

IDEAS GRANTS 2019 GUIDE TO APPLICANTS ON PREPARING AN APPLICATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides advice on the application that is specific to the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Ideas Grants scheme and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Ideas Grants 2019 Guidelines
- Ideas Grants Guide to Peer Review 2019 (will be available closer to scheme opening date)
- NHMRC Funding Agreement

2. PROFILE REQUIREMENTS

Within an applicant's profile, there is mandatory information that will need to be completed and/or updated prior to submitting an application. This information includes, but not exclusively, personal details, academic/research interests and peer review information.

The requirement to complete the mandatory sections applies to all Chief Investigators (CIs) named on the application. It is accordingly advisable to check that each of the CIs have completed and/or updated their profiles before an application is certified.

It is important that profile information is up to date at the time of application submission as it is imported into the application and used by peer reviewers. Any changes made to a profile after Chief Investigator A (CIA) certification will not appear in the submitted application.

2.1. Minimum data requirements

Minimum data must be entered in NHMRC's granting system by the specified due date to allow NHMRC to start identifying suitable peer reviewers. Applications who fail to satisfy this requirement will not be accepted. Applicants must complete the required fields with correct information. Using placeholder text such as "text", "synopsis" or "xx" etc. is not acceptable as minimum data.

Minimum data fields for Ideas Grants will be outlined within NHMRC's granting system.

Failure to meet this deadline will result in the application not proceeding to the next stage of the assessment process.

RAOs are not required to certify applications for the purpose of minimum data. Applications should only be certified once complete and ready for submission (see <u>section 7.5</u> of the *Ideas Grants 2019 Guidelines*).

2.2. Peer Review Area

Applicants will need to nominate at least one peer review area that is the most relevant to their application. This nomination will be used to determine the Grant Review Panel (GRP) most suitable to review the application. If an application covers multiple peer review areas, the primary area nominated should be the main focus of the application.

3. ADDRESSING THE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applications for 2019 Ideas Grants are assessed by peer reviewers according to the four assessment criteria detailed in the category descriptors (see Attachment A):

- Research Quality (35%)
- Innovation and Creativity (25%)
- Significance (20%)
- Feasibility (20%).

Assessment by peer reviewers will be based on information provided in the application form and the grant proposal.

Table 1: Grant proposal details

Gr	Page Limit	
A.	Research proposal	7 pages
B.	References	2 pages
C.	Innovation and Creativity statement	1 page
D.	Significance statement	1 page
E.	Feasibility statement	1 page
F.	Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria (if applicable)	2 pages
G.	Priority Driven Cancer Australia Early Career Researcher, if applicable	1 page

A pre-formatted template for the grant proposal will be available to download from <u>GrantConnect</u>. Applicants must use this template. Applications that fail to use the template or exceed the above page limits may be removed from peer review.

The following advice should be taken into consideration when preparing applications.

A. Research Proposal (7 pages)

NHMRC defines 'Research Quality' as the quality of the project aims and the proposed research plan (see <u>Attachment A</u>).

The Research Quality criterion is assessed primarily using information provided in the research proposal. The research proposal is to be submitted as a PDF file. All scientific information relating to your application should be contained within the research proposal.

The research proposal must be written in English and provide sufficient detailed information to enable the research plan to be thoroughly assessed. The research proposal must address the essential components of your research and may include the following properties depending on the type of research:

Component	Properties			
Aims	Describe the specific aims of the research plan, including a clear statement of			
	hypotheses to be tested.			
Background	Provide a rationale for the research and refer to preliminary data, where relevant. It is anticipated that, in some instances, preliminary data may not be available to support innovative ideas, technologies and points of view that differ substantially from current thinking or practice.			
Research Plan –	Outline the research plan in detail, including the following where appropriate:			
methods and techniques	detailed description of the experimental design			
to be used	details and justification of controls			
	details for appropriate blinding			
	 strategies for randomisation and/or stratification 			
	justification of sample-size, including power calculation			
	justification of statistical methods			
	strategies to ensure that the experimental results will be robust, unbiased and reproducible			
	 details to achieve balance of male and female cell and animal models, including justification where it is not warranted 			
	any ethical considerations			
	 community involvement and/or plans to transfer knowledge to stakeholders or into practice. 			
	strengths and weaknesses of the study design and approach			
Identified Risks	Describe the scientific and/or technical risks associated with the research plan and how			
	these will be managed. Include details of how Associate Investigators (Als) may help to			
	mitigate or control any risk.			
Timeline	Provide a detailed timeline for the research plan along with justification for the duration of the grant being requested.			

