



# Targeted Call for Research scheme-specific peer review guidelines

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## Contents

1 Overview of the peer review process.....	2
2 Roles and responsibilities .....	2
3 Peer review process.....	9
3.1 Before the GRP Meeting.....	9
3.1.1 Establishment of the Grant Review Panel .....	9
3.1.2 External Assessors .....	10
3.1.3 Identification of GRP member conflicts.....	10
3.1.4 Allocation of Spokesperson.....	11
3.1.5 GRP members access applications .....	11
3.1.6 Preparation of Spokespersons reports and initial scores .....	11
3.1.7 Release of Assessor Reports .....	12
3.1.8 Applicant Response .....	12
3.1.9 Spokesperson reassessment of applications .....	12
3.1.10 Removing less competitive applications - Not For Further Consideration.....	12
3.2 Grant Review Panel meeting .....	13
3.2.1 Declaration of inter-relationships .....	13
3.2.2 Chair to announce the application .....	13
3.2.3 1SP to comment on the application .....	14
3.2.4 2SP to comment on the application .....	14
3.2.5 Full panel discussion.....	14
3.2.6 Scoring by members .....	14
3.2.7 Discussion by exception of proposed budget .....	15
3.2.8 Reconciliation and further review of applications.....	15
3.3 Post GRP meeting .....	16
3.4 GRP documentation.....	16
4 Attachments .....	16
Attachment A – Overview of the 2018 Targeted Call for Research Peer Review Process .....	17
Attachment B: 2018 NHMRC Targeted Call for Research Category Descriptors.....	18
Attachment C: 2018 NHMRC Targeted Call for Research Category Descriptors Incorporating Assessment Criteria for Health Research Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.....	21
Attachment D - Guidance for Assessors to Assess Applications Against the Indigenous Excellence Criteria.....	26
Attachment E – TCR Assessments – Do’s and Don’ts .....	27

The following sections describe the specific processes, timelines and expectations that apply to the peer review of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Targeted Call for Research (TCR) applications.

These scheme-specific peer review guidelines complement and must be read in conjunction with the following supporting documents:

- *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*
- *2018 TCR specific-specific funding rules*
- *2018 NHMRC Advice and Instructions to Applicants*
- *2018 TCR scheme-specific advice and instructions to applicants*
- *2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review*
- *NHMRC Funding Agreement*

It is recommended that you read the *2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review*, before reading these guidelines.

## 1 Overview of the peer review process

A flowchart of the Peer Review Process is provided at [Attachment A](#).

## 2 Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of those participating in the peer review process are identified in the TCR Peer Review Participants table below. These take precedence over the general descriptions in section 6 of the *2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review*.

### Targeted Calls for Research Peer Review Participants Table

Role	Responsibilities
<b>Panel Chairs</b>	<p>The Chair's role is to ensure NHMRC's procedures are adhered to and that a fair and equitable consideration is given to every application being reviewed at the GRP meeting. Chairs are independent of the review of research proposals, and must manage the process of peer review in accordance with these Guidelines. Chairs will:</p> <p><i>Prior to the GRP meeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familiarise themselves with documentation relevant to the funding scheme</li> <li>• identify and advise NHMRC of all real or potential CoIs they have with applications to be reviewed by the GRP</li> <li>• familiarise themselves with all the applications being considered by the GRP.</li> </ul> <p><i>During panel meetings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask members to declare any associations between panel members</li> <li>• ensure that Observers are fully aware of the names and affiliations of the Chief Investigators (CIs) of applications under discussion and Observers leave the room where a high CoI exists</li> <li>• keep discussions on time and focused</li> <li>• ensure NHMRC procedures are followed</li> <li>• assist members with their duties and understanding what is expected of them</li> <li>• take appropriate action for each declared CoI</li> <li>• promote good engagement by Spokespersons and GRP members in all discussions</li> <li>• ensure that all members consider career disruptions and 'relative to opportunity' when discussing applications</li> <li>• ensure the discussion leads to an outcome where the applications are scored against the Category Descriptors appropriately (using the seven point scale – see <a href="#">Attachment B</a> for non-Indigenous GRPs and <a href="#">Attachment C</a> for Indigenous</li> </ul>

Role	Responsibilities
	<p>Health GRPs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure GRP members are satisfied with score outcomes and appropriately manage any uncertainty</li> <li>• ensure that GRP members declare a reason/s for voting two or more away from the Primary Spokesperson (1SP) score in any of the assessment criteria</li> <li>• facilitate the GRP's discussion of budgets where required</li> <li>• assist the panel to resolve budget discussions</li> <li>• ensure that discussions are consistent for all applications</li> <li>• ensure panel members are satisfied with each days deliberations</li> <li>• through RGMS e-scoring, endorse that peer review procedures were followed correctly and notify NHMRC of any requests for clarification or advice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assistant Chairs</b></p>	<p>Assistant Chairs will:</p> <p><b><i>Prior to the GRP meeting:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familiarise themselves with documentation relevant to the funding scheme</li> <li>• identify and advise NHMRC of all real or perceived Cols they may have with applications to be reviewed by their panel.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>During panel meetings:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• note GRP discussions</li> <li>• support the Chairperson to ensure that NHMRC procedures are adhered to.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Grant Review Panel (GRP) Members</b></p>	<p>GRP members will:</p> <p><b><i>Prior to the GRP meeting:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familiarise themselves with documentation relevant to the funding scheme</li> <li>• identify and advise NHMRC of all real or potential Cols they have with applications on the GRP</li> <li>• read all documentation including the Assessors' Report and the Applicant Responses for each application assigned to the GRP (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• provide a fair, impartial and scientific assessment against the assessment criteria, using the category descriptors</li> <li>• if required, confirm the inclusion of applications on the NFFC list and 'rescue' up to one application that warrants discussion at the GRP if they deem it appropriate.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>During panel meetings:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• score each application reviewed by the panel using RGMS e-scoring</li> <li>• prepare for and participate in the panel discussion for each application including budget discussion, where applicable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Primary Spokesperson (1SP)</b></p>	<p><b><i>Prior to the GRP meeting:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the allocated applications against the assessment criteria in the call-specific Funding Rules, including whether the expected outcomes address the scope, aims and objectives of the TCR</li> <li>• assess any claims for Career Disruption</li> <li>• score the applications using the category descriptors as a guide and prepare a Spokesperson report in RGMS for rebuttal by the applicant within the prescribed timeframe (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• review the Assessor Reports for inappropriate or biased comments (if applicable)</li> </ul>

Role	Responsibilities
	<p>to the call)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• following consideration of the Assessors Report and Applicant Response, re-score the application in RGMS within the prescribed timeframes (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• prepare speaking notes for the GRP meeting for each application assigned as 1SP</li> <li>• rigorously assess the proposed budget to ensure that Personal Support Packages (PSPs), Direct Research Costs (DRCs) and equipment requests are appropriate for the project and fully justified</li> <li>• prepare a recommendation for the GRP to either: leave the requested budget intact, propose modifying the budget, or seek advice from the panel regarding specific budget requests.</li> </ul> <p><i>At the GRP meeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide detailed advice to the panel of any applications that have claimed a career disruption</li> <li>• lead the discussion using prepared notes and contribute to the budget discussion</li> <li>• provide final scores for allocated applications based on discussions</li> <li>• rigorously assess the proposed budget to ensure that PSPs, DRCs and equipment requests are appropriate for the project and fully justified.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Secondary Spokesperson (2SP) (if relevant to the call)</b></p>	<p><i>Prior to the GRP meeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the allocated applications against the assessment criteria in the call-specific Funding Rules, including whether the expected outcomes address the scope, aims and objectives of the TCR</li> <li>• assess any claims for Career Disruption</li> <li>• score the applications using the category descriptors as a guide and prepare a Spokesperson report in RGMS for rebuttal by the applicant within the prescribed timeframe (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• review the Assessor Reports for inappropriate or biased comments (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• following consideration of the Assessors' Report and Applicant Response, re-score the application in RGMS within the prescribed timeframes (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• prepare speaking notes for each application assigned to them as 2SP focusing on the Assessors' Report and Applicant response (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• rigorously assess the proposed budget to ensure that Personal Support Packages (PSPs), Direct Research Costs (DRCs) and equipment requests are appropriate for the project and fully justified</li> <li>• prepare a recommendation for the GRP to either: leave the requested budget intact, propose modifying the budget, or seek advice from the panel regarding specific budget requests.</li> </ul> <p><i>At the GRP meeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• add to the 1SP comments and discussion with reference to prepared notes</li> <li>• ensure that External Assessor(s) comments (if received for the call), specifically the strengths and weaknesses raised, are presented to the GRP</li> <li>• ensure that the Applicant Response is presented (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• provide final scores for allocated applications based on discussions</li> </ul>

