%	10.0%	\$5,000,000

Outcomes for CIAs by Career Stage*

- CIAs less than ten years post-PhD averaged 6.3 years post-PhD, with a 25% funded rate.
- CIAs equal or greater than ten years post-PhD averaged 21.2 years post-PhD, with a 14.5% funded rate.
- One funded CIA did not hold a PhD, with a funded rate of 20%.

Career stage	Applicants	Average years post-PhD of applicants	Grants awarded	Average years post-PhD of awardees	Funded rate
Less than 10 years post-PhD	4	6.3	1	2.0	25.0%
Equal to or greater than 10 years post-PhD	55	21.2	8	23.6	14.5%
Do not hold a PhD/Not stated	5	-	1	-	20.0%

*Data from applicant profile in RGMS

Outcomes for all CIs by Career Stage*

- CIs less than ten years post-PhD averaged 4.5 years post-PhD, with a 10.8% funded rate.
- CIs equal to or greater than ten years post-PhD averaged 20.2 years post-PhD, with a 14.6% funded rate.
- Those awardees who do not hold a PhD had a funded rate of 19.3%.

Career stage	Applicants	Average years post-PhD of applicants	Grants awarded	Average years post-PhD of awardees	Funded rate
Less than 10 years post-PhD	120	5.3	13	4.5	10.8%
Equal to or greater than 10 years post-PhD	308	20.5	45	20.2	14.6%
Do not hold a PhD/Not stated	57	-	11	-	19.3%

*Data from applicant profile in RGMS

Funded rates for CIAs by gender

- 60% of Synergy Grants have been awarded to female CIAs, although more men than women applied as CIA.

CIA	Applicants	Funded	Proportion	Funded rate
Male	35	4	40%	11.4%
Female	29	6	60%	20.7%

- In contrast, 100% of 2017 Program Grants were awarded to male CIAs.

	Applicants	Funded	Proportion	Funded rate
Male	27	8	100%	29.6%
Female	4	0	0%	0.0%

Funded rates for all CIs by gender

- The number of female and male CIs funded is close to equal, noting that more men than women applied.

All CIs	Applicants	Funded	Proportion	Funded rate
Male	256	34	49%	13.3%
Female	223	35	51%	15.7%
Not Stated	6	0	0%	0.0%

CI by gender - Synergy Grants vs Program Grants

- Compared to the 2017 Program Grant round, the proportion of female CIs who applied to the Synergy Grant round in 2019 more than doubled.

	2016 – Program Grant Applicants	2017 – Program Grant Applicants	2019 – Synergy Grant Applicants
Male	104	119	256
Female	36	35	223

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research

- NHMRC is committed to allocating at least five per cent of the MREA each year to research directed at improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Applications that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health represent 10.0% of the grants awarded and 10.0% of the total Synergy Grant MREA allocation.

	Applications	Proportion of Applications	Grants awarded	Proportion of grants awarded	Funded rate
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused research	4	6.3%	1	10.0%	25.0%

In conclusion

- The first cohort of ten Synergy Grant teams now has five years of funding to tackle research questions that cannot be answered by a single investigator.
- The diversity of these teams is critical to the projects.
- The scheme will be run annually, so there will be a growing number of diverse, multidisciplinary teams holding these grants over time.
- The Synergy Grant scheme is complemented by the Investigator Grant, Ideas Grant and Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grant schemes.