

INTRODUCTION

This document serves to outline the overarching funding rules for research grants-in-aid administered under the Melbourne Health Research Funding Program (MHRFP) by the Office for Research.

BACKGROUND

Melbourne Health is one of Australia's leading health care providers and a key player in hospital-based research. Our commitment to research has been demonstrated by providing Melbourne Health staff with access to research funding support through an internal contestable research funding scheme.

The MHRFP is financially supported by general and targeted donations, trusts and bequests.

PURPOSE

At Melbourne Health, clinical research is part of patient care and provides an opportunity for our patients to access new interventions such as drugs, vaccines, medical devices, health service changes, preventative care strategies and more.

The objective of the MHRFP is to foster medical research and invest in innovative and the highest quality projects as determined through the peer review process.

1. Enquiries and Correspondence

All grants are administered by the Office for Research. Any enquiries regarding the administration of grants, or about the content of MHRFP Funding Rules should be addressed to:

RAO: Angela Magira
 Email: RMHRAO@mh.org.au
 Telephone: +61 3 9342 7950.

You may also refer to the *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* documents specific to the scheme to which you are applying.

2. Submitting an Application

All applications must be submitted electronically using the online grant management system, SmartyGrants.

Refer to the relevant *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* document available from the Office for Research web page at: <https://www.thermh.org.au/research/rfp>.

Applications must be certified and submitted by the closing date of the funding scheme. Late submissions will not be considered.

The application should contain all information necessary for assessment without the need for further written or oral explanation, or reference to additional documentation. All details included must be current at the time of application.

Help on how to complete the online application form can be found on the SmartyGrants website at: <https://applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au/help-guide-for-applicants/>.

3. Outcome of Application

The Office for Research will advise applicants of outcome via email by March 2020.

4. Eligibility

Applications to the MHRFP are subject to meeting all the following eligibility requirements.

- » Applicants must be Melbourne Health employees with a current appointment. Staff who only hold honorary appointments with Melbourne Health are not eligible to apply.
- » Applicants will not be considered if they have achieved the academic level of professor.
- » The applicant must be the lead author of the research proposal.
- » The project must be a Melbourne Health led project *and* Melbourne Health must own the protocol.

NOTE: If an applicant is awarded a grant and the proposal is found to be contrary to this eligibility criterion, the Office for Research will terminate the grant and all funding must be repaid.

- » Applicants must be Australian Citizens or Permanent Residents.
- » A research project can be submitted to only one scheme in the MHRFP – i.e. either a grant in aid OR fellowship.
- » Applicants cannot hold concurrent MHRFP grants (as distinct from fellowships) as the lead investigator, i.e. CIA. Current recipients of grants may apply so long as the current grant is completed by the time the award is accepted should they be successful.

Note a grant must be accepted within one month of the offer. (See 14. *Acceptance and commencement of a fellowship*)

- » The maximum number of applications any CI (CIA-CIJ) may submit per funding round to the MHRFP (i.e. grants and fellowship schemes) is two (2) – this cap excludes applications to the following schemes:
 - Kearnton Travel Grant
 - NWMH Seed Grant
 - JL Frew Travelling Fellowship

Where any CI (CIA-CIJ) has submitted applications in excess of two applications, all applications they are named on as a CI will be ruled ineligible and excluded from consideration.

Applicants should also refer to the individual *Advice and Instructions to Applicants* for further eligibility requirements.

Applications which do not meet the eligibility requirements may be removed from the assessment process.

Previous recipients of MHRFP grants and awards

Previous recipient of all MHRFP research grants, fellowships and travel grants who have not submitted progress and/or final reports OR have not submitted adequately detailed progress and/or final reports will be deemed ineligible.

If you are unsure, contact the RAO to check your eligibility.

5. Consumer and Community Participation

Researchers are encouraged to consider the benefits of actively engaging consumers in their proposed research. Applicants should refer to The Consumer Health Forum of Australia Inc and NHMRC Statement available at: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/r22>

6. Conditions of Award

All grants are offered in accordance with the conditions specified in the *MHRFP Grant Agreement*. In signing an acceptance of the award, the applicant is agreeing to abide by all the conditions. Research; Financial Management; and Human Resources policies.

7. Intellectual Property

Melbourne Health will own all Intellectual Property generated as a result of the funded project unless otherwise agreed upon.

8. Funding Details

Each Grant in Aid offers up to \$25,000. An accurate budget must be provided in the application detailing the anticipated expenses to cover the cost of the project.

Grant recipients must comply with Melbourne Health policies and processes when expending the funds.

Any salary awarded will be processed through Melbourne Health's Human Resources department and Payroll.

When applying for funding the amount requested must cover the total employment costs of the position (including 28% oncosts).

9. Duration of Award

The grants in aid are 12-month awards and funding must be expended within this period.

10. Relative to Opportunity

All applications submitted to the MHRFP are assessed "relative to opportunity". This reflects our position that assessments should accurately assess and applicant's track record and associate productivity relative to stage of career.