Role	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be prepared to assist the 1SP in discussion on the appropriateness or otherwise, of the requested budget with reference to the individual elements of the budget ensuring PSPs, DRCs and equipment requests are appropriate for the project and fully justified</li> <li>• present a recommendation for the GRP to either: leave the requested budget intact, propose modifying the budget, or seek advice from the panel regarding specific budget.</li> </ul>
<b>Assigners Academy (if applicable to the call)</b>	<p>The NHMRC Assigners Academy consists of researchers with extensive knowledge of relevant Australian and international health and medical research and with a reputation for integrity. If applicable to the call, the NHMRC Assigners Academy may support the peer review process by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying and advising NHMRC of all real or potential CoIs they have with applications</li> <li>• providing advice to NHMRC on panel membership and assignment of applications to GRPs where necessary</li> <li>• sourcing up to two External Assessors for each of the applications they are allocated. In undertaking this task Assigners Academy members may consult other experts in the field including international experts. The decision on which assessor/s to nominate rests with the Assigners Academy member.</li> </ul> <p>Members with Indigenous health expertise will be responsible for confirming that Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander health research applications have at least 20% of their research effort or capacity building related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.</p>
<b>External Assessors (if applicable to the call)</b>	<p>Depending on the number of applications received and the type of call, NHMRC may seek external assessments for each application.</p> <p>If External Assessors are required for a Peer Review Panel, NHMRC will endeavour to obtain two written assessments from External Assessors for each application. An External Assessor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is considered to be an independent reviewer for the application</li> <li>• can be a national or international researcher</li> <li>• is chosen on the basis of their expertise in their field of research to complement the application in question but do not necessarily have expertise to cover the entire application</li> <li>• can be an Assigners Academy member</li> <li>• must identify and advise NHMRC of all real or potential Conflict of Interests (CoIs) they may have with any aspect of the application prior to undertaking the assessment</li> <li>• will provide written assessments focusing on the key strengths and weaknesses against each of the assessment criteria including appropriate queries which will then be made available to applicants for response</li> <li>• will provide comment on the budget, where appropriate</li> <li>• will not provide scores in their report.</li> </ul>
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander External Assessors (if applicable to the call)</b>	<p>NHMRC will obtain an External Assessor with appropriate expertise in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander health research applications that have at least 20% of their research effort or capacity building related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.</p> <p>However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health External Assessors may not be used if adequate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health expertise is available within the GRP, such as for Indigenous Health Research Grant Review Panels (IGRPs) assessing applications to calls specifically relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.</p> <p>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander External Assessors will:</p>

Role	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review applications addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health areas against the 2018 NHMRC TCR Category Descriptors Incorporating Assessment Criteria for Health Research Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples at <a href="#">Attachment C</a> and NHMRC’s Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria as set out in section 6.3 of the <i>2018 NHMRC Funding Rules</i></li> <li>• provide written assessments focusing on the key strengths and weaknesses of the application against the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria, including appropriate queries of applicants against the criteria (refer to <a href="#">Attachment D</a> for guidance).</li> </ul> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander External Assessors will not provide scores in their report.</p>
<b>Office of NHMRC – Research Scientists</b>	<p>NHMRC staff with extensive research expertise may be involved in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing the membership of the GRPs</li> <li>• allocating applications to spokespersons</li> <li>• assisting and advising on the GRP process</li> <li>• Chairing or Assistant Chairing GRPs</li> <li>• selecting external assessors</li> <li>• providing advice on the assessment and treatment of disclosures of interest</li> <li>• finalising budget considerations, if required.</li> </ul>
<b>Office of NHMRC - Secretariat</b>	<p>NHMRC Secretariat may:</p> <p><i>Prior to the GRP meeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• act as the first point of contact for GRP members</li> <li>• approach potential GRP members, on advice from NHMRC Research Scientists and the Assigners Academy</li> <li>• provide administrative support and advice to the Chair, Assistant Chair and GRP members</li> <li>• prepare the list of NFFC applications (if NFFC process is required)</li> <li>• prepare the order in which applications will be reviewed during the GRP meeting</li> <li>• notify NHMRC Scientific Staff of any requests for clarification or advice.</li> </ul> <p><i>At the GRP meeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• operate RGMS e-scoring processes</li> <li>• advise the Chair if GRP process points have been overlooked</li> <li>• as applicable, record budget adjustments on recommendation from the panel</li> <li>• record outcomes of GRP recommendations.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Observers</b>	<p>NHMRC invites respected members of the general community to sit in on the GRP meetings to observe that NHMRC policy and procedures are being adhered to. The Observers assist NHMRC in ensuring that the assessment of all applications is fair, equitable and impartial.</p> <p>Observers will be briefed on GRP procedures prior to the GRP meeting. They will not participate in the discussion of any application, and will be identified by their name tags.</p> <p><b>At the GRP meeting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify and advise the Panel Chair of all real or potential conflicts they have with applications on the GRP</li> <li>• monitor the procedural aspects of the GRPs</li> <li>• provide feedback to NHMRC on the consistency of procedures in the GRP.</li> </ul> <p>Observers may raise issues of a general nature with NHMRC Research Scientists who may communicate these issues to Chairs.</p>

Role	Responsibilities
	Observers are subject to the same Col requirements as the GRP panellists. Where a high Col exists, the Observer will leave the room.
<b>Additional Experts</b>	<p>Additional experts with research expertise and experience may be appointed to provide expert reports on applications to GRP members including at GRP meetings. Additional Experts do not participate in scoring or budget discussion of applications and must identify and advise the NHMRC of all real or perceived Cols they have with applications assigned to them.</p> <p>Additional Experts are responsible for providing advice to the GRP on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the strengths and weaknesses of the application</li> <li>• the context of the applicant's research field and their standing in that field</li> <li>• the applicant's track record and the competitiveness of the application based on the applicant's current stage in their career, relative to opportunity.</li> </ul>

### Peer Review Participants - Targeted Calls for Research Addressing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Area, (if relevant to the call)

