



Australian Government  
National Health and Medical Research Council

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## Ideas Grants Outcomes 2020: Factsheet



NHMRC

# Ideas Grants 2020 Outcomes Factsheet

## Ideas Grants

- The Ideas Grant scheme is the second largest scheme in NHMRC's grant program, accounting for approximately 25% of the Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA)
- The Ideas Grant scheme was developed as part of a major reform of NHMRC's grant program implemented in 2019.
- The 2020 Ideas Grant round is the second round for this scheme and funds grants commencing in January 2021.
- The application period for the round was extended by six weeks in response to the changed professional demands, additional caring responsibilities and other disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Streamlined peer review and exceptional support from peer reviewers enabled the round to be completed and outcomes released before the end of the year despite the impact of the pandemic.
  - This year, 558 peer reviewers provided 11,954 individual reviews of 2995 grant applications.
  - 99.4% of applications received the target of four reviews. All of the remainder received three reviews.
- This year's Ideas Grants funding totals \$259.7 million.
  - This includes \$20 million drawn forward to supplement the budget for 2020 Ideas Grants to boost opportunities for the research sector at this difficult time.
  - It also includes \$32.7 million allocated to support areas of structural priority.
- The objective of the Ideas Grant scheme is to support innovative research projects addressing a specific question(s).
- The expected outcomes of the Ideas Grant scheme are:
  - innovative and creative research
  - funding of researchers at all career stages, and
  - funding any area of health and medical research from discovery to implementation.
- The scheme provides particular opportunities for early and mid-career researchers.
- The scheme is not intended to support research where a clinical trial or cohort study is the primary objective.
- The amount of funding awarded for an Ideas Grant is based on assessment of the requested budget. Applications must clearly justify the requested duration and budget amount and how each element of the budget will support the proposed outcomes of the research.

## Ideas Grant Outcomes

- 283 applications from institutions across the country will be funded in this round.
- The teams represent diversity in career stages, research disciplines, disease focus and location where the research will be conducted.

Funding round	2019	2020
Total number of applications received	2739 <sup>^</sup>	2995 <sup>^</sup>
Total number of applications applying for NHMRC funding	2651 <sup>*</sup>	2889 <sup>*</sup>
Number of grants awarded	294 <sup>**</sup>	283
Percentage of applications awarded	11.1%	9.8%
Mean budget for awarded grants	\$822,258.82	\$917,747.57

<sup>\*</sup>Excludes applications that did not request NHMRC funding.

<sup>\*\*</sup>Includes one application that was funded by the Australian Communications and Media Authority for research on the health effects of Electromagnetic Energy.

<sup>^</sup>Two applications were withdrawn after the round closed in both the 2019 and 2020 rounds.

### Outcomes by Broad Research Area (BRA)

- NHMRC is committed to supporting a broad range of research from discovery science through to clinical research, health services and public health research.
- Basic Science received the greatest allocation of Ideas Grants funding, representing 67.5% of awarded grants and 65.4% of the awarded budget.

Broad Research Area	Year	Applications	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion of grants awarded	Total value
Basic Science	2019	1821	221*	12.1%	75.2%	\$173,947,106
	2020	1899	191	10.1%	67.5%	\$169,807,794
Clinical Medicine and Science	2019	566	45	8.0%	15.3%	\$40,231,653
	2020	675	59	8.7%	20.8%	\$57,272,149
Health Services	2019	117	12	10.3%	4.1%	\$8,263,881
	2020	125	10	8.0%	3.5%	\$10,869,947
Public Health	2019	147	16	10.9%	5.4%	\$19,301,455
	2020	190	23	12.1%	8.1%	\$21,772,673

\*Includes one application that was funded by the Australian Communications and Media Authority for research on the health effects of Electromagnetic Energy.

### Funded Rates for CIAs by Gender

- Funded rates for female and male CIAs are equal at 9.8%.
- NHMRC has identified research led by women as an area of structural priority and, as in 2019, has funded additional applications led by female CIAs using structural priority funding, in addition to the original base funding allocation for Ideas Grants.

