Synergy Grants 2025 Guidelines

Opening date:	5 February 2025
Closing date and time:	5:00 pm ACT local time on 2 April 2025
Commonwealth policy entity:	National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
Enquiries:	Applicants requiring further assistance are to direct enquiries to their Administering Institution's Research Administration Officer. Research Administration Officers can contact NHMRC's Research Help Centre for further advice: ▪ Phone: 1800 500 983 (+61 2 6217 9451 for international callers) ▪ Email: help@nhmrc.gov.au NHMRC will not respond to any enquiries submitted after 13:00 ACT local time on 2 April 2025. Note: NHMRC's Research Help Centre aims to provide a reply to all requests for general assistance within 2 working days. This timeframe may be longer during peak periods or for more detailed requests for assistance. Submission of a registration form and activation of a Sapphire account must occur at least 3 business days before application close, noting that account activation processes cannot be guaranteed in less than this time.
Date guidelines released:	5 February 2025
Type of grant opportunity:	Targeted competitive

Contents

1. Synergy Grants 2025 processes

NHMRC's Synergy Grant scheme is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives

The Synergy Grant scheme is a component of the Portfolio Budget Statements Program 1.1: Health and Medical Research, which contributes to Outcome 1: Improved health and medical knowledge.

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The grant opportunity opens

NHMRC publishes the grant opportunity guidelines on GrantConnect.

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Minimum Data deadline

Application Fields marked with a flag must be completed and not contain placeholder text.

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Applicants complete and submit a grant application

Applicants must complete the application form and address all of the eligibility criteria to be considered for a grant.

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Applications are verified and assessed

Applications are verified against eligibility criteria and applicants are notified if not eligible. Peer reviewers assess applications against the assessment criteria including an overall consideration of value with money.

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Grant decisions are made

NHMRC's CEO seeks approval of funding recommendations from the Minister for Health and Aged Care.

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NHMRC notifies applicants of the outcome

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Applicant's Administering Institution signs the NHMRC Grant Schedule(s) setting out the grant activity

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Delivery of grant

Grantees undertake the grant activity as set out in the schedule to the Funding Agreement. NHMRC manages the grant through the relevant Administering Institution.

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Evaluation of the Synergy Grant scheme

NHMRC undertakes periodic evaluations of the performance and administration of its funding schemes to determine strengths and to identify where improvements can be made.

1.1. Introduction

These grant opportunity guidelines (guidelines) contain information for the Synergy Grants 2025 grant opportunity.

Applicants must read these guidelines before filling out an application.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant scheme/grant opportunity
- the eligibility and assessment criteria
- how grant applications are considered and selected
- how grantees are notified and receive grant payments
- how grants will be monitored and evaluated
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

GrantConnect (www.grants.gov.au) is the authoritative source of information on this grant opportunity. Any alterations or addenda to these guidelines will be published on GrantConnect.

The Synergy Grants 2025 grant opportunity will be undertaken in accordance with the *Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024* (CGRPs), available from the Department of Finance website.

Commonwealth funding for this grant opportunity, including where future or additional funding opportunities are indicated, is subject to the relevant Commonwealth Government funding policy and priorities at the time of notification and accordingly may be subject to change. This may affect the funding available, and its timing, provided under this grant opportunity. Any such changes will be notified as soon as possible.

1.2. About NHMRC

NHMRC is the Australian Government's key entity for managing investment in, and the integrity of, health and medical research. NHMRC works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program in accordance with the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992* (NHMRC Act) and the CGRPs.

NHMRC awards grants through several research funding schemes to advance health and medical knowledge and to improve the health of all Australians. NHMRC invests in the highest quality research and researchers, as determined through peer review, across the 4 pillars of health and medical research: basic science research, clinical medicine and science research, public health research and health services research.

2. About the grant program

Funding for the program will be provided from the NHMRC Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA), which is underpinned by section 51 of the NHMRC Act.

The objective of the Synergy Grant scheme is to:

- support outstanding multidisciplinary teams of investigators to work together to answer questions that cannot be answered by a single investigator.

The intended outcomes of the Synergy Grant scheme are:

- multidisciplinary research that addresses major problems in all areas of human health and medical research, from discovery to translation
- highly collaborative teams of diverse researchers including by gender, career stage and cultural background, working together to address major problems in human health.

2.1. Key changes

Applicants need to note the following changes for the Synergy Grants 2025 Guidelines:

- NHMRC has streamlined its cross-scheme eligibility framework such that the Synergy Grant scheme is no longer relevant to a Chief Investigator's (CIs) eligibility to apply for and/or hold an Investigator or Ideas Grant. This change will apply for current Synergy Grant holders, such that CIs (CIA–J) will no longer have their Synergy Grant count towards their application or grant capping for the Investigator or Ideas Grant schemes. Removing the Synergy Grant scheme from cross-scheme eligibility capping (formerly the Investigator, Synergy and Ideas Grant schemes) will simplify the application process by making it easier for the CIA and RAO to determine the eligibility of their applications. The Synergy Grant scheme-specific eligibility rules remain (i.e. CIs can apply for a maximum of one Synergy Grant per funding round and hold a maximum of one Synergy Grant concurrently.
- The Synergy Grant scheme-specific eligibility rules remain (i.e. CIs can apply for a maximum of one Synergy Grant per funding round and hold a maximum of one Synergy Grant concurrently. As per section 4.2.1 of these guidelines, CIs cannot apply for more than they would be eligible to hold).
- The second component of this streamlining is the removal of exceptions to the rule that CIs can hold up to a maximum of 2 grants from the Investigator and Ideas Grant schemes (i.e. CIs holding 2x Ideas Grants (could apply for and hold an Investigator Grant). The se former exceptions to the 'hold 2 grants' rule added complexity to the eligibility policy, created difficulty for CIAs and RAOs to determine the eligibility of their applications, was responsible for a high percentage of ineligible applications each funding round and was seldom taken advantage of by applicants. This streamlining will simplify the application process by assisting RAOs and CIAs to better understand their eligibility to apply. This change is not retroactive and will not impact CIs already in receipt of 2x Ideas and 1x Investigator grants.
- Applicants are no longer required to respond to the 3 research impact sub elements separately, however they will continue to be independently assessed by the peer reviewer. Applicants will provide their response to the 3 sub elements in a single field in the application form. There is a second field for applicants to use when providing evidence for their research impact claims. This follows feedback that addressing the 3 research impact sub elements separately can be more challenging/restrictive for applicants and can result in information being repeated across the 3 separate fields in the application form (see section 6.5.3 of Appendix E).
- Addition of section 7.7 regarding the Statement on Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation in Health and Medical Research (the Sex and Gender Statement).

2.2. NHMRC structural priorities, Synergy Grants 2025 priorities and funding with other organisations

NHMRC's Corporate Plan outlines strategic priorities and major health issues for the period covered by the Plan, including how NHMRC will address these issues, and a national strategy for medical research and public health research. Each year, NHMRC also identifies structural priorities for funding to deliver against certain strategic priorities. Information on NHMRC's structural priorities, Synergy Grants priorities and Synergy Grants funding with other organisations is provided in Appendix A.

3. Grant amount and grant period

3.1. Grants available

The provisional funding allocation for the Synergy Grants 2025 round is $55 million, funding for each successful grant is $5 million. NHMRC's Research Committee annually reviews and recommends indicative budget amounts to be awarded across individual funding schemes.

3.2. Grant period

A Synergy grant is awarded for a fixed 5-year term.

4. Eligibility criteria

Applications will only be accepted from NHMRC Administering Institutions.

The CIA and Administering Institution must ensure applications and grants meet all eligibility requirements as set out in these guidelines. Applications that do not meet these eligibility requirements may be ineligible and may be excluded from further consideration.

Where an eligibility ruling is being considered, NHMRC may request further information to assess whether the eligibility requirement has been met.

Decisions are made based on current policies and considerations specific to this grant opportunity. Decisions made in relation to previous grant opportunities, or other NHMRC funding schemes will not be regarded as precedents and will not be considered when assessing compliance with the requirements of this grant opportunity.

Administering Institutions will be notified in writing of ineligible applications and are responsible for advising applicants of the decision.

NHMRC staff will not make eligibility rulings before the minimum data deadline. Grant offers may be withdrawn if eligibility criteria are not maintained. Action may also be taken over the life of a grant if eligibility criteria to continue holding a grant are not met.

4.1. Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

4.1.1. Chief Investigators and Associate Investigators

A Synergy Grant application requires a minimum of 4 CIs. The maximum number of CIs allowed on a Synergy Grant application is 10.

Chief Investigator 'A'

At the time of acceptance and for the duration of a grant the CIA must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, or a permanent resident of Australia. CIA must also be based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period; the other CIs may be international collaborators.

Chief Investigators

The role and contribution of each CI must be described in the grant application. PhD students may be named as CIs where the PhD student is critical for the successful completion of the proposed research. CIs are expected to remain on the grant activity for the duration of the grant, unless a variation is approved by NHMRC in accordance with the NHMRC *Grantee Variations Policy*. NHMRC will only approve a change in CIs in exceptional circumstances and a variation request must not be used as a means to meet NHMRC eligibility requirements.

Associate Investigators

There is no restriction on who may be named as an AI on an application. However, a maximum number of 10 AIs may be named. Up to 10 can be entered in Sapphire.

4.1.2. Limits on the number of Synergy Grant applications/grants

CIs can submit a maximum of one Synergy Grant application in a grant opportunity.

CIs can hold no more than one Synergy grant concurrently, subject to other NHMRC grants held or concurrently applied for.

Note: Applications to **Synergy Grants** do not impact the eligibility of CIs applying to the Investigator or Ideas Grant schemes. If successful, Synergy Grants do not impact the number of Investigator or Ideas Grants a CI is eligible to hold (refer to the relevant scheme's guidelines for eligibility requirements).

4.2. Exclusion of applications

An application may be excluded from further consideration if NHMRC identifies that:

- it contravenes an eligibility rule or other requirement as set out in these guidelines
- it, or the CIA/any CI named on the application, contravenes an applicable law or code, or
- it is inconsistent with the objectives of the NHMRC Act and/or the purposes of the MREA.

An application will be excluded if the CIA/any CI named on the application is the subject of a decision by NHMRC's CEO or delegate that any application they make to NHMRC, for specified funding schemes, will be excluded from consideration for a period of time, whether or not they otherwise meet the eligibility requirements. Such decisions will generally reflect consequential action taken by NHMRC in response to findings of a serious breach of the *Australian Code for the*

Responsible Conduct of Research (the Code) (including a finding of research misconduct, where this term is used) or a Probity Event. See the Code for a definition of 'research misconduct' and NHMRC's *Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy*.

Such exclusion may take place at any time following CIA and Administering Institution certification of the application.

If a decision is made to exclude an application from further consideration, NHMRC will provide its decision and the reason(s) for the decision to the Administering Institution's Research Administration Officer (RAO). The Administering Institution's RAO is responsible for advising applicants of the decision. Decisions to exclude an application may be reviewable by NHMRC's Commissioner of Complaints.

5. What the grant money can be used for

5.1. Eligible grants activities and expenditure

Funding provided by NHMRC for a grant activity must be spent on costs directly incurred in that grant activity that satisfy the principles and requirements outlined in NHMRC's *Direct Research Costs Guidelines.*

5.1.1. Salary support

Synergy grants are not normally intended to provide salary support for CIs. However, if salaries are sought for CIs, the costs must be directly associated with achieving the outcomes of the research.

CIs, including the CIA, can draw a salary from the Synergy grant if they are based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period. CIs based overseas cannot draw a salary, but the grant can be used to provide salary support for research support staff based overseas (see section 5.2). Salary costs must be based on Personnel Support Packages (PSPs).

Multiple partial salaries can be drawn up to 100%, if allowed in the guidelines for the respective grant opportunities.

Associate Investigators cannot draw a salary from Synergy grants.

5.2. Funding to support overseas grant activities and researchers

Synergy Grant funds are provided to support research costs in Australia. Funding can be used to support specific grant activities to be undertaken overseas, including salary support for overseas-based research support staff, if the overseas grant activity is critical to the successful completion of the project and the equipment/resources required for the grant activity are not available in Australia. In doing so, the CIA must clearly demonstrate that the overseas grant activity is critical to the successful completion of the project and the equipment/resources required for the grant activity are not available in Australia.

See NHMRC's *Direct Research Costs Guidelines* for further guidance on the expenditure of funding for a grant activity.

5.3. Duplicate funding

NHMRC may compare the research proposed in grant applications with grants previously funded, currently funded and funded by other agencies (e.g. Australian Research Council or Department of Health and Aged Care) and published research. NHMRC will not fund research that it considers duplicates research previously or currently being funded.

Where NHMRC believes that an applicant has submitted similar research proposals to NHMRC and has been successful with more than one application, the applicant may be required to provide NHMRC with a written report clearly identifying the difference between the research aims of the research activities. If NHMRC subsequently does not consider the research activities to be sufficiently different, the applicant will be required to decline or relinquish one of the grants.

6. The assessment criteria

Applications for Synergy Grants 2025 are assessed by peers against the assessment criteria listed below and the score descriptors in Appendix_B

- Knowledge gain (30%)
- Synergy (30%)
- Track record, relative to opportunity (40%).

6.1. Knowledge gain

NHMRC defines 'knowledge gain' for the Synergy Grant scheme as the quality of the proposed research and significance of the knowledge gained. It incorporates theoretical concepts, hypotheses, research design, robustness and the extent to which the research findings will contribute to the research area and health outcomes (by advancing knowledge, practice or policy).

6.2. Synergy

NHMRC defines 'synergy' for the Synergy Grant scheme as the quality of a diverse team's multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to solving a major health and medical research question, while building workforce capability. AIs are not assessed as part of the research team.

6.3. Track record

NHMRC defines 'track record' for the Synergy Grant scheme as the value of an individual's past research achievement, relative to opportunity, not prospective achievements, using evidence.

Track record assessment only includes CIs and not AIs. Assessment is undertaken relative to career stage based on 2 categories: researchers who are *≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent*, and researchers who are *>10 years post-PhD or equivalent* (see Appendix_B).

Assessment of track record comprises peer reviewers' consideration of each individual CI's publications, research impact and leadership as follows:

Criteria	Weighting	Assessment timeframe
Publications	20%	Past 10 years, extended for career disruption
Research impact	15%	Research impact is expected to be recent, whereas the research program underpinning the impact has no limit
Leadership	5%	Past 10 years, extended for career disruption

Track records are assessed relative to opportunity, taking into consideration any valid career disruptions and other relative to opportunity considerations, where applicable (see Appendix C).

Where there is an eligible career disruption, applicants may include publications and leadership track record information immediately preceding the '10-year assessment timeframe' up to the application close date for the timeframe commensurate to the period of their career disruption[1].

Only (eligible) career disruptions will extend the '10-year assessment timeframe' for assessing publications and leadership track record.

Track record information provided from outside of the '10-year assessment timeframe' (extended for career disruption) will not be considered by peer reviewers in their assessments.

While it is expected that the **research impact** will be recent, the **research program** which underscores the research impact can be drawn from any time in the researcher's career.

NHMRC recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants often make additional valuable contributions to policy development, clinical/public health leadership and/or service delivery, community activities and linkages, and are often representatives on key committees. If applicable, these contributions will be considered when assessing research output and track record.