Circumstances considered under relative to opportunity include, but are not limited to:

- » Amount of time spent as an active researcher
- » Career Disruption (see *Section 10.1* for further details)
- » Clinical, administrative or teaching workload
- » Relocation of an applicant and their research laboratory or clinical practice
- » Research output and productivity commensurate with time spent employed in other sectors

10.1 Career Disruption

A career disruption involved a prolonged interruption to an applicant's capacity to work due to:

- » Pregnancy
- » Major illness/injury
- » Carer Responsibilities

Interruptions must involve either a continuous absence from work for periods of 28 calendar days or more and/or long-term partial return to work that has been formalised with the applicant's employer.

The period of career disruption may be used:

- » to determine an applicant's eligibility for a scheme
- » to allow for the inclusion of additional track record information for an assessment of an application
- » for consideration by the panel during their deliberations.

11. Approvals to be obtained prior to funding commencing

Funding will not commence until all relevant approvals, particularly in relation to ethics and governance, have been received and lodged with the RAO prior to the commencement of the research.

12. Varying a Grant

Variations occur when a grant needs modification from the original proposal submitted. This may include changes in personnel or an amendment to the budget.

Extensions to a project end date will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, with a maximum extension of 6 months. Amendments due to Parental Leave requests may differ (see *15. Parental Leave*).

Requests to amend a grant or the terms of the conditions must be made in writing to the RAO.

13. Reporting

Annual progress and financial reports will be required. All information provided to the Office for Research in progress and final reports may be used for internal reporting and any Melbourne Health publications including the organisation's Annual Report.

Where an applicant fails to submit satisfactory reports as required, the Office for Research may terminate funding and determine that all or part of the funding must be repaid. Alternatively, the Office for Research may withhold the remainder of the applicant's funding under the scheme.

In addition, an applicant who fails to submit satisfactory reports may not be eligible to apply for any future funding rounds of the MHRFP.

14. Acceptance and commencement of a grant

Successful applicants must accept an offer of award within one month upon receipt of the offer. Receipt meaning date offer was emailed to the applicant.

To accept an offer of award, the recipient needs to sign and return the Terms and Conditions of Award.

Grant recipients must commence the project within 4 months upon receipt of the offer.

15. Parental Leave

Current Recipients who wish to apply for Parental Leave should contact their departmental managers. Once Parental Leave has been approved, inform the RAO in writing requesting an amendment to the terms of the award.

The amendment may include a request to extend the duration of the project for up to 12 months.

16. Review Process

The Office for Research oversees the MHRFP and employs an internal and external grant review process.

All applications will be assessed and scored by expert reviewers. A Grant Review Panel will convene and funding will be awarded to the highest ranking applications.

The sequence of events in the peer review process is as follows:

1. Applications received
2. Reviewed for compliance
3. Applications assigned to assessors
4. Applications and assessments reviewed and adjudicated by the Grant Review Panel
5. Funding recommendations prepared
6. Advice to applicants

17. Selection and Assessment Criteria

Research is a pillar of the Melbourne Health strategy and grants will awarded to researchers whose projects are in alignment with the research strategy and also:

- » are committed to enhancing patient care
- » are innovative and significant
- » demonstrate Melbourne Health’s values of Caring, Excellence, Integrity, Respect and Unity

Applications will be assessed using the scoring matrix below.

Scoring Matrix

Criteria	%
<p>Aims and hypothesis</p> <p>Has the method/framework/approach been partially tested?</p> <p>What outcome is sought in the proposed study?</p> <p>What exactly is the outcome measure?</p> <p>Is it well integrated and adequately developed?</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Is there sufficient information about the scope of the problem?</p> <p>Does the background make a good case for the relevance of the experiments?</p> <p>Research Plan: Study Design and Method</p> <p>What are the strengths and weaknesses of the study and its design?</p> <p>Have any major pitfalls or problems been overlooked?</p> <p>Have alternative approaches been considered?</p> <p>Is the plan well informed by knowledge of the literature?</p> <p>Is the design appropriate for the aims of the research?</p> <p>Will the research plan successfully address the stated hypothesis or research objectives?</p> <p>Has there been appropriate consumer consultation?</p>	50%
<p>Significance and Innovation to Health</p> <p>Does the study address an important problem?</p> <p>Will the work or research have an impact?</p> <p>Is the proposed research new/novel or creative?</p> <p>How will scientific knowledge be advanced?</p> <p>What will be the effect of the study on the concepts or methods that drive this field?</p> <p>Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches or methods?</p> <p>Are the aims original and innovative?</p>	20%
<p>Feasibility</p> <p>Are the goals concrete and achievable?</p> <p>Is the infrastructure required to achieve the study available?</p> <p>CIA Track Record</p> <p>Does the CIA have the expertise and experience to conduct the research?</p> <p>Does CIA’s track record confirm their capacity to conduct the research?</p> <p>Does the CIA have research output relative to opportunity? (Publications, presentations, etc.)</p> <p>Team Quality</p> <p>Does the research team have the appropriate skills and expertise?</p> <p>Is the team capable of achieving the goals?</p>	30%