NHMRC FUNDING RULES

incorporating the Program Grants scheme

for funding commencing in 2015

Applications for Program Grants open on 6 March 2013 and close at 17:00hrs (AEST) on Wednesday 5 June 2013.

Late applications will not be accepted.

Scheme-specific changes for 2013 are outlined on page 20.

This document must be read in conjunction with the *Program Grants Scheme Advice and Instructions to Applicants for funding commencing in 2015*.

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PART 1 - NHMRC FUNDING RULES

1 Introduction

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is Australia's leading funding agency promoting the development and maintenance of public and individual health standards. It is established under the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992*, (the NHMRC Act) which is available on the NHMRC website at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/organisation-overview/nhmrcs-role.

The object of the NHMRC Act is to make provision for a national body to pursue activities designed to:

- raise the standard of individual and public health throughout Australia;
- foster the development of consistent health standards between the States and Territories;
- foster medical research and training and public health research and training throughout Australia; and
- foster consideration of ethical issues relating to health.

The *NHMRC Strategic Plan* (Strategic Plan) describes the agency's strategic objectives and provides the context within which its funding schemes operate. NHMRC's strategy for health and medical research is to invest in the highest quality research, as determined through peer review, across the four pillars of health and medical research: biomedical, clinical, public health and health services research.

Further information on the Strategic Plan can be found at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/node/31313.

NHMRC will only support excellence in research because the best outcomes flow from the best research. NHMRC is committed to all research relevant to health (including biomedical, clinical, public health and health services research) and recognises that multidisciplinary approaches are needed to solve the complex problems of health.

These rules apply to all NHMRC funding schemes. They were designed to provide researchers and the Research Administration Officers (RAOs) ease of access and consistency across funding schemes.

These rules must be read in conjunction with *Part 2 - Scheme-Specific Information* and the relevant *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* documents.

2 Enquiries

Enquiries about the content of NHMRC *Funding Rules* should be addressed to your Administering Institution's RAO in the first instance. If further assistance is required, please contact the Research Help Centre on 1800 500 983, or at help@nhmrc.gov.au or refer to the relevant funding scheme web page on the NHMRC website: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/types-funding.

Applicants must not contact grant review panel members or external assessors in relation to their application, or the peer review process. Doing so may constitute a breach of *The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007* (the Code) (refer to subsection 2d) and the application may be excluded from further consideration. Applicants are to direct any queries concerning the peer review process to their Institution's Research Office.

3 Submitting an Application

All applications must be submitted electronically using NHMRC's Research Grant Management System (RGMS) at: https://www.rgms.nhmrc.gov.au/.

Applicants who are not registered RGMS users should submit a new user request via the RGMS login page at https://www.rgms.nhmrc.gov.au/, or contact help@nhmrc.gov.au for more information.

When completing an application, refer to - *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* documents available from https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding. Templates of the application forms are also available at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/research-grants-management-system-rgms.

For help in learning to use RGMS, applicants are advised to use RGMS Tutor, a training tool, available at the RGMS Library within RGMS at: https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding.

The application should contain all information necessary for assessment without the need for further written or oral explanation, or reference to additional documentation. All details included must be current at the time of application, as this will be used as the prime source of information available to the peer review panel.

Applications must be certified and submitted by an NHMRC registered Administering Institution. Further information on becoming an Administering Institution can be found in the *NHMRC Administering Institutions Policy* at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/admininst.htm.

It is important to check the closing dates for the funding schemes you wish to apply to. The closing dates for NHMRC funding schemes can be found at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/funding-calendar.

Applicants should note that Administering Institutions may have a submission date well in advance of NHMRC's closing date, and should consider relevant institutional timeframes when preparing the application.

Applications submitted after the closing date will not be considered by NHMRC. Once submitted to NHMRC, the application will be considered final and no changes will be permitted.

Further information in relation to the completion of the application is located in the Library section of RGMS.

Retracted Publications

If a publication relevant to an application is retracted after the application has been submitted, applicants must advise NHMRC of the retraction at the earliest opportunity by email (help@nhmrc.gov.au) with an appropriate explanation regarding the retraction. Applicants are required to send this information to NHMRC through their RAO.

In addition, where the publication forms part of the applicant's Track Record, that information must be immediately recorded in their Profile & CV in RGMS.

If an application is largely dependent on the results of a retracted publication, applicants should also consider withdrawing the application. If, under these circumstances, applicants choose not to withdraw the application, they should make their reasons clear in their communications with NHMRC.

3.1 Profile and CV

RGMS provides an online Profile and CV function. This function must be used when applying for all types of grants in RGMS. Relevant information from the Profile and CV will be uploaded automatically into the application form. It is therefore important that the Profile and CV are up to date.

NHMRC has made a significant investment to ensure that RGMS has sufficient capacity for all applicants to have adequate access to the system to prepare their applications in a timely manner. However, congestion management may be necessary during times of extreme load on the system. To avoid any inconvenience applicants are encouraged to complete their Profile and CV as early as possible following the opening of applications for the funding round.

3.2 Withdrawal of Applications

Applicants may withdraw their application at any time in writing, through their Administering Institution's Research Office to NHMRC.

3.3 Incomplete, False or Misleading Applications

All details in the application, particularly concerning any current grants and other applications, must be current and accurate at the time of application.

Under section 136.1 of the *Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995*, it is an offence to provide false or misleading information to a Commonwealth body in an application for a benefit. Such action can be punishable by up to 12 months imprisonment.

Examples of false or misleading information in an application include, but are not restricted to:

a) providing a dishonest statement regarding time commitments to the research for which support is being sought;
b) providing incomplete or inaccurate facts regarding other sources of funding;
c) providing fictitious track records; and

d) falsifying claims in publication records (such as describing a paper as accepted for publication when it has only been submitted).

If NHMRC believes that omissions or inclusion of misleading information are intentional, it may refer the matter for appropriate legal action.

3.4 Responsible Conduct of Research and Research Misconduct

NHMRC expects the highest levels of research conduct and integrity to be observed in the research that it funds. Institutions that administer grants, as well as Chief Investigators (CIs), are bound by the conditions of the *NHMRC Funding Agreement* (Funding Agreement), and through this agreement by the requirements of the Code available at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r39.

The purpose of the Code, which was issued by NHMRC in partnership with the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia, is to guide institutions and researchers in responsible research practices. The Code promotes integrity in research and provides a mechanism by which a breach of the Code or an incident of research misconduct can be resolved.

All institutions must have a mechanism in place to handle and investigate research misconduct. All staff should be aware of this process. Researchers who become aware of research misconduct should follow the process outlined in the Code and can report on scientific misconduct by completing an e-form available from the NHMRC website at: https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/contact-us/complaint-form.

Administering Institutions are required to inform NHMRC of cases of research misconduct and NHMRC may exclude these applications from further assessment if the applicant is found to have committed serious research misconduct.

3.5 Removal of Applications

NHMRC reserves the right, at its absolute discretion, to remove applications from further consideration.

Exclusion of applications may take place at any time during the assessment process if they contravene these *Funding Rules*.

The application must:

a) be submitted using RGMS by the advertised closing date;
b) declare the source, duration and level of funding already held for research in the particular area of the application;
c) be certified and submitted through the appropriate Research Office of an NHMRC approved Administering Institution;
d) be within the specified page limits; and
e) be formatted (including font sizes and margins) as specified in the *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* document.

Applications may be excluded under the following circumstances:

a) the application is clearly of a standard that will not gain support via the competitive funding scheme (note: NHMRC would only determine an application to be non-competitive on advice from a review panel);

b) the application does not comply with the eligibility criteria specified in either this document or *Scheme-Specific Information*;
c) the application includes any incomplete, false or misleading information;
d) the application is inconsistent with the objectives of the NHMRC Act and the purposes of the Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) (refer to sections 3 and 51 of the NHMRC Act);
e) the application does not comply with the requirements of these rules, *Scheme-Specific Information*, or the *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* document; and
f) the application involves researcher/s against whom a finding of research misconduct has been made.