CIA Gender	Year	Applications	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion of grants awarded
Female	2019	1108	123	11.1%	41.8%
	2020	1232	121	9.8%	42.8%
Male	2019	1517	169	11.1%	57.5%
	2020	1635	160	9.8%	56.5%
Not Stated	2019	26	2	7.7%	0.7%
	2020	22	2	9.1%	0.7%

### Funded rates for all CIs by Gender

- The funded rate for female CIs (CIA, CIB etc.) is higher than for male CIs.

CI Gender	Year	Applications	Grants awarded	Funded rate
Female	2019	3006	361	12.0%
	2020	3717	391	10.5%
Male	2019	4501	523	11.6%
	2020	5253	512	9.7%
Intersex or Indeterminate	2019	2	0	0.0%
	2020	2	0	0.0%
Not Stated	2019	297	35	11.8%
	2020	360	34	9.4%

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research and Researchers

- NHMRC is committed to allocating at least 5% of the MREA each year to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.
- 27.7% of applications that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health are awarded funding, representing 4.6% of awarded Ideas Grants.
- 25.5% of applications from researchers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent are awarded funding, representing 4.2% of awarded Ideas Grants.
- NHMRC has funded additional applications in both of these categories using structural priority funding, on top of the original base funding allocation for Ideas Grants.

Indigenous Identified/Indigenous Focused	Year	Applications	Grants awarded	Funded rate	Proportion of grants awarded
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused research	2019	29	6	20.7%	2.0%
	2020	47	13	27.7%	4.6%
Applications with one or more researchers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent in their teams	2019	42	9	21.4%	3.1%
	2020	47	12	25.5%	4.2%
Applications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research with researchers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent in their teams	2019	17	5	29.4%	1.7%
	2020	33	9	27.3%	3.2%

Note: There is overlap in these figures as applications that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health also had researcher(s) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent in their teams, as shown in the third row.

## Outcomes for CIAs by Career Stage and Gender

- One-quarter of the awarded grants are led by early-career and mid-career CIAs (within ten years post-PhD).

Career Stage	Year	Applicants	Grants awarded				Funded rate	Proportion of grants awarded
			Female	Male	Not Stated	TOTAL		
<10 years post-PhD	2019	782	32	27	-	59	7.5%	20.0%
	2020	792	37	33	1	71	9.0%	25.1%
≥10 years post-PhD	2019	1766	88	136	2	226	12.8%	76.9%
	2020	2015	84	122	1	207	10.3%	73.1%
No PhD/ unknown*	2019	103	3	6	-	9	8.7%	3.1%
	2020	82	0	5	0	5	6.1%	1.8%

\*No PhD listed in applicant's CV and Profile

## Outcomes for all CIs by Career Stage and Gender

- Over one-quarter of CIs (CIA, CIB etc.) awarded grants are early-career and mid-career CIs (within ten years post-PhD).

Career Stage	Year	Applicants	Grants awarded				Funded rate	Proportion of CIs awarded grants
			Female	Male	Not Stated	TOTAL		
<10 years post-PhD	2019	2161	98	114	6	218	10.1%	23.7%
	2020	2657	141	121	6	268	10.1%	28.6%
≥10 years post-PhD	2019	4381	215	323	9	547	12.5%	59.5%
	2020	5394	209	333	7	549	10.2%	58.6%
No PhD/unknown*	2019	1264	48	86	20	154	12.2%	16.8%
	2020	1281	41	58	21	120	9.4%	12.8%

\*No PhD listed in applicants' CV and Profile

## New Grant Program

- NHMRC's new grant program commenced in 2019.
- The new grant program was developed to address concerns that the high volume of applications for NHMRC funding was having a range of negative effects on Australian health and medical research. In response to these issues, NHMRC reviewed the structure of its research funding and reformed its grant program.
- 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.
- Input from comprehensive public consultation, NHMRC Principal Committees and expert working groups was used to develop the new grant program and the peer review models for the Investigator, Synergy, Ideas and Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grant schemes.
- NHMRC will continue to monitor the outcomes of the new grant program to determine whether it is meeting the stated objectives.
- Due to the nature of the capping and eligibility rules, it will take several years of transition before the full benefits are realised.

## In conclusion

- The Ideas Grant scheme is one of NHMRC's new flagship funding schemes.
- The second year of funding for this scheme has supported 283 applications with equal funded rates for female and male CIAs, and one-quarter of awarded grants led by an early to mid-career researcher.
- The scheme will be run annually, creating additional opportunities for researchers at all career stages.