6.4. Health research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

As part of NHMRC's stated commitment to advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, NHMRC has requirements and processes designed to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research is of the highest scientific merit and is beneficial and acceptable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Applicants proposing to undertake research which specifically relates to the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, or which includes distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, biological samples or data, must refer to the following documents in formulating their proposal:

[1] For example, if an applicant has a 90-day career disruption, they may include publications and/or Leadership track record information during the 3 months preceding the 10 years up to the application close date

- *Road map 3: A strategic framework for improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health through research*
- *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders*, and
- *Keeping Research on track II*, which is a companion document on how the values and principles outlined in the *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders* can be put into practice in research.

To qualify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, at least 20% of the research effort and/or capability building must relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Qualifying applications must address NHMRC's *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* as follows:

- **Community engagement** – the proposal demonstrates how the research and potential outcomes are a priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with relevant community engagement by individuals, communities and/or organisations in conceptualisation, development and approval, data collection and management, analysis, report writing and dissemination of results.
- **Benefit** – the potential health benefit of the project is demonstrated by addressing an important health issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This benefit can have a single focus or affect several areas, such as knowledge, finance and policy or quality of life. The benefit may be direct and immediate, or it can be indirect, gradual and considered.
- **Sustainability and transferability** – the proposal demonstrates how the results of the project have the potential to lead to achievable and effective contributions to health gain for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, beyond the life of the project. This may be through sustainability in the project setting and/or transferability to other settings such as evidence-based practice and/or policy. In considering this issue, the proposal should address the relationship between costs and benefits.
- **Building capability**– the proposal demonstrates how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and researchers will develop relevant capabilities through partnerships and participation in the project.

Peer reviewer(s) with specific expertise in Indigenous health research will evaluate how well the application addresses the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* and ensure the research is being undertaken in a culturally appropriate manner. This evaluation is not given a numerical score but is a yes/no determination that will be taken into consideration in the overall assessment of the application, using the assessment criteria outlined in section 6 (it does not alter the weighting of the assessment criteria). Confirmation of qualifying applications will be used for reporting measures by NHMRC.

7. How to apply

7.1. Overview and timing of grant opportunity processes

Date	Process
5 February 2025	Applications open in Sapphire
5:00 pm ACT local time **5 March 2025**	Minimum data due in Sapphire
5:00 pm ACT local time **2 April 2025**	Applications close in Sapphire
Mid-May – early June 2025	Stage One – Knowledge gain and synergy assessment
June - July 2025	Stage Two – Track record assessment
October 2025*	Anticipated notification of outcomes

*Date is indicative and subject to change.

Applications must be submitted electronically using Sapphire (unless otherwise advised by NHMRC).

Electronic submission requires Administering Institutions and all CIs on an application to register for an account in Sapphire. Applicants who are not registered can submit a new user request via the login page of Sapphire.

Applicants should refer to the *Sapphire Learning and Training Resources* for detailed user instructions or contact their RAO or NHMRC's Research Help Centre for further assistance.

Late applications will not be accepted.

7.2. Application extensions

Requests for application extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be submitted by email to help@nhmrc.gov.au before the application closing date and time. Requests will only be considered for:

- unforeseen circumstances, e.g. natural calamities such as bushfires, floods or cyclones
- exceptional circumstances that affect multiple researchers, e.g. power and/or internet network outages, or
- where an applicant, or a member of their immediate family[2], is incapacitated due to an unforeseen medical emergency, such as life-threatening injury, accident or death.

Extensions will be for a maximum of 7 calendar days. This is to ensure that subsequent peer review processes and approval of funding recommendations are not delayed, especially as eligibility decisions for some NHMRC schemes depend on an applicant's success with other schemes.

Requests for extensions submitted after the scheme close date and time will not be considered.

[2] Immediate family comprises a spouse, child, parent or sibling. It includes de facto, step and adoptive relations (e.g. de facto, step or adopted children).

7.3. Minimum data requirements

Minimum data must be entered in Sapphire by the specified due date. **Applications that fail to satisfy this requirement will be ineligible and will not proceed**. Applicants must complete the required fields with correct information. Applications containing placeholder text (including in the synopsis) such as "text", "synopsis" or "xx" at minimum data will be ineligible. The minimum data deadline will not be extended.

Applicants are discouraged from making any changes to minimum data fields following the minimum data deadline as NHMRC uses minimum data to identify appropriate peer reviewers to assess the application. Incorrect minimum data may result in less suitable peer reviewers assessing the application.

Minimum data fields for Synergy Grants 2025 are outlined in (Appendix E, section 3) and within Sapphire.

RAOs are not required to certify applications for the purpose of minimum data. Applications are only to be certified once complete and ready for submission.

7.4. Application requirements

The application must contain all information necessary for assessment without the need for further written or oral explanation or reference to additional documentation. Further information on what can and cannot be included and guidance for each component of the application is provided in Appendix E.

All details included must be current at the time of submission, as this information is relied on during assessment.

Applications must comply with all content and formatting requirements. Incomplete or non-compliant applications may be ineligible.

7.5. Attachments to the application

NHMRC requires the following documents with your application:

- Grant proposal PDF.

You must attach supporting documentation to the application in line with the instructions provided in Sapphire or Appendix E. Only attach requested documents. NHMRC will not consider information in attachments that it does not request.

7.6. Consumer and community involvement

The *Statement on Consumer and Community Involvement in Health and Medical Research* (the Statement) has been developed because of the important contribution consumers make to health and medical research. The Statement's purpose is to guide research institutions, researchers, consumers and community members in the active involvement of consumers and community members in all aspects of health and medical research. The Consumers Health Forum of Australia Ltd (CHF) and NHMRC worked in partnership with consumers and researchers to develop the Statement.

To complement the statement, NHMRC has released a Toolkit with resources on consumer and community involvement in, and expectations of, health and medical research. Researchers are encouraged to consider the benefits of actively engaging consumers and to use this Toolkit throughout all stages of research, including the planning and preparation of grant applications, the conduct of research and the evaluation of outcomes.

Further information on CHF, the Statement and the Toolkit is available on the NHMRC webpage on consumer and community engagement. Consumer and community involvement in the proposed research will be considered, as relevant, as part of the applicable assessment criteria (see section 6).

7.7. Consideration of Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation

The *Statement on Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation in Health and Medical Research* (the Sex and Gender Statement) has been developed because of the importance of our health care system being informed by an evidence base that reflects the sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation of all people in Australia.

The Sex and Gender Statement's purpose is to guide researchers, and their supporting stakeholders, as they consider these variables at all stages of their research project, where applicable. NHMRC and the Department of Health and Aged Care, responsible for implementation of the Medical Research Future Fund, developed the Sex and Gender Statement in partnership with researchers, consumers, representatives and stakeholders with experience and expertise in sex and gender matters related to health and medical research.

All applicants for NHMRC funding are strongly encouraged to:

- consider sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation at all stages of the research project
- use consistent definitions and classifications according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation.

The Sex and Gender Statement provides prompts by research life-cycle stage from question setting and design through to conduct, analysis, reporting and translation and implementation. Further information and supporting resources is available on the NHMRC webpage on the Sex and Gender Statement.

7.8. Certification and submission

Once complete, applications must be electronically certified and then submitted to NHMRC through the RAO of an NHMRC Administering Institution using Sapphire.

Certification is required firstly by the CIA and then by the Administering Institution RAO by the specified due date or the application will be ineligible and excluded from further consideration.

Once submitted to NHMRC, the application is considered final and no changes can be made.

7.8.1. CIA certification

The following assurances, acknowledgements and undertakings are required of the CIA before submitting an application:

- All required information has been provided and is complete, current and correct.
- All eligibility and other application requirements have been met.
- All personnel contributing to the grant activity have familiarised themselves with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* and other relevant NHMRC policies concerning the conduct of research and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with those policies.
- The application may be excluded from consideration if found to be in breach of any requirements, in accordance with the guidelines.

And if funded:

- The research will be carried out in strict accordance with the conditions governing NHMRC grants at the time.
- The Head of Department of the Administering Institution (and Participating Institution/s, if applicable) will ensure the appropriate facilities will be available.
- The research may be used for internal NHMRC quality evaluations/reviews.

7.8.2. Certification from other Chief Investigators (CIB to CIJ) and Associate Investigators

By accepting an invitation to participate on an application, Chief and Associate Investigators certify that, at the time of application submission, they:

- agree to be named on the application
- endorse application certification by the Chief Investigator A and submission for endorsement by the Administering Institution's RAO
- have familiarised themselves with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* and other relevant NHMRC policies concerning the conduct of research, and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with those policies
- agree to participate in the manner described in the application and to the handling of personal information contained within the application as described in the NHMRC *Privacy Policy*
- have met all eligibility and other application requirements.

7.8.3. Administering Institution certification

The following assurances, acknowledgements and undertakings are required of the Administering Institution before submitting an application:

- Reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the application is complete and correct and complies with all eligibility and other application requirements.
- CIA is an Australian or New Zealand citizen or permanent resident of Australia at the time of accepting the successful grant.
- CIA will be based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period.
- The appropriate facilities and salary support will be available for the funding period.
- Approval of the grant activity by relevant institutional committees and approval bodies, particularly for ethics and biosafety, will be sought and obtained before the commencement of the research, or the parts of the research that require their approval.
- Arrangements for the management of the grant have been agreed between all institutions associated with the application.
- The application is being submitted with the full authority of, and on behalf of, the Administering Institution, noting that 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. This includes submission of an application by those not authorised by the Institution to submit applications for funding to NHMRC.

Administering Institutions must ensure that the RAO is authorised to certify and submit applications. Where a researcher is a nominated position holder for the Administering Institution, the Administering Institution is to manage Conflict of Interest and separation of duties and ensure the researcher does not certify their own application.

7.9. Retracted publications

If a publication relevant to an application is retracted after the application has been submitted, the applicant must promptly notify their RAO. The RAO must advise NHMRC at the earliest opportunity of the retraction by email (help@nhmrc.gov.au) with an explanation of the reasons for the retraction.

In addition, where the publication forms part of the applicant's track record, the applicant must immediately record that information in their Profile in Sapphire.

If an application is largely dependent on the results of a retracted publication, the applicant should also consider withdrawing the application. If, under these circumstances, an applicant chooses not to withdraw the application, the RAO must advise NHMRC in writing (to help@nhmrc.gov.au), clearly outlining the reasons for not withdrawing the application.

7.10. Withdrawal of applications

Applications may be withdrawn at any time by written notice from the Administering Institution's RAO to NHMRC.

An application may be 'marked for deletion' by the applicant in Sapphire before the close of the round. This authorises NHMRC to delete the application once the grant opportunity has closed. The application will not be deleted while the grant opportunity remains open for application submission.

7.11. Questions during the application process

Applicants requiring further assistance should direct enquiries to their Administering Institution's RAO.

All policy enquiries must be submitted in writing by the Administering Institution's RAO to NHMRC's Research Help Centre. Policy enquiries from applicants will be re-directed to the RAO. Frequently asked policy questions will be addressed via the scheme's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document, which will be updated on GrantConnect as required and should be reviewed before submitting a query.

NHMRC's Research Help Centre details:

Phone: 1800 500 983 (+61 2 6217 9451 for international callers)

Email: help@nhmrc.gov.au

Refer to the Research Help Centre webpage for opening hours.

8. The grant selection process

8.1. Assessment of grant applications

NHMRC considers applications through a targeted competitive grant process. Applications are required to meet eligibility requirements as set out in these guidelines and are assessed against the assessment criteria (see section 6) by independent peer reviewers.

As per section 12 of the CGRPs, the extent to which applications represent value with relevant money is considered as part of the broader score descriptors in Appendix_B. This consideration guides assessment of applications against the scheme's objectives and intended outcomes (section 2), the relative value of the grant sought, the quality of the proposed research and the track record or capability of the applicant(s).

8.1.1. Who will assess applications?

NHMRC's peer review process is designed to provide a rigorous, fair, transparent and consistent assessment of the merits of each application to ensure that only the highest quality research that provides value with money is recommended for funding.

Applicants must not seek to identify or make contact about their application with anyone who is directly engaged with its assessment, in keeping with NHMRC's principles of impartial and independent peer review. Seeking to influence the process or outcomes of peer review may

constitute a breach of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* and may result in the application being excluded from consideration.

8.1.2. Synergy Grants assessment process

NHMRC will conduct peer review for this funding round in accordance with the following principles:

- Fairness. Peer review processes are fair and seen to be fair by all.
- Transparency. Applies to all stages of peer review.
- Independence. Peer reviewers provide independent advice. There is also independent oversight of peer review processes by independent Chairs and Observers, where relevant.
- Appropriateness and balance. There is appropriate experience, expertise and representation of peer reviewers assessing applications.
- Research community participation. Persons holding taxpayer-funded grants should willingly make themselves available to participate in peer review processes, whenever possible, in accordance with the obligations of the Funding Agreement.
- Confidentiality. Participants respect that confidentiality is important to the fairness and robustness of peer review.
- Impartiality. Peer review is objective and impartial, with appropriate processes in place to manage disclosures of interest.
- Quality and excellence. NHMRC will continue to introduce evidence-based improvements into its processes to achieve the highest quality decision-making through peer review.

8.1.3. Stage One – Knowledge gain and synergy assessment

Peer reviewers will independently undertake an assessment of applications against the *knowledge gain* and *synergy* assessment criteria (see section 6). Written feedback provided by peer reviewers may be shared with other reviewers assessing the same application. Where relevant, NHMRC may also take additional measures to ensure that outlier scores are not a result of typographical or other unintentional errors. The most competitive applications that meet a threshold score for the *knowledge gain* and *synergy* criteria may be shortlisted.

8.1.4. Stage Two – Track record assessments

Peer reviewers will independently assess the track records of individual CIs on shortlisted applications, relative to opportunity and taking into account career disruptions, against the *track record* criterion. Some applications may be discussed by peer reviewers. The overall scores of shortlisted applications will be used to produce a rank ordered list of applications, on which funding recommendations will be based.

Further information on the assessment process is in the accompanying peer review guidelines.

8.2. Who will approve grants?

In accordance with paragraph 7(1)(c) of the NHMRC Act, NHMRC's CEO or their delegate makes recommendations on expenditure from the MREA to the Minister with portfolio responsibility for NHMRC. The Minister, acting on the advice of the CEO, determines expenditure from the MREA (subsection 51(2) of the NHMRC Act).

9. Notification of application outcomes

NHMRC will advise applicants and their nominated Administering Institution's RAO of the outcome of the application as early as possible, following the approval of grants. Advice of outcomes may occur before the approval of grants if an application has been assessed as uncompetitive or excluded for other reasons.

NHMRC may advise applicants and their Administering Institution's RAO of the outcome under embargo. This means that the information must not be made public until the embargo is lifted. During the embargo period, applicants must not publicise the information or post comments about their or the grant opportunity's grant outcomes in public domains such as social forums, websites, journals or newspapers.

10. Successful grant applications

CIAs whose applications are approved for funding will have access to a letter of offer through Sapphire. Administering Institutions responsible for administering approved applications will also have access to the letter of offer and to the Schedule to the Funding Agreement. The Administering Institution is responsible for accepting the Schedule through the online signing/acceptance process within Sapphire.