Role	Responsibilities
<b>Indigenous Health Research Grant Review Panel Members (IGRP)</b>	<p>For TCRs addressing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health area, an Indigenous Health Research Grant Review Panel will be established in place of a GRP. The panel membership will be made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, and/or researchers with expertise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research. NHMRC will endeavour to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers constitute at least 50 per cent of the membership. The IGRP will assess applications against the TCR Category Descriptors and Assessment Criteria for Indigenous Health Research. The IGRP will also review the relative strength of each application in terms of how well it addresses NHMRC's Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria (see section 6.3 of the <i>2018 NHMRC Funding Rules</i>). Refer to the 2018 NHMRC TCR Category Descriptors Incorporating Assessment Criteria for Health Research Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples at <a href="#">Attachment C</a>.</p> <p>IGRP members will:</p> <p><b>Prior to the GRP meeting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familiarise themselves with documentation relevant to the funding scheme</li> <li>• identify and advise NHMRC of all real or potential interests they have with applications on the IGRP</li> <li>• read all documentation including the Assessors Report and the Applicant Responses for each application to be assessed by the IGRP</li> <li>• provide a fair, impartial and scientific assessment against the assessment criteria, using the category descriptors</li> <li>• confirm the inclusion of applications on the NFFC list and 'rescue' up to one application that warrants discussion at the GRP (if the NFFC process takes place).</li> </ul> <p><b>During panel meetings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• score each application reviewed by the panel using RGMS e-scoring (using the category descriptors in the <i>call-specific Funding Rules</i>)</li> <li>• prepare for and participate in the panel discussion for each application including budget discussion, where applicable.</li> </ul>

Role	Responsibilities
<p><b>Primary Spokesperson (1SP)</b></p>	<p><i>Prior to the GRP meeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the allocated applications against the assessment criteria in the call-specific Funding Rules, including whether the expected outcomes address the scope, aims and objectives of the TCR</li> <li>• assess any claims for Career Disruption</li> <li>• score the applications using the category descriptors as a guide and prepare a Spokesperson report in RGMS for rebuttal by the applicant within the prescribed timeframe (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• review the Assessor Reports for inappropriate or biased comments (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• following consideration of the Assessors Report and Applicant Response, re-score the application in RGMS within the prescribed timeframes (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• prepare speaking notes for the GRP meeting for each application assigned as 1SP</li> <li>• rigorously assess the proposed budget to ensure that Personal Support Packages (PSPs), Direct Research Costs (DRCs) and equipment requests are appropriate for the project and fully justified</li> <li>• prepare a recommendation for the GRP to either: leave the requested budget intact, propose modifying the budget, or seek advice from the panel regarding specific budget requests.</li> </ul> <p><i>At the GRP meeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide detailed advice to the panel of any applications that have claimed a career disruption</li> <li>• lead the discussion using prepared notes and contribute to the budget discussion</li> <li>• provide final scores for allocated applications based on discussions</li> <li>• rigorously assess the proposed budget to ensure that PSPs, DRCs and equipment requests are appropriate for the project and fully justified.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Secondary Spokesperson (2SP)</b></p>	<p><i>Prior to the PRP meeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the allocated applications against the assessment criteria in the call-specific Funding Rules, including whether the expected outcomes address the scope, aims and objectives of the TCR</li> <li>• assess any claims for Career Disruption</li> <li>• score the applications using the category descriptors as a guide and prepare a Spokesperson report in RGMS for rebuttal by the applicant within the prescribed timeframe (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• review the Assessors' Reports for inappropriate or biased comments (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• following consideration of the Assessors' Report and Applicant Response, re-score the application in RGMS within the prescribed timeframes (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• prepare speaking notes for each application assigned to them as 2SP focusing on the Assessors' Report and Applicant response (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• rigorously assess the proposed budget to ensure that Personal Support Packages (PSPs), Direct Research Costs (DRCs) and equipment requests are appropriate for the project and fully justified</li> <li>• prepare a recommendation for the GRP to either: leave the requested</li> </ul>



Role	Responsibilities
	<p>budget intact, propose modifying the budget, or seek advice from the panel regarding specific budget requests.</p> <p><i>At the GRP meeting:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• add to the 1SP comments and discussion with reference to prepared notes</li> <li>• ensure that External Assessor(s) comments (if received for the call), specifically the strengths and weaknesses raised, are presented to the GRP</li> <li>• ensure that the Applicant Response is presented (if applicable to the call)</li> <li>• provide final scores for allocated applications based on discussions</li> <li>• be prepared to assist the 1SP in discussion on the appropriateness or otherwise, of the requested budget with reference to the individual elements of the budget ensuring PSPs, DRCs and equipment requests are appropriate for the project and fully justified</li> <li>• present a recommendation for the GRP to either: leave the requested budget intact, propose modifying the budget, or seek advice from the panel regarding specific budget.</li> </ul>

## 3 Peer review process

NHMRC's peer review process is designed to provide a rigorous, fair, transparent and consistent assessment of the merits of each application according to the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) to ensure that only the highest quality, value for money research is recommended for funding (see section 11.2 of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*).

All applications are assessed against the assessment criteria in the *call-specific Funding Rules* and the corresponding category descriptors. Applications that are accepted to relate to the improvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health are also assessed against the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* as set out in section 6.3 of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*.

An overview of the 2018 TCR peer review process can be found in [Attachment A](#). Further detail about each step is provided below.

### 3.1 Before the GRP Meeting

#### 3.1.1 Establishment of the Grant Review Panel

The GRP is established to review all applications received by the call. The number of GRPs formed will depend on the total number and type of applications received. Each GRP will be led by a Chair with support from an Assistant Chair. Both will be independent and will not participate in the assessment or scoring of applications. Each panel is supported by a dedicated NHMRC Secretariat who will support the GRP operations.

The number of members on the GRP will vary depending on the number of applications received. Panel members are chosen for their expertise and experience by NHMRC staff. The [Guiding Principles for Peer Review Panel Membership Nomination and Appointments](#) endorsed by Research Committee are applied when determining each panel's membership.

NHMRC endeavours to limit occurrences where the Chief Investigator (CI) of an application to the call is a Member, Chair or Assistant Chair of the panel for the call.

Information will not be revealed to the applicant regarding the membership of the panel that reviewed the application.

### 3.1.2 External Assessors

Where applicable to the call, depending on the number of applications received and the type of call, NHMRC may seek external assessments for each application.

External Assessors provide expert advice to the GRP members on how well the applicant has addressed the assessment criteria in a specific field of research and its weaknesses, and may focus on aspects of the application that require further clarification.

NHMRC will obtain an External Assessor with appropriate expertise in the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander health research applications that have at least 20% of their research effort or capacity building related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander External Assessor will assess the application against the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* as set out in section 6.3 of the *2018 NHMRC Funding Rules*.

However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health External Assessors may not be used if adequate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health expertise is available within the GRP, such as for Indigenous Health Research Grant Review Panels (IGRPs) assessing applications to calls specifically relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

Potential External Assessors will be asked to identify any CoIs prior to gaining access to the full application. If the nominated External Assessor has declared a low or no conflict, they will be provided access to the full application.

External Assessors will submit their assessment in RGMS. Assessments will provide comments addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the application against the Assessment Criteria in the *call-specific Funding Rules*. They may also remark on the proposed budget and include any additional comments and questions they may have for the applicant.

External Assessors should focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the application. The report should help clarify outstanding questions **but not overly criticise the application**, not provide scores, not contain inappropriate language or defamatory remarks, or comments/questions irrelevant to the assessment criteria. Assessors must refer to section 6.1 of the *2018 NHMRC Guide to Peer Review* and the 'TCR Assessment Do's and Don'ts' at [Attachment E](#) of these Guidelines. NHMRC will not preview Assessors' comments.

External Assessors should also consider whether the application meets the Definition and Scope as outlined in the *call-specific Funding Rules*. If the External Assessor considers the application to be outside the scope of the TCR, they should raise this in their report and with NHMRC.

Where Assessors believe that the proposed research has already been done by others, they may raise this in their assessment as long as they provide references so that applicants have the opportunity to respond in their applicant response.

