



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council

How did NHMRC select the open and close dates for the new grant program?

Introduction of NHMRC's new grant program provides NHMRC with the opportunity to consider the timing of applications for each of the new grant schemes. A number of factors have been considered, wherever possible balancing the needs of applicants with those of peer reviewers.

Applicants and Administering Institutions

For applicants, NHMRC has sought to:

- Limit the potential disadvantage to those applying to more than one scheme by spreading the application preparation and submission times across several months
- Notify outcomes as early as possible, particularly for Investigator Grants which may include salaries for the applicant and for members of their research team
- Minimise overlap with key dates of Australian Research Council funding opportunities, national school holidays and major international conference periods.

The last of these goals has proved to be the most challenging to manage and we recognise that the dates selected for the Investigator Grant scheme in late 2018/early 2019 are difficult for many people.

An important additional issue in 2018–19 is that the new schemes each have new grant guidelines (released in July 2018) and peer review processes and will be delivered through a new grants management system.

NHMRC will release scheme documentation as far in advance of the opening dates as possible so that applicants can begin preparing their application before the schemes open.

Peer Reviewers

Reducing peer review burden is one of the key objectives of NHMRC's new grant program.

As many peer reviewers are also applicants, NHMRC has sought to spread peer review periods, application preparation time and submission dates for the major schemes across the year. This is intended to minimise the possibility that some applicants would be preparing applications for one scheme while being called upon to contribute to peer review for another.

Investigator and Ideas Grants

In the new grant program, applicants may apply for one Investigator Grant and one Ideas Grant in the same year. If both applications are successful, only the Investigator Grant will be offered.

To minimise assessment of Ideas Grant applications that will not be offered because of the award of an Investigator Grant, the open and close dates for Investigator and Ideas Grants will be staggered. Outcomes for Investigator Grant applications will be known before spokespersons begin their assessments of Ideas Grants, enabling Ideas Grant applications from successful Investigator Grant Chief Investigators to be removed from peer review.

In the long term, NHMRC would like to explore staggering the open and close dates of Investigator and Ideas Grants so that outcomes for Investigator Grants are known prior to the opening of Ideas Grants.

Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies

NHMRC will run the Ideas Grant scheme and the Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies Grant scheme concurrently. Outcomes for these two schemes will be notified at a similar time, which will help any funding partners that may use these schemes to peer review applications.

Future rounds

In addition to the considerations outlined above, two other factors have affected the timing of schemes in the first year of the new grant program – the work needed to develop new policies and documentation and to establish Sapphire, and uncertainty about the number of applications that will be submitted to the Investigator Grant and Ideas Grant schemes.

NHMRC will review the open and close dates for future rounds with a focus on minimising the impact on the summer holiday period and introducing more than one round per year of Ideas Grants.