3.6 Relative to Opportunity

Peer reviewers' consideration of relative to opportunity may take into account the amount of time spent as an active researcher; career disruption (see subsection 3.7); available resources; clinical, administrative or teaching workload; relocation of an applicant and his/her research laboratory or clinical practice setting; restrictions on publication associated with time spent working in other sectors (e.g., industry, policy and government) and the typical performance of researchers in the research field in question.

A number of the assessment criteria for NHMRC funding schemes are assessed relative to opportunity. This reflects NHMRC's aim that assessment processes accurately measure an applicant's track record relative to stage of career, including consideration as to whether productivity and contribution is commensurate with the opportunities available to the applicant.

3.7 Career Disruption

Career disruption represents a special category within the assessment of relative to opportunity, and includes pregnancy; major illness; and carer responsibilities including parental leave. Employment outside the research sector including time spent working in industry; clinical, administrative or teaching workload; relocation of laboratory or clinical practice setting or other similar circumstances that impact upon research productivity are <u>not</u> considered to be career disruption and are considered under relative to opportunity (see subsection 3.6).

4 Confidentiality and Privacy

Section 80 of the NHMRC Act prevents NHMRC Officers (including staff and members of NHMRC Council and committees) from disclosing commercial-in-confidence information acquired in the course of their duties and relating to matters under consideration by NHMRC, unless the disclosure is made in the performance of duties under the NHMRC Act. Information which may properly be regarded as confidential commercial information should be designated as such.

Information comprising the names of successful grant applicants and their Administering Institutions, together with the title of the research project and the funding awarded, may be published in the NHMRC Annual Report and are available through NHMRC's website. NHMRC may also release information about the areas of research of the grant, funding partners and a brief description of the grant. This information is provided by the applicant in response to the question on the application form designated as Media Summary.

4.1 Privacy

Documents containing personal information are handled and protected by NHMRC in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988* (the Privacy Act), which sets standards for the collection, storage, use and disclosure of, and access to, personal information. Personal information is disclosed only with permission of the individual to whom it relates or where the Privacy Act allows.

4.2 Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

NHMRC is subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) and is committed to meeting the Australian Government's transparency and accountability requirements. Changes to the FOI legislation as of late 2010 have implications for the way in which NHMRC responds to and reports on, requests for information under the FOI Act. The FOI Act provides a legal right of access to any person to obtain documents of Commonwealth agencies. Access to documents may only be refused where the FOI Act provides a legal basis for the refusal, such as where the documents are exempt.

However, subject to its FOI obligations, NHMRC remains committed to maintaining the confidentiality of grant applications, the peer review process and the privacy of people participating in peer review. If an FOI application is received in relation to peer review documents that contain your personal or business information, NHMRC will take into account the nature of those documents and where appropriate, consult with anyone whose personal information or business information may be affected by the release of those documents (this is known as “third party consultation”).

Sections 27 and 27A of the FOI Act prescribe when third parties must be consulted in relation to the information contained in documents that are subject to an FOI request. In addition, where appropriate and practicable, NHMRC will consult above and beyond those requirements. In the event that you are consulted as a third party, NHMRC will send you a detailed letter seeking your views and giving you a reasonable time to respond.

However, please note that whilst FOI decision-makers are required to take into account third parties’ views on the release or non-release of their information, decision-makers are not bound by those views. Should a decision-maker decide to release a document containing your personal or business information after you have submitted that it should not be released, the FOI Act states that that document must not be released to the FOI applicant until you, as a third party, have exercised and exhausted all your review rights, or chosen not to exercise them. Your review rights consist of:

a) a right to request the NHMRC to review its decision to release the document (called an internal review and conducted by a different decision-maker) or to request the Australian Information Commissioner to review the decision;
b) a right to appeal to the Australian Information Commissioner against an internal review decision if it is adverse; and
c) a right to appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal against an adverse decision of the Australian Information Commissioner.

Until such time as all those appeal rights are exhausted, the contested document cannot be released.

More information about FOI, including third party rights, is available from the Australian Information Commissioner’s website at: http://www.oaic.gov.au/.

5 Eligibility

Applications for all NHMRC funding schemes are subject to eligibility rules. Applications which do not meet these eligibility guidelines may be removed from the assessment process. For further information, refer to subsection 3.5 *NHMRC Funding Rules* (Removal of Applications).

NHMRC may compare the research proposed with Research Support grants it currently funds, and grants provided by other agencies. NHMRC may remove from consideration any application it considers to duplicate research previously, or currently being undertaken.

Additional eligibility criteria may apply and applicants should read this section and its subsections in conjunction with the S*cheme-Specific Information.*

5.1 Multiple Research Grant Eligibility

Project Grants

Individuals are limited to holding a maximum of six NHMRC Project Grants as a Chief Investigator (CI). A different requirement applies to CIs on Program Grants (please refer to subsection *5.1 Multiple Research Grant Eligibility – Program Grants*).

The maximum number of Project Grant applications a CI (CIA-CIJ) may submit in any year will be six, less the number of NHMRC Project Grants that are scheduled to continue in the year that any new grants will commence. For example, if an investigator, at the time of submission of an application holds four NHMRC Project Grants, one of which will finish at the end of the year in which applications close, the investigator may submit up to three applications.

Where a CI (CIA-CIJ) has submitted applications in excess of the maximum number of grants and applications for which he/she is eligible, all applications that include that investigator as a CI will be automatically ineligible and removed from the assessment process; refer to subsection 3.5 *NHMRC Funding Rules* (Removal of Applications). It is the responsibility of all CIs to ensure that this condition is adhered to prior to submission of an application.

Program Grants

Full-time Program Grant CIs are not permitted to hold, or apply for more than one Project Grant.

Applicants should note that there can only be one Program Grant holder named as a CI on any Project Grant application. Program Grant CIs cannot be the only (sole) CI named on a Project Grant or a Project Grant application: there must be at least one other CI who is not also a CI on a Program Grant receiving funding in any year in which the Project Grant is funded.

A researcher can be a part-time CI on one or two Program Grants. Part-Time Program Grant CIs who hold one Program Grant are permitted to hold up to two Project Grants. Part-Time Program Grant CIs who hold two Program Grants are not permitted hold or apply for any Project Grants.

New Program Grant awardees who are named as a CI on more than one Project Grant must submit grant variation requests for all Project Grants they are no longer eligible to hold prior to the commencement of funding for the Program Grant. The Grant Variation Request(s) will need to make the case that the viability of the Project Grant(s) will be maintained.

Targeted and Urgent Calls for Research

Awards of this funding type will not count towards the maximum of six NHMRC Project Grants held as a CI or towards the one Project grant held by CIs that also hold a Program Grant. Applications for other NHMRC funding schemes are subject to conditions outlined in their respective *Funding Rules*. Time commitments of CIs will be carefully considered in the review of applications.

5.2 Chief Investigators and Research Teams

Note: subsections 5.2 and 5.3 apply to Research Support schemes but do not apply to People Support awards (e.g. Fellowships and Scholarships).

Chief Investigators

The role and contribution of each CI must be described in the grant application. PhD students may be included as CIs in exceptional circumstances if appropriate for the proposed research project.

The maximum number of CIs allowed on an application is 10.

Unless support for personnel is being sought on the grant, funding for a grant depends on the continuing employment of each of the CIs over the period of the grant.

Chief Investigator A

CIA is the project leader who takes the lead role in the conduct of the research project, and is the investigator who takes responsibility for completion and lodgement of the application.