### 3.1.3 Identification of GRP member conflicts

Panel members will be provided access (via RGMS) to the Snapshot Summary Report of each relevant application and will be asked to declare any CoIs. Members will only be given access to the full application if they have a low or no CoI. For information on what constitutes a CoI see section 4.3.2 of the *2018 NHMRC Guide to Peer Review*.

Members are asked to notify the NHMRC Secretariat immediately if a CoI is identified later in the process. It is important that all CoIs are declared early. CoIs that are not declared until late in the assessment process or GRP meeting can cause delays.

**Panel members are required to review and confirm all NHMRC CoI rulings in advance of the panel meeting.**

### 3.1.4 Allocation of Spokesperson

While declaring their Cols, panel members will indicate their suitability to act as a Spokesperson on applications, based on their expertise. NHMRC staff, with guidance from the Assigners Academy where necessary, will allocate Spokespersons to each application based on the indicated suitability and declared Cols of each panel member. Panel members will be notified of their allocations accordingly.

When indicating expertise, it would be expected that GRP members have a moderate or high level of expertise for the majority of applications received via the call. Members should only indicate no expertise in cases where they feel strongly that they do not have the expertise to assess the application. In the event that there is insufficient expertise on a panel, every effort will be made to secure additional expertise, possibly via an Additional Expert.

### 3.1.5 GRP members access applications

All panel members will be provided with access to the full application where there is no or low Col. When accessing the full application, panel members should re-check whether they have a Col not previously evident.

GRP members who become aware of any previously undeclared Col should contact the NHMRC Secretariat immediately. The panel member will be required to delete or destroy any files in their possession pertaining to applications with which they have declared a late high Col.

### 3.1.6 Preparation of Spokespersons reports and initial scores

Where applicable to the call, the 1SP and 2SP prepare a Spokesperson report that will be provided to the applicant as part of the Assessors' Report. The Spokesperson report should discuss the key strengths and weaknesses of the application (see section 6.1 of the *2018 NHMRC Guide to NHMRC Peer Review*) and include questions on those aspects of the application that require clarification, including the appropriateness of the requested budget. For guidance on NHMRC Budget Guidelines refer to the [Budget mechanism for funding commencing in 2018](#) on the NHMRC website.

To ensure impartiality and independence of assessments the Spokespersons must not discuss the application and will not have access to External Assessor reports.

NHMRC will not preview Spokesperson comments. Spokespersons must ensure that their reports do not contain inappropriate or defamatory remarks. Further guidance on what may be considered inappropriate remarks, and additional guidance on assessment do's and don'ts, can be found at section 6.1 of the *2018 Guide to NHMRC Peer Review* and at [Attachment E](#) of these guidelines.

The 1SP and 2SP will provide initial scores in RGMS against each assessment criteria for all applications for which they are the nominated spokesperson. These scores will not be provided to applicants in their Applicant Response, but will be provided to other panel members prior to the panel meeting.

Spokespersons should also consider whether the application meets the Definition and Scope as outlined in the *call-specific Funding Rules*. If the Spokesperson considers the application to be outside of the scope of the TCR, they should raise this in their report, and with NHMRC.

When determining questions for the applicant, Spokespersons should:

- be clear and concise so as to not mislead the applicant
- not provide an opportunity for the applicant to modify the research plan in any major way
- not provide a report which has so many questions/critiques that the applicant cannot respond within the two page limit
- not provide arbitrary or irrelevant commentary on the application
- not identify themselves as the 1SP or 2SP.

Questions may seek to:

- obtain additional scientific information that may assist the GRP/IGRP to understand the application
- gain further justification of any perceived weaknesses in the project
- clarify budget issues, including appropriateness of PSPs, DRCs and equipment (where applicable) requested
- determine whether the requested budget is appropriate
- clarify relationships with other applications, funding sources and existing grants held by the applicants
- give the applicant the opportunity to explain any identified issues or problems with their track record, or where relevant, the composition of the proposed research team.

### 3.1.7 Release of Assessor Reports

Where applicable to the call, the Spokesperson and External Assessor/s' reports will be collated into the Assessor Report and made available to applicants through RGMS. NHMRC endeavours to release Assessor reports when at least one External Assessor (if relevant to the call) and both Spokespersons have submitted their reports. NHMRC will provide prior notification to applicants of the upcoming release of the Assessors Report.

**Note:** The comments provided in the Assessors' Report are **not** an indication of the final outcome of the application.

### 3.1.8 Applicant Response

Where applicable to the call, applicants will be given the opportunity to review the Assessors' Report and submit a written response.

Instructions on the required format of Applicant Response and the due date will be provided in the notification of release of the Assessor Report.

The response should address the questions raised and is not an opportunity to modify the proposed research plan.

Applicants will be allowed up **to 10 days**, inclusive of weekends and public holidays, in which to submit their Applicant Response.

The provision of the Assessors' Report to applicants is dependent upon the timely provision and availability of reports from the Spokespersons and External Assessors and therefore may occur outside of advised time periods. Where significant delays occur, applicants will be notified.

Where applicable, panel members should raise any concerns with the Assessor Reports or the Applicant Response with NHMRC immediately.

### 3.1.9 Spokesperson reassessment of applications

Where applicable to the call, once the Applicant Responses have been received, the 1SP and 2SP for each application will consider the research proposal in conjunction with the Assessor Report and Applicant Response. The 1SP and 2SP will then be asked to review their initial scores and may rescore the application in RGMS against each of the assessment criteria.

### 3.1.10 Removing less competitive applications - Not For Further Consideration

Where applicable to the call, the Not for Further Consideration (NFFC) process aims to identify and remove applications that are assessed as being less competitive than others on the panel. NHMRC will determine for each call whether an NFFC process is to take place, depending on the number of applications received.

If the NFFC process takes place, the Spokespersons' scores following review of the Assessors Report and Applicant Response (where applicable) will determine the identification of applications considered to be the least competitive. The bottom 50% (or less, depending on the number of applications received) will form a preliminary NFFC list. An NFFC list, tailored for conflicts of interest, will be provided to panel members before the GRP meeting. Each panel member has the opportunity

to rescue one application from the NFFC list if they strongly feel that an application warrants full review at the GRP meeting. Applications not appearing on the NFFC list will proceed to full review.

### **Exclusion criteria**

An application will be excluded from NFFC for the following reasons:

- NHMRC has not received a score and an assessment report from both the 1SP and 2SP and an assessment report from at least one external assessor (if applicable to the call).
- Overall scores from the Spokespersons are two or more points away from each other and the notional score of either 1SP or 2SP ordinarily would have placed the application in the top 50% of ranked applications.

## **3.2 Grant Review Panel meeting**

The GRP will meet to review each application that is not on the NFFC list. Panels may meet face-to-face, or via videoconference.

Members will be provided with a short briefing prior to the commencement of the peer review process by NHMRC staff, or via webinar in the weeks prior to the GRP meeting. This briefing will provide members with information on their duties and responsibilities and allow members to ask questions and clarify any matters relating to the peer review process.

A quorum of more than 50% of panel members must be involved for an application to be reviewed and scored by the GRP. NHMRC will endeavour to identify, prior to the GRP meeting, those applications that do not have a quorum and obtain a suitably qualified additional member to participate in panel discussion and to score that application.

### **3.2.1 Declaration of inter-relationships**

Suggested time limit: 15 minutes

When members (including the Chair, Assistant Chair and Secretariat) meet face-to-face for the first time, each panel member will be invited to briefly describe their expertise and previous peer review experience. During their introductions, members will be asked to declare any relationships with other panel members including:

- current and previous collaborations
- former student/teacher/mentoring relationships
- common employment/institutional relationships
- other relationships that may, or be seen to, impair fair and impartial assessment.