References cited in the research proposal are to be provided within the references section (B).

B. References (2 pages)

The references section must:

- contain a list of all references cited in the research proposal in an appropriate standard journal format.
 NHMRC prefers the Author-date (also known as the Harvard System), Documentary-note and the Vancouver Systems
- list authors in the order in which they appear in PubMed
- only include references to cited work
- be written in English.

C. Innovation and Creativity statement (1 page)

NHMRC defines 'Innovation and Creativity' for the Ideas Grant scheme as health and medical research that seeks to challenge and shift current paradigms and/or have a major impact on a health research area through one or more studies that creatively:

- develop or use novel research concepts, approaches, methodologies, technologies or interventions
- propose a reinterpretation, refinement, improvement or new application of existing theoretical concepts, approaches, methodologies, technologies or interventions, or
- integrate and adapt concepts, approaches, methodologies, technologies or interventions from other research fields or disciplines for a new purpose or in a new way.

Applicants should address the Innovation and Creativity assessment criterion in this statement (see <u>Attachment A</u>), noting that assessment of this criterion may require supporting or background information provided in other sections of the grant proposal. Applicants should avoid duplicating information provided in other sections of the grant proposal.

D. Significance statement (1 page)

NHMRC defines 'Significance' for the Ideas Grant scheme as the extent to which the outcomes and outputs will result in advancements to the research or health area. Significance in this context does not refer to the prevalence of disease or magnitude of the issue.

Applicants should address the Significance assessment criterion in this statement (see <u>Attachment A</u>), noting that assessment of this criterion may require supporting or background information provided in other sections of the grant proposal. Applicants should avoid duplicating information provided in other sections of the grant proposal.

E. Feasibility statement (1 page)

NHMRC defines 'Feasibility' for the Ideas Grant scheme as the appropriateness of the applicant team and their expertise, the resources and access to additional personnel necessary for the project. There is no assessment of an individual Cl's or Al's track record in the Ideas Grant scheme.

Applicants should address the Feasibility assessment criterion in this statement (see <u>Attachment A</u>), noting that assessment of this criterion may require supporting or background information provided in other sections of the grant proposal. Applicants should avoid duplicating information provided in other sections of the grant proposal.

F. Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria (2 pages, where applicable)

If at least 20% of the research effort relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, the application will also be assessed against the *NHMRC Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria*:

- · Community engagement
- Benefit
- Sustainability and transferability
- Building capability

These criteria are set out in section 6.1 of the *Ideas Grants 2019 Guidelines*. Applicants should ensure that they address each Indigenous Research Excellence Criterion and demonstrate what proportion of the research effort will be directed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

4. PROPOSED BUDGET

Applicants must enter details of the proposed research budget into NHMRC's granting system. Applicants are required to justify the budget requested for each year of the proposed research in order to demonstrate value for money. Poorly justified items may be reduced or removed.

Grant funds can only be used to pay costs that arise directly from the research activities (refer to Section 5 of the Ideas Grants 2019 Guidelines for what the grant money can be used for).

4.1. Personnel

Salary contributions for research staff (Chief Investigators, Professional Research Persons and Technical Support Staff) are provided as Personnel Support Packages (PSPs). The level of PSP requested in an application must match the roles and responsibilities of the position and the percentage of the PSP requested must reflect the required time commitment. Applicants must fully justify all requests for PSPs.

Applicants can only draw one salary from one NHMRC grant/award. Further information about PSPs, including the levels, is available on the NHMRC website.

4.2. Direct Research Costs and Equipment

Details on permitted uses of NHMRC funds and setting of budgets can be found in the *Direct Research Costs Guidelines* on the NHMRC website.