The Funding Agreement requires the Specified Person (CIA for Research Support schemes) prepare Progress and Final Reports for each Research Activity by the date specified in the *Scheme-Specific Information*.

Where a CIA requests a transfer of the administrative responsibility for a grant to a new institution, it is the responsibility of the CIA to drive the transfer process and to ensure that the completed transfer request is submitted to NHMRC in a timely manner.

It is generally required that, at the time of application submission, the CIA is an Australian citizen or is a permanent resident of Australia. It is also required that the CIA is based in Australia for the duration of the grant.

NHMRC may waive the requirement to be an Australian citizen or permanent resident where it can be demonstrated that the research is based in Australia and will benefit health and medical research in Australia. Requests to waive this requirement need to be made through the Research Administration Office of the Administering Institution and should be emailed to help@nhmrc.gov.au and marked for the Project Officer for the relevant scheme.

Note: Applicants who have applied for and received waivers for existing NHMRC grants, must again seek a waiver for each application round.

Exception: A CIA who is a New Zealand citizen is not required to seek a waiver if they are based in Australia for the duration of the grant.

Chief Investigators B to J

Researchers who are not Australian citizens or permanent residents in Australia are eligible to apply for a grant as a CI B to J. If they are based in Australia for the duration of the grant, they may be eligible to request a personnel support package.

CIs based overseas are not eligible to draw a salary from a grant unless additional provisions in *Scheme-Specific Information* state otherwise.

Associate Investigators

An Associate Investigator (AI) is defined as an investigator who provides intellectual input into the research and whose participation warrants inclusion of their name on publications.

Associate Investigators are not able to draw a salary from any grant.

There are no restrictions on individuals who may be named as an AI on an application. However, the maximum number of AIs who can be named is 10 per application.

5.3 Consent to be a Chief Investigator

The CIA must confirm with other CIs (B-J) that they agree to be named on the application. The CIA will provide written evidence (e.g. an email) to the RAO of all CIs' endorsement of the application. The RAO will certify and submit the application in RGMS (Research Grants Management System).

The RAO should not submit the application to NHMRC until all CIs have completed this step and all relevant consents have been obtained as per this requirement.

5.4 Consent to be an Associate Investigator

The CIA must confirm with all AIs that they agree to be named on the application. Written evidence (e.g. an email), must be obtained from all AIs and provided to the RAO, stating their agreement to be on the application. AIs are not required to endorse an application prior to submission to NHMRC.

The RAO should not submit the application to NHMRC until all the CIA has completed this step and all relevant AI consents have been obtained as per this requirement.

6 Use of NHMRC Funds

Note: Section 6 and its subsections apply to Research Support schemes but do not apply to People Support awards (e.g. Fellowships and Scholarships).

6.1 Access to NHMRC Funding

NHMRC seeks to promote collaboration between researchers and to remove artificial barriers that prevent multidisciplinary and multi-organisational proposals. However, NHMRC contributes funds only to the direct costs of a research project.

To access NHMRC funding, applicants are required to:

- Make a case for NHMRC grant funding in accordance with the *Scheme-Specific Information*. For further information, refer to section 3 *NHMRC Funding Rules* (Submitting and Application); and

- Declare the sources, duration and level of funding already held for research as part of the application.

NHMRC funds may be used for (see Appendix A):

- Supporting personnel, where the level of personnel support package requested matches the roles and responsibilities of the position, rather than the expertise of a specific occupant of the position;
- Equipment that is unique to the project and is essential for the project to proceed;
- Direct research costs (DRCs) for the purchase of research materials (not personnel) required to conduct the proposed research;
- Costs of animal agistment that are a direct requirement of the research project; and
- Travel costs directly related to achieving the objectives of the grant.

NHMRC does not fund:

- Research infrastructure that an institution with research as part of its mission would be expected to supply;
- Institutional overheads and administrative charges; or
- The other indirect costs of research.

For more information regarding direct and indirect research costs, refer to the links below:

1. Direct Research Costs – a guide for research and administrative staff: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement; and
2. Use of NHMRC Project Grants funds and other Research Support Grants funds for travel, conferences and publications costs: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement/use-nhmrc-project-grants-funds.

Further information on the use of NHMRC Funding is available at Appendix A.

6.2 Salary Support for Chief Investigators

NHMRC Research Support awards are not normally intended to provide salary support for CIs and in some schemes, salary support for CIs is not offered. However, if applications are seeking salaries for CIs, this should be justified in the proposed budget as being directly associated with achieving the outcomes of the research.

Salaries for research staff must be based on Personnel Support Packages (PSPs). Further details on PSPs can be found at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/project-grants/budget-mechanism-project-grant-funding-commencing-2012.

NHMRC does not support senior research salaries through Research Support schemes. Researchers seeking salaries outside of the range of PSP 1 to 5 must do so via NHMRC's People Support schemes (ie, Research or Practitioner Fellowships). Information about NHMRC People Support schemes can be found at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/fellowship-awards/people-support.

6.3 Registration of Clinical Trials

All NHMRC funded clinical trials must be registered in the Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (ANZCTR), or equivalent, prior to commencement of the clinical phase.

Applicants proposing to undertake a randomised controlled trial may request the administrative charge payable for the registration of the trial. Requests for funding of trial registration must be justified in the DRC component of the application.

Information pertaining to the ANZCTR or equivalent, and how to register can be found at: http://www.anzctr.org.au.

6.4 Paid Parental Leave Scheme

Information concerning the Australian Government's Paid Parental Leave Scheme is available at the following website: http://www.familyassist.gov.au/payments/family-assistance-payments/paid-parental-leave-scheme/.

All NHMRC awards provide for investigators to undertake research on a part-time basis for all or part of the duration of the grant.

7 Outcome of Application

NHMRC will advise applicants and their nominated Administering Institution's Research Office of the outcome of the application as early as possible following announcement of funding.

NHMRC will publish the following information on its website for all successful grants:

a) Application Identity;
b) All CI names;
c) Administering Institution;
d) Scientific title and/or simple title;
e) Broad Research Area;
f) Funding partners (if relevant); and
g) Total funding awarded and duration.

NHMRC may publish this information in a manner that allows it to be searched and viewed in a variety of ways, including by CI name, State, Institution and/or Application ID.

The media summary may also be published.

8 Complaints in Relation to the Outcome of Funding Applications

Applicants may contact NHMRC seeking clarification on the outcome of their application for funding, or to state an objection to any part of the process. The complaint must be lodged in writing through the Administering Institution's Research Office and be received within four weeks of the date of notification.

The complaint should be directed to the Complaints Officer at:

Complaints Officer
National Health and Medical Research Council
GPO Box 1421
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Or via email to: complaints@nhmrc.gov.au.

The NHMRC will provide a written response to all complaints.

The NHMRC policy on complaints can be found at:
https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/contact-us/complaint-form.

8.1 Formal Complaints to the Commissioner of Complaints

The NHMRC Act provides for the Commissioner not to investigate a complaint where the complainant has not initially applied to the complaints officer as outlined above (see Section 8).

If an applicant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may lodge a formal complaint with the NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints, as detailed in Part 8 of the NHMRC Act.

A person whose interests are affected may at any time lodge a complaint under section 59 of the NHMRC Act. Section 61 of the NHMRC Act provides the Commissioner of Complaints with discretion, including where a complainant has not approached the CEO with the complaint, to choose not to investigate and refer the complaint to the CEO.

Complaints to the Commissioner should be addressed to:

NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints
National Health and Medical Research Council
GPO Box 1421
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Formal complaints can be mailed to the above address, or sent by email as a PDF letter to complaints@nhmrc.gov.au.

Complaints must be in writing, be signed by the complainant, describe the action complained about and specify the nature of and grounds for the complaint.