This information is sought for the benefit of panel members, who may raise any concerns arising from declarations with NHMRC staff.

### **3.2.2 Chair to announce the application**

Suggested time limit: 2 minutes

The Chair will announce the application to be discussed including the title, Administering Institution and the Chief Investigators (CIs).

The Chair will identify any members who have previously identified a Col with the application. Those members with a high Col will be asked to leave the room or disconnect from the videoconference.

The Chair will invite members to declare any late Col with the application. If a member declares a new Col, or wishes to discuss any concerns related to an existing Col, the matter will be discussed with the panel. It is up to the remaining panel members to determine if the new interest constitutes a high Col and if the declaring panel member should leave the room. The details of the late Col will be recorded by the NHMRC. As this decision making can take extra time, it is important that all Col are declared and decided upon well in advance of the meeting, where possible.

If a Col is declared at the GRP meeting by a 1SP or 2SP, which prevents them from participating in the assessment of the application, a new 1SP or 2SP will be assigned to the application and the scores from the initial Spokesperson will be discarded. Discussion of the application will be moved to later in the review order, where possible, to give the new Spokesperson/s time to prepare.

Once highly conflicted members have left the room (those with a low CoI remain in the panel room), the Chair will announce if there were any career disruptions claimed. The Chair will then identify the Spokespersons and External Assessors (where applicable) and announce the Spokesperson scores for each of the assessment criteria.

### 3.2.3 1SP to comment on the application

Suggested time limit: 8 minutes

The 1SP will:

- set out the impact of any career disruption/s (where applicable)
- discuss the application's strengths and weaknesses against the Assessment Criteria in the *call-specific Funding Rules*, including whether the expected outcomes address the scope, aims and objectives of the TCR
- ensure that relevant considerations (e.g. track record relative to opportunity, career disruption/s) are highlighted
- **not** make reference to the budget at this stage.

### 3.2.4 2SP to comment on the application

Suggested time limit: 6 minutes

The 2SP will:

- add to the 1SP comments and discussion with reference to prepared notes
- present the External Assessors' views to the GRP, specifically the strengths and weaknesses raised, if applicable to the call
- present the Applicant Response, if applicable to the call
- briefly highlight their agreement/disagreement with the 1SP and External Assessors' comments
- **not** make reference to the budget at this stage.

### 3.2.5 Full panel discussion

Suggested time limit: 5 minutes

The Chair will open discussion to the panel. GRP members have an opportunity to ask questions of both Spokespersons; discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the application; and ensure that relevant considerations are taken into account.

The Chair must ensure adequate review of the application occurs, that all members get a fair opportunity to comment and no member exerts undue influence over others.

### 3.2.6 Scoring by members

Suggested time limit: 3 minutes

Following the panel's discussion, the Chair will ask the Spokespersons to confirm their scores against the category descriptors, noting that scores may change as a result of the full panel discussion. The Chair will then ask if any member intends to score two or more points away from any of the 1SP. If so, the member must declare this to the GRP and provide a brief justification.

All members in the room, excluding the Chair and Assistant Chair, must independently score the application through RGMS E-scoring. All scoring members will provide scores against the assessment criteria using the seven-point scale as reference. At the completion of scoring, the GRP Secretariat will announce the following results:



1. Rating - the rating will be determined by including each voting member's score for each of the assessment criteria. The rating, as calculated arithmetically to three decimal places, will take account of the weighting of each criterion.

2. Category - this will be deemed, based on the calculated rating, as follows:

Rating range	Deemed category
1.001 - 1.500	1
1.501 - 2.500	2
2.501 - 3.500	3
3.501 - 4.500	4
4.501 - 5.500	5
5.501 - 6.500	6
6.501 - 7.000	7

Where members have concerns regarding the final score, the Chair should invite further discussion. If the panel collectively determines that reassessment is warranted, members will be invited to independently rescore that application. Panel members should not aim to achieve a consensus score, nor take into consideration the potential overall ranking or funding outcome of an application.

### **3.2.7 Discussion by exception of proposed budget**

Suggested time limit: 5 minutes

Budget discussions should not commence until the NHMRC Secretariat has announced the rating and category. Applications with a score of 5.001 or greater (top half of category 5) will trigger a discussion of the budget. Depending on the number of applications received to the call, budget discussions may occur for applications below this cut off.

The Chair will facilitate the budget discussion to ensure applications are considered fairly and equitably. The 2SP will lead the budget discussion and comment on the appropriateness of the outlined costs and provide any recommendations. The 1SP should be prepared to assist the 2SP if required. Other panel members may also provide relevant comments. Where the GRP deems the proposed budget is in excess of that required to accomplish the research objectives, appropriate reductions may be recommended and reasons recorded by the Assistant Chair and NHMRC Secretariat.

NHMRC will record budget recommendations as agreed by the panel. NHMRC will check the budget recommendations to ensure the budgets have been recorded correctly.

NHMRC research staff may amend the budget recommended by the GRP for any application if deemed necessary.

### **3.2.8 Reconciliation and further review of applications**

At the end of each day's deliberations, a reconciliation of applications reviewed will take place. This process gives members an opportunity to raise any concerns regarding applications that have been reviewed throughout the day.

Where a member believes an application may have been reviewed in an inconsistent manner, they should raise the matter with the Chair. The NHMRC Secretariat will ensure that members with high Cols leave the room prior to discussing the application and the reason for concern.

In the event that the Chair determines an application needs to be reassessed, the application will be reopened for discussion and rescored independently by the panel at the next opportunity. The Chair may also revisit budget discussions at the end of each day to ensure consistency was achieved.

### 3.3 Post GRP meeting

After the meetings conclude the following steps occur:

1. Applications ranked: in the case of multiple panels for a TCR, the scores may be linearised to ensure that NHMRC funds the same proportion of applications that fall within funded categories in each panel.
2. Funding recommendations: NHMRC will make a funding recommendation to Research Committee. Research Committee recommends those applications to be funded through NHMRC Council to the CEO who submits them for approval to the Minister with Portfolio responsibility for NHMRC.
3. Funding announcements: subsequent to Ministerial approval, applicants and RAOs will be advised of the outcome of their applications through RGMS, which may be subject to an embargo.
4. Preparation of Application Assessment Summaries: All applications not deemed NFFC seeking will receive numerical feedback in the form of an Application Assessment Summary, following the announcement of outcomes.

### 3.4 GRP documentation

GRP members must retain their speaking notes and any other notes they make of the peer review process until the outcomes of the panel's deliberations are finalised. For GRP meetings, this is following discussion of the last application and the Secretariat has confirmed all data entry is complete. After this time notes, both hard copy and electronic, should be disposed of appropriately.

