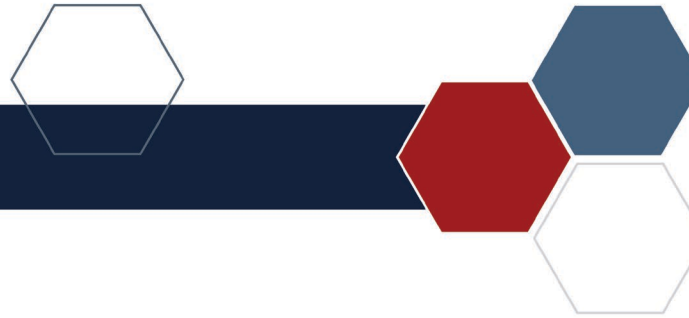


Medical Research Future Fund



Responses to Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) RAO webinar (4 August 2022) questions

The below commonly asked questions have been collated by the Department of Health and Aged Care (the Department). The questions were collated through the pre-MRFF RAO webinar survey, the MRFF RAO webinar held on 4 August 2022, and stakeholder engagement throughout 2022.

Theme/Question	Response
Data	
Will the Department provide information on the number of applications for each grant opportunity in the future? Will success metrics (number applied vs number funded) be available for grant opportunities?	The Department will continue exploring options for analysis of MRFF data, including statistics such as funded rates.
Can the MRFF grant recipient page be updated more frequently?	The MRFF Grant Recipients list is now reviewed monthly. You can view the list on the Department website .
Would the Department consider releasing all MRFF outcomes in a file format (Excel spreadsheet)?	Details of MRFF grant recipients are available in both Excel and PDF formats on the Department website .
Grant Opportunity Guidelines and Applications	
What are the criteria for deciding whether an addendum is issued? Who makes the decision and how is consistency in approach achieved across grant opportunities and administering grant hubs (Business Grants Hub (BGH) or National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC))?	Addenda are issued when key date changes or clarification of intent must be provided to all applicants. An addendum is issued by the grant administration hub (BGH, NHMRC), in consultation with the Department.

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Will FAQs for each grant opportunity be published?	Currently, FAQs or addenda are issued where clarification of intent following the release of grant opportunity guidelines is required. However, the Department will consider this feedback (in consultation with NHMRC and BGH) as part of future improvements.
Can more definitions be included in the grant opportunity guidelines (e.g., partner vs participating institution)?	The Department reviews standard content in grant opportunity guidelines regularly. The Department is working to provide more information on partner organisations as part of upcoming grant opportunity guidelines.
Can grant opportunities be grouped so more popular grant opportunities do not have competing deadlines?	The Department continues to actively work with NHMRC on scheduling MRFF grant opportunities, taking into consideration ARC and NHMRC schedules, as well as holiday periods and school holidays, among others.
Would the Department consider giving the actual dates for "the last 5-years" instead of a definition that has proven difficult to interpret?	The Department has updated definitions and information relating to 'the last 5 years' in guidelines for upcoming grant opportunities. We will monitor the impact of these changes and consider further revisions if required.
Is the PhD awarded date the graduation ceremony date or the acceptance letter date?	The Department has updated information relating to PhD award date in guidelines for upcoming grant opportunities. The PhD award date is the date an individual's Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis is passed (not the date of conferral).
For clinician researchers, could MD be sufficient rather than PhD for eligibility purposes?	It is important to check the eligibility requirements of the grant opportunity being applied for. Only some MRFF grant opportunities require PhD for eligibility purposes; in those instances the clinician researchers applying would be expected to hold a PhD.
<p>Letters of support:</p> <p>a. When are letters of support required? For grants submitted through BGH, are letters of support required from all organisations including those that have Chief Investigators (CIs)?</p> <p>b. How are letters of support used?</p>	<p>a. Letters of support requirements are stipulated in the relevant grant opportunity guidelines. In general, letters of support are not expected from organisations that have CIs listed on the grant, unless it is a requirement within the guidelines (e.g., where mandatory cash co-contributions are needed). Specific questions in relation to a particular grant opportunity and its requirements should be emailed to the respective hub (BGH or NHMRC).</p> <p>b. Letters of support are reviewed by the grant assessment committee as part of their deliberations.</p>
<p>Consumers:</p> <p>a. Can consumer costs be paid under Other Direct Research Costs?</p> <p>b. Is consumer involvement a necessary component of a successful application?</p>	<p>a. Remuneration of consumers is considered eligible expenditure where that activity is integral to achieving the approved research objectives of a grant (i.e., there are direct, demonstrated and monitored links to project objectives and</p>