Complaints can only be considered against administrative process and not the merits of a particular decision. The grounds of complaint are detailed at section 58 of the NHMRC Act and are that:

a) the action involved a breach of the rules of natural justice;
b) the action was induced or affected by fraud;
c) there was no evidence or other material to justify the action;
d) an irrelevant consideration was taken into account in relation to the action;
e) a relevant consideration was not taken into account in relation to the action;
f) in the course of the action a discretionary power was exercised for a purpose other than the purpose for which the power is conferred;
g) the action involved the exercise of a discretionary power in bad faith;
h) in the course of the action, a personal discretionary power was exercised at the direction of another person;
i) the action involved the exercise of a discretionary power in accordance with a rule or policy without regard to the merits of the particular case; or
j) the action involved any other exercise of a power in a way that constitutes abuse of the power.

Complainants are advised to contact their RAOs prior to making a complaint to the Commissioner.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can also investigate complaints about the actions and decisions of Australian Government agencies. For further information please refer to the Commonwealth Ombudsman website at: http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/.

9 Approvals to be Obtained Prior to Funding Commencing

Funding for an NHMRC Grant (other than Research and Practitioner Fellowships) will not commence until all relevant approvals, particularly in relation to ethics and biosafety, have been received from the appropriate institutional committees and lodged with the Administering Institution's Research Office prior to the commencement of the research. Provisional approvals are not acceptable and no funding will be provided on the basis of a provisional approval**.**

The grant offer may be withdrawn if ethics approvals are not obtained within six months of the original grant commencement date.

Where an ethics clearance or regulatory approval is not required until the latter years of a Grant and the relevant committee cannot review the proposal without the results of the preliminary findings of the research then, NHMRC approval can be sought for the funds to be released. These requests will be considered by NHMRC on a case by case basis.

Applicants must ensure that where appropriate, a copy of the application is referred to the relevant institutional committees or approval bodies.

The Research Administration Officer, who is responsible for the application, must advise NHMRC when clearances have been granted by the relevant committees.

NHMRC reserves the right to request further information in relation to decisions made in response to an application for ethics committee or biosafety committee approval.

10 Approvals and Licenses

10.1 Research Involving Humans

Research funded by NHMRC that involves human participants must be reviewed by a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) or an institutional low risk review process in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007* (the National Statement). Consideration must also be given to the Privacy Act.

The National Statement is available on the NHMRC website at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e72.

Human research, in this context, includes research involving any human tissue, no matter what the source, and also includes research in which there is any intervention (physical or psychological) in the normal lives of humans.

All research involving the administration of drugs, chemical agents or vaccines to humans must be considered by a HREC to assess the appropriateness of their use. If such research is part of a clinical trial, then it falls under the responsibility of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) which administers the Clinical Trials Notification/Exemption schemes. Further information on these schemes can be obtained from the TGA:

http://www.tga.gov.au/industry/clinical-trials.htm.

In the case of multi-centred clinical trials, the relevant institutions and their HRECs may agree that the primary ethical and scientific assessment be made at one institution/organisation, with copies of the approvals being sent to the other institutions/organisations involved. Further information on multi-centre research approval is provided in the National Statement.

10.2 Human Embryo Research

Research involving certain human embryos requires a licence issued by the Embryo Research Licensing Committee of NHMRC in accordance with *Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002* and *Prohibition of Human Cloning for Reproduction Act 2002*.

For further information about the legislation refer to the NHMRC website at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/hc38; and
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/prohibit.

10.3 Use of Personal Information in Research

Section 95 of the Privacy Act provides that the CEO of NHMRC may, with the approval of the Commissioner, issue guidelines for the protection of privacy in the conduct of medical research.

Any research involving humans that uses personal information held by Commonwealth agencies where identified information needs to be used without consent from the individual(s) involved should abide by NHMRC guidelines approved under section 95 of the Privacy Act (section 95 guidelines). In these situations, the proposed medical research must be approved by a properly constituted HREC in accordance with the section 95 guidelines.

NHMRC guidelines approved under section 95A of the Privacy Act (section 95A guidelines) are broader than the section 95 guidelines and apply to the collection, use and disclosure of health information held by organisations in the private sector for the purposes of research or the compilation or analysis of statistics, relevant to public health or public safety, without the consent of the individual(s) involved. Under the section 95A guidelines, a HREC must give approval for the use of this information.

10.4 Research Involving Animals

Research funded by NHMRC that involves the use of animals must be reviewed and approved by a properly constituted Animal Ethics Committee as being in accordance with the *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes 2004* (the Animal Code). The Animal Code is available on the NHMRC website at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea16.

10.5 Generation or Use of Genetically Modified Organisms

Applicants proposing to undertake research involving genetically modified organisms (GMO) must ensure that all the requirements of the *Gene Technology Act 2000* and *Gene Technology Regulations 2001* have been met.

In the first instance, applicants should seek advice from their Institutional Biosafety Committee on the level of authorisation needed for any proposed GMO research. Information on the gene technology regulatory scheme, including the Act and Regulations, is also available from the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator website at:

http://www.ogtr.gov.au.

11 Considerations Relevant to NHMRC Funded Research

11.1 Health Research Involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Ethics applications for research that involves the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples should be developed with reference to the Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research (2003). Further information is available from the NHMRC website at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e52.

11.2 Use of Carcinogenic or Highly Toxic Chemicals

All research that involves the use of carcinogenic or highly toxic chemicals must adhere to the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission guidelines, *National Code of Practice for the Preparation of Material Safety Data Sheets 2nd Edition 2011*. Further information is available from the Safe Work Australia web site at:
http://safeworkaustralia.gov.au/.

11.3 Use of Cultured Cell Lines for Research

Concern exists within the scientific community regarding the impact of contamination with mycoplasma and other cells in eukaryotic cell lines and the use of incorrectly characterised cells lines, on the validity of research outcomes. NHMRC recommends that researchers employ quality assurance procedures to ensure their eukaryotic cell lines are free from mycoplasma.

11.4 Use of datasets for research purposes

The use of datasets for research purposes must comply with the *Minimum Guidelines for Health Registers for Statistical and Research Purposes*. Further information is available from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website at:
http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/9792.

11.5 Nagoya Protocol

Applicants should be mindful of the Nagoya protocol and the likelihood of Australia becoming a signatory. The protocol seeks to establish a legally-binding framework for biotechnology researchers and other scientists to gain access to genetic resources. It also establishes a framework for researchers and developers to share any benefits from the use of genetic resources, or traditional knowledge associated with those resources, with the provider country. More information can be obtained at:
http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/science/access/biological-diversity.html.

11.6 Defence Trade Controls Act 2012

Applicants should be mindful of the implementation of recent amendments to the *Defence Trade Controls Act 2012*. More information on can be obtained at:
http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2012A00153.

12 Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research

The Statement on *Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research* (the Statement) has been developed because many consumers and researchers recognise the contribution that consumers can make to health and medical research. The Consumers Health Forum of Australia Inc (CHF) and NHMRC worked in partnership with consumers and researchers to develop the Statement. Researchers are encouraged to consider the benefits of actively engaging consumers in their proposed research. Applicants should refer to the CHF and NHMRC Statement available at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r22-r23-r33-r34.

NHMRC and CHF are currently revising the Statement. Public consultation on a draft revised Statement is scheduled for the first half of 2013.

13 Administration of NHMRC Grants

Any enquiries regarding the administration of NHMRC grants should be directed firstly to the applicant's RAO, then by email to postaward.management@nhmrc.gov.au.

13.1 NHMRC Funding Agreement

All grants are offered in accordance with the conditions specified in the Funding Agreement which is an agreement between NHMRC and the Administering Institution. In signing the Signature Block for Schedules, the Administering Institution is agreeing to the conditions contained in the Funding Agreement and the Schedule.

Details of the Funding Agreement can be found at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement.