## 4 Attachments

- Attachment A: Overview of the 2018 Targeted Call for Research Peer Review Process
- Attachment B: 2018 NHMRC Targeted Call for Research Category Descriptors
- Attachment C: 2018 NHMRC Targeted Call for Research Category Descriptors and Assessment Criteria for Health Research Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- Attachment D: Guidance for Assessors to Assess Applications Against the Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria
- Attachment E: TCR Assessments – Do's and Don'ts

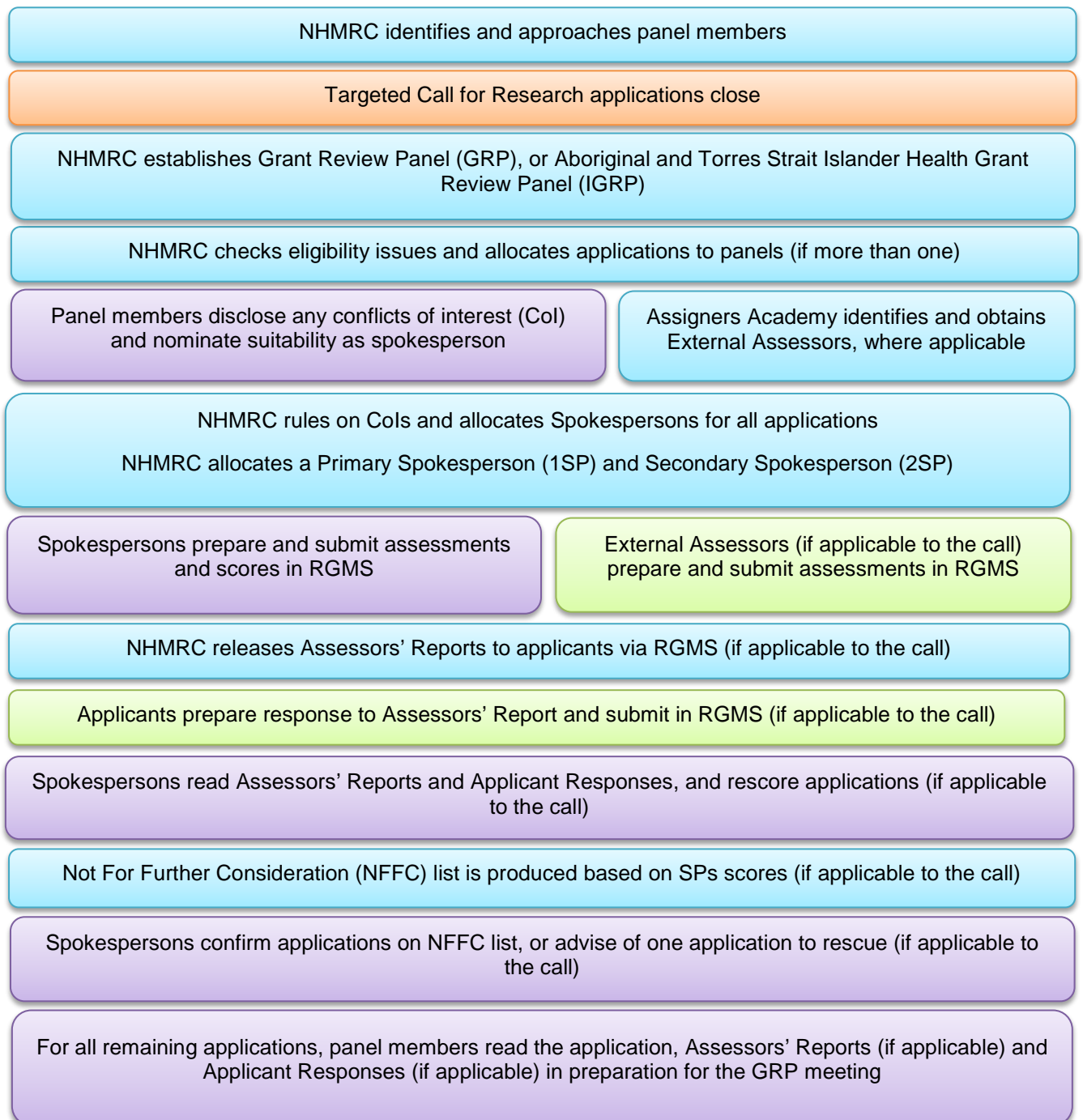


# Attachment A – Overview of the 2018 Targeted Call for Research Peer Review Process

 Grant Review Panel

 NHMRC

 External to NHMRC and GRP



## Funding Recommendation Process



## Attachment B: 2018 NHMRC Targeted Call for Research Category Descriptors

Category	<i>Scientific Quality and Relevance to Successfully Delivering the Expected Outcomes of the TCR</i>	<i>Record of Achievement of the Team in Areas and Disciplines Relevant to the TCR – relative to opportunity</i>
<b>7 Outstanding</b>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>highly relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• is <b>without question, highly feasible</b> and <b>will successfully</b> achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• has objectives that are <b>well-defined, highly coherent</b> and <b>strongly developed</b></li> <li>• has a <b>near flawless</b> design</li> <li>• will provide <b>very high quality</b> evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• is <b>highly competitive</b> with the best comparable research proposals internationally</li> <li>• is <b>highly likely</b> to be translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• will almost certainly result in highly influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a track record that <b>specifically targets</b> the proposed research both in terms of depth and breadth</li> <li>• has <b>all</b> the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<b>6 Excellent</b>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>very relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• is <b>highly feasible</b> and is <b>highly likely</b> to achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• has objectives that are <b>clear, logical</b> and <b>well developed</b></li> <li>• is <b>excellent</b> in design</li> <li>• will provide <b>high quality</b> evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• is <b>competitive</b> with strong comparable research proposals internationally</li> <li>• is <b>very likely</b> to be translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• is <b>very likely</b> to result in highly influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a track record that is <b>highly relevant</b> to the proposed research in terms of depth and breadth</li> <li>• has <b>all</b> the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<b>5 Very Good</b>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• is <b>feasible</b> and is <b>likely</b> to achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• has objectives that are <b>clear</b> and <b>logical</b></li> <li>• raises a <b>few minor concerns</b> with respect to the study design</li> <li>• will provide <b>some high quality</b> evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the TCR</li> <li>• may <b>not be highly competitive</b> with comparable research proposals internationally</li> <li>• <b>maybe</b> translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• may result in influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a track record that is <b>very relevant</b> to the proposed research in terms of depth and breadth</li> <li>• has <b>most of</b> the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>

<p><b>4 Good</b></p>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is somewhat <b>relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• raises <b>some concerns</b> regarding feasibility and likelihood to achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• has objectives that are <b>clear</b></li> <li>• raises <b>some concerns</b> regarding the study design</li> <li>• will provide <b>some evidence</b> that addresses the expected outcomes of the TCR</li> <li>• is <b>not likely to be competitive</b> with similar research proposals internationally</li> <li>• <b>maybe</b> translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• may result in <b>modestly</b> influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a track record that is <b>somewhat relevant</b> with the proposed research in terms of depth and breadth</li> <li>• has <b>some</b> of the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3 Marginal</b></p>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>not particularly relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• raises <b>several concerns</b> regarding feasibility and likelihood to achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• is <b>somewhat unclear</b> in its objectives</li> <li>• raises <b>several concerns</b> regarding the study design</li> <li>• may provide <b>limited</b> evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the TCR</li> <li>• is <b>not competitive</b> nationally or internationally</li> <li>• <b>unlikely</b> to be translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• may result in publications of marginal influence.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has <b>limited</b> track record in the field of the proposed research</li> <li>• has minimal skills and expertise required to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2 Unsatisfactory</b></p>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• raises <b>several major concerns</b> regarding feasibility and likelihood to achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• is <b>unclear</b> in its' objectives</li> <li>• raises <b>several major concerns</b> regarding the study design</li> <li>• is <b>not adequately relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• is not competitive nationally or internationally</li> <li>• unlikely to provide evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the TCR</li> <li>• very unlikely to be translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• unlikely to result in influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a track record which <b>does not relate well</b> to the proposed research</li> <li>• is <b>deficient in many</b> of the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>1 Poor</b></p>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contains a research plan that <b>does not seem to be feasible</b> and is <b>unlikely</b> to be successfully completed</li> <li>• is <b>very unclear</b> in its objectives</li> </ul>	<p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does <b>not have a relevant</b> track record in the field of the proposed research</li> <li>• is <b>deficient in most</b> of the required skills and expertise to</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• contains a study design that is <b>not adequate</b></li><li>• is <b>not relevant</b> to the call</li><li>• is not competitive nationally or internationally</li><li>• very unlikely to provide evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the TCR</li><li>• no potential to be translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li><li>• very unlikely to result in influential publications.</li></ul>	successfully achieve the expected outcomes.
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# Attachment C: 2018 NHMRC Targeted Call for Research Category Descriptors Incorporating Assessment Criteria for Health Research Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Category	<i>Scientific Quality and Relevance to Successfully Delivering the Expected Outcomes of the TCR</i>	<i>Record of Achievement of the Team in Areas and Disciplines Relevant to the TCR – relative to opportunity</i>
<b>7 Outstanding</b>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>highly relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• is <b>without question, highly feasible</b> and <b>will successfully</b> achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• has objectives that are <b>well-defined, highly coherent</b> and <b>strongly developed</b></li> <li>• has a <b>near flawless</b> design</li> <li>• will provide <b>veryhigh quality</b> evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• is <b>highly competitive</b> with the best comparable research proposals internationally</li> <li>• is <b>highly likely</b> to be translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• will almost certainly result in highly influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a track record that <b>specifically targets</b> the proposed research both in terms of depth and breadth</li> <li>• has <b>all</b> the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<b>7 Indigenous Criteria</b>	<p><b>Sustainability and transferability</b></p> <p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>outstanding in demonstrating</b> how the research and potential outcomes are a priority for the community</li> <li>• will definitely lead to <b>major and effective</b> health gains for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</li> <li>• will have a <b>veryhigh impact</b> on health services delivery or other community priorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Benefit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outcomes from the proposal will have a <b>strongly significant</b> health benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building capability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant team has an <b>outstanding track record</b> in working with communities and building capability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> <li>• The research proposal <b>outstandingly</b> demonstrates how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and researchers will develop <b>outstanding</b> capabilities through partnerships and participation in the project.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrates <b>outstanding</b> levels of community engagement, ensuring that the proposal is <b>highly feasible</b> and will build <b>outstanding capability</b> among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> </ul>