NHMRC's CEO or delegate may withdraw or vary an offer of a grant if they consider that it is reasonably necessary to protect Commonwealth revenue.

10.1. Information required from grantees

Grantees may be required to supply additional information about their grant activity before payments commence. This will be stated in the Schedule to the Funding Agreement, relevant grant opportunity guidelines or letter of offer.

10.2. Obligations and approvals

NHMRC-funded grant activities must comply with applicable guidelines, laws and approval requirements.

Institutions applying for NHMRC funding (both Administering and Participating Institutions) must also be aware of their obligations under the *National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse – Grant Connected Policy*. Relevant institutions that have been named in an application for the Redress Scheme or named in the Royal Commission, and have not joined the Redress Scheme, will be ineligible to receive NHMRC funding.

Note: NHMRC-funded research with ethics and biosafety considerations must be referred for approval to the relevant institutional committees and approval bodies.

10.3. NHMRC Funding Agreement

All grants are offered in accordance with the Funding Agreement (with any conditions specified in Schedules and these guidelines), which is a legal agreement between NHMRC and the Administering Institution. Schedule(s) are accepted by the Administering Institution electronically in accordance with the provisions of the Funding Agreement.

A grant will not commence, nor grant funds be paid, until:

- the Funding Agreement between NHMRC and the Administering Institution is in place, and
- the appropriate Schedule to the Funding Agreement is executed in accordance with clause 2.3 of the Funding Agreement.

10.3.1. Responsible and ethical conduct of research

NHMRC expects the highest levels of research conduct and integrity to be observed in the research that it funds. Under the Funding Agreement, NHMRC funded research must be conducted in accordance with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

10.4. NHMRC policies

Under the Funding Agreement, it is the responsibility of Administering Institutions and CIs to be aware of, and comply with, all relevant legislation and policies relating to the conduct of the grant activity. This includes adhering to the key principles and applicable requirements of the CGRPs and the published grant opportunity guidelines.

10.5. Payments

Payments will commence once all outstanding obligations (e.g. conditions, eligibility rules or data requirements specified in the Schedule to the Funding Agreement, relevant grant opportunity guidelines or letter of offer) have been met by the CIA and the Administering Institution.

10.6. Suspension of grants

NHMRC funding may be suspended for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, requests made by the CIA. Variations will generally only be granted if allowed in the grant opportunity guidelines and the NHMRC *Grantee Variation Policy*.

Funding may also be suspended by NHMRC, in circumstances as set out in the Funding Agreement, including when there has been a failure to comply with a Policy or Guideline, or on the basis of a Probity Event or an investigation of an alleged breach of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (including research misconduct, where this term is used).

10.7. Tax implications

All amounts referred to in these guidelines are exclusive of GST, unless stated otherwise.

Administering Institutions are responsible for all financial and taxation matters associated with the grant.

11. Announcement of grants

Grant outcomes are publicly listed on the GrantConnect website within 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by the CGRPs.

12. How we monitor your grant activity

12.1. Variations

A variation is a change (including a delay) to a grant. There are specific circumstances under which grantees are to report and seek approval of a variation to an NHMRC grant (including the grant activity) relative to the peer reviewed application. Requests must comply with the grant opportunity guidelines and the *NHMRC Grantee Variations Policy*. Requests to vary the terms of a grant are to be made to NHMRC via the Grantee Variation portal in Sapphire. For information on grant variations see the NHMRC *Grantee Variations Policy*.

Note that CIs are expected to remain on the grant for the full funding period and NHMRC will only approve changes to CIs in exceptional circumstances. Before a CIA applies for a grant variation, they and the relevant RAO will need to confirm that all CIs have agreed to the variation, noting the impact that it may have on their suite of grants and their eligibility to hold/apply for other grants.

Grant variations cannot be used as a means to meet NHMRC eligibility requirements.

12.2. Reporting

Administering Institutions are required to report to NHMRC on the progress of the grant and the use of grant funds. Where an institution fails to submit reports (financial or otherwise) as required, NHMRC may take action under the provisions of the Funding Agreement. Failure to report within timeframes may affect eligibility to receive future funding.

12.2.1. Financial reports

Annual financial reports are required in a form prescribed by NHMRC. At the completion of the grant or upon transfer to a new Administering Institution, a financial acquittal is also required.

12.2.2. Non-financial reports

The Funding Agreement requires the CIA to prepare reports for each grant activity. While having outstanding obligations from previous NHMRC grants does not disqualify applicants from applying for other NHMRC grants, it is a condition of funding that outstanding obligations from previous NHMRC grants, including submission of a Final Report, have been met before commencement of a new grant.

Information included in the Final Report may be publicly released. Use of this information may include publication on the NHMRC website, publicity (including release to the media) and the promotion of research achievements.

The Administering Institution is also required to provide NHMRC with any other report in respect of any research activity within the timeframe, in the format and containing the information requested by NHMRC. All information provided to NHMRC in reports may be used for internal

reporting and reporting to government. This information may also be used by NHMRC when reviewing or evaluating funded research projects or funding schemes or designing future schemes.

12.3. Evaluation of the Synergy Grants scheme

NHMRC undertakes periodic evaluations of the performance and administration of its grant opportunities to determine their effectiveness and to identify where improvements can be made.

12.4. Open Access Policy

All recipients of NHMRC grants must comply with all elements of NHMRC's *Open Access Policy* as a condition of funding.

13. Probity

13.1. Complaints process

As per the NHMRC *Complaints Policy*, applicants or grantees can lodge a formal complaint about an NHMRC process related to funding via their Administering Institution's RAO and in writing to NHMRC Complaints Team at: complaints@nhmrc.gov.au. Complaints must be lodged within 28 days of the relevant NHMRC decision or action. NHMRC will provide a written response to all complaints. NHMRC will not review the merits of a funding decision, but it will investigate complaints about the administrative process followed to reach a funding decision.

If applicants or grantees are dissatisfied with the response from the NHMRC Complaints Team, they can raise their concerns with the NHMRC Commissioner of Complaints. Note that the Commissioner of Complaints does not undertake a merits review.

Applicants or grantees can complain to the Commonwealth Ombudsman if they do not agree with the way NHMRC has handled their complaint. The Ombudsman will not usually consider a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with NHMRC and, where relevant, the Commissioner of Complaints.

13.2. Conflicts of interest

NHMRC is committed to ensuring that interests of any kind are dealt with consistently, transparently and with rigour, in accordance with sections 16A and 16B of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 (made under the subsection 29(2) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act)).

Applicants are not required to declare actual or perceived interests.

To manage any conflicts of interest with applicants, NHMRC requires peer reviewers to declare interests, actual or perceived, and sign deeds of confidentiality. Peer reviewers declare any direct or indirect, pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest, which is reviewed by NHMRC, before being granted full access to an application. Any peer reviewer who is determined by NHMRC to have a 'high' conflict of interest will not be able to participate in the review of that application.

By managing any conflict, NHMRC maintains objectivity, impartiality and integrity in the assessment of applications. Further information about the conflict-of-interest process is available in the Synergy Grants 2025 Peer Review Guidelines.

13.3. Privacy: confidentiality and protection of personal information

NHMRC treats applicants' personal information in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and the *Privacy Act 1988*. The NHMRC *Privacy Policy* details the types of personal or sensitive information that may be collected by NHMRC and how it will be handled. Applicants need to familiarise themselves with the NHMRC Privacy Policy before providing personal information to NHMRC.

Information that is generally regarded as confidential information is application information and any other information specifically identified as such by applicants and grantees and will be received by NHMRC on the basis of a mutual understanding of confidentiality.

NHMRC may disclose personal and/or confidential information to:

- overseas entities, Australian, State/Territory or local government agencies, organisations or individuals where necessary to assess an application or to administer a grant
- the peer review committee and other Commonwealth employees and contractors to help NHMRC manage the grant scheme effectively
- employees and contractors of NHMRC to research, assess, monitor and analyse schemes and activities
- employees and contractors of other Commonwealth agencies for relevant purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery
- other Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government agencies in reports and consultations
- NHMRC approved Administering Institutions' Research Administration Offices
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- the responsible Minister or Parliamentary Secretary, and
- a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

In addition, NHMRC will provide certain limited personal information of the Chief Investigator/s included in an application to Administering Institutions for the purpose of certification of eligibility requirements.

13.4. Freedom of information

NHMRC as a Commonwealth agency is subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and is committed to meeting the Australian Government's transparency and accountability requirements. Freedom of information laws facilitate the general public's access to documents held by national government agencies, including application and funding documentation relating to NHMRC researchers. This right of access is limited where documents, or parts of documents, are exempt under the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Researchers are to familiarise themselves with NHMRC's Freedom of Information procedures before submitting an application.

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent	Identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent follows the advice given on the AIATSIS website (https://aiatsis.gov.au/family-history/you-start/proof-aboriginality). This states that government agencies and communities usually accept 3 'working criteria' as confirmation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, namely: • being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent • identifying as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, and • being accepted as such by the community in which you live, or formerly lived.
assessment criteria	The specified principles or standards against which applications will be judged. These criteria are used to assess the merits of proposals and, in the case of a competitive granting opportunity, to determine applicant rankings.
Associate Investigator (AI)	An investigator who provides some intellectual and/or practical input into the research and whose participation may warrant inclusion of their name on outputs (e.g., publications).
Chief Investigator (CI)	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
Chief investigator A (CIA)	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles 2024 (CGRPs)	The CGRPs establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration.
date of effect	This will depend on the particular grant. It can be the date on which the schedule to a grant agreement is executed or the grant is announced, whichever is later.
eligibility criteria	The principles, standards or rules that a grant applicant must meet to qualify for consideration of a grant.
final year	The final 12 calendar months of a grant.
Funding Agreement	For NHMRC MREA grants, the grant agreement is the NHMRC Funding Agreement and the Schedule to the Funding Agreement.
funding round	Collectively refers to the Investigator, Synergy and Ideas Grant opportunities commencing funding in the same year.
grant	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.

Term	Definition
grant activity	Defined as "Research Activity" in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
grant opportunity guidelines	All the documents published on GrantConnect under the grant opportunity. Also referred to as guidelines in this document.
grant opportunity	Refers to the specific grant round or process where a Commonwealth grant is made available to potential grantees. Grant opportunities may be open or targeted, and will reflect the relevant grant selection process.
grant program	A group of one or more grant opportunities under a single entity Portfolio Budget Statement Program. This is referred to as a scheme in this document.
GrantConnect	GrantConnect is the Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRPs. It is available at www.grants.gov.au Non-corporate Commonwealth entities (such as NHMRC) must publish grant opportunities on GrantConnect to meet the grant publishing requirements under the CGRPs. Where information is published in more than one location, and there are inconsistencies, GrantConnect is the authoritative, auditable information source.
grantee	An individual/organisation that has been selected to receive a grant. For NHMRC's purposes, grants are awarded to the Administering Institution for the benefit of the grant recipients (however described).
Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA)	A 'Special Account' established under section 49 of the NHMRC Act, through which Government appropriated funds are used to pay NHMRC grants.
Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)	The MRFF was established in 2015 by the *Medical Research Future Fund* Act 2015 (MRFF Act). Refer to the Department of Health and Aged Care website: https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/medical-research-future-fund
peer reviewers	Individuals (peers) with appropriate knowledge and expertise who review grant applications.
Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Program	Described within the entity's PBS, PBS programs each link to a single outcome and provide transparency for funding decisions. These high-level PBS programs often comprise a number of lower level, more publicly recognised programs, some of which will be

Term	Definition
	Grant Programs (schemes). A PBS Program may have more than one Grant Program (scheme) associated with it, and each of these may have one or more grant opportunities.
Probity Event	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
Sapphire	NHMRC's electronic, secure system that allows research administrators, applicants, assessors, grant holders and NHMRC staff to manage all aspects of the granting lifecycle.
Schedule	As defined in the NHMRC Funding Agreement.
value with money	Value with money in this document refers to 'value with relevant money' which is a judgement based on the grant proposal representing an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources and determined from a variety of considerations. When administering a grant opportunity, an official should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to: • the quality of the project proposal and activities • fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives • that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government's outcomes being achieved, and • the potential grantee's relevant experience and performance history.

Appendix A. NHMRC structural priorities, Synergy Grants 2025 priorities and funding organisations

NHMRC structural priorities

Each year, NHMRC identifies structural priorities for funding to help achieve its broader goals.

Applications that meet structural priorities may be funded in order of merit, supplementary to applications within the budget for the grant opportunity, based on advice from NHMRC's Research Committee. NHMRC's current structural priorities are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers
- Gender equity – female and non-binary lead investigators
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research and researchers

NHMRC is committed to improving the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and encourages applications that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. Accordingly, NHMRC is committed to allocating at least 5 per cent of the annual allocation from its Medical Research Endowment Account to research directed at improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Support for health and medical research and research translation is central to achieving improvements in this area. It is also important to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, and how this diversity relates to health issues in these communities.

Applicants identifying as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent are asked to indicate this in their Sapphire profile.

Identification of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent follows the advice provided on the AIATSIS website (https://aiatsis.gov.au/family-history/you-start/proof-aboriginality). This states that government agencies and communities usually accept 3 'working criteria' as confirmation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, namely:

- being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- identifying as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, and
- being accepted as such by the community in which you live, or formerly lived.

Administering Institutions must retain evidence, consistent with AIATSIS guidance, of a Chief Investigator's A identification as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person and must provide this evidence to NHMRC, if requested.

Gender equity – female and non-binary lead investigators

As the Australian Government's lead agency for funding health and medical research, NHMRC is committed to achieving gender equity in its grant program. Funding outcomes have highlighted the underrepresentation of female chief investigators across many of NHMRC's funding schemes. By providing structural priority funding for female lead investigators, NHMRC is seeking to give more outstanding female researchers the opportunity to receive funding and to encourage more to apply. Non-binary lead investigators are included in the gender equity structural priority to recognise that non-binary people in the research workforce, like women, may have been affected by systemic disadvantage.[3]

Synergy Grants 2025 priority areas

In addition to these priorities, NHMRC may award Synergy Grants that:

- address other defined structural priorities
- are funded with partner organisations.

Synergy Grants funded by other organisations

Synergy Grants may be funded by or in conjunction with other organisations. These grants offer opportunities to researchers whose work is particularly relevant to the priorities and research interests of the partner organisations.

Some funding partners may require a separate application to be provided to them, or may have specific criteria and requirements, in addition to those of NHMRC. Applicants are to contact the funding partner to identify any additional requirements.

For the purposes of the *Privacy Act 1988*, applicants and other persons whose details appear in grant applications (e.g. other investigators) need to be aware that NHMRC may provide their personal information, including all pertinent application documentation and peer review outcomes, to the funding organisation(s) nominated by the applicant. The purpose of providing this information is to enable potential funding partners to assess the application's eligibility for funding under the funding organisation's policies.

In the event that a funding partner is unable to fulfil its obligation to a co-funded grant, NHMRC will continue to support the Synergy Grants recipient under the conditions that would have been awarded by NHMRC. Any additional benefits that may have been provided by the funding partner, including Synergy grants that may have been fully funded by the funding partner, will not be supported by NHMRC.

Further information on Synergy Grants funded by other organisations is available on the NHMRC website.