Provide details on:

- the item type (Direct Research Costs or Equipment Costs)
- the name/description of the item
- the total value of the item requested for each year
- a justification for the particular item requested.

This information must be aligned with the proposed aims of the study, be detailed on a yearly basis and be fully justified (including, in the case of equipment, why the equipment cannot be provided by the Institution).

Note:

- NHMRC funds the direct costs of research based on advice from peer review. Applicants should provide
 detailed justification of budgets requested. Poorly justified budgets run the risk of having their budget
 adjusted.
- Funding cannot be used for infrastructure.
- There is no provision to increase funds for any reason.

4.3. Research Facilities

Applicants often need to receive services from research facilities to enable their research to be successfully undertaken.

Such facilities include but are not limited to: biospecimens and associated data from biobanks or pathology services, non-human primate colonies, the Australian Twin Registry, Cell Bank Australia, and the Trans-Tasman Radio Oncology Group.

Applicants will need to consult with research facilities to ensure that the services they require can be provided and that the charges included in the budget are accurately reflected. Letters from research facilities confirming their collaboration must be submitted with the application.

4.4. Equipment

Applicants can request funding to pay for equipment costing over \$10,000 that is essential to the research. The total equipment requested cannot exceed \$80,000. Individual items of equipment costing less than \$10,000 must be requested within DRCs.

Applicants must clearly outline the total value of all items of equipment for each year, why the equipment is required for the proposed research and why the equipment cannot be provided by the institution.

For each item of equipment requested, a written quotation must be received and held with the RAO of the Administering Institution, and be made available to NHMRC on request. The Administering Institution must be prepared to meet all service and repair costs in relation to equipment funded.

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).

5. FUNDING PARTNERS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

For further details on strategic priorities and funding organisations, see <u>Appendix A</u> of the *Ideas Grants 2019 Guidelines*.

5.1. Funding Partners

Applicants may be able to seek funding from funding partners, either exclusively or in addition to NHMRC funding. Details of the funding partners participating in the 2019 Ideas Grants round will be provided in NHMRC's granting system.

Applicants seeking funding from a funding partner should be aware of any additional application requirements.

Applicants who are applying for NHMRC funding and also seeking Cancer Australia's Priority-driven Collaborative Cancer Research Scheme (PdCCRS), Early Career Researcher funding for the same project must provide a one page modified research proposal with reduced aims and timeframes. PdCCRS Early Career applicants must meet NHMRC submission deadlines in addition to any Cancer Australia deadlines (see Appendix A of the *Ideas Grants* 2019 Guidelines for additional guidance).

5.2. Electromagnetic Energy Research

Applicants applying for Electromagnetic Energy (EME) funding will be required to provide a statement justifying consideration of their application (see Appendix A of the *Ideas Grants 2019 Guidelines*).

Justification (maximum of 2000 characters including spaces and line breaks).

Applicants will need to:

- justify how their project will investigate the effects of radio frequency (RF) EME on human health
- provide a description of both the RF exposure (such as frequency range and source of the exposure) and the health effect that is being investigated
- provide a detailed justification of how their application aligns with the research agenda for RF EME and health outlined in the 2017 Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) Technical Report, Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Energy and Health: Research Needs.

5.3. MRFF Million Minds Mission

Applicants applying for funding from the MRFF Million Minds Mission will be required to provide a statement justifying consideration of their application (see <u>Appendix A</u> of the *Ideas Grants 2019 Guidelines*).

6. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: 2019 Ideas Grants Category Descriptors

ATTACHMENT A - DRAFT 2018 NHMRC IDEAS GRANTS CATEGORY DESCRIPTORS

The following category descriptors are used as a guide to scoring an application against each of the four assessment criteria:

- 1) Research Quality NHMRC defines 'Research Quality' for the Ideas Grant scheme as the quality of the project aims and the proposed research plan.
- 2) Innovation & Creativity NHMRC defines 'Innovation and Creativity' for the Ideas Grant scheme as health and medical research that seeks to challenge and shift current paradigms and/or have a major impact on a health research area through one or more studies that creatively:
 - · develop or use novel research concepts, approaches, methodologies, technologies or interventions
 - propose a reinterpretation, refinement, improvement or new application of existing theoretical concepts, approaches, methodologies, technologies or interventions, or
 - integrate and adapt concepts, approaches, methodologies, technologies or interventions from other research fields or disciplines for a new purpose or in a new way.