<p><b>6 Excellent</b></p>	<p><b>The research proposal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>very relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• is <b>highly feasible</b> and is <b>highly likely</b> to achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• has objectives that are <b>clear, logical</b> and <b>well developed</b></li> <li>• is <b>excellent</b> in design</li> <li>• will provide <b>high quality</b> evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• is <b>competitive</b> with strong comparable research proposals internationally</li> <li>• is <b>very likely</b> to be translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• is <b>very likely</b> to result in highly influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The applicant team:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a track record that is <b>highly relevant</b> to the proposed research in terms of depth and breadth</li> <li>• has <b>all</b> the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6 Indigenous Criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Sustainability and transferability</b></p> <p><b>The research proposal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>excellent in demonstrating</b> how the research and potential outcomes are a priority for the community</li> <li>• will lead to <b>considerable and effective</b> health gains for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</li> <li>• will have a <b>high impact</b> on health services delivery or other community priorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Benefit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outcomes from the proposal will have a <b>significant</b> health benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building Capability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant team has an <b>excellent track record</b> in working with communities and building capability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> <li>• The research proposal demonstrates <b>excellently</b> how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and researchers will develop <b>excellent</b> capabilities through partnerships and participation in the project.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p><b>The applicant team:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrates <b>excellent</b> levels of community engagement, ensuring that the proposal is <b>highly feasible</b> and will build <b>excellent capability</b> among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5 Very Good</b></p>	<p><b>The research proposal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• is <b>feasible</b> and is <b>likely</b> to achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• has objectives that are <b>clear</b> and <b>logical</b></li> <li>• raises a <b>few minor concerns</b> with respect to the study design</li> <li>• will provide <b>some high quality</b> evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the TCR</li> <li>• may <b>not be highly competitive</b> with comparable research proposals internationally</li> <li>• <b>maybe</b> translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• may result in influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The applicant team:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a track record that is <b>very relevant</b> to the proposed research in terms of depth and breadth</li> <li>• has <b>most of</b> the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>

<p><b>5 Indigenous Criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Sustainability and transferability</b></p> <p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>clearly demonstrates</b> how the research and potential outcomes are a priority for the community</li> <li>• will lead to <b>effective</b> health gains for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</li> <li>• will have <b>an impact</b> on health services delivery or other community priorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Benefit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outcomes from the proposal will have <b>some</b> health benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building Capability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant team has a <b>very good track record</b> in working with communities and building capability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> <li>• The research proposal demonstrates well how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and researchers will develop <b>very good</b> capabilities through partnerships and participation in the project.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrates <b>very good</b> levels of community engagement, ensuring that the proposal is <b>likely to be feasible</b> and will build <b>very good capability</b> among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4 Good</b></p>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is somewhat <b>relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• raises <b>some concerns</b> regarding feasibility and likelihood to achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• has objectives that are <b>clear</b></li> <li>• raises <b>some concerns</b> regarding the study design</li> <li>• will provide <b>some evidence</b> that addresses the expected outcomes of the TCR</li> <li>• is <b>not likely to be competitive</b> with similar research proposals internationally</li> <li>• <b>maybe</b> translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• may result in <b>modestly</b> influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a track record that is <b>somewhat relevant</b> with the proposed research in terms of depth and breadth</li> <li>• has <b>some</b> of the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4 Indigenous Criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Sustainability and transferability</b></p> <p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrates how the research and potential outcomes are a priority for the community</li> <li>• <b>may</b> lead to effective health gains for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</li> <li>• may have <b>an impact</b> on health services delivery or other community priorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Benefit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outcomes from the proposal <b>may have some</b> health benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building capability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant team has a <b>good track record</b> in working with communities and building capability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> <li>• The research proposal demonstrates how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and researchers will develop <b>good</b> capabilities through partnerships and participation in the project. Raises <b>some concerns</b> about feasibility.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrates <b>good levels</b> of community engagement which may build <b>good capability</b> among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—this raises <b>some concerns</b> about feasibility</li> </ul>