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c. Do all grant opportunities allow for consumers as CIs, or do some require a PhD?	<p>outcomes). The relevant classification of the expenditure (for example, 'Other Direct Research Costs') is defined in the grant opportunity guidelines.</p> <p>b. Requirements regarding consumer involvement are specified in grant opportunity guidelines. The descriptors for the four MRFF criteria that are used to assess applications to MRFF grant opportunities have recently been updated to include expectations for consumer involvement. More information regarding the refresh can be found on the Department website.</p> <p>c. The skills and experience of all CIs are used to assess applications to MRFF grant opportunities. In the majority of grant opportunities, educational requirements for CIs are not specified, and the applicant determines the set of skills and experience needed to best deliver the project, including as appropriate, consumer project team members/CIs.</p>
Grant Assessment and Outcomes	
Could research administration officers (RAOs) observe the MRFF grant assessment committee deliberations?	The Department is currently considering options for addressing this request.
Can more clarity around the MRFF grant assessment processes be provided? Who (consumers, industry representatives, peers) scores during a grant assessment committee meeting? What information do they receive to score?	Applications for MRFF funding undergo rigorous assessment processes by independent grant assessment committees. To learn more about the role and who is involved please see the MRFF Grant Assessment Committees factsheet . The 4 August 2022 MRFF RAO webinar also covered the grant assessment process and can be accessed on the Department website .
What is the role of consumers in the MRFF grant assessment committee meetings?	<p>Consumer involvement in grant assessment committees is tailored to the experiences and confidence of the individual. The majority of the time, consumers provide comment on all applications that is taken into consideration by scoring assessors, but do not score applications themselves.</p> <p>The Department is working with the MRFF Consumer Reference Panel to review consumer involvement in MRFF implementation. The Panel is keen to further strengthen consumer involvement in the assessment of MRFF applications. A pilot of greater consumer involvement in assessment is current being undertaken through the 2023 Consumer-Led Research grant opportunity.</p>
How is value and application alignment with the MRFF strategic priorities assessed?	Application alignment with strategic priorities, and value, are assessed by two of the four MRFF assessment criteria – '1. Impact,' and '4. Overall Value and Risk of

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	the Project.’ More information regarding the criteria, including the rating scale, is available in grant opportunity guidelines and related published documents.
Do academic reviewers review team capacity, capability and resources to do the project as opposed to just reviewing track record?	The assessment of capacity, capability, and resources to deliver the project for MRFF grant opportunities takes a much broader approach than a review of track records – this is outlined in section 5 of MRFF grant opportunity guidelines. All grant assessment committee members are provided detailed guidance and advice regarding assessment of capacity, capability, and resources; this is not a standard assessment of track records. The MRFF assessment criteria descriptors have recently been refreshed to allow more clarity and ease of use for both applicants in applying for grants and reviewers in assessing applications against the criteria. More information regarding the refresh can be found on the Department website .
Will MRFF grant scores be released to applicants to give them feedback on their applications?	As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, the Department is currently working with the grant hubs to trial the release of scores and written feedback to applicants for grant opportunities. Note that scores are already provided by NHMRC to applicants whose applications proceed to discussion at the Grant Assessment Committee following the meeting.
Would it be possible for the successful and unsuccessful applicants to receive outcomes regarding their MRFF applications on the same day?	The Department has recently moved to releasing outcomes to both successful and unsuccessful applicants on the same day.
Could MRFF grant application outcomes be provided to RAOs? Sometimes the outcomes are only provided to the lead chief investigator.	<p>For MRFF grant applications administered through BGH, the outcomes are provided to the primary contact listed within the application by the applicant. RAOs should ensure the appropriate contacts are listed within the application at submission. This information can also be updated for active grants by contacting the relevant team at BGH. In addition, for BGH-administered grants, RAOs are able to view the status of a grant, including the outcome in the system, if added to the relevant application within the portal.</p> <p>For MRFF grant applications administered through NHMRC, the outcomes are provided to the CIA listed in the application via an email from Sapphire and the RAOs of the CIA’s Eligible Organisation have access to this information through the Sapphire dashboard.</p>