[3] Non-binary applicants and applicants who use a relevant term to describe their gender in the "I use a different term" free text field within their Sapphire profile will be placed in the female/non-binary ranked list [OR] will be included with female applicants for the purposes of structural priority funding.

Appendix B. Synergy Grants 2025 score descriptors

The following score descriptors are used as a guide to scoring an application against each of the assessment criteria.

While the score 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 score descriptors are a guide to a 'best fit' outcome. Peer reviewers will consistently refer to these score descriptors to ensure thorough, equitable and transparent assessment of applications.

Assessing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions

It is recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants make additional valuable contributions to policy development, clinical/public health leadership and/or service delivery, community activities and linkages, and are often representatives on key committees. If applicable, these contributions should be considered when assessing research output and track record.

Stage One – Knowledge Gain (30%) and Synergy (30%)

Knowledge gain (30%)

Table 1. Knowledge Gain

Score	Performance indicator	Score descriptors
7	Exceptional	The proposed multidisciplinary research represents **exceptional knowledge gain** as it: • **Comprehensively integrates complementary** information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts and/or theories, from 2 or more disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge, that are essential to solve a major research question that is beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice: – is supported by an **extremely well** justified and reasoned hypothesis/hypotheses/rationale – the scientific framework, design, methods and analyses are **flawless**, **highly** developed, **completely** complementary and integrated and **highly** appropriate – the integration of research components is **extremely likely** to result in novel conceptual approaches and insights. • Demonstrates to an **extremely high level** that the research proposal tackles a **major** question addressing an issue of **critical importance** to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) • Collectively has or has access to **exceptional** technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve project outcomes • **Will** result in **extremely** significant and **transformative** changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues • **Will** lead to **extremely** significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.) • **Would be extremely** competitive with the best, similar, research proposals internationally.

6	Outstanding	The proposed multidisciplinary research represents outstanding knowledge gain as it: • Integrates complementary information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts and/or theories, from 2 or more disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge, that are essential to solve a major research question that is beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice: – is supported by a very well justified and reasoned hypothesis/hypotheses/rationale – the scientific framework, design, methods and analyses are well developed, complementary and integrated and highly appropriate with only a few minor weaknesses – the integration of research components is highly likely to result in novel conceptual approaches and insights. • Demonstrates to a very high level that the research proposal tackles a major question addressing an issue that is very important to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) • Collectively has or has access to outstanding technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve project outcomes • Will result in very highly significant and substantial changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues • Will lead to very highly significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.) • Would be highly competitive with the best, similar, research proposals internationally.
5	Excellent	The proposed multidisciplinary research represents excellent knowledge gain as it: • Integrates complementary information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts and/or theories, from 2 or more disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge, that are essential to solve a major research question that is beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice: – is supported by a well justified and reasoned hypothesis/hypotheses/rationale the scientific framework, design, methods and analyses are well developed, complementary and integrated and highly appropriate with several minor weaknesses – the scientific framework, design, methods and analyses are well developed, complementary and integrated and highly appropriate with several minor weaknesses – the integration of research components is likely to result in novel conceptual approaches and insights. • Demonstrates to a high level that the research proposal tackles a major question addressing an issue that is of considerable importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) • Collectively has or has access to excellent technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve project outcomes • Will result in highly significant and substantial changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues • Will lead to highly significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.) • Would be competitive with the best, similar, research proposals internationally

4	Very good	The proposed multidisciplinary research represents very good knowledge gain as it: • Integrates broadly complementary information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts and/or theories, from 2 or more disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge, that are essential to solve a major research question that is beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice: – is supported by a well justified and reasoned hypothesis/hypotheses/rationale – the scientific framework, design, methods and analyses are well developed, broadly complementary and integrated and highly appropriate with a few minor concerns – the integration of research components is likely to result in novel conceptual approaches and insights. • Demonstrates that the research proposal tackles a major question addressing an issue that is of importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) • Collectively has or has access to very good technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve project outcomes • Likely to result in significant and substantial changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues • Likely to lead to significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.) • Would be likely to be competitive with high quality, similar research proposals internationally.
3	Good	The proposed multidisciplinary research represents good knowledge gain as it: • Integrates broadly complementary information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts and/or theories, from 2 or more disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge, essential to solve a major research question that is beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice: – is supported by a justified and sound hypothesis/hypotheses/rationale – the scientific framework, design, methods and analyses are developed, broadly complementary and integrated and appropriate with several minor concerns – the integration of research components could result in novel conceptual approaches and insights. • Demonstrates that the research proposal tackles a major question addressing an issue that is of some importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) • Collectively has or has access to good technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve project outcomes • Could result in significant and substantial changes/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues • Could lead to significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.) • Would be somewhat competitive with high quality, similar research proposals internationally.

2	Satisfactory	The proposed multidisciplinary research represents satisfactory knowledge gain as it: • Integrates broadly complementary information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts and/or theories, from 2 or more disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge, essential to solve a major research question that is beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice: – is supported by a reasoned hypothesis/hypotheses/rationale – the scientific framework, design, methods and analyses are generally sound, complementary and integrated but may lack clarity in some aspects and/or may contain notable weaknesses/concerns – the integration of research components could result in some novel conceptual approaches and insights. • Demonstrates that the research proposal tackles a major question addressing an issue that is of marginal importance to advance the research or health area (not prevalence or magnitude of the issue) • Collectively has or has access to some/most but not all of the technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, and if required, has access to additional expertise necessary to achieve project outcomes • Could result in appreciable improvements/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues • Could lead to moderately significant research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.) • Would be marginally competitive with high quality, similar research proposals internationally.
1	Marginal to Poor	The proposed multidisciplinary research: • Does not integrate information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts and/or theories, from 2 or more disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge, essential to solve a major research question that is beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice: – has a weak hypothesis/hypotheses/rationale – the scientific framework, design, methods and analyses have significant shortcomings and may contain major weaknesses. • Fails to demonstrate that the research proposal tackles a major research question • Does not have access to the technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities, or access to additional expertise necessary to achieve project outcomes • Is unlikely to result in improvements/outcomes in the scientific knowledge, practice or policy underpinning human health issues of significance • Is unlikely to lead to research outputs (e.g. intellectual property, publications, policy advice, products, services, teaching aids, consulting, contract research, spin-offs, licensing etc.) of significance • Is unlikely to be competitive with similar research proposals internationally.

Synergy (30%)

Table 2. Synergy

Score	Performance indicator	Score descriptors
7	Exceptional	The proposed research team provides exceptional synergy (*diversity*, *multidisciplinarity* and *collaborative gain*) as it: *Diversity* • Comprises a diverse team (in terms of gender, career stage and/or researchers from different cultures) that will provide expertise **and** build capability aligned to the research question – Provides investigators' diverse experience and vital perspectives, without which the research question cannot be addressed. AND *Multidisciplinarity* • Comprehensively demonstrates why the research requires the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines and has processes to ensure the research question is addressed using these different disciplines complementarily • Integrates researchers with highly complementary expertise and insights across disciplines necessary and sufficient to address the major research question and lead to transformative outcomes – Achieves integration of the various researchers' skills and perspectives that is extremely likely to produce sustainable synergy and novel outcomes, which would not be possible by the CIs pursuing the components as separate projects, or with a different composition of CIs. AND *Collaborative gain* • Demonstrates to an extremely high degree, comprehensive and suitable plan(s) for the research team to work synergistically, including milestones and evaluation measures and strategies for intellectual exchange, governance, grant sharing and resources • Demonstrates sustainable collaborations that are highly likely to extend beyond the life of the project • Demonstrates each investigator's previous experience and success in collaborative research (with the same or other collaborators) • Incorporates comprehensive and exceptional strategies to integrate, provide mentoring and development opportunities and increase capability of under-represented groups/researchers (e.g. health professionals, consumers, community groups, policy makers and people from different cultures).

6	Outstanding	The proposed research team provides **outstanding synergy** (*diversity*, *multidisciplinarity* and *collaborative gain*) as it: *Diversity* • **Comprises a diverse team** (in terms of gender, career stage and/or researchers from different cultures) that will provide expertise **and** build capability aligned to the research question – Provides investigators' diverse experience and vital perspectives, without which the research question cannot be addressed. AND *Multidisciplinarity* • Demonstrates to a **very high degree** why the research requires the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines and has processes to ensure the research question is addressed using these different disciplines complementarily • Integrates researchers with **complementary expertise and insights** across disciplines **necessary** and **sufficient** to address the major research question and lead to **substantial** outcomes – Achieves integration of the various researchers' skills and perspectives that is **highly likely** to produce sustainable synergy and novel outcomes, which would not be possible by the CIs pursuing the components as separate projects, or with a different composition of CIs. AND *Collaborative gain* • **Demonstrates to a very high degree**, comprehensive and suitable plan(s) for the research team to work synergistically, including milestones and evaluation measures and strategies for intellectual exchange, governance, grant sharing and resources • Demonstrates sustainable collaborations that are **highly** likely to extend beyond the life of the project • Demonstrates each investigator's previous experience and success in collaborative research (with the same or other collaborators) • Incorporates **comprehensive** and **outstanding** strategies to integrate, provide mentoring and development opportunities and increase capability of under-represented groups/researchers (e.g. health professionals, consumers, community groups, policy makers and people from different cultures).

5	Excellent	The proposed research team provides **excellent synergy** (*diversity*, *multidisciplinarity* and *collaborative gain*) as it: *Diversity* • **Comprises a diverse team** (in terms of gender, career stage and/or researchers from different cultures) that will provide expertise and build capability aligned to the research question – Provides investigators' diverse experience and vital perspectives, without which the research question cannot be addressed. AND *Multidisciplinarity* • Demonstrates to a **high degree** why the research requires the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines and has processes to ensure the research question is addressed using these different disciplines complementarily • Integrates researchers with **complementary expertise and insights** across disciplines **necessary** and **sufficient** to address the major research question and lead to **substantial** outcomes – Achieves integration of the various researchers' skills and perspectives that is likely to produce sustainable synergy and novel outcomes, which would not be possible by the CIs pursuing the components as separate projects, or with a different composition of CIs. AND *Collaborative gain* • **Demonstrates to a high degree**, comprehensive and suitable plan(s) for the research team to work synergistically, including milestones and evaluation measures and strategies for intellectual exchange, governance, grant sharing and resources • Demonstrates sustainable collaborations that are **likely** to extend beyond the life of the project • Demonstrates each investigator's previous experience and success in collaborative research (with the same or other collaborators) • Incorporates **comprehensive** and **excellent** strategies to integrate, provide mentoring and development opportunities and increase capability of under-represented groups/researchers (e.g. health professionals, consumers, community groups, policy makers and people from different cultures).

4	Very good	The proposed research team provides very good synergy (*diversity, multidisciplinarity* and *collaborative gain*) as it: *Diversity* • Comprises a diverse team (in terms of gender, career stage and/or researchers from different cultures) that will provide expertise **and** build capability aligned to the research question – Provides investigators' diverse experience and vital perspectives, without which the research question cannot be addressed. AND *Multidisciplinarity* • Broadly demonstrates why the research requires the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines and has processes to ensure the research question is addressed using these different disciplines complementarily • Integrates researchers with complementary expertise and insights across disciplines necessary and sufficient to address the major research question and likely lead to substantial outcomes – Achieves integration of the various researchers' skills and perspectives that could produce sustainable synergy and novel outcomes, which would not be possible by the CIs pursuing the components as separate projects, or with a different composition of CIs. AND *Collaborative gain* • Demonstrates comprehensive and suitable plan(s) for the research team to work synergistically, including milestones and evaluation measures and strategies for intellectual exchange, governance, grant sharing and resources • Demonstrates sustainable collaborations that could extend beyond the life of the project • Demonstrates each investigator's previous experience and success in collaborative research (with the same or other collaborators) • Incorporates comprehensive and very good strategies to integrate, provide mentoring and development opportunities and increase capability of under-represented groups/researchers (e.g. health professionals, consumers, community groups, policy makers and people from different cultures).

3	Good	The proposed research team provides **good synergy** (*diversity*, *multidisciplinarity* and *collaborative gain*) as it: *Diversity* • **Comprises a diverse team** (in terms of gender, career stage and/or researchers from different cultures) that will provide expertise **and** build capability aligned to the research question – Provides investigators' diverse experience and vital perspectives, without which the research question cannot be addressed. AND *Multidisciplinarity* • **Largely** demonstrates why the research requires the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines and has processes to ensure the research question is addressed using these different disciplines complementarily. • Integrates researchers with expertise and insights across disciplines **necessary** and **sufficient** to address the major research question and **could** lead to substantial outcomes – Achieves integration of the various researchers' skills and perspectives that could in general produce sustainable synergy and novel outcomes, which would not be possible by the CIs pursuing the components as separate projects, or with a different composition of CIs. AND *Collaborative gain* • **Demonstrates suitable** plan(s) for the research team to work synergistically, including milestones and evaluation measures and strategies for intellectual exchange, governance, grant sharing and resources • Demonstrates collaborations that **could** extend beyond the life of the project • Demonstrates each investigator's previous experience and success in collaborative research (with the same or other collaborators) • Incorporates **clear** and **good** strategies to integrate, provide mentoring and development opportunities and increase capability of under-represented groups/researchers (e.g. health professionals, consumers, community groups, policy makers and people from different cultures).

2	Satisfactory	The proposed research team provides moderate synergy (*diversity*, *multidisciplinarity* and *collaborative gain*) as it: *Diversity* • Comprises a diverse team (in terms of gender, career stage and/or researchers from different cultures) that will provide expertise **and** build capability aligned to the research question – Provides investigators' diverse experience and vital perspectives, without which the research question cannot be addressed. AND *Multidisciplinarity* • Demonstrates to some degree why the research could require the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines and has processes to ensure the research question is addressed using these different disciplines complementarily, but poses some concerns • Integrates researchers with expertise and insights across disciplines that are relevant to the major research question and may lead to improved outcomes: – Achieves integration of the various researchers' skills and perspectives that could produce some synergy and novel outcomes, which would not be possible by the CIs pursuing the components as separate projects, or with a different composition of CIs. AND *Collaborative gain* • Demonstrates moderately suitable plan(s) for the research team to work synergistically, including milestones and evaluation measures and strategies for intellectual exchange, governance, grant sharing and resources • Demonstrates to some extent collaborations that may extend beyond the life of the project • Demonstrates to some extent each investigator's previous experience and success in collaborative research (with the same or other collaborators) • Incorporates moderate strategies to integrate, provide mentoring and development opportunities and increase capability of under-represented groups/researchers (e.g. health professionals, consumers, community groups, policy makers and people from different cultures).