<p><b>3 Marginal</b></p>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>not particularly relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• raises <b>several concerns</b> regarding feasibility and likelihood to achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• is <b>somewhat unclear</b> in its objectives</li> <li>• raises <b>several concerns</b> regarding the study design</li> <li>• may provide <b>limited</b> evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the TCR</li> <li>• is <b>not competitive</b> nationally or internationally</li> <li>• <b>unlikely</b> to be translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• may result in publications of marginal influence.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has <b>limited</b> track record in the field of the proposed research</li> <li>• has minimal skills and expertise required to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3 Indigenous Criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Sustainability and transferability</b></p> <p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• may lead to <b>limited or short-term</b> health gains for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</li> <li>• may have a <b>moderate</b> impact on health services delivery or other community priorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Benefit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The outcomes from the proposal are likely to have a <b>minimal health benefit</b> for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building capability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant team has a <b>marginal track record</b> in working with communities and building capability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> <li>• The research proposal <b>minimally</b> demonstrates how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and researchers may develop <b>minimal</b> capabilities through partnerships and participation in the project. This raises <b>several concerns</b> that the proposal is feasible and achievable.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrates <b>limited community engagement</b> and may build <b>minimal capability</b> among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples— this raises <b>several concerns</b> that the proposal is feasible and achievable</li> </ul>
<p><b>2 Unsatisfactory</b></p>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• raises <b>several major concerns</b> regarding feasibility and likelihood to achieve the expected outcomes of the call</li> <li>• is <b>unclear</b> in its' objectives</li> <li>• raises <b>several major concerns</b> regarding the study design</li> <li>• is <b>not adequately relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>• is not competitive nationally or internationally</li> <li>• unlikely to provide evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the TCR</li> <li>• very unlikely to be translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>• unlikely to result in influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a track record which <b>does not relate well</b> to the proposed research</li> <li>• is <b>deficient in many</b> of the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2 Indigenous Criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Sustainability and transferability</b></p> <p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is <b>unlikely</b> to lead to any health gains for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has <b>little or no community engagement</b> and is <b>unlikely</b> to build capability among Aboriginal and</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is <b>unlikely</b> to have any impact on health services delivery or other community priorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Benefit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The outcomes from the proposal are likely to have little or no health benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building capability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant team has an <b>unsatisfactory track record</b> in working with communities and building capability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> <li>The research proposal is <b>unlikely to build capability</b> among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and researchers—therefore the proposal is <b>unlikely to be feasible</b> and achievable.</li> </ul>	<p>Torres Strait Islander peoples—therefore the proposal is <b>unlikely to be feasible</b> and achievable.</p>
<p><b>1 Poor</b></p>	<p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains a research plan that <b>does not seem to be feasible</b> and is <b>unlikely</b> to be successfully completed</li> <li>is <b>very unclear</b> in its objectives</li> <li>contains a study design that is <b>not adequate</b></li> <li>is <b>not relevant</b> to the call</li> <li>is not competitive nationally or internationally</li> <li>very unlikely to provide evidence that addresses the expected outcomes of the TCR</li> <li>no potential to be translated into changes in the practice of clinical medicine, public health or in health policy</li> <li>very unlikely to result in influential publications.</li> </ul>	<p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>does <b>not have a relevant</b> track record in the field of the proposed research</li> <li>is <b>deficient in most</b> of the required skills and expertise to successfully achieve the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>1 Indigenous Criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Sustainability and transferability</b></p> <p>The <b>research proposal</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>will not</b> lead to any health gains for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples</li> <li><b>will not</b> have any impact on health services delivery or other community priorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Benefit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The outcomes from the proposal will have <b>no health benefit</b> for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> </ul> <p><b>Building Capability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant team has a poor track record in working with communities and building capability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> <li>The research proposal will not build any capability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and researchers —will not be feasible.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>The <b>applicant team</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has <b>no community engagement</b> and will <b>not build any capability</b> among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—will <b>not be feasible</b>.</li> </ul>

# Attachment D - Guidance for Assessors to Assess Applications Against the Indigenous Excellence Criteria

Panel members should consider the following when assessing applications that have a focus on the health of Indigenous Australians. The following points below should be explicit throughout the application and not just addressed separately within the Indigenous criteria section.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- Does the proposal clearly demonstrate thorough and a culturally appropriate level of engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or health services prior to submission of the application?
- Is there clear evidence that the level of engagement throughout the project will ensure the feasibility of the proposed study?
- Has the application demonstrated evidence that any of the methods, objectives or key elements of the proposed work have been formed, influenced or defined by the community?
- Were the Indigenous community instrumental in identifying and inviting further research into the health issue and will the research outcomes will directly benefit the 'named' communities?
- Is there a history of working together with the 'named' communities e.g., co-development of the grant, involvement in pilot studies or how the 'named' communities will have input/control over the research process and outcomes across the life of the project?

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFERABILITY**

- Does the proposal:
  - Provide a convincing argument that the outcomes will have a positive impact on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which can be maintained after the study has been completed?
  - Have relevance to other Indigenous communities?
  - Clearly plan for and articulate a clear approach to knowledge translation and exchange?
  - Demonstrate that the findings are likely to be taken up in health services and/or policy?
- Will the outcomes from the study make a lasting contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their wellbeing?

## **BENEFIT**

- Does the proposal clearly outline the potential health benefits (both intermediate and long term, direct and indirect) to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
- Does the proposal demonstrate that the benefit(s) of the project have been determined or guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities or organisations themselves?

## **BUILDING CAPABILITY**

- Does the proposal outline how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and/or communities will benefit from capability development?
- Does the proposal outline how researchers and individuals/group associated with the research project will develop capabilities that allow them to have a greater understanding/engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?
- Is there opportunity for two-way Chief Investigator/Associate Investigator capacity development for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous investigators?

## Attachment E – TCR Assessments – Do's and Don'ts

<i>General</i>	
<b>Do's</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide constructive feedback.</li> <li>• Only ask questions that will assist the grant review panel to make a fair and thorough evaluation of the application– noting that applicants must be able to address these questions without modifying their research proposal.</li> <li>• Use the category descriptors associated with the Assessment Criteria.</li> <li>• Consider both the strengths and weaknesses for each Assessment Criterion.</li> <li>• Consider any Career Disruptions in detail and understand the longer term impact these have on scientific output.</li> <li>• Provide specific references if you think that the applicants have overlooked a relevant body of work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide 'nil' comments.</li> <li>• Provide inappropriate comments.</li> <li>• Provide broad statements which suggest that the application is worthy or not worthy of funding.</li> <li>• Bring into question the integrity of the research or researchers – any concerns regarding potential research misconduct must be raised with NHMRC separately.</li> <li>• Question the eligibility of the applicant/s and/or application – this should be raised with NHMRC separately.</li> <li>• Question whether the researcher has previously submitted a similar application or receiving grant funding for comparable research – this should be raised with NHMRC separately.</li> <li>• Provide scores.</li> <li>• Focus on many minor points. Remember that the applicants have only two pages to respond to comments.</li> </ul>
<i>Scientific Quality and Relevance to Successfully Delivering the Expected Outcomes of the TCR – also refer to the category descriptors</i>	
<b>Do's</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the clarity of the hypotheses, research objectives and/or research plan</li> <li>• the strengths and weaknesses of the study design and feasibility</li> <li>• the statistical rigour of the proposed study</li> <li>• if applicable, the diversity of population samples, particularly when sampling exclusion criteria are specified</li> <li>• if applicable, the gender/sex of samples to be used in the study– is there an appropriate explanation for omitting a gender/sex?</li> <li>• whether the research has the potential to significantly advance the field</li> <li>• whether the research has the potential to identify new ideas, procedures, technologies, programs or health policy settings to important topics that will impact on human health</li> <li>• whether the outcomes will generate broad interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite or encourage an applicant to make significant changes to the submitted research plan.</li> <li>• Consider that a topic is ineligible simply because the bulk of the work is being conducted in a particular setting (e.g. overseas).</li> <li>• Assess the significance of the study as a measure of the prevalence/incidence of the health issue.</li> <li>• Make assessments of the study's significance based on the consensus in the field.</li> </ul>

***Record of Achievement of the Team in Areas and Disciplines Relevant to this TCR, relative to opportunity - also refer to the category descriptors***

<b>Do's</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all confirmed Career Disruptions – ensure the career disruption meets NHMRCs advice</li> <li>• whether the research team has the capability to deliver on the proposed research</li> <li>• whether the research team have included junior members on their team</li> <li>• the track record of all CIs, relative to opportunity (including career stage and/or career disruptions)</li> <li>• all aspects of the teams output, including publications, translation of findings into policy, practice or commercialisation</li> <li>• citations of publications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the CIAs track record only.</li> <li>• Consider only individual aspects of a team member's track record.</li> <li>• Dismiss career disruptions.</li> <li>• Use journal impact factors or person-centric citation metrics such as the H-index.</li> <li>• Suggest alternative/better CIs for the proposed project.</li> <li>• Simply 'average' the track record scores of the team.</li> <li>• Penalise teams in which junior members are being mentored to contribute to the research.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Budget</i></b>	
<b>Do's</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider whether the salary requests, direct research costs and equipment costs are necessary and fully justified.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide generalised comments that cannot be addressed.</li> </ul>