A grant may not commence, nor grant funds be expended, prior to:

- the Funding Agreement between NHMRC and the Administering Institution being in place; and
- the appropriate Signature Block for Schedules being signed by the signatories to the Funding Agreement, or an appropriate delegate, and signed and executed by NHMRC.

13.2 Payments

Subject to appropriations provided by the Commonwealth Department of Finance and Deregulation, payment of funds will be made to Administering Institutions in regular instalments, in accordance with approved payment arrangements made for assistance provided from the MREA. Funds must be used only for the purposes approved and detailed in the Funding Agreement and its Schedule.

Payments will commence once any outstanding reporting obligations have been met by the CIs and the Administering Institution.

13.3 Research Misconduct

Research funded by NHMRC must comply with the Code, which can be found at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r39.

The Funding Agreement contains provisions for the handling of allegations of research misconduct. Applicants and grant holders are referred to the NHMRC *Policy on Actions to be taken in the event of research misconduct involving NHMRC funding*. This is available at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement.

13.4 Intellectual Property

Unless otherwise approved by NHMRC, applicants must agree to comply with the *National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research (2001)* available at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/intellectual-property-management.

14 Reporting on NHMRC Grants

14.1 Progress Reports and Financial Reports

Annual progress and financial reports will be required by 30 April of each year in a form prescribed by NHMRC. At the completion of the grant, a final report and financial acquittal will be required within six months after the period of funding ends.

Failure to report within timeframes may also affect eligibility to apply for and receive funding.

Additional reporting requirements and reporting exemptions may apply: please check the *Scheme-Specific Information* for the scheme (e.g. People Support Schemes).

NHMRC has designated Section A of the End of Grant – Final Report as information that NHMRC may publicly release. Use of this information may include publication on the NHMRC website, publicity (including release to the media), and the promotion of research achievements.

All information provided to NHMRC in progress and final reports may be used for internal reporting and reporting to government. This information may also be used by NHMRC when reviewing or evaluating funding schemes, or designing future schemes.

The reporting requirements are included in the Schedule to the Funding Agreement and can also be found at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/progress-and-final-reporting.
NHMRC may suspend payment of further instalments of:

- the relevant grant, and/or
- all grants held by the CIA, and/or
- all grants administered by that Administering Institution until the appropriate reports have been received and assessed as satisfactory.

In addition, where an institution fails to submit satisfactory reports as required, NHMRC may also terminate funding and determine that all or part of the funding must be repaid. Alternatively, NHMRC may withhold the remainder of the Institution's payments under the scheme for the current year or initiate recovery of funding.

15 Open Access Statement

15.1 Dissemination of Scientific Results

The Australian Government makes a major investment in research to support its essential role in improving the wellbeing of our society. To maximise the benefits from research, findings need to be disseminated as broadly as possible to allow access by other researchers and the wider community.

NHMRC acknowledges that researchers take into account a wide range of factors in deciding on the best outlets for publications arising from their research. Such considerations include the status and reputation of a journal or publisher, the peer review process of evaluating their research outputs, access by other stakeholders to their work, the likely impact of their work on users of research and the further dissemination and production of knowledge. Taking heed of these considerations, both organisations want to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the research supported by their grants, in the most effective manner and at the earliest opportunity.

NHMRC encourages researchers to consider the benefits of depositing their data and any publications arising from a research project in an appropriate subject and/or institutional repository wherever such a repository is available to the researcher(s). If a researcher is not intending to deposit the data from a project in a repository within a twelve-month period, they should include the reasons in the project's Final Report. Any research outputs that have been or will be deposited in appropriate repositories should be identified in the Final Report.

Section 4 of the Code, outlines these and other responsibilities of Institutions and researchers, which apply to all forms of dissemination.

Grant recipients must ensure that they comply with NHMRC policy on the dissemination of research findings, which is available at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/dissemination-research-findings.

16 Resources

16.1 NHMRC Resources

The role of NHMRC at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/organisation-overview/nhmrcs-role.

Access the Research Grants Management System (RGMS) at:
http://www.rgms.nhmrc.gov.au/.

Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007 at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r39.

Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ea16.

Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/your-health/indigenous-health.

NHMRC Administering Institutions policy at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/admininst.htm.

NHMRC complaints handling policy:
https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about/contact-us/complaint-form.

NHMRC Funding Agreement at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement.

NHMRC policy on the dissemination of research findings:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/dissemination-research-findings.

NHMRC Strategic Plan 2013-2015 at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/nh160.

Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e52.

16.2 Legislation

Criminal Code Act 1995 at:
http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2010C00842.

Freedom of Information Act 1982 at:
http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2011C00138.

National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992 (NHMRC Act) at:
http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2010C00734.

Privacy Act 1988 at:
http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2011C00157.

Prohibition of Human Cloning for Reproduction Act 2002 (PHCR Act) at:
http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2008C00694.

Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2002 (RIHE Act) at:
http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2008C00689.

PART 2 – SCHEME-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Program Grants Scheme for funding commencing in 2015

1 Changes for 2013 Application Round

The Funding Rules now outline the process to be undertaken by the CIA should the constitution of the team change after the application has been submitted. Further details are on page 22.

In addition, there has been clarification on the process for an applicant team requesting a preferred date for their interview, please refer to page 27 for more information.

2 Objectives and Description of Program Grants

The aim of the NHMRC's Program Grants scheme is to provide support for teams of the highest quality researchers to pursue broadly based, collaborative research addressing complex problems.

The underlying rationale for the scheme is to provide substantial, long-term, flexible funding to integrated groups of researchers with well-established track records of high impact health and medical research.

Program Grant recipients are expected to:

- contribute new knowledge at a leading international level in important areas of health and medical research
- develop novel ideas and approaches
- tackle problems for which longer term stable funding is essential
- develop training and career development opportunities within the team
- facilitate collaborative use of specialised facilities or expertise
- pursue interdisciplinary, collaborative goals which would not be possible by working on the program's individual components in isolation of each other.

3 Funding

3.1 Duration

Program Grants will be of five (5) years duration.

3.2 Budget

The budgets offered will be determined by the NHMRC and will be dependent on the assessment of the Chief Investigators' (CIs) track records. Program Grant budgets will generally equate to the sum of the quanta for all CIs on the application. Budgets will allow flexibility to redirect funds to new initiatives, provided that expenditure is consistent with the Program proposal, and that funds are not used for purposes excluded in the Funding Agreement. See: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement

Budget construction will be based on the team rather than the research proposed. It will also take into account each CI's time available for research. Successful full time CIs may receive a full quantum. Part time CIs may be allocated half a quantum.

The quanta are intended to allow the team to support a range of senior and junior postdoctoral researchers, research and technical assistants and higher degree candidates, as well as providing for direct research costs and minor items of equipment for use in facilities in Australia.

Note: *Retrospective rates for the four quanta are published on the NHMRC website (http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply-funding/program-grants).*

Program Grants are awarded on the basis that recent past achievements are the best indicators of future performance. The grant is awarded as a team grant, on the basis of what the team is likely to achieve. Program Grants support researchers to pursue broad based, collaborative research. It would therefore be inappropriate to provide individual CI quantum, breaking the award down into individual components.

The budget for the Program will not provide support for CI salaries. Individuals whose salary is supported through the NHMRC's People Support schemes (e.g. Australia Fellow, Research Fellow, and Practitioner Fellow Awards) may be included as CIs.

3.3 Indexation

Program Grant budgets may be indexed each year by the annual NHMRC out-turn factor. No additional funds will be provided, although the budget may be altered depending on the outcome of any administrative review.