1	Marginal to Poor	The proposed research team provides **limited synergy** (*diversity*, *multidisciplinarity* and *collaborative gain*) as it: *Diversity* • **Does not comprise a diverse team** (in terms of gender, career stage and/or researchers from different cultures) **or** the proposed team is diverse but investigators **do not** provide diverse experience and vital perspectives aligned to the research question. **AND** *Multidisciplinarity* • **Does not** demonstrate why the research requires the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines and **has no processes** to ensure the research question is addressed using these different disciplines complementarily • **Does not** integrate researchers with **expertise and insights across disciplines** necessary to address the major research question. **AND** *Collaborative gain* • **Does not** demonstrate suitable plan(s) for the research team to work synergistically, including milestones and evaluation measures and strategies for intellectual exchange, governance, grant sharing and resources • **Does not** demonstrate collaborations that are **likely to extend beyond the life of the project** • Does not demonstrate each investigator's previous experience and success in collaborative research (with the same or other collaborators) • **Does not** incorporate strategies to integrate provide mentoring and development opportunities and increase capability of under-represented groups/researchers (e.g. health professionals, consumers, community groups, policy makers and people from different cultures).

Stage Two – Track record (40%), relative to opportunity

Publications (20%)

Any publication type can be included to illustrate the Chief Investigator's (CI's) involvement, the quality of the research and its contribution to science. The publication assessment will focus on up to 10 of each individual CIs top publications in the past 10 years (taking into account career disruptions), supported by the CI's explanation for the nomination of each publication.

Assessment of publication track record will focus on the quality of the research and contribution to science rather than the quantity of publications.

Table 3. Publications

Descriptor: Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the individual Chief Investigator demonstrates a(n) [performance indicator] record of **publications** in terms of quality and contribution to science

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Performance Indicator	Weak or limited	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Outstanding	Exceptional

Research Impact (15%)

Table 4. Reach and significance of the research impact (5%)

Less than 10 years post-PhD (taking into account career disruptions)	Score descriptors			More than 10 years post-PhD (taking into account career disruptions)
	There is robust, verifiable evidence of:	*Note: Individual Chief Investigator's do not need to demonstrate all types of research impact*	*There is robust, verifiable evidence of:*	
7	an **exceptional** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* **and/or** *social impact*	*Knowledge* • a **paradigm changing** development that has led to (a) new knowledge within the field that is recognised across multiple countries, (b) significant influence beyond the specific field of research **or** (c) the development of a new field(s) of research that has been recognised across multiple countries/beneficiaries *Health* • a **paradigm changing** development that has improved health or health systems, services, policy, programs or clinical practice that (a) had a significant impact on health with an extensive reach, (b) had a profound impact on health with a modest reach, (c) profoundly improved the health of Australia's Indigenous people **or** (d) led to a significant, scalable and sustainable change in health systems and services in a large number of communities.	an **exceptional** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact*	7
		Economic • development of a service delivery or system change, prevention program, intervention, device, therapeutic or change in clinical practice that led to (a) the generation of **significant** commercial income **or** (b) a **profound reduction** in healthcare costs *Social* • changes in policy that have had (a) a **significant** impact on the social well-being, equality or social inclusion of very large numbers of people at a national level or across multiple countries **or** (b) a **profound impact** on the social well-being of the end-user, public and community of a smaller number of individuals at a national level or across multiple countries.	an **outstanding** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact*	6

7	an **exceptional** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* **and/or** *social impact*	*Knowledge* • a **major development** that has led to (a) new knowledge within the field that is recognised nationally or across multiple countries, (b) a **major** influence beyond the specific field of research or (c) a **major** influence on the development of a new field(s) of research that has been recognised nationally or across multiple countries/beneficiaries *Health* • an **important development** that has improved health or health systems, services, policy, programs or clinical practice that (a) had a **major** impact on health with an extensive reach, (b) had a **significant** impact on health with a modest reach, (c) led to a **significant** improvement in the health of Australia's Indigenous people or (d) led to major scalable and sustainable change in health systems and services in a number of communities *Economic* • development of a service delivery or system change, prevention program, intervention, device, therapeutic or change in clinical practice that led to (a) the generation of **considerable** commercial income or (b) a **major** reduction in healthcare costs *Social* • changes in policy that have either had (a) a **major** impact on the social well-being, equality or social inclusion of very large numbers of people at a local, state/territory or national level or (b) a **significant** impact on the social well-being of the end-user, public and community of a smaller number of individuals at a local, state/territory or national level	an **excellent** knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact	5
6	an **outstanding** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact*		a **very good** knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact	4
5	an **excellent** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact*	*Knowledge* • a change that has led to (a) new knowledge within the field that is recognised nationally or across multiple countries, (b) had **some** influence beyond the specific field of research, or (c) **some** influence on the development of a new field(s) of research that has been recognised nationally or across multiple countries/beneficiaries	a **good** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact*	3
4	a **very good** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact*	*Health* • a development that has improved health or health systems, services, policy, programs or clinical practice that (a) had **some** impact on health with an extensive reach, (b) had a **major** impact on health with a modest reach, (c) led to a **major** improvement in the health of Australia's Indigenous people, or (d) led to some scalable and sustainable change in health systems and services in a small number of communities.		

3	a **good** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact*	*Economic* • development of a service delivery or system change, prevention program, intervention, device, therapeutic or change in clinical practice that led to (a) the generation of **some** commercial income or (b) **some** reduction in healthcare costs *Social* • changes in policy that have had (a) **some** impact on the social well-being, equality or social inclusion of very large numbers of people at a local, state/territory or national level or (b) an impact on the social well-being of the end-user, public and community of a smaller number of individuals at a local, state/territory or national level	a **satisfactory** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact*	2
2	a **satisfactory** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact*			
1	a **weak** or **limited** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact* **and/or** the applicant has **not supplied robust verifiable evidence**	***There is limited*** *or* ***weak evidence of:*** • the development of new knowledge • improved health systems and services • reductions in health care costs or economic growth • improvements in social well-being, equality or social inclusion.	a **weak** or **limited** *knowledge*, *health*, *economic* and/or *social impact* **and/or** the applicant has **not supplied robust verifiable evidence**	1
)	**Less than 10 years post-PhD** (taking into account career disruptions	**Score descriptors** *Note: Individual Chief Investigators do not need to demonstrate all types of research impact*	**More than 10 years post-PhD** (taking into account career disruptions)	

Table 5. Research program's contribution to the research impact (5%)

Descriptor Relative to opportunity and to their field of research, there is robust verifiable evidence that the individual Chief Investigator's **research program** made a(n) [performance indicator] contribution to the claimed knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Performance Indicator	**Weak** or **limited**	**Satisfactory**	**Good**	**Very Good**	**Excellent**	**Outstanding**	**Exceptional**

Note: Chief Investigators who do not supply robust verifiable evidence should receive a score of 1.

Table 6. Chief Investigator's contribution to the research program (5%)

Descriptor Relative to opportunity and to their field of research, there is robust verifiable evidence that the individual **Chief Investigator** made a(n) [performance indicator] contribution to the claimed knowledge, health, economic and/or social impact

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Performance Indicator	**Weak** or **limited**	**Satisfactory**	**Good**	**Very Good**	**Excellent**	**Outstanding**	**Exceptional**

Note: Chief Investigators who do not supply robust verifiable evidence should receive a score of 1.

Leadership (5%)

Table 7. Leadership

Descriptor Relative to opportunity (including career stage) and to their field of research, the individual Chief Investigator demonstrates [performance indicator] performance in:

- supervision, mentoring, training and/or career development of staff and/or students within and/or beyond their research group
- experience and contribution to the peer review of publications and grant applications, nationally and/or internationally
- contribution to community engagement, public advocacy, government advisory boards or committees, professional societies at a local, national and/or international level
- non-research contribution(s) to department, centre, institute or organisation e.g. people development, relationship building, stewardship, teaching, mentoring, contributions towards improving equity and diversity, behaviour and culture
- conception and direction of a research project or program
- building and maintaining collaborative networks necessary to achieve research outcomes within and/or beyond their institution.

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Performance Indicator	Weak or limited	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Outstanding	Exceptional

Appendix C. NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy

Purpose

NHMRC's goal is to support the highest quality research that will lead to improvements in health over the short or long term. Peer review by independent experts is used to identify well-designed feasible projects that address a significant question and are undertaken by researchers with demonstrated capability to perform high quality research.

In most NHMRC grant schemes, peer reviewers are asked to assess the track record of the applicants as well as the proposed research. However, NHMRC recognises that not all research careers are the same and therefore peer reviewers are asked to assess track records 'relative to opportunity', taking into account circumstances that have affected the applicant's research productivity.

The purpose of this document is to outline NHMRC's *Relative to Opportunity Policy* with respect to:

- peer review of applicant track records

Policy approach

NHMRC considers relative to opportunity to mean that peer reviewers should assess an applicant's track record of research productivity and professional contribution in the context of their career stage and circumstances, by taking into consideration whether the applicant's productivity and contribution are commensurate with the opportunities available to them.

The policy has 2 components:

- **Career Disruption** – a prolonged interruption to the ability to work due to pregnancy, illness/injury and/or carer responsibilities. Career Disruptions are taken into account in track record assessment and in determining an applicant's eligibility to hold an Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant (in terms of years since they received their PhD).
- **Other Relative to Opportunity considerations** – any other personal or professional circumstances affecting research productivity. These circumstances are taken into account in track record assessment.

In addition to *NHMRC's Principles of Peer Review*, particularly fairness and transparency, the following principles support this objective:

- **Research opportunity:** Researchers' outputs and outcomes should reflect their opportunities to advance their career and the research they conduct.
- **Fair access:** Researchers should have access to funding support available through NHMRC grant program consistent with their experience and career stage.
- **Career diversity**: Researchers with career paths that include time spent outside academia should not be disadvantaged. NHMRC recognises that time spent in sectors, such as industry, may enhance research outcomes for both individuals and teams.

NHMRC expects that peer reviewers will give clear and explicit attention to these principles to identify the highest quality research and researchers. NHMRC recognises that life circumstances can be varied and therefore it is not possible to implement a formulaic approach to applying relative to opportunity considerations during peer review.

Consideration of career circumstances during peer review of grant applications

Under the NHMRC's *Relative to Opportunity Policy*, researchers' career circumstances are considered during track record assessment. This aims to take into account salient research opportunity considerations over the course of a research career and is not intended to address minor changes to life circumstances.

Circumstances considered during peer review include, but are not limited to:

Research

- research role(s) and responsibilities, career stage, and amount of time spent as an active researcher

Resources and facilities

- available resources and facilities, including:
  - the extent to which any additional research personnel and/or collaborators contribute to the applicant's research program
  - situations where research is being conducted in remote or isolated communities.

Professional responsibilities

- clinical, administrative and/or teaching workload
- time employed in other sectors
- building relationships of trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over long periods

Personal circumstances

- disability (including mental health conditions and psychosocial disability) or illness
- caring responsibilities that do not interrupt the applicant's career for an extended period (that would meet the definition of a Career Disruption) but still affect research productivity.
- for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, community obligations including 'sorry business'
- any other personal circumstances

Other circumstances

- relocation of an applicant and their research laboratory or clinical practice setting
- periods of unemployment
- calamities, such as pandemics, bushfires or cyclones

Relative to opportunity considerations do not include:

- minor (or short-term) changes that occur during the normal course of conducting research, e.g. broken equipment or delayed ethics approval
- minor (or short-term) medical conditions
- recreational leave or general administrative activities related to research, such as preparation of grant applications and publications or committee-related activities.

Consideration of career disruption during peer review and in determining eligibility for Emerging Leadership Investigator Grants

A career disruption is defined as a prolonged interruption to an applicant's capacity to work, due to:

- pregnancy
- major illness/injury
- carer responsibilities.

The period of career disruption may be used:

- to determine an applicant's eligibility for an Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant
- to allow for the inclusion of additional track record information for assessment of an application
- for consideration of track record relative to opportunity by peer reviewers.

A period of career disruption is defined as:

- a continuous absence from work for 90 calendar days or more, and/or
- continuous, long-term, part-time employment (with defined %FTE) due to circumstances classified as career disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 90 calendar days or more[1].

In determining eligibility of Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant applicants, the 10-year limit on the number of years post-PhD may be extended commensurate with the period of the career disruption.

NOTE: For the purposes of peer review, circumstances not meeting the definition of career disruption may be considered under the career circumstances provisions above

[1] For example, an applicant who is employed at 0.8 FTE due to childcare responsibilities would need to continue this for at least 450 calendar days to achieve a career disruption of 90 calendar days.

Appendix D. Concept of Synergy

Preamble

The Synergy Grant scheme incorporates an assessment criterion on 'Synergy' that will assess the merits of an applicant team's multidisciplinary approach, the diversity of the research team and its 'collaborative gain'. With respect to multidisciplinarity and diversity, only the CIs of the proposed research team will be assessed; the AIs are not considered for this criterion.

The criterion will consider the quality of the diverse team's multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to solving a major health and medical research question, as well as the capability-building/workforce development outcomes.

Successful Synergy Grant proposals will have an outcomes focus, demonstrating the skills essential to solve the research question, and will provide evidence of a discernible benefit over 'homogenous' research teams (through multidisciplinarity and diversity).

A multiple disciplinary approach to research

Solving major research questions and achieving transformative health outcomes increasingly require new technical and intellectual approaches (new ways to think about and/or address a question) through a convergence of perspectives from different disciplines. Each discipline provides specific intellectual knowledge, experimental approaches, methodological considerations, analytical approaches, and theoretical context. Together, these elements provide new insights to address major and challenging research questions.

In addition to integration between the broad research areas of basic science, clinical medicine and science, public health and health services research, a multidisciplinary approach may involve single or multiple methods (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, multimethod and mixed methods) across a range of research disciplines including, for example, social sciences, policy analysis, economics, engineering, mathematics and physical sciences. Such approaches may be critical to address major questions in health care delivery, health systems strengthening or population health.

The concept of research involving multiple disciplines is often denoted by terms such as multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary. However, the definition of these terms, and even the concept of a 'discipline', is constantly evolving and lacks consensus across different areas of health and medical research.

For the purposes of Synergy Grants, 'multiple disciplinary research' covers 'research by teams that integrate information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, methodologies and/or theories from 2 or more disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve questions whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice'.

Applicants should identify a major health and medical research related question and justify:

- why it requires the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge
- how the multiple disciplinary approach can provide novel solutions and insights that would not be achieved with a single discipline or traditional approaches
- how the research question is operationalised and addressed using different disciplines complementarily
- the sustainability of the research collaboration and scope for long term outcomes extending beyond the life of the project
- the methods that will keep the multiple disciplinary team of CIs focused, integrated and cohesive and that will drive outcomes.

Diversity of research teams

NHMRC recognises the need to foster diversity in health and medical research teams beyond multiple disciplinarity.

Health and medical research, from basic science to clinical and translational research, and policy formation, requires creativity and a range of skillsets and viewpoints.

Synergy Grant research teams will foster both collaborative gain and capability building through the recruitment of talented researchers from diverse backgrounds and groups.

Diversity in Synergy Grants could span under-represented groups in health and medical research. This could include career stage, gender and researchers from different cultures (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers). Given the broad spectrum of research encompassed in the health and medical research sector, the opportunities to engage a particular group will depend on the type of research being undertaken. It is, however, essential that each of the CIs contributes to the scientific development and execution of the project in a substantive and measurable manner.

In addition to diversity in the research team, NHMRC strongly encourages and values collaborations with stakeholders who have direct experience and knowledge, or who are direct beneficiaries, of the proposed research. This could include consumers, community groups, policy makers and people from different cultures (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people). The active involvement of these stakeholders will enhance research priority setting, increase the relevance of the research and its translation and provide critical knowledge that increases the quality and direction of the research.

