



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

BUILDING  
A HEALTHY  
AUSTRALIA

## Synergy Grants 2021 Outcomes Factsheet



## Synergy Grants 2021 Outcomes Factsheet

### 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 \$5 million of funding over five years to support high-performing research teams.
- NHMRC cancelled the 2020 Synergy Grants round due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For the 2021 Synergy Grants round, NHMRC has increased the funding allocation from the Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) from \$50 million to \$85 million to partially offset the impact of cancelling the 2020 round<sup>1</sup>.

### Synergy Grant Outcomes

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

Total number of applications received in 2021 (2019)	<b>86<sup>#</sup></b> (64)
Number of grants awarded in 2021 (2019)	<b>17</b> (10)
Percentage of applications awarded in 2021 (2019)	<b>19.8%</b> (15.6%)

<sup>#</sup> Three of the 86 applications were ruled ineligible.

### Application and grant team sizes

Average application team size in 2021 (2019)	<b>8.1</b> (7.6)
Average grant team size in 2021 (2019)	<b>8.2</b> (6.9)

---

<sup>1</sup> The remaining \$15 million was allocated to Investigator Grants 2021 to provide more support for early and mid-career researchers.

### Outcomes by Broad Research Area

- NHMRC is committed to supporting a broad range of research from discovery science through to clinical research, health services and public health research. Synergy Grants will be funded in each of these Broad Research Areas.

<b>Broad Research Area</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Applications</b>	<b>Grants awarded</b>	<b>Funded rate</b>	<b>Proportion of grants awarded</b>	<b>Total value</b>
Basic Science	2019	19	4	21.1%	40.0%	\$20,000,000
	2021	20	3	15.0%	17.6%	\$15,000,000
Clinical Medicine and Science	2019	21	3	14.3%	30.0%	\$15,000,000
	2021	38	8	21.1%	47.1%	\$40,000,000
Health Services Research	2019	15	2	13.3%	20.0%	\$10,000,000
	2021	12	1	8.3%	5.9%	\$5,000,000
Public Health	2019	9	1	11.1%	10.0%	\$5,000,000
	2021	16	5	31.3%	29.4%	\$25,000,000

Outcomes for CIAs by Career Stage\*

- Most CIAs have held their PhD for at least ten years.

<b>Career Stage</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Applications</b>	<b>Average years post-PhD of applicants</b>	<b>Grants awarded</b>	<b>Average years post-PhD of awardees</b>	<b>Funded rate</b>
Less than 10 years post-PhD	2019	4	6.3	1	2.0	25.0%
	2021	5	6.8	0	-	0.0%
Equal to or greater than 10 years post-PhD	2019	55	21.2	8	23.6	14.5%
	2021	74	21.9	16	21.8	21.6%
Do not hold a PhD/Not stated	2019	5	-	1	-	20.0%
	2021	7	-	1	-	14.3%

\*Data from applicant profile in Sapphire

### Outcomes for all CIs by Career Stage\*

- CIs less than ten years post-PhD averaged 5.5 years post-PhD, with a 17.3% funded rate.
- CIs equal to or greater than ten years post-PhD averaged 20.3 years post-PhD, with a 20.3% funded rate.
- Those awardees who do not hold a PhD (or did not state that they hold a PhD) had a funded rate of 26.6%.

<b>Career Stage</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Applications</b>	<b>Average years post-PhD of applicants</b>	<b>Grants awarded</b>	<b>Average years post-PhD of awardees</b>	<b>Funded rate</b>
Less than 10 years post-PhD	2019	120	5.3	13	4.5	10.8%
	2021	150	5.5	26	4.8	17.3%
Equal to or greater than 10 years post-PhD	2019	308	20.5	45	20.2	14.6%
	2021	479	20.3	97	20.4	20.3%
Do not hold a PhD/Not stated	2019	57	-	11	-	19.3%
	2021	64	-	17	-	26.6%

\*Data from applicant profile in Sapphire

Funded rates for CIAs by gender\*

- 52.9% of Synergy Grants have been awarded to female CIAs and 47.1% have been awarded to male CIAs.
- The funded rate is 4.2% higher for female CIAs than for male CIAs.

Year	Female CIA				Male CIA			
	Applicants	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion	Applicants	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion
2019	29	6	20.7%	60.0%	35	4	11.4%	40.0%
2021	41	9	22.0%	52.9%	45	8	17.8%	47.1%

\*Data from applicant profile in Sapphire

- In contrast, in the final round of Program Grants in 2017, few applications had a female CIA and 100% of grants were awarded to male CIAs.

Year	Female CIA				Male CIA			
	Applicants	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion	Applicants	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion
2017	4	0	0%	0%	27	8	29.6%	100.0%

### Funded rates for CIs by gender\*

- More men than women applied as CIs in both 2019 and 2021.
- The funded rate is 1.8% higher for male CIs than for female CIs in 2021.

Year	Female CIs				Male CIs				CI Gender Not Stated or Not Provided			
	Applicants	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion	Applicants	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion	Applications	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion
2019	223	35	15.7%	50.7%	256	34	13.3%	49.3%	6	0	0%	0
2021	329	63	19.1%	45.0%	359	75	20.9%	53.6%	5	2	40.0%	1.4%

\*Data from applicant profile in Sapphire

### 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 11.8% of the grants awarded and 11.8% of the total Synergy Grant MREA allocation.

Indigenous Identified/Indigenous Focused	Year	Applications	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health focused research	2019	4	1	25.0%	10.0%
	2021	6	2	33.3%	11.8%

### In conclusion

- The seventeen funded Synergy Grant teams now have 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 success of the projects.
- The Synergy Grant scheme is complemented by the Investigator Grant, Ideas Grant and Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grant schemes.
- NHMRC will continue to monitor the outcomes of its grant program to determine whether it is meeting the stated objectives.