



Grantee Variation Submission – November 2021 Update

NHMRC is working towards the final transition of grant management processes from RGMS into Sapphire including Post Award functions. The Post Award modules will build on existing Sapphire application and assessment functionality that has been in production for more than twelve months for all Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) and Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) grant opportunities. To date, the Research Grant Management System (RGMS) and Sapphire have been running concurrently. Implementation of the Postaward module will enable replacement of RGMS and achievement of end to end capability in Sapphire by early 2022.

From November 2021, some Postaward functionality will be unavailable in RGMS, including submission of variation requests, in preparation for the transfer of all RGMS data to Sapphire. This update provides information for CIAs and RAOs on:

- [How to submit a Grantee Variation request for grants currently in RGMS](#)
 - The 'offline' Grantee Variation request process to be used for variations for grants currently in RGMS. The process will be in place from 8 November 2021 until the implementation of full functionality in the new Sapphire grant management system for all NHMRC funded and administered schemes.
- [How to submit a Grantee Variation request for grants currently in NHMRCs new grants management system \(Sapphire\)](#)
- [New grantee variation types available in Sapphire](#)
- [Extend end date requests for Exceptional Circumstances](#)

How to submit a Grantee Variation request for grants currently in RGMS

In preparation for the transfer of all RGMS data to Sapphire later this year, the process for submitting variation requests in RGMS will change from **8 November 2021** as follows.

- From 8 November 2021 until early 2022 – creation of new variation requests for grants within RGMS will occur via an off system process.
- Variation requests that have been created before 8 November but which are yet to be submitted to NHMRC in RGMS must either be completed and submitted to NHMRC in RGMS by 12 November, or will need to be recreated using the off-system process.

This change only applies to grants created and managed in RGMS and is an interim measure until all RGMS data has been migrated to Sapphire, after which time variations for all grants will be processed via Sapphire as described below.

Grant variations processed via the offline process will have the grant record updated and the variation will be visible within the Sapphire Grants Management system post the migration from RGMS, including any adjustments to the funding period, milestones and budgets as required.

The offline grantee variation process involves the following steps:

1. The Chief Investigator (CIA) downloads the NHMRC Offline Variations Form from the NHMRC website.



2. The CIA completes the *CIA to complete* sheet in the form, saves the form using the format **GNTID_VariationType** (e.g. *GNT1234567_Extend End Date*), and submits to the RAO via email along with any supporting documentation.
3. The RAO completes and electronically signs the *RAO to complete* sheet and submits the form via email to postaward.management@nhmrc.gov.au. The Administering Institution must maintain a record of, and keep, any relevant supporting documentation to be available if requested by NHMRC.
4. NHMRC reviews the request and makes a decision whether or not to approve (or may seek additional information if required). If necessary, the request will be forwarded to a panel with scientific expertise for a recommendation.
5. The RAO will be notified by email of the decision. The RAO is required to notify the relevant personnel of the outcome of the variation request.
6. If the variation is approved, revised schedules are only issued if the grant has transferred to a different Administering Institution.
7. The grant record will be updated and will be visible within the Sapphire Grants Management system post the migration from RGMS, including any adjustments to the funding period, milestones and budgets as required.
8. If the variation is rejected, the grant will continue as originally awarded or as previously approved.

How to submit a Grantee Variation request for grants currently in Sapphire

Grants commencing 2022 that have been offered and accepted in Sapphire may have Variations submitted in Sapphire as soon as the grant offer has been co-signed by NHMRC.

Grants that have been created and managed in RGMS will use the offline variation request process until all RGMS data has been migrated to Sapphire,

The Sapphire grantee variation submission process involves the following steps:

1. The Chief Investigator creates a New Variation within the Sapphire Grant record, completes the relevant Variation Form, and submits to the RAO for review.
2. The RAO reviews the request in the context of the Grantee Variations Policy and submits the Variation to the NHMRC. The Administering Institution must maintain a record of, and keep, any relevant supporting documentation.
3. NHMRC reviews the request and makes a decision whether or not to approve (or may seek additional information if required). If necessary, the request will be forwarded to a panel with scientific expertise for a recommendation.
4. The RAO is notified by email of the decision. The RAO is required to notify the relevant personnel of the outcome of the variation request.
5. If the variation is approved, revised schedules are only issued if the grant has transferred to a different Administering Institution.
6. The Sapphire grant record will be updated where required, including any adjustments to the funding period, milestones and budgets as required.
7. If the variation is rejected, the RAO will be asked to confirm that the grant will continue as originally awarded or as previously approved.