(Refer to Appendix D of the Ideas Grants 2019 Guidelines for more information on the concept of Innovation and Creativity.)

- 3) Significance NHMRC defines 'Significance' for the Ideas Grant scheme as the extent to which the outcomes and outputs will result in advancements to the research or health area.
- 4) Feasibility NHMRC defines 'Feasibility' for the Ideas Grant scheme as the appropriateness of the applicant team and their expertise, the resources and access to additional personnel necessary for the project.

While the category descriptors provide peer reviewers with some benchmarks for appropriately scoring each application, it is not essential that all descriptors relating to a given score are met.

The descriptors are a guide to a "best fit" outcome. The process of consistently referring panel members to these descriptors is vital to ensuring equity, thoroughness and process consistency both within and across all Peer Review Panels.

CATEGORY	Research Quality (35%)	Innovation & Creativity (25%)	Significance (20%)	Feasibility (20%)
7 Exceptional	 The project aims and proposed research plan: are supported by an extremely well justified hypothesis/rationale are focused, well-defined, extremely coherent and have a flawless study design and approach would be extremely competitive with the best, similar research proposals internationally have extremely well identified and managed scientific and technical risks. 	Relative to the research field, the planned research demonstrates extremely innovative project aims, which will result in an extremely substantial shift in the current paradigm, and/or lead to an extremely substantial breakthrough or impact in the research area.	 The planned research, relative to the research field: will address an issue of critical importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) will result in extremely significant outcomes in the science, knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues will lead to extremely significant research outputs (intellectual property, publications, products, services, conferences, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.). 	 The applicant team (Chief Investigators and Associate Investigators): has a lead Chief Investigator with exceptional scientific leadership and skills to achieve the project aims has access to exceptional technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities and if required, has access to additional support personnel necessary for the project has an extremely appropriate balance of integrated expertise, experience and training that specifically targets all aspects of the proposed research, in terms of both depth and breadth.
6 Outstanding	 The project aims and proposed research plan: are supported by a very well justified hypothesis/rationale are focused, well-defined, very highly coherent and have an outstanding study design and approach with only a few minor weaknesses would be very highly competitive with the best, similar research proposals internationally have very well identified and managed scientific and technical risks with only a few minor weaknesses. 	Relative to the research field, the planned research demonstrates very highly innovative project aims, which will result in a very substantial shift in the current paradigm, and/or lead to a very substantial breakthrough or impact in the research area.	 The planned research, relative to the research field: will address an issue that is of very high importance to advance the research or health area (not the prevalence or magnitude of the issue) will result in very highly significant outcomes in the science, knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues will lead to very highly significant research outputs (intellectual property, publications, products, services, conferences, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.). 	 has a lead Chief Investigator with outstanding scientific leadership and skills to achieve the project aims has access to outstanding technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities and if required, has access to additional support personnel (Associate Investigators) necessary for the project has a very highly appropriate balance of integrated expertise, experience and training that is targeted towards all aspects of the proposed research, in terms of both depth and breadth.

