



Reducing Health Inequities Mission Expert Advisory Panel Terms of Reference

Preamble

The Medical Research Future Fund's (MRFF) **Reducing Health Inequities Mission (RHIM)** was announced by the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon. Mark Butler MP, on 02 May 2024.

The RHIM will provide up to \$150 million over 10 years, from 2027-28. The objective of the RHIM is to address inequities in health outcomes by improving access to quality health services by priority populations.

The RHIM will provide research funding to support:

- better understanding of specific health needs for diverse individuals and communities
- enabling the development of inclusive and targeted approaches to support health and wellbeing for priority populations
- generation of high-quality evidence to inform changes to health policy, practice or the health care system to improve access to health services for priority populations.

Scope of the Reducing Health Inequities Mission

The RHIM will provide funding for large scale multidisciplinary translational research projects which align with the [Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2024–2026](#). In addition, the RHIM will provide funding support to those health and medical interventions that are driven by consumers, communities, preventive and public health approaches and priority populations, including First Nations peoples.

The priority populations will include but not be limited to those individuals and communities identified under the [Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2024–2026](#) that are currently in force. These include First Nations peoples, people in regional, rural and remote communities, people with a disability (including people with intellectual disability), people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (including people who are immigrants or refugees), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, disadvantaged children and youth, older people experiencing diseases of ageing, and people with rare or currently untreatable diseases/conditions.

The RHIM will also support research to reduce health inequity for people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, and people living with mental illness.

Purpose of the Expert Advisory Panel

The Expert Advisory Panel (EAP) will advise the Minister for Health and Ageing on the strategic priorities for investment in health and medical research translation and interventions via the RHIM.

The role of the EAP is to identify and define evidence and knowledge gaps that should be addressed through the RHIM research funding. This role will include the definition of key research questions that, if answered, would deliver improvement and meaningful change for Australians who are accessing health services and care through the translation of health and medical research.

The EAP will advise on translational health and medical research and/or activities to be funded through the RHIM that:

- identify key modifiable mechanisms that could reduce health inequities in access to quality health services for priority populations and communities experiencing inequity across Australia, including in regional, rural and remote areas
- support translation of research into actionable and scalable interventions to reduce these health inequities
- accelerate implementation of successful health and medical research interventions and approaches that impact on health and wellbeing and improve access to quality health care for priority populations
- promote research to address cross-cutting factors that contribute to health inequity for priority populations and identify where targeted approaches may be required
- closing the gap and reducing the disparities in health outcomes between priority populations and other population groups
- promote community-driven and multidisciplinary approaches to translational research addressing health inequity
- generate evidence that can inform change to policy, practice and systems by including a focus on implementation, evaluation and health economic aspects.

In addition, the EAP is to consider how to:

- involve all stakeholders relevant to the research and its translation in its conceptualisation, design and implementation. These key stakeholders include but are not limited to: health care consumers, communities and providers, health and medical researchers, peak bodies, clinicians, social health care practitioners and other allied health practitioners and representatives from priority populations
- best support social and community-based research translation and implementation to address inequities to access and improvement to health care systems across Australia, including in regional, rural and remote areas.

The EAP will remain focused on health and medical research instead of seeking to address issues in relation to the broad context of inequities in all policy areas. For example, income support, rent controlled housing, and public transportation systems would be out of scope.

Key deliverables

The EAP will provide advice on:

- research priorities for the \$150 million investment through the RHIM
- develop a Roadmap and Implementation Plan, outlining the short (1-2 years) and medium (3-5 years) term and long-term priorities.

In doing so, the EAP will consider how to complement and not duplicate existing funding activities, including the:

- priorities and investments already existing under the 22 initiatives of the MRFF ([MRFF 3rd 10-Year Investment Plan: 2024-25 to 2033-34](#))
- other major relevant funding schemes such as those offered by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

It will also consider the intent of the [Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2024–2026](#) to ensure equitable health outcomes for all people living in Australia; as well as national (including state and territory based) and international knowledge and experiences.

Roadmap

The EAP will develop a Roadmap for the RHIM that includes the:

- aim, vision, goals, challenges, and funding principles for the RHIM
- overarching research priorities for investment and a summary of the approach to implementation.

Implementation Plan

The EAP will develop this document to support the Roadmap by advising on the:

- priorities for research investment in the short, medium and long term (including building on what has already been funded, where relevant)
- opportunities to use additional investment and other research currently being undertaken to support the priority research areas
- activities required to support the research and facilitate long term implementation
- evaluation approach and measures, including consideration of the [MRFF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Strategy](#).