New Grantee Variation types available in Sapphire

Two new variation types have been added to Sapphire to assist Investigator Grant holders to request variations to change the time commitment (FTE) on their grant; and to suspend the grant in part or in full. These variation types take into account the specific requirements under the Investigator Grant guidelines and should not be used for variation requests for other schemes, which should continue to use the standard Change in FTE (People Support Schemes) or Defer-in-Progress variation types.

1. Investigator Grant – Change in FTE

Investigator Grants are awarded on a full-time, part time (Professional) and part time (Personal) basis. Requests to change the time commitment from the awarded FTE will be considered by NHMRC on a case by case basis in the following circumstances:

Reduction of the awarded time commitment may be requested due to:

- A change in the CIA's professional circumstances
 - Career disruption due to a change in personal circumstances
 - Exceptional circumstances
- Requests to reduce the FTE may be made for the duration of the grant or for a specified period. In the case of FTE reductions requested for a specified period, the FTE of the grant will revert to the awarded FTE at the end of the requested period.
 - The salary component of the grant will be reduced commensurate with the requested FTE for the period requested.
 - The awarded RSP may be reduced commensurate with the reduction in FTE, or may be retained at 100% of the awarded FTE.
 - Reductions in FTE will not affect the grant term, which will remain at five years.

Increases to the awarded time commitment may only be requested where the grant was awarded as a part time (Personal) Investigator Grant, and where the personal circumstances of the grantee have changed such as changes in carer responsibility or recovery from an illness or major injury.

- Where a request to increase time commitment is approved, the salary component of the Investigator Grant will be increased pro-rata
- The RSP component will not be affected and remains at the awarded amount.
- The grant term will remain at five years.

2. Investigator Grant – Suspend Grant – Partial or Full

NHMRC will consider a request to suspend an Investigator Grant on a case-by-case basis under the following circumstances:

- Career disruption due to a change in personal circumstances
- Temporary professional appointments
- Approved time overseas as an Emerging Leader in accordance with the grant opportunity guidelines
- Exceptional circumstances

Suspensions to an Investigator Grant can be requested as:

- **Full suspension** – where both the salary and RSP components of the grant are suspended as there is no activity or expenditure on the grant during the period of suspension. In this case, the end date of the grant will be moved forward by a period equivalent to the period of suspension.
- **Partial suspension** – where only the salary component of the grant is suspended and the RSP is retained in full to enable the research activity to continue during the period of absence of the CIA. In this case, the grant term will remain at five years and the end date will not be affected. The salary component of the grant will be reduced by an amount



commensurate with the period of suspension.

Please note that suspensions of less than 12 months that cause the end date of the grant to be changed will cause asynchrony with the scheme and potentially affect eligibility for subsequent funding rounds.

Extend end date – Exceptional Circumstances

The Grantee Variations Policy allows for Extend End Date for up to 12 months where a Research Activity has not been completed.

Variations to extend the end date of grants beyond a 12 month period – including secondary requests to extend the end date for a further period of up to 12 months – may be requested in [exceptional circumstances](#).

Investigator Grant recipients may submit Extend End Date requests for Exceptional Circumstances only.

No additional funding will be provided for Extend End Date requests unless otherwise provided for under scheme-specific guidelines. Funds that have not been spent by the current end date may be spent during the extension period. There is no separate approval required to spend these funds. Funds can only be spent on the Direct Research Costs of the Research Activity in accordance with the [Direct Research Costs Guidelines](#).

Extend End Date requests for Exceptional circumstances should include:

- The reason for the extension, including details of the specific impact of the exceptional circumstance
- The number of months being requested.

Please note that variations that extend the end date of the Funding Period may affect eligibility to apply for and hold grants in future years. CIAs requesting an Extend End Date variation are to ensure that all CIs on the grant team are aware of and have agreed to funding period being extended.

Extensions to the funding period of less than 12 months may cause asynchrony with subsequent funding rounds and may also affect researchers' ability to apply for and hold grants in future years.

Enquiries

Any enquiries about this interim update should be directed to postaward.management@nhmrc.gov.au.