CATEGORY	Research Quality (35%)	Innovation & Creativity (25%)	Significance (20%)	Feasibility (20%)
5 Excellent	The project aims and proposed research plan: are supported by a well justified hypothesis/rationale are focused, well-defined, highly coherent and have an excellent study design and approach with several minor weaknesses would be competitive with the best, similar research proposals internationally have well identified and managed scientific and technical risks with a few minor concerns	Relative to the research field, the planned research demonstrates highly innovative project aims, which will result in a substantial shift in the current paradigm, and/or lead to a substantial breakthrough or impact in the research area.	 The planned research, relative to the research field: will address an issue of considerable importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) will result in highly significant outcomes in the science, knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues will lead to highly significant research outputs (intellectual property, publications, products, services, conferences, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.). 	 has a lead Chief Investigator with excellent scientific leadership and skills to achieve the project aims has access to excellent technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities and if required, has access to additional support personnel (Associate Investigators) necessary for the project has a highly appropriate balance of integrated expertise, experience and training necessary for all aspects of the proposed research, both in terms of both depth and breadth.
4 Very good	The project aims and proposed research plan: are supported by a well justified hypothesis/rationale are focused, well-developed, coherent and have a very good study design and approach with a few minor concerns would be likely to be competitive with high quality, similar research proposals internationally have identified and managed scientific and technical risks, with several minor concerns	Relative to the research field, the planned research demonstrates innovative project aims, which will result in a moderate shift in the current paradigm, and/or lead to a moderate breakthrough or impact in the research area.	 The planned research, relative to the research field: will address an issue of importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) will result in significant outcomes in the science, knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues will lead to significant research outputs (intellectual property, publications, products, services, conferences, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.). 	The applicant team: has a lead Chief Investigator with very good scientific leadership and skills to achieve the project aims has access to very good technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities and if required, has access to additional support personnel (Associate Investigators) necessary for the project has an appropriate balance of integrated expertise, experience and training necessary for all aspects of the proposed research, in terms of both depth and breadth.
3 Good	 The project aims and proposed research plan: are supported by a sound hypothesis/rationale are logical, generally clear in the study design and approach with several minor concerns would be somewhat competitive with high quality, similar research proposals internationally have identified and managed scientific and technical risks, with some major concerns. 	Relative to the research field, the planned research demonstrates some innovative project aims, which will likely result in some shift in the current paradigm, and/or lead to a some breakthrough or impact in the health research area.	 The planned research, relative to the research field: will address an issue of some importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) will result in moderately significant outcomes in the science, knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues will lead to moderately significant research outputs (intellectual property, publications, products, services, conferences, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.). 	 has a lead Chief Investigator with good scientific leadership and skills to achieve the project aims has access to good technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities and if required, has access to additional support personnel (Associate Investigators) necessary for the project has expertise, experience and training that is essential, integrated and balanced for most aspects of the proposed research, in terms of both depth and breadth, with some major concerns.

CATEGORY	Research Quality (35%)	Innovation & Creativity (25%)	Significance (20%)	Feasibility (20%)
2 Satisfactory	 The project aims and proposed research plan: are supported by a satisfactory hypothesis/rationale are satisfactory in the study design and approach, but may lack clarity in some aspects and may contain some major weaknesses would be marginally competitive with high quality, similar research proposals internationally have identified and managed scientific and technical risks, but there are several major concerns 	Relative to the research field, the planned research demonstrates somewhat innovative project aims, which will result in a minor shift in the current paradigm, and/or lead to a minor breakthrough or impact in the health research area.	 The planned research, relative to the research field: will address an issue of marginal importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) may result in outcomes in the science, knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues may lead to research outputs (intellectual property, publications, products, services, conferences, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.). 	 has a lead Chief Investigator with satisfactory scientific leadership and skills to achieve the project aims has access to some of the necessary technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities and if required, may have access to additional support personnel (Associate Investigators) relevant to the project, and raises some notable concerns has some but not all of the expertise, experience and training essential to the proposed research in terms of depth and breadth, and raises several major concerns
1 Marginal to Poor	 The project aims and proposed research plan: are underpinned by a weak hypothesis/rationale have significant flaws in the study design and approach and may contain several major weaknesses are unlikely to be competitive with similar research proposals internationally have not satisfactorily identified and managed scientific and technical risks. 	Relative to the research field, the planned research does not demonstrate innovative project aims, and is unlikely to cause a shift in the current paradigm, or lead to a breakthrough or impact in the health research area.	 The planned research, relative to the research field will address an issue of some concern to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) unlikely to result in outcomes in the science, knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues unlikely to lead to research outputs (intellectual property, publications, products, services, conferences, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.). 	 has a lead Chief Investigator with weak scientific leadership and skills to achieve the project aims does not have access to the necessary technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities and if required, has access to additional support personnel (Associate Investigators) relevant to the project, and raises several major concerns does not have access to expertise, experience and training essential to the proposed research in terms of depth and breadth.