Diversity is a broad concept with different dimensions and approaches across the health and medical research sector. Each of the different dimensions is important and diversity should be embraced in its broadest sense. Rather than mandate a particular approach to achieving diversity or ascribe a hierarchy of importance (e.g. gender versus career stage), NHMRC requires applicants to establish and demonstrate diversity in research teams that is aligned to the major research question of the proposal. The inclusion of a particular team member should be considered in the context of the research question, by valuing and engaging diverse personnel to enhance a project's quality and outcomes and advancing workforce development/capability.

Applicants should justify the diversity within the CIs of the proposed research team by outlining:

- the type(s) of diversity fostered and how it will enhance the outcomes of the project and its scientific quality, including why the research question cannot be addressed without the proposed personnel, and
- how the team of CIs will contribute to the capability building, mentoring, career development and diversification of the research workforce.

Examples of multiple disciplinary research teams are outlined below to illustrate the concepts in the context of Synergy Grants. These examples are not indicative of the potential merit of an application.

Examples of multiple disciplinary research teams:

- The development of genomics formed from genetics, molecular biology, analytical chemistry, mathematics and informatics. Genomics is now being integrated with public health research for health improvement through guidelines for appropriate use of genetic tests and services, interventions such as newborn screening for conditions and multidisciplinary population sciences to assess value and impact of genetic information in health conditions.
- The development of cancer-screening tools undertaken by teams including clinicians, research nurses, geneticists, bioinformaticians, biochemists etc. Together, these researchers identify a suitable patient cohort, obtain clinical samples, identify likely biomarkers that correlate with tumour development using genetics, define the role of that gene/protein in the development of cancer and undertake subsequent development of diagnostic tests for screening in patient cohorts.
- Research into the assessment and management of cardiovascular risk to develop new approaches to individualised absolute risk assessment and management. This may require a research team that includes public health researchers with qualitative and quantitative skills, clinicians with a range of expertise across the lifecycle and continuum from hospital to community care, geneticists, behavioural, biomedical engineering and informatics scientists, dietitians and exercise scientists and health consumers (especially from vulnerable population groups).
- Research to identify new approaches to manage antibiotic resistance could incorporate researchers from biology and biochemistry, immunology, biomedicine and pharmacology. Such a team could work with mathematicians and statisticians to develop new antibiotics, as well as with behavioural scientists and economists to understand how patterns of resistance develop and develop new behavioural strategies to reduce antibiotic use or to provide incentives for appropriate use of new antibiotics.

Synergy Grant applications will be assessed against published assessment criteria based on the specific details of each proposal. Applicants should refer to the Score Descriptors, which identify the expectations for each score across a 7-point scale.

Appendix E. Synergy Grants 2025 Guide to Applicants

1. Preparing an application

The following sections provide additional advice about parts of the application that are specific to Synergy Grants.

- Refer to the *Sapphire Learning and Training Resources* for general instructions on how to apply for a grant in Sapphire.
- Synergy Grants scheme-specific policy and instructions for applying in Sapphire (grey boxes) are provided in this appendix.
- For further assistance during the application process, refer to section 7 in the grant opportunity guidelines.

1.1. Use of generative artificial intelligence in grant applications

Applicants are to exercise caution when using generative artificial intelligence tools in the preparation of grant applications, as per NHMRC's *Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Grant Applications and Peer Review*.

2. Application requirements

A complete application is comprised of:

- Completed mandatory sections of 'My Profile' (section 5) and 'My Profile' Requirements for Synergy Grants (section 5.7)
- Completed application form (section 6)
- Grant Proposal as an attachment (section 6.7).

Applications must comply with all requirements as set out in the grant opportunity guidelines. Failure to adhere to any of these requirements may result in non-acceptance or exclusion of your application (refer to section 4 of the guidelines).

3. Minimum data requirements

Minimum data must be entered in Sapphire by the specified due date. Applicants must complete the required fields with correct information and are discouraged from making changes to this information after the minimum data due date. NHMRC uses this information to identify peer reviewers who are best suited to assess the application. Minimum data are indicated in Sapphire by a flag (⚑) and are comprised of:

- Administering Institution
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health research focus (yes/no)
- Project Synopsis
- Privacy agreement (both tick boxes ticked)

- Research Classification:
  - Broad Research Area
  - Field(s) of Research
  - Peer Review Areas
  - Research Keywords (minimum of 5)
- Chief Investigator A (CIA) (complete CIA Role and Name).

Minimum data must be entered into Sapphire by 5:00 pm ACT local time 5 March 2025.
Applicants are to refer to section 7.3 of the guidelines for further information.

Failure to meet this deadline will result in the application being ineligible and not proceeding.
The minimum data deadline will not be extended.

Research Administration Officers (RAOs) are not required to certify applications for the purpose of minimum data. Applications only require certification once complete and ready for submission to NHMRC.

4. Key changes

Applicants need to note the following changes for the Synergy Grants 2025 application form:

- There is now a single text field in the application form for applicants to respond to the 3 research impact sub-criteria (8000 characters) and a separate text field for references /evidence to support the research impact claims (2000 characters) (see section 6.5).
- NHMRC has streamlined its cross-scheme eligibility framework to simplify the application process for CIAs and Research Administration Officers (RAOs).
- Clarification at Appendix B that any publication type can be included as a Top 10 publication, with CIs nominating those that best illustrate their involvement, the quality of the research and its contribution to science.

5. ‘My Profile’ requirements

Within your profile in Sapphire, there is mandatory information that must be provided and/or updated before an application is submitted (refer to section 7 of the guidelines). This information includes personal details, academic/research interests and peer review information.

Mandatory Profile information is indicated in Sapphire. This requirement applies to all Chief Investigators (CIs) named on the application. You will need to verify that each of the CIs has completed and/or updated their profile before an application is certified, noting that an error message will appear when a CI is added as a team member if they have not completed all mandatory fields in their profile. Existing NHMRC grant holders cannot commence or be named on an application until all mandatory ‘My Profile’ fields are complete.

5.1. About My Profile

Provide your primary institution name under Primary Institution. If this is an Administering Institution, the RAO will have access to view your profile (including your gender). You may also allow the RAO to edit your profile.

Note: to update your Primary Institution name in Sapphire, go to ‘Account Settings’, ‘Personal details’ and click on ‘Primary Institution’.

5.2. Personal Information

Provide your most current details in this section. It is important that your title, names, gender, phone and email details are up to date as these are the details on which NHMRC relies when contacting you.

5.3. Academic information

Indicate whether you have a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and, if applicable, the pass date (year) of your thesis (not the date of conferral).

5.4. Peer review information

Select a Broad Research Area that best aligns with your expertise.

Basic Science Research: seeks to understand the biological processes that underpin health and disease at the molecular, cellular, organ system and whole-body levels. It may be conducted in vitro, in vivo and/or in silico. It may use, but is not limited to, cells, tissues or other materials of human origin or from relevant animal models.

Clinical Medicine and Science Research: seeks to improve the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of human diseases and conditions. It may involve interaction with patients and/or the use of clinical diagnostic materials or patient data.

Health Services Research: seeks to understand and improve the effectiveness, quality, safety, social and environmental dimensions of health care including access, distribution, timeliness and efficiency.

Public Health Research: seeks to improve the health of a population through the prevention of disease, prolongation of life and promotion of health and wellbeing. It includes research to understand the social, behavioural, environmental and other determinants of health and disease.

Accurate and up-to-date peer review information helps reduce peer review burden and ensures applications are allocated to the reviewers with the most relevant expertise. When completing this section, consider your relevant skills and expertise to review grant applications, rather than the field of your current research.

Select 5 to 10 Research Keywords most applicable to your main area of research. You can also provide further detail about your research interests or areas of expertise. This could include, but is not limited to, your research methodologies, areas of student supervision and areas in which you have published.

Select up to 3 Peer Review Areas (PRAs) that best describe your research interests, one being the most relevant and 3 being the least relevant.

You can add as many Fields of Research as required to describe your expertise. Indicate when you started your research in that field, the classification of the research (e.g., primary), and whether the research is current or terminated. Individuals are encouraged to list all relevant Fields of Research. Only current Fields of Research will be displayed.

Note: An opportunity is provided in the application to select research areas, fields of research and keywords that best describe your research proposal, as opposed to your personal research interests. The above information about your personal research interests will not determine the peer reviewers selected for your application.

5.5. Unavailability calendar

Peer review is an integral part of NHMRC funding schemes. NHMRC grant recipients have obligations to contribute to the assessment of applications (as outlined in the *NHMRC Funding Agreement*). If you are not available to act as a peer reviewer, include a statement detailing your reasons and the period for which you are unavailable. To maintain the list of available peer reviewers within Sapphire, NHMRC requests that all applicants update their availability routinely. This will avoid unnecessary contact if you are unavailable.

5.6. Contributions to NHMRC

Indicate the role you have contributed to NHMRC, if you have previously participated in an advisory, peer review, guideline development or other NHMRC activity requiring expert input via formal appointment.

Click '+' to start a new entry to specify the below:
Select a 'Contribution Role', from the drop-down menu
Indicate the year in which you held the Contribution Role.
Indicate the number of times you acted in that role in each year.
You will need to create a new entry for each type of contribution in a particular year.

'My Profile' requirements specific to the Synergy Grants scheme

The following sections provide advice about parts of the application that are specific to Synergy Grants 2025. For the purposes of this grant opportunity, you are only required to complete the sections outlined below. If you enter more information than is required, only the required information will be imported into your application.

It is important that relevant 'My Profile' information (for all CIs) is up to date at the time of application submission, as it is used to contact applicants, imported into the application and used by peer reviewers. It may also be used for analyses of NHMRC's funding profile and to capture grant outcomes. 'My Profile' information can be updated at any time. However, any changes made to 'My Profile' (for any CI) after CIA certification will not appear in the submitted application.

Instructions for entering 'My Profile' information in Sapphire are provided in the *Sapphire Learning and Training Resources*.

Note: You are required to list research outputs in relevant subsections of your profile. You are encouraged to link the entered research output to NHMRC Grant IDs, where applicable.

5.7. Career disruptions (within the last 10 years)

NHMRC is committed to ensuring that every applicant is treated fairly and recognises that some applicants will have had career disruptions that need to be considered when evaluating their track record and eligibility. If applicable, applicants should use this opportunity to declare any career disruptions that may be relevant to their career history.

The period of career disruption may be used to determine an applicant's eligibility for a grant opportunity or to allow additional track record information to be considered during assessment.

Career Disruption

A Career Disruption is defined in the NHMRC *Relative to Opportunity Policy* as a prolonged interruption to an applicant's capacity to work due to pregnancy, major illness/injury and/or carer responsibilities.

Career Disruption claims will not be considered for applications that fail to comply with the following requirements:

The last 10 years of Career Disruptions will be included for each CI and provided to peer reviewers for assessment.

Disruption Type

To enter a Career Disruption, click '+'. Select a 'Disruption type' from the drop-down menu.

Impact

Provide a brief explanation of the impact the Career Disruption(s) has had on your research, research achievements and associated productivity relative to your career stage. Include the percentage (%) full-time equivalent (FTE) of the Career Disruption*. Do not describe the nature of the Career Disruption in this field.

Note that the information in this field will be provided to peer reviewers.

Additional Research Outputs

Provide details of outputs other than publications that you would like to claim in relation to this Career Disruption.

Dates

Nominate the periods when you have had a disruption (approximate dates). Entries will be listed in reverse chronological order.

5.8. Relative to Opportunity (within the last 10 years)

If applicable, you can use this section to provide details of any Relative to Opportunity considerations and the effect they have had on your research and research achievements, including (but not limited to) interruptions due to calamities, e.g. bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The last 10 years of Relative to Opportunity information will be included for each CI and provided to peer reviewers for assessment.

Circumstances

Provide a brief explanation of the type of Relative to Opportunity circumstance.

Impact

Provide a brief explanation of the impact this has had on your research, research achievements and associated productivity relative to your career stage.

Date

Nominate the periods when you have had a Relative to Opportunity circumstance (approximate dates). Entries will be listed in reverse chronological order.

6. Application form requirements

The following sections of the application form are specific to Synergy Grants 2025 and must be completed as part of your application. Step-by-step instructions for entering application details in Sapphire are provided in the *Sapphire Learning and Training Resources*.

6.1. Creating an application

Click ‘’+ New Application’ to create an application.

Grant Opportunity

Select the grant round you wish to apply for, e.g. 2025 Synergy Grants opportunity funding commencing in 2026.

Application Title

The application title will be used to identify the application at all times during the assessment process and needs to accurately describe the nature of the research proposal.

The title should not be in all capitals, contain placeholder text, or include the name of the grant opportunity or the applicant. The title should indicate the subject of the application. The title will be used to allocate your application to suitable peer reviewers, peer reviewers to declare interests, and published in the release of grant opportunity outcomes.

Instructions on how to change your application title can be found in the Application section of Sapphire Help.

6.2. Application details

All fields on this page marked with a flag ( ) must be completed to meet minimum data requirements.

Application Identification Number (APP ID)

Each application will have its own unique Application Identification Number (Application ID), which is automatically generated by Sapphire and pre-filled in the application. Use this Application ID number (e.g. 2345678) to identify your application when referring to it in any correspondence.

Administering Institution

Select your Administering Institution by entering 3 characters to start searching. There can be only one Administering Institution for each application. You must ensure that the institution you choose as your Administering Institution is the correct institution for your application. If in doubt, contact the RAO at your proposed Administering Institution.

Grant Duration

This section may contain pre-filled information that cannot be edited. If not, select the requested duration of your grant (in years) with reference to any limits specified in the grant opportunity guidelines.

Project Synopsis

The synopsis should accurately, and briefly, summarise the research proposal. This information may be used to assign applications to peer reviewers. It may also be considered in the peer review process.

Plain English Summary

Describe the overall aims of the research and expected outcomes in simple terms that could be understood by the general public. Avoid the use of highly technical terms. This information may be used in grant announcements, media releases and other public documents, and by funding partners (where applicable) to determine whether the research proposal meets their priorities for funding.

Privacy Agreement

NHMRC, as an agency subject to the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), is required to notify you about our collection, use and disclosure of your personal information. We do so by referring you to the NHMRC *Privacy Policy*. Ensure that you have carefully read and understood the Privacy Policy before completing the application. If you require further clarification, contact the NHMRC Privacy Contact Officer via email (NHMRC.Privacy@nhmrc.gov.au) or letter (NHMRC, GPO Box 1421, Canberra ACT 2601).

Have you read and understood the NHMRC Privacy Policy?

Select 'Yes' or 'No'.

In addition, and in accordance with Australian Privacy Principle 8 in the *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*, we seek your consent to send your personal information (consisting of an "Application summary") overseas, for the purposes of peer-review of this application if required. NHMRC uses the expertise of some peer assessors who reside overseas. While we make every effort to protect your personal information, assessors outside Australia are bound by their own country's laws and consequently we cannot provide assurance that your information will be handled in accordance with the same standards as required by the Privacy Act 1988, or that you would have similar remedies if your personal information is released in breach of local privacy laws.

Select 'Yes' or 'No'.

Partner organisation consent

Do you give consent to provide your application and assessment results to other partner organisations?

Select 'Yes' or 'No'.