4 The Program Grant Team

4.1 Team Members

It is expected that CIs will:

a. hold a PhD or relevant professional qualification (for example, MBBS, MPH)
b. be at either academic salary Level C or above, be an NHMRC Senior Research Fellow or above, or if otherwise employed be at (or above) a level equivalent to these.
c. have a strong record of achievement in competitive peer-reviewed research or industry-supported research
d. in the context of their other commitments, commit sufficient time to ensure the success of the program.

Note: The Applicant team must include a minimum of three full time Chief Investigators (CIs). A maximum of 10 Chief Investigators are allowed on a Program Grant. (CIA-J) The Chief Investigator A (CIA) takes the lead role in the conduct of the research project, and is the investigator who takes responsibility for completion and lodgement of the application.

Applicants are advised to critically review the composition of their team prior to submission of a Program Grant application. Several instances have occurred where an otherwise competitive application was disadvantaged by the inclusion of clearly non-competitive CIs.

Should the constitution of the team change after submission of the application (e.g. an unexpected international transfer), the CIA is required to notify the NHMRC. NHMRC will advise the CIA of the process to be followed, which will depend on the stage of the peer review process at which the notification is made.

4.2 Full Time Chief Investigators Commitment

Each full time CI is required to devote 80-100% of their NHMRC research time to the Program. Therefore the available time for additional research activity funded by the NHMRC is restricted to a maximum of 20% unless otherwise stated in specific schemes.

4.3 Part-Time Chief Investigators Commitment

NHMRC expects that CIs on Programs will be full time. However, there may be exceptional cases such as:

a. personal circumstances; or
b. where a researcher has particular and essential skills that she/he brings to the research efforts of two teams.

In this case the applicant may potentially be a part-time CI. A part-time CI on a Program Grant cannot devote less than 50% of their NHMRC research time to any Program.

4.4 Additional Personnel

Teams may include 'Additional Personnel' who will contribute to the Program without being listed as CIs. A description of how they will participate in the Program can be included under the Research Strategy and/or Collaborative Gain sections of the application.

Note: When submitting an application in RGMS Additional Personnel are identified as Associate Investigators.

Program Grant Additional Personnel:

a. are not restricted from applying for any other NHMRC grants as a result of their status as Program Grant Additional Personnel
b. will not contribute to the Program's budget
c. can be researchers who are primarily based overseas.

4.5 Consent to be a Chief Investigator

The Chief Investigator A must seek agreement from other CIs' (B-J) to be named on the application. The CIA will provide written evidence (e.g. an email) to the RAO of all CIs' endorsement of the application. The RAO will then certify and submit the application in RGMS (Research Grants Management System). The RAO will not be authorised to submit the application to NHMRC until all Chief Investigators have completed this step.

5 Critical Dates

The following critical dates apply to the Program Grant scheme for funding commencing in 2015:

- Applications OPEN 6 March 2013
- Applications CLOSE 17:00 hrs (AEST) 5 June 2013
- Anticipated interview week 21 October 2013

Applications cannot be submitted after the closing date and time.

6 Additional Eligibility

6.1 Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria require that:

a. the Applicant team must include a minimum of three full time Chief Investigators (CIs)
b. CIs must have one of the following:
    i. Australian or New Zealand citizenship
    ii. Australian permanent resident status at the time of application
c. researchers who will be primarily based overseas for the duration of the grant cannot be named as a CI
d. Program Grant holders can apply for a new Program Grant in years 4 and 5 of their existing Program Grant only
e. Program Grant applicant CIs cannot apply for more grants than they are eligible to hold at the time of funding, taking into account any grants already held.

6.2 NHMRC Program and Project Grant Eligibility

Please refer to Part 1, Section 5.1 *NHMRC Funding Rules* (Multiple Research Grant Eligibility) for information of Program and Project Eligibility.

7 Assessment Criteria

7.1 Program Grant Assessment Criteria

The assessment criteria and weightings have been designed to reflect the nature and intent of the scheme. PGRP members will draw on their field and discipline expertise, and reports provided by external assessors, when scoring the applications.

The assessment criteria and their weightings are specified below:

	Assessment Criteria	**Score**
1	Research Achievements	60
2	Research Strategy	20
3	Collaborative Gain	20
	Maximum score	**100**

1. <u>Research Achievements</u>

Each CI will be given a score of up to **60** points for their Research Achievements.

The applicant team as a whole can receive up to **60** points as its team's Research Achievements score. The applicant team's Research Achievements score will be the average of the individual CIs' scores.

Research Achievements will be interpreted broadly and appropriate judgements about research achievements will be made by PGRPs, paying particular attention to factors most relevant to the applicants' fields of research, particularly their more recent achievements.

It is recognised that some applicants will have high levels of achievement, but track records that have unusual features, including **career disruptions**. Career disruption represents a special category within the assessment of relative to opportunity, and includes pregnancy; major illness; and carer responsibilities including parental leave. Employment outside the research sector including time spent working in industry; clinical, administrative or teaching workload; relocation of laboratory or clinical practice setting or other similar circumstances that impact upon research productivity are not considered to be career disruption and are considered under relative to opportunity (see section 3.6 *NHMRC Funding Rules*). Further information on identifying and reporting career disruption(s) is provided in the *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* document.

***Note*:** Academic or clinical responsibilities will be considered within the framework of "relative to opportunity" and not career disruption. Relocation of laboratory or clinical practice setting or other similar circumstances that impact upon research productivity are not considered to be career disruption and are considered under relative to opportunity.

The **60** points available for each CI's Research Achievements score will be distributed across two parts; Academic Recognition (**45** points) and Research Application (**15** points).

Academic Recognition **45 points**

The **45** points for Academic Recognition will be distributed across the following three elements:

- Publications* and/or high quality Technical Reports** **35**
- Grants **5**
- Invitations / Prizes / Awards over Career **5**

Research Application **15 points**

Commercialisation
This may include, without being limited to, for example, contributing to development of intellectual property in collaboration with Biotech or Pharma, founding a Start-Up, or the development and granting of patents etc.

AND/OR

Clinical Application
This may include, without being limited to, for example, being a leader of seminal clinical trials; a crucial advocate for changes in clinical practice based on evidence; an initiator, through to

* In terms of Publications, the application should focus on the significant, and likely enduring impacts of and outcomes from published works and not the impact factor of journals in which research is published (though there is often a relationship between the two). It is therefore left to the applicants to make a case in the appropriate section of their application as to how particular research outputs rate against the assessment criteria. Inclusion of information such as journal specialty ranking and citations may assist the PGRP in the scoring process.

** Technical reports can include non-peer reviewed publications that have had a significant impact on health policy and/or practice

implementation, of clinical practice guidelines; an initiator, through to completion, of change to evaluation of clinical practice, e.g. national disease register; making other recognized national contributions to policy and health services development etc.

AND/OR

Public Health Application
This may include, without being limited to, for example, holding a leadership role in design, conduct, publication and advocacy for policy and practice of seminal research; having key responsibility for changes in concept, practice or priority of research implications; being an initiator, through to implementation, of a new system of data collection and organizational feedback e.g. population-based data collections; making other recognized national contributions to policy and public health practice; being a constructive and effective change agent in public health discipline etc.

Applicants must indicate their specific contributions to any activities identified in the Research Application section.

2. Research Strategy
The **20** points of the application score will be based on the quality of the application's Research Strategy.