Consultation

A national public consultation and an international review of the draft Roadmap and Implementation Plan will be conducted prior to the finalisation of these two documents.

Membership

The EAP will consist of up to 8 members including the Chair and an international member.

The international member will be a researcher with expertise in any of the health inequity specialities, including the primary health care and clinical research areas, who understands relevant health and medical research activities occurring internationally.

At least one member will be a consumer representative and at least one will be a First Nations representative.

Other members will collectively have:

- health and medical research or clinical research expertise
- experience in community-based population health research activities
- experience and expertise in primary health service delivery with a focus on health system inequities research
- experience and expertise in health and medical research translation and implementation, interventional research / clinical trial and/or evaluation.

An [Australian Medical Research Advisory Board \(AMRAB\)](#) representative will be selected to attend EAP meetings to support the strategic alignment of Research Plan priorities with the MRFF more broadly, including the collaboration across already existing eight MRFF Missions.

Ex-officio membership

Representatives from relevant areas within the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) or other relevant government entities may be selected to be ex-officio members of the EAP.

Ex-officio members will attend EAP meetings to contribute to the discussion at the EAP meetings, based on their expertise in health inequities from a policy or program perspective. The ex-officio representatives will be selected in addition to the up to 8 EAP members.

The ex-officio members will also assist the EAP in the development of the Roadmap and Implementation Plan for the RHIM by providing context relevant to their policy or program expertise.

Term

EAP members will be selected and appointed by the Minister for Health and Ageing for the period it takes to finalise development of a Roadmap and Implementation Plan, including the review by an international panel of experts and a national public consultation.

The term of EAP membership will not be more than 12 months. The term will end on the publishing of the Roadmap and Implementation Plan on the DHDA's website.

EAP member applications for MRFF funding

EAP members will **not** be eligible to apply for funding from the RHIM grant opportunities that open during the term of the EAP and for one additional year after the term of the EAP ends.

EAP members will be able to apply for other MRFF grant opportunities outside of the RHIM during this time. Non-EAP members who are from the same institution as the EAP members are eligible to apply for the RHIM grant opportunities.

Logistical Arrangements

- EAP meetings will be held on an as required basis and at the discretion of the Chair.
 - It is expected at least 4-6 meetings will be required to draft the Roadmap and Implementation Plan.
 - Following international review and national public consultation of the Roadmap and Implementation Plan, the EAP will meet to finalise these two documents.
- If an EAP member is unable to attend, proxies will not be permitted.
 - Proxies may be permitted for ex-officio members with prior agreement from the Secretariat.
- If required, arrangements will be made to seek agreement to items using out-of-session arrangements.
- Papers for meetings will be provided to the EAP prior to the scheduled meeting.
- The DHDA will be the Secretariat for the EAP.
- The following email address can be used for inquiries MRFF.Missions@health.gov.au.

Quorum

- At least five members of the EAP are required to attend any meeting for a quorum to be achieved.
- If the Chair is unavailable to attend a scheduled meeting, the AMRAB member will assume this role, or if unavailable the Health and Medical Research Office (HMRO), Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or the HMRO CEO's representative will act as a facilitator for the meeting.

Confidentiality and Declarations of Interest

Members must abide by the Confidentiality, Conflict of Interest, Privacy and Secrecy Deed Poll signed by members and the [MRFF Declaration of Interest Policy Statement](#).

The Statement, and supporting documents, enables members to be aware of their obligation to disclose any relevant interests they may have, and to ensure they effectively and consistently manage any conflicts of interest. All interests will be published on the MRFF website.

Remuneration

Consistent with the [DHDA's Remuneration Framework Policy](#), EAP members will be remunerated at the General Professional Rate, with details outlined in the Member's Instrument of Appointment and Appointment Pack.

Ex-officio members will not be specifically remunerated for their participation.

Implementation of the RHIM Plan

The EAP will provide the RHIM Roadmap and Implementation Plan to the Minister for Health and Ageing for approval.

The HMRO will use the Roadmap and Implementation Plan to design grant opportunities that address the priorities for investment.

- The grant opportunities for this Mission will open **every two years** with funding first awarded in 2027-28.
- Grant opportunity guidelines will be published on GrantConnect (www.grants.gov.au).

- Grant administration services will be managed by the NHMRC, and if required, the Business Grants Hub.

Applications received under each grant opportunity will be evaluated competitively through independent Grant Assessment Committees (GACs) comprising Australian and international assessors with relevant expertise and experience.

Following recommendations from the GACs, the Government will publish the successful RHIM grant opportunity recipients.