If you wish to be considered for funding by a partner organisation, select 'Yes'. By selecting 'Yes' you are consenting to NHMRC providing your application and/or assessment information to potential funding partners if your application fits the funding partner's research funding objectives. For a list of funding partners, refer to this grant opportunity's information on GrantConnect.

6.2.1. Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria, where applicable

To qualify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health research, at least 20% of the research effort and/or capability building must relate to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health.

Complete this section if at least 20% of your research effort and/or capability building relates to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health and you answered 'yes' to the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Research question within Sapphire.

Applicants should ensure that they address each *Indigenous Research Excellence Criterion* as set out in section 6.4 of the Guidelines and demonstrate:

- what proportion of the research effort will be directed to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health
- that the Indigenous community were instrumental in identifying and inviting further research into the health issue and that the research outcomes will directly benefit the 'named' communities
- that there is a history of working together with the 'named' communities (e.g. co- development of the grant, involvement in pilot studies) or how the 'named' communities will have input/control over the research process and outcomes across the life of the project
- that there is opportunity for 2-way capability development for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous investigators
- that the above points are explicit throughout the application and not just addressed separately within the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* section.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health research

This question enables you to identify research that specifically investigates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health issues. It is also designed to enable NHMRC to identify those research proposals that will require assessment of the proposed research against the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria*.

Only select 'Yes' if you can demonstrate that at least 20% of your research effort and/or capability building relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

If you have answered 'Yes' to this question, you will be required to provide details of how your application addresses the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria* in the application form. Your application may be assessed against the *Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria*, using information you provide in the following text boxes: 'Community Engagement', 'Benefit', 'Sustainability and Transferability' and 'Build Capability'.

Maximum of 2000 characters including spaces and line breaks for each criterion

6.3. Participating Institutions

In some cases, the institution that will administer your application may differ from the institution in which you will actually conduct the proposed research, or your proposed research may be conducted at a collaborating institution in addition to your administering institution. For example, many universities administer research that will be conducted in an affiliated teaching hospital. Information on 'Participating Institutions' is required by NHMRC to enable peer reviewers to identify potential institutional conflicts with your application and for grant administration purposes.

Research Institution

List the Participating Institution and department where the proposed research will be conducted.

To add more than one Participating Institution, press '+' and complete the required information. If the Participating Institution does not appear in the list, email the institution name to the Research Help Centre (help@nhmrc.gov.au).

Research Effort (%)

If the research will be conducted at more than one institution, enter the Research Effort percentage (%) allocated to each Participating Institution and department. The percentages (%) entered must total 100%.

Note: If some or all of the proposed research will be carried out at your Administering Institution, create an entry with the Administering Institution and choose a percentage up to 100%. At least one institution must be listed.

6.4. Research classification

The details entered in this section will be used in the peer review process to assist with the allocation of your application to the most relevant peer reviewers for your application. It may also be used for analyses of NHMRC's funding profile.

Definitions for the 4 Broad Research Areas (BRAs) have been added to the application form in Sapphire to assist applicants in selecting the most appropriate BRA. These definitions will appear as help text (?) under Research Classification in the application.

All fields on this page marked with a flag (⚑) must be completed to meet minimum data requirements. You must make the selections that best describe your research proposal against each of the following fields:

Broad Research Area:

Select a Broad Research Area that best describes the research outlined in your grant proposal. For example, research in the very early stages of developing a vaccine against a parasite should be categorised as basic science research instead of public health research.

Basic Science Research: seeks to understand the biological processes that underpin health and disease at the molecular, cellular, organ system and whole-body levels. It may be conducted in vitro, in vivo and/or in silico. It may use but, is not limited to, cells, tissues or other materials of human origin or from relevant animal models.

Clinical Medicine and Science Research: seeks to improve the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of human diseases and conditions. It may involve interaction with patients and/or the use of clinical diagnostic materials or patient data.

Health Services Research: seeks to understand and improve the effectiveness, quality, safety, social and environmental dimensions of health care including access, distribution, timeliness and efficiency.

Public Health Research: seeks to improve the health of a population through the prevention of disease, prolongation of life and promotion of health and wellbeing. It includes research to understand the social, behavioural, environmental and other determinants of health and disease.

All fields on this page marked with a flag (⚑) must be completed to meet minimum data requirements. You must make the selections that best describe your research proposal against each of the following fields:

Field(s) of Research:

Click '+' to add rows for each Field of Research (FoR) that best describes the area of research of the application. The choice of FoRs and their proportions will assist in assigning appropriate assessors to the application.

- Select up to 3 Fields of Research that best reflect the nature of the research in the application.
- Allocate a percentage (%) against each FoR.
- Ensure the total percentage (%) equals 100%.

Peer Review Areas:

Select 3 Peer Review Areas (PRAs) that best reflect the application's areas of research. PRAs must not be duplicated.

Research Keywords:

Select 5 Research Keywords that are most applicable to the application's main area of research.

Burden of Disease:

Select up to 3 Burden of Disease types that best describe the area of research of the application.

- click '+' to add rows for each additional Burden of Disease.
- you must allocate a percentage (%) of time against each.
- the percentage (%) total must not exceed 100%.

6.5. Research team

You can include a minimum of 4 and maximum of 10 Chief Investigators (CIs) and 10 Associate Investigators (AIs) in your research team. For further information of the eligibility requirements for CIs and AIs, refer to section 4 of the guidelines.

All fields on this page marked with a flag (⚑) must be completed to meet minimum data requirements. List all members of the Research Team, including CIs and AIs. Complete a separate entry for each member of the team by clicking '+' to add rows.

All CIs/AIs must have a Sapphire account in order to be listed as part of the Research Team. CIs/AIs who cannot be located using the search function will need to complete registration.

Note: Click 'Invite to Register & Manage Access' to invite a Chief/Associate Investigator to complete Sapphire Registration and/or share your application with view or edit access. Enter the email address, select the corresponding access option from the drop-down menu and click 'Save and send'. Users will receive an email invitation to be assigned to the application with appropriate access rights. Click '+ Add another user' to invite any additional Investigators. Ensure that you have the correct email addresses for your colleagues before commencing your application.

Chief Investigators (CIA to CIJ)

The 'Role' and corresponding 'Name' fields for Chief Investigator A must be completed to meet minimum data requirements. If you are naming yourself for a CI/AI role, 'Invitation Response' status will automatically change to Accepted.

Indicate whether the Chief Investigator A will be based in Australia for the duration of the grant and outline their background and expertise relevant to the grant proposal.

Click '+'to add rows for additional CIs. Click the 'Role' drop-down menu to select a role for the CI.

To add a CI to your research team, enter their email address. Outline the background and expertise relevant to the grant proposal for each additional Chief Investigator.

If you add a CI to your research team, an email will automatically be generated to the team member for their agreement to be named on the application. The invitation response status next to their name will indicate progress. Invitations must be accepted by CIs in order for applications to be submitted.

Note: Emails to added CIs will be sent after a short delay. Invitation status will not update to *Sent* until you have logged out of the application for 15 minutes.

Associate Investigators (AIs)

Click '+' to Add Rows for AIs. To add an AI to your research team, enter their email address.

'Position' is optional.

Note: AIs are not considered in the assessment against any of the criteria.

If you add an AI to your research team, an email will automatically be generated to the team member for their agreement to be named on the application. The invitation response status next to their name will indicate progress. Invitations must be accepted by AIs in order for applications to be submitted.

Note: Emails to added AIs will be sent after a short delay. Invitation status will not update to *Sent* until you have logged out of the application for 15 minutes.

6.5.1. Track record details for CIs

Once each CI has accepted their invitation, they are able to complete their individual track record requirements via NHMRC's Synergy Grants Track Record template. This template is available on GrantConnect. Each CI must complete this template and then provide it to their CIA/application owner for input into Sapphire. All fields on this template must be completed by each CI nominated. The track record criterion applies to CIs only. CIAs are advised to provide the following information to each CI to assist them in completing their NHMRC Track Record template.

The following advice should be considered by CIs when completing the Synergy Grants 2025 track record requirements:

The following sections provide advice about parts of the application that are specific to Synergy Grants 2025.

The track record assessment comprises consideration of:

- Publications (20%)
- Research impact (15%)
- Leadership (5%).

6.5.2. Publications (20%)

Individual CIs are required to nominate up to 10 of their best publications from the past 10 years (taking into account any career disruptions) immediately prior to the scheme close date. You are to provide separate explanations for each publication entry. Each explanation should explain why the publication has been selected, including its quality and contribution to science, and your contribution to the publication.

You may include field weighted metrics and citation metrics within the explanation field for the 10 best publications from the last 10 years. Where possible, references to publications within the provided entry fields should be provided as a complete citation. Where this is not possible, include sufficient citation information to locate the publication such as authors, publication title, journal name, year and digital object identifier. CIs may nominate any publication type that best illustrates their involvement, the quality of the research and its contribution to science.

Publications outside the last 10 years (taking into account any career disruptions) and other research outputs such as patents can be referred to in the research impact section if relevant.

Publications will be assessed against the score descriptors at *Table 3* of Appendix_B

Top 10 publications

Provide the details of (up to) 10 of your best publications in the last 10 years.

Each publication should be provided separately, i.e. one publication per free-text field. The explanation should outline why the publication was nominated, its quality and contribution to science, and your contribution to the publication:

Publication 1–10 (max. 500 characters for citation)

Explanation (max. 1000 characters).

6.5.3. Research impact (15%)

Individual CI's will be assessed based on:

- the reach and significance of their claimed research impact (5%)
- the contribution of their research program to the research impact (5%)
- the contribution of the individual CI to the research program (5%).

Definitions used to assess research impact are provided in *Figure 1*.

NHMRC defines the impact of research as the verifiable outcomes that research makes to knowledge, health, the economy and/or society. Impact is the effect of the research after it has been adopted, adapted for use, or used to inform further research.

Research impact is the verifiable outcomes from research and *not the prospective or anticipated effects of the research.*

Research impact also includes research that leads to a decision not to use a particular diagnostic, treatment or health policy.

Figure 1. Key definitions for the assessment of research impact

Research impact

The verifiable outcomes that research makes to knowledge, health, the economy and/or society. Impact is the effect of the research after it has been adopted, adapted for use, or used to inform further research.

Research program

A cohesive body of research by the individual Chief Investigator, not limited to an individual case study (as used in a clinical context) or a single publication. It may be recent or in the past.

Research program's contribution to the research impact

The degree to which the individual Chief Investigator's research program was necessary to achieve the impact(s) (knowledge, health, economic, and/or social impact).

Chief Investigator's contribution to the research program

The level of the CI's contribution (e.g. leadership, intellectual and/or technical input) to the research program.

NHMRC identifies 4 specific types of impact. Examples of evidence are listed in **Table 1**. Evidence examples may be relevant to more than one research impact type.

Table 1. Types of research impact and examples of evidence of research impact

Type of impact	**Description of research impact**	**Examples of evidence** (not exhaustive)
Knowledge impact	New knowledge, demonstrating the benefits emerging from adoption, adaption or use of new knowledge to inform further research, and/or understanding of what is effective.	• recognition of research publications (e.g. citation metrics, particularly field weighted) • data sharing • contribution to registries or biobanks • prizes and conference presentations • uptake of research tools and techniques • evidence of uptake of the research by other disciplines

Health impact	Improvements in health through new therapeutics, diagnostics, disease prevention or changes in behaviour; or improvements in disease prevention, diagnosis and treatment, management of health problems, health policy, health systems, and quality of life.	• policy or program adopted • a clinical guideline adopted • international or national practice standards adopted • improved service effectiveness • Phase I, Phase II and Phase III clinical trials underway or completed • improved productivity due to research innovations (e.g. reduced illness, injury) • Quality-Adjusted Life Years, Disability-Adjusted Life Years, Potential Years of Life Lost, Patient Reported Outcome Measure and other relevant indicators • relative stay index for multi-day stay patients, hospital standardised mortality ratio, cost per weighted separation and total case weighted separation • reports (including community and government)
Social impact	Improvements in the health of society, including the well-being of the end user and the community. This may include improved ability to access health care services, to participate socially (including empowerment and participation in decision making) and to quantify improvements in the health of society.	• uptake or demonstrated use of evidence by decision makers/policy makers • qualitative measures demonstrating changes in behaviours, attitudes, improved social equity, inclusion or cohesion • improved environmental determinants of health • improved social determinants of health • changes to health risk factors

Economic impact	Improvements in the nation's economic performance through creation of new industries, jobs or valuable products, or reducing health care costs, improving efficiency in resource use, or improving the welfare/well-being of the population within current health system resources. An economic impact may also contribute to social or health impacts, including human capital gains and the value of life and health.	**Health care system savings** • relative stay index for multi-day stay patients, hospital standardised mortality ratio, cost per weighted separation and total case weighted separation • reduction in Medicare Benefits Schedule/Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme costs • improved productivity due to research innovations (e.g. reduced illness, injury) • improved service effectiveness **Product development** • a research contract with an industry partner and an active collaboration • granting of a patent • execution of a licensing agreement with an established company • income from intellectual property • raising funding from venture capital or other commercial sources or from government schemes that required industry co-participation • successful exit from start-up company (public market flotation, merger or acquisition) • development of pre-good manufacturing practice prototype • successful generation or submission of: – a regulatory standard data set – applications for pre-market approval of a medical device – a new drug or device for registration (e.g. by Food and Drug Administration, European Medicines Agency, Therapeutic Goods Administration) • product sales

For each CI, indicate which of the following research impact types you would like considered in the assessment of your application.

Select one or more impact types.

How to demonstrate research impact **(per CI)**

CIs should only include One **research program** to demonstrate research impact(s) across one **or more of the 4 types of impact**. CI's will be asked to indicate in the Synergy Grant Track Record template which of the research impact types they would like considered in the assessment of their track record. If the research program can be used to demonstrate multiple impacts, the overall research impact score is determined holistically and on balance across the 4 types (it is not additive). This means that a CI with 1 type of impact can score as well as or better than a CI with multiple types of impact.

A research program is a cohesive body of research by the CI, as opposed to disparate bodies of research that each have different objectives and impacts. CIs are required to provide evidence that is sufficient and strong enough to demonstrate their claims for all 3 impact criteria. CIs may use the same evidence across the 3 impact criteria if appropriate. Peer reviewers will decide based on the evidence provided whether the impact claims have been sufficiently demonstrated and corroborated. A poorly corroborated or non-corroborated research impact or contribution to impact will receive a score of 1, in alignment with the score descriptors.

For CIs who have provided impacts for more than one research program, peer reviewers determine whether any one of the research programs and their impacts have been sufficiently demonstrated and corroborated, and score accordingly. CIs are not scored in an additive method for multiple research programs.

Whilst it is expected that the research impact is recent, the research program that contributed to the research impact may be from any time in a researcher's career - there are no time limits on when a researcher made a contribution to the research program or when the research program contributed to the research impact.

CIs should note that there is no requirement for their research impact to align with the research proposal/vision in their application - these are assessed independently against separate assessment criteria and score descriptors.

The assessment of research impact will be against the score descriptors at **Tables 4**, **5** and **6** (Appendix B).

CIs should provide robust, verifiable evidence (qualitative and/or quantitative, see **Table 1**) to support the claimed research impact that can be independently assessed by peer reviewers.