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Grant Management	
Can MRFF project reporting be streamlined? Can the Department provide more guidance about what to include and how much detail to provide in project reports?	<p>As part of continuous improvement, the Department is looking to improve grant management processes, including updating grant reporting requirements. More guidance regarding progress reporting and variation processes will be released to the sector this year.</p> <p>MRFF project reporting supports ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement of the performance of the MRFF. Routine monitoring provides assurance that MRFF-funded projects are meeting their intended objectives during and after the grant ends, allows oversight of issues and risks as they arise, and provides information to support improvements in grant design (e.g., understanding key features of successful projects).</p> <p>Further information about project reporting can be found on the Department website.</p>
Can the Department address delays with MRFF variation outcomes?	<p>The Department is continuously working to improve post-award management of grants. As a first step, the MRFF Grant Variation Policy was released in 2022. To assist with reducing processing timeframes, in collaboration with the grant hubs the Department is reviewing the entire variations process workflow to identify issues causing delays and ways to address them. Further guidance following from this review is anticipated later this year. A variation request form is also being developed for BGH-administered MRFF grants that will enable grantees to submit critical and complete information upfront and assist the Department with reviewing requests more quickly.</p>
Budgets	
Will MRFF grants support institutional overheads in the future?	<p>At this time, MRFF funding is provided to support the direct costs of research activity undertaken as part of an approved project. Information on allowable costs is provided in the grant opportunity guidelines.</p>
For grant opportunities through BGH, researchers can put in their full salary costs. For grant opportunities through NHMRC, researchers must use personnel support packages (PSPs), which leads to salary gaps. Will this be addressed by NHMRC and the Department?	<p>The Department and the hubs - NHMRC and BGH are aware of this matter. At this stage no change is anticipated but the issue will continue to be monitored into the future. BGH and NHMRC have different policies for considering direct costs for staffing; each grant hub applies its own policy to all grant opportunities it manages.</p>

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	The NHMRC PSPs are not meant to cover full salary costs of researchers but are provided as a support package in recognition of the role a researcher plays as part of the grant. This applies to MRFF grants administered through NHMRC, as well as NHMRC's own grant program.
Systems	
Could the BGH grant application portal enable RAOs to see progress of MRFF applications? Could applicants be allowed to print their applications and share with their team?	RAOs can be added in the portal to a relevant application which now allows them to view the application and print it.
The BGH portal regularly requires organisations to submit a paper/email copy of a report, and then re-enter the same report later in the portal. Is BGH working on a solution for this?	BGH and the Department are aware of the matter and are discussing options to address it. In addition, BGH is in the process of updating their systems and is exploring streamlining processes including application forms and reports.
Will NHMRC's Sapphire have the capability in future to do career disruption and eligibility calculations to remove some of the burden from RAOs?	This feedback will be considered by NHMRC for future system improvements. Note that NHMRC is currently working on a number of other priority enhancements to Sapphire functionality.