The Research Strategy should be consistent with research that is **broadly based**, **multidisciplinary** and **collaborative** by nature, and describe how scientific opportunities provided by the collaborations will be exploited. It should also address:

- relevance and/or significance with respect to the field/s of research and/or health outcomes
- national and international competitiveness
- innovation, and potential for contribution to knowledge

3. Collaborative Gain

The **20** points for Collaborative Gain will take into account the following four elements:

i. Integration of the Research Teams and Program
ii. Team Skills
iii. Resource Management
iv. Intellectual Exchange

Examples of these four elements include:

- significant productivity gains and the pursuit and achievement of goals permitted by the synergy of the Program's multidisciplinary components, which would otherwise not be possible by pursuing the components as separate projects
- evidence of existing collaborations amongst CIs, and a description of working strategies employed previously, or appropriateness of proposed new collaborative arrangements
- integration and cohesiveness of the team, and the likely effectiveness of their working collaborations and intellectual exchange

- collective achievements of previously existing teams and likely impact of new team members
- how the team will operate and coordinate, including meeting, planning, decision making and financial arrangements team skills, and how the team components will combine into a broad theme
- performance measures/milestones
- how junior staff will be integrated into the team
- mentoring and other development strategies to be adopted
- contribution of each CI.

With new teams, the following will also be taken into account:

- proposed meetings and work plans
- establishment of advisory panels
- research seminars
- explanation of why the new team has not collaborated previously
- plans for geographical collaboration
- benefits, and relevant indicators of potential collaborations and synergy
- measures to ensure accountability.

If the applicants have had the opportunity to collaborate before and have not done so, an explanation will be required as to why this has not occurred and how the direction of their research has now changed to necessitate or allow the new collaboration. They will also need to explain how they will ensure the cohesive running of the grant. This may involve the use of specific contractual arrangements.

7.2 NHMRC Priority Research Area – Indigenous Health

As part of its commitment to advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, the NHMRC has established certain requirements and processes designed to ensure that research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is not only of the highest scientific merit but that it is beneficial and acceptable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Part A of the application includes the question '*Does this research proposal include Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health research and/or capacity building?*' Applicants should only select 'YES' if they can demonstrate that at least 20% of their research effort and/or capacity building relates to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health. Applicants who select 'YES' need to address the *Criteria for Health and Medical Research of Indigenous Australians* (*The Indigenous Criteria*) available at:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/grants/indighth.pdf.

Researchers proposing to do research which specifically relates to the health of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, or which includes distinct Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander populations, biological samples or data, should be aware of, and refer to, the following documents in formulating their proposal:

- The *NHMRC Road Map II: A Strategic Framework for Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health through Research* available at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/r47
- *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* available at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e52

8 Peer Review Process

NHMRC will appoint one or more Program Grant Review Panel/s (PGRP) based on the number and breadth of applications received. The PGRPs will be comprised of experts who will consider applications against the assessment criteria.

8.1 Shortlisting

Applications which the PGRPs consider to be uncompetitive will be removed from further consideration. Applicants will be advised accordingly.

Shortlisted applications will be sent to external assessors for comment. Those shortlisted applicant teams will be interviewed by a PGRP. Prior to the interview, reports from external assessors will be forwarded to the applicants who will be given the opportunity to respond to any issues raised in the reports at interview.

8.2 Interviews

The interviews will be of one to two hours in duration. NHMRC may invite additional expert/s with expertise in an application's field/s of research to participate in the interview panels. Applicants will be advised of panel membership (but not spokesperson identity) 3 working days prior to the interview.

All CIs on competitive applications will be invited to attend the interview. There is a strong expectation that all CIs will attend the interviews. CIs who cannot attend interviews will be expected to provide the NHMRC with adequate explanations and/or documentation i.e. medical certificates.

The Interview schedule is settled taking into account several different factors affecting the process, and as such once an applicant has been notified of their interview date and time, it cannot be changed.

Should a team have a preference for a specific time or date, they must notify the NHMRC of this prior to **01 July 2013**. The NHMRC will consider the request, however, due to the various factors affecting the scheduling of interviews the NHMRC cannot guarantee that applicant requests will be accommodated.

Additional Personnel are not permitted to attend interviews.

A written list of publications (only) that have occurred since the application was submitted may be provided to the PGRP via the Program Grant mailbox no later than 2 working days before interview. This document should list the publications in a standard journal format, along with the date the publications were accepted by the publisher (program.grants.preaward@nhmrc.gov.au).

Applicants will not be permitted to provide the PGRP with any other written material at the interview, however verbal updates may be provided on achievements such as conference participation, patents etc.

The PGRPs will prepare GRP Assessment Summaries on each application, highlighting strengths and weaknesses and stating any concerns identified with the application. These summaries will then be provided to applicants by the NHMRC when the outcomes of the peer review process are advised.

8.3 Ranking

Each PGRP will rank its applications and provide narratives. The PGRP's final rankings will be presented to Research Committee. NHMRC and its committees do not challenge the category or the ranking of individual grants, subsequent to the GRP views. On advice from Research Committee and Council, the NHMRC Chief Executive Officer will make funding recommendations to the Minister for Health.

8.4 Indigenous Health Assessment Process

Research proposals relating specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be identified after applications close. These applications will be assessed against The Indigenous Criteria and the Program Grants assessment criteria. The aim of this review is to ensure that research involving Indigenous Australians is designed and implemented in a way that is safe and beneficial to communities and individuals.

Assessment of Indigenous health applications will include external assessment by a specifically selected Indigenous health external assessor. The external assessor will ideally have both scientific and Indigenous health research expertise. The external assessor will review the application against *The Indigenous Criteria* and the Program Grants assessment criteria. The review will provide comments against *The Indigenous Criteria* and this review will be reflected in the PGRP's scores for the assessment criteria.

If it is not possible to assign an Indigenous health external assessor with both scientific and Indigenous health research expertise, an Indigenous assessor who can provide comments against *The Indigenous Criteria* will be selected. These comments will be taken into account by the PGRP in finalising the applications

If an application fails to address adequately *The Indigenous Criteria*, and conditions cannot be placed such that the grant would meet *The Indigenous Criteria*, the application would not be recommended for funding.

APPENDIX A: NHMRC Budget Guidelines for Research Support Grants

Introduction

NHMRC funds the direct costs of the research proposal based on advice from peer review. This document is designed to assist NHMRC grant applicants in identifying resources which can or cannot be funded using NHMRC funds, and to assist applicants in the preparation of the budget component of their grant application.

Note: These guidelines do not apply for People Support schemes or the NHMRC Program Grant scheme.

Level of funding

Applicants are advised to clearly justify the requested budget paying particular attention to any research cost(s) which may be specific to this field of research and specially needed for their application.

The PRP advises NHMRC of a budget for each application. The PRPs recommendation is based on the budget requested by the applicant, the requirements of the proposal as assessed by the PRP and its knowledge of the costs associated with the research.

Grant applicants are required to:

- make a case for NHMRC grant funding in accordance with the *Scheme-Specific Information.*
- declare the sources, duration and level of funding already held for research.

Where co-funding has already been secured, applicants should indicate the components of the budget for which NHMRC support is being sought.

Budget considerations

There are three areas to consider when preparing a budget proposal:

1. support for personnel engaged in the conduct of the research;
2. direct research costs; and
3. equipment costs necessary to conduct the research.

These and other budget considerations are discussed below.

Support for Personnel

Researchers who are not Australian citizens or permanent residents in Australia are eligible to apply for an NHMRC grant as CI B to J.

Associate Investigators are not permitted to draw salary from a NHMRC grant.

Casual computing and similar casual staff requirements, which will be contracted at hourly rates, should be included under DRCs.

Funds to support personnel are provided as Personnel Support Packages (PSPs). The level of PSP requested in an application should match *the roles and responsibilities of the position, rather than the expertise of a specific person* whom the CIs may intend to appoint to the position. Information on PSP amounts can be found at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/apply/projects/budget.htm.

Personnel Support Packages (PSPs) are designed to contribute to salary and salary on-costs (e.g. payroll tax, workers compensation, leave loading, compulsory and contributory superannuation and long service leave). Administering Institutions should seek their own advice on any potential taxation implications.

All applicant CIs must indicate the proportion (%) of their research time that they will commit to NHMRC funded research for the currently submitted grant application. Further information on how to indicate the amount of time proposed to be devoted to the grant, should it be awarded, is provided in the *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* document.