CIs should provide their best example of the impact within the field limit. Any references that are required as verifiable evidence of the impact need not be provided as a complete citation. References to publications within the available entry fields do not need to be provided as a complete citation. For example, it would be sufficient to note a combination of the digital object identifier, journal name, publication title, year and authors.

CIs should note that it is the quality of the corroborating evidence provided, not the quantity. CIs only need to provide evidence sufficient and strong enough to verify the claims, not all evidence that may be on the public record.

A CI who does not wish to provide research impact evidence because it is not in the public domain, or because it is commercially sensitive, may describe the evidence within their track record template,

noting that it is commercially sensitive, without making it available. Any such evidence should be provided to RAOs who should ensure that such evidence is retained by their office to be made available to NHMRC, if requested.

In considering whether to provide such evidence, CIs should note that all NHMRC peer reviewers enter into an obligation in relation to confidential information (formerly the Deed of Confidentiality) prior to the commencement of the peer review process. This prohibits the discussion of applications or disclosure of any information contained therein, outside of their appointment as a peer reviewer. In addition, NHMRC staff are required under the APS Code of Conduct to observe rigorous confidentiality in relation to their day-to-day work.

Research impact claim

Outline the research impact claim in the free text field provided (8000 characters), framed around the 3 sub-criteria:

- CI's contribution to the research program (5%)
- Research Program's contribution to the research impact (5%)
- Reach and significance of the research impact (5%).

Note: there is no prescribed order that information needs to be represented for the research impact claim. CIs need to provide enough detail in their response to allow reviewers to assess and score their research impact claims against the score descriptors for each of the 3 sub-criteria.

The CI's contribution to the research program: Outline your contribution (e.g. leadership, intellectual and/or technical input) to the research program.

Research program's contribution to the research impact: Outline how the research program contributed to the research impact. Describe the degree to which the research program was necessary to achieve the impact(s) (knowledge, health, economic, and/or social impact) based on robust and verifiable evidence. The relationship between the CI's research program (including related activities) and the impact may be foreseen or unforeseen and may be an end-product or demonstrated during the research process. Research impact examples may include the adoption or adaptation of existing research.

A research program is a cohesive body of research by the CI. It is not limited to an individual case study (as used in a clinical context) or a single publication. A research program may be recent or in the past. CIs need to outline the research program with corroborating evidence that can be independently assessed by peer reviewers.

Reach and significance of the research impact

Describe the reach and significance of the research impact, including any corroborating evidence.

Reach is the extent, spread, breadth, and/or diversity of the beneficiaries of the impact, relative to the type of research impact.

Significance is the degree to which the impact has enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or changed the performance of policies, practices, products, services, culture, understanding, awareness or well-being of the beneficiaries (not the prevalence or magnitude of the issue).

References / evidence

All claims made in response to the research impact criteria should be accompanied by robust and verifiable evidence (e.g. references/citations). This evidence can be provided in this free text field (2000 characters).

Any references that are required as verifiable evidence of the impact need not be provided as a complete citation. For example, it would be sufficient to note the publication title and year to prove the existence of a publication.

CIs should note that it is the quality of the corroborating evidence provided, not the quantity, that is most relevant. CIs only need to provide evidence sufficient and strong enough to verify the claims, not all evidence that may be on the public record.

6.5.4. Leadership (5%)

For the assessment of leadership, each CI is required to demonstrate their leadership with examples drawn from the past 10 years (taking into account career disruptions and relative to opportunity) across each of the 4 Leadership elements (maximum of 2000 characters per element):

- **Research Mentoring** examples may be drawn from:
  - formal and informal stewardship of the next generation of researchers
  - identifying, training and nurturing talent
  - fostering collaboration among junior researchers.
- **Research Policy and Professional Leadership** examples may be drawn from:
  - improving research quality standards
  - driving innovation and multi-dimensionality in research
  - improving academic reporting standards.
- **Institutional Leadership** examples may be drawn from:
  - driving behavioural and cultural change
  - identifying and mitigating risks.
- **Research Programs and Team Leadership** examples may be drawn from:
  - creating diverse, inclusive, and collaborative learning environments
  - engagement with the broader community and public advocacy
  - providing opportunities for appropriate research and non-research training.

NHMRC recognises that a broad range of leadership contributions are necessary to create an environment that enables research excellence and stewardship, and that based on a researcher's working environment, work history and level of seniority, examples of leadership will vary. The examples listed under each Leadership element above are illustrative only, CIs are encouraged to demonstrate their strongest examples of leadership.

CIs are encouraged to highlight their leadership style and describe how they have identified and contributed to positive change (e.g. organisational or behavioural/cultural change). Demonstrated impacts of leadership, such as people development, stewardship, contributions to cultural or paradigm change and fostering equality, diversity and inclusion, will be assessed by peer reviewers against the score descriptors at Appendix B

Peer reviewers will be instructed to ignore Leadership track record information that falls outside of the past 10 years (taking into account career disruptions). Where you have Leadership track record that carries across the 10-year timeframe, include only that information which falls within the

allowable timeframe (e.g. instead of writing “I have mentored 19 students since 2007”, write “I have mentored 11 students since 2014”).

The assessment of Leadership will be against the score descriptors at **Table 7** in Appendix_B of the Synergy Grants 2025 Guidelines.

Address each of the leadership elements in the fields provided (maximum of 2000 characters including spaces and line breaks per field).

6.6. Ethics

If you answer “Yes” to any of the questions, you will need to obtain ethics approvals and supply evidence of these to your research office in the event your application is funded. For further information, see NHMRC’s practical guidelines and advice on Ethics and Integrity.

6.7. Grant proposal

Knowledge gain (30%)

NHMRC defines knowledge gain for the Synergy Grant scheme as the quality of the proposed research and significance of the knowledge gained. It incorporates theoretical concepts, hypotheses, research design, robustness and the extent to which the research findings will contribute to the research area and health outcomes (by advancing knowledge, practice or policy).

Synergy (30%)

The Synergy criterion will consider the quality of the diverse team’s multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to solving a major health and medical research question, as well as the capability-building/workforce development outcomes.

This criterion will also assess whether the specific research team named in your application has the appropriate mix of research skills and collaborative experience to answer the research question.

Successful Synergy Grant proposals will be outcomes focused, demonstrating the skills essential to solve the research question, and provide evidence of a discernible benefit over homogenous research teams.

Applicants must not include in any part of their application:

- Links to external websites, apart from references to journal articles, guidelines, government reports, datasets and other outputs that are only available online; where links are included, provide the URL in full (e.g. the NHMRC website https://www.nhmrc.gov.au). Applicants are asked not to use URL shorteners as this may create a security risk. For the purposes of providing evidence for claims made against the Research Impact criterion, CIs may include references to external websites, where this is necessary to corroborate their claim(s).
- Publication metrics such as Journal Impact Factors, consistent with the recommendations in the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment. If included, these metrics will be disregarded by peer reviewers when assessing a CI.

The grant proposal must be written in English and submitted in a Portable Document Format (PDF) file, using NHMRC’s Grant Proposal template, which will be available on GrantConnect. Applicants must use this template. The grant proposal must be uploaded into Sapphire.

Grant Proposal (Upload)

To upload your Grant Proposal PDF, select the 'Upload New' button followed by the 'Choose File' button. Select the PDF file you wish to upload and then click 'Start upload' to upload your Grant Proposal. Click 'Save' to ensure the application is submitted correctly.

To ensure that the document is displaying properly, applicants need to open a copy of the uploaded document by selecting the open icon to the right of the document name after the document has been saved in Sapphire.

Naming and formatting requirements for the grant proposal, to ensure fairness and consistency across applicants, are listed in section 6.7.1. Applications that fail to comply with these requirements may be excluded from consideration.

Details to be addressed in the grant proposal and associated page limits are set out in section 6.7.2. Applicants should note that peer reviewers will, as part of their assessment, consider the reproducibility and applicability of the proposed research and research design. Within the experimental design of the proposal, applicants need to include sufficient information to demonstrate that robust and unbiased results will be produced.

6.7.1. Formatting requirements

The grant proposal must be saved and uploaded as a PDF file. The PDF file must:

- not exceed 2 MB in size
- be named using the following: Applicant's Surname_Document Type/Name.pdf
- be A4 in size
- include the Application ID and Applicant surname in the header
- include the page number in the footer
- have 2 cm top, bottom, left and right margins
- be written in English.

NHMRC recommends a minimum of 12-point Times New Roman font. Applicants must ensure the font is readable. Single line spacing must be used.

All images and figures within the grant proposal must be appropriately referenced. Applicants must ensure any images of people (particularly children) are appropriately de-identified and/or note that informed consent has been given to use the image.

6.7.2. Grant proposal components

6.7.2.1. Research proposal

This has a page limit of 7 pages, the research proposal must address the essential components of your research and can include the following depending on the type of research.

Aims

- Describe the specific aims of the project, including a clear statement of hypotheses to be tested.

Background

- Provide a rationale for the project.

Research Plan – methods and techniques to be used

- When drafting the response to the Knowledge Gain criterion applicant teams should:
  - Describe the applicant team's research strategy for the next 5 years
  - Outline the proposed research objectives, basic methodologies and expected outcomes
  - Describe the support for their proposed research (e.g. access to technical resources, infrastructure, equipment and facilities and, if required, access to additional expertise necessary to achieve proposed outcomes).

Outcomes and significance

- Describe the importance of the problem to be researched, the planned outcome of the research plan, and the potential significance of the research.

6.7.2.2. References

References for the Research Proposal must:

- not exceed 2 pages
- provide a list of all references cited in the application 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.

6.7.2.3. Assessment criteria

Responses to the Synergy assessment criterion – up to 6 pages

Synergy is assessed for CIs against the score descriptors provided at **Table 1** in Appendix_B of the *Synergy Grants 2025 Guidelines*. Note that AIs are **not** considered for this criterion.

Diversity (1–2 pages)

For the purposes of Synergy Grants, diversity includes gender, cultural backgrounds, skills, expertise and career stages. NHMRC recognises the need to foster diversity in health and medical research teams beyond multidisciplinarity.

Health and medical research, from basic science to clinical and translational research, and policy formation, requires creativity and a diverse range of skillsets and viewpoints.

Applicants should justify the diversity within the proposed team of CIs by outlining:

- the type(s) of diversity fostered and how it will enhance the outcomes of the research and its scientific quality, including why the research question cannot be addressed without the proposed personnel
- how the CI team will contribute to the capability building, mentoring, career development and diversification of the research workforce.

Multidisciplinarity (1–2 pages)

For the purposes of Synergy Grants, 'multidisciplinary research' covers research by teams that integrate information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, methodologies and/or theories from 2 or more disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve questions whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice.

As part of the Research Proposal, applicants will have identified a major health and medical research related question. To address the multidisciplinary approach of the Synergy criterion, the response must demonstrate:

- why the research question requires the integration of knowledge from multiple disciplines or bodies of specialised knowledge
- how the multiple disciplinary approach can provide novel solutions and insights that would not be achieved with a single discipline or traditional approaches
- how this combination of Chief Investigators, with their past experience and disciplines, will enhance the outcomes of the research and its scientific quality by working as a team, including why the research question cannot be addressed without the proposed personnel
- how the research question is operationalised and addressed using different disciplines complementarily.

Collaborative Gain (1–2 pages)

Synergy Grant research teams will foster both collaborative gain and capability building through the recruitment of talented researchers from diverse backgrounds and groups. Collaborative gain reflects the ability to achieve goals that could otherwise not be achieved by the CI team pursuing components as separate projects.

The response should describe:

- the methods that will keep the team focused, integrated and cohesive and that will drive outcomes, e.g.:
  - how performance will be monitored
  - how milestones will be evaluated
  - how the grant funds and other resources will be shared, deployed, and redeployed if required.
- strategies for the sustainability of the research collaboration and scope for long term outcomes extending beyond the life of the project
- how the strategy will support intellectual exchange during and beyond the life of the research project
- how each investigator has previously demonstrated experience and success in collaborative research (with the same or other collaborators)
- what mentoring, professional and personal development opportunities will be provided and how they will help increase capability of under-represented groups and researchers.

6.8. Funding partners

Applicants may be able to seek funding from a funding organisation. Refer to Appendix_A in the Guidelines and the *GrantConnect* website for information on the funding organisation and any specific application requirements.

Funding Organisation

Indicate by selecting 'Yes', the funding organisation(s) you would like to consider your application.

7. Certifying your application

Once all 'My Profile' details, application form details and supporting documents have been entered/uploaded, the application can be certified and submitted in Sapphire. Certification is required by both the CIA and Administering Institution. Refer to section 7.8 of the guidelines for further details.

Before completing these steps:

- Review the application to ensure it is accurate and complete and meets all eligibility/application requirements.
- Applicants retain responsibility for confirming that their application satisfies the stated eligibility requirements.
- For funding schemes where the applicant has nominated a research budget, the summary tab automatically generates a summary of the requested budget from the relevant sections.
- A checklist for applicants applying for NHMRC funding is provided at section 8 of this appendix.
- Ensure you have read and understood the assurances, acknowledgements and undertakings required of CIAs and Administering Institutions as part of this step. These are outlined in section 7.8 of the guidelines.
- Note that certification will lock down the application and prevent further editing. The final snapshot produced at this time will include relevant information from your 'My Profile'. Any subsequent changes to these areas of Sapphire will not appear in the application. If changes are needed after CIA certification but before submission to NHMRC, your RAO will need to reject the application in order for you to make the changes.
- Note that your personal information may be provided to another Administering Institution for the purpose of certifying the application where a researcher is either currently receiving NHMRC funding or is on a different and separate application for NHMRC funding.

Instructions for certifying and submitting an application in Sapphire are provided in the *Sapphire Learning and Training Resources*.

Once submitted to NHMRC, your application will be considered final, and no changes can be made unless the application is withdrawn for amendment before the closing date.

8. Checklist for applicants

Before creating an application:

- Ensure Sapphire Accounts for all CIs are active and mandatory 'My Profile' fields are complete.
- Familiarise yourself with the guidelines and *Sapphire Learning and Training Resources*.
- Check closing date and time for application lodgement.
- Update your Sapphire 'My Profile' in accordance with requirements set out in this document.

- Read the relevant ethical guidelines/associated documentation if ethics approval is required for the proposed application.
- Inform your RAO of your intention to submit an application.
- Be aware of any Administering Institution internal deadlines and requirements for submission.

During the creation of an application:

- Check any minimum data requirements.
- Check eligibility requirements.
- Complete all parts of the application.
- Create and upload your Grant Proposal.
- Identify any Relative to Opportunity considerations, including Career Disruptions, where applicable, within your application.
- Consider any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander requirements for your application, including addressing any additional assessment criteria.
- Make sure all required attachments are uploaded.

Before submitting an application:

- Read and understand the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018*. Submission of an application indicates that the Administering Institution and research team understand and will comply with the principles and responsibilities set out in the Code.
- Check your compliance with formatting and page requirements.
- Ensure any approvals or licences are acquired or applied for.
- Check all information is correct and complete.
- Familiarise yourself with your obligations should you be successful.
- Certify the application and ensure RAO certification and submission occur before the closing date and time.

Remember, your RAO is your primary contact for advice and assistance. RAOs will contact the Research Help Centre for further advice if required.