Applicants may apply for a full PSP provided that 80% or more of the occupant's time will be devoted to the Project.

An annual indexation will be applied to PSPs, based on the Australian Government Wage Cost Index (WCI).

Direct Research Costs

DRCs are awarded for the purchase of research materials (not personnel) required to conduct the proposed research. For example: items such as consumables, printed materials, microfilms, survey or field expenses, purchase costs for animals and computing charges.

DRCs are available in multiples of $5,000. Individual items of equipment costing less than $10,000 must be requested as DRC.

All requests for funds must be fully justified, especially requests for:

- programming, preparation and data storage or the hire of external computer time. Funds will not be provided for the hire of computer time on a computer within the applicant's institution,
- covering the liability insurance for human clinical trials; and
- administrative charges associated with registration of clinical trials.

Applicants should refer to *Direct Research Costs – A guide for research and administrative staff* available at: http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/administering-grants/nhmrc-funding-agreement;

Using Research Facilities

Biospecimen and Associated Data

Requests for biospecimens and associated data must be fully justified in the DRC component of the application form.

The NHMRC will support the costs of biospecimens and associated data that are a direct requirement of the research project. Biospecimen and associated data costs must be based upon published cost recovery schedules of biobanks or similar accredited bodies (e.g. Pathology services). An indicative list of these is available below. Such costs will typically represent cost recovery for the costs of collection, processing, storage and distribution. Consideration for additional project development and management costs for utilising biospecimens and associated data may be requested.

Given the significant expansion in biobank activities in Australia in the last decade, any future proposal for prospective funding of a biobank must specify why the samples cannot already be sourced from an existing biobank. Any proposal to establish a new biospecimen collection should seek to use infrastructure or services provided by biobanks or similar accredited bodies. Comprehensive justification for not using one of these must be provided.

Following is an indicative list of Biobanks and services that provide services based upon international standards of best practice (ISBER):

- ASPREE Healthy Ageing Biobank http://www.med.monash.edu.au/epidemiology
- Australian Brain Bank Network http://www.austbrainbank.org.au/index.html
- Australian Breast Cancer Tissue Bank http://www.abctb.org.au/abctbNew2/default.aspx
- Australian Ovarian Cancer Study http://www.aocstudy.org/
- Australian Prostate Cancer BioResource http://www.apccbioresource.org.au/bioresource.html#Ethics0
- Australian Schizophrenia Research Bank www.schizophreniaresearch.org.au
- Cancer Institute NSW Biobanking Network. Including
- GynBioBank
- Kolling Institute of Medical Research Neuroendocrine, Gynaecological, Breast and Upper GI Banks
- Genetic Repositories Australia (GRA) http://www.neura.edu.au/GRA
- Kathleen Cuningham Foundation Consortium for Research into Familial Breast Cancer http://www.kconfab.org/Index.shtml
- Lowy Biorepository http://powcs.med.unsw.edu.au/research/adult-cancer-program/services-resources/biorepository
- NATA Accredited Pathology Practices
- NSW Children's Hospital Network
- The Leukaemia and Lymphoma Tissue Bank A joint research initiative of ALLG and the Leukaemia Foundation email: allg_tissue_bank@health.qld.gov.au
- Victorian Cancer Biobank www.viccancerbiobank.org.au
- WA DNA Bank http://www.genepi.meddent.uwa.edu.au/enabling-resources/biobanking
- WA Research Tissue Network (Operated by St John of God HealthCare)
- Wesley Institute

Other Research Facilities

The costs of utilising the services of other research facilities can also be sought through DRCs. Examples of organisations that are included in this category include Non-Human Primate colonies, the Australian Twin Registry, Cell Bank Australia, the Trans-Tasman Radiation Oncology Group (TROG) and suppliers of clinical trials services. This list is illustrative and is by no means exhaustive.

Researchers should consult with research facilities to ensure that the services they are seeking DRC funding for can be provided and that the research budgets reflect these charges. Letters from research facilities confirming their collaboration should be included with the application to assist the Grant Review Panel in assessing the application.

Animal Agistment Costs

Requests for animal agistment costs must be fully justified in the DRC component of the application form.

The NHMRC will support the costs of animal agistment that are a direct requirement of the research project. Animal agistment costs may include the costs of food and caging, and of experimental breeding, during the course of the project. For information on animal agistment costs, consult your Administering Institution. The purchase of animals should be included in DRC.

Funds will be provided for the full purchase price of non-human primates. Applicants should contact the relevant non-human primate breeding colony to obtain information about the terms and conditions associated with the purchase of animals and agistment fees.

The NHMRC will not support infrastructure costs that should normally be provided by the Animal House of the host institution (such as administration or support of Animal House staff) regardless of whether or not the institution has its own Animal House.

Equipment

Where an applicant is requesting funding for an item of equipment, the equipment must be unique to the project and essential for the project to proceed. Equipment requests must not include the type of apparatus normally provided from institutional funds such as freezers, etc.

Applicants must provide details as to why the equipment is not being provided by their institution. For each item of equipment requested, a written quotation must be received and held with the Research Office of the Administering Institution and must be made available to the NHMRC on request.

The applicant must ensure the Administering Institution is prepared to meet all service and repair costs in relation to equipment awarded.

Funds will not be provided for the purchase of computers except where these are an integral component of a piece of laboratory equipment or are of a nature essential for work in the research field. For example: a computer which is dedicated to data collection from a mass spectrometer, or used for the manipulation of extensively large datasets (i.e. requiring special hardware) may be supported.

Individual items of equipment costing less than $10,000 must be requested as DRCs. Applicants may not seek funding for equipment totalling more than $80,000 for the entire period of the grant.

An annual indexation will be applied to equipment, based on the WCI.

Medicare Claims

The following information relates to health services NHMRC grant applications having clinical relevance in order to attract Medicare benefits.

Medicare is governed by the *Health Insurance Act 1973* which sets out the services attracting benefits. Sub-section 19(5) of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* provides that benefits are for where services are clinically relevant for the treatment of the patient. Clinical relevance is a matter of judgement for the patient's medical practitioner.

Where a range of services or tests are carried out by the patient's medical practitioner as part of the deliberate management of the patient's health, Medicare rebates are payable.

However, a range of tests offered to a patient by a clinic for which there is no apparent clinical necessity, as determined by a medical practitioner, do not attract benefits.

In light of this information, Medicare rebates would not be available for patient visits to General Practitioners as part of a research project, where such visits would not be deemed clinically relevant for the treatment of the patient.

Infrastructure, Indirect Costs and Institutional Overheads

NHMRC does not fund:

- the indirect costs of research; or
- research infrastructure; or
- institutional overheads and administrative charges (levied to pay for institutional research; and
- general infrastructure.

This policy applies regardless of whether the institution, department, unit or individual researcher is in receipt of any form of Commonwealth or State support for research infrastructure.

Research infrastructure includes facilities necessary to the research endeavour that a responsible institution with research as a part of its mission would be expected to supply as a prerequisite to its engagement in research, and includes:

- Physical space and all the services associated with it;
- Furniture for research staff;
- Administrative services;
- Office services and consumables that are not specific to the research project;
- Laboratory services and consumables that are not specific to the research project;
- Animal house facilities;
- Computer networks and basic network utilities; and

- Personal computers, related network peripherals and software needed for communicating, writing, and undertaking simple analyses.

Research infrastructure does not include:

- Office services and consumables that are specific to the project;
- Individual human research subjects or research animal services specific to the project;
- Laboratory services and consumables that are specific to the project;
- Computer network facilities required to meet project specific needs;
- Personal computers, related network peripherals and software required to meet project specific needs; and
- Other items of equipment that are required to meet project specific needs.