

""

""

Monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy

**Medical Research Future Fund**

2020–21 to 2023–24

### November 2020

Contents

[Introduction to the Medical Research Future Fund 3](#_bookmark0)

[MRFF’s program structure 4](#_bookmark1)

[Monitoring and evaluation 5](#_bookmark2)

[Principles for monitoring and evaluation 5](#_bookmark2)

[Learning from monitoring and evaluation activities 6](#_bookmark3)

[Conceptual framework for monitoring and evaluating the MRFF 7](#_bookmark4)

[Financial and administrative data 14](#_bookmark8)

[Proposed approach for monitoring and evaluating the MRFF 15](#_bookmark9)

[Appendix A Initiatives and their goals 18](#_bookmark12)

[Appendix B MRFF program logic overview 20](#_bookmark13)

#### Figures

[Figure 1 MRFF program structure 4](#_bookmark1)

[Figure 2 MRFF monitoring, evaluation and learning conceptual framework 8](#_bookmark5)

#### Tables

[Table 1 Defining measures of success 10](#_bookmark6)

[Table 2 How initiatives contribute to the measures of success 11](#_bookmark7)

[Table 3 Proposed MRFF monitoring, evaluation and learning activities 16](#_bookmark10)

[Table 4 Indicative MRFF monitoring, evaluation and learning schedule 17](#_bookmark11)

[Table 5 MRFF initiatives and their goals 18](#_bookmark12)

Introduction to the

Medical Research Future Fund

The Department of Health (the Department) has developed this Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) *Monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy* (the Strategy) as an overarching framework for assessing the performance of the MRFF. The Strategy aligns with the [*Australian medical research and*](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australian-medical-research-and-innovation-strategy-2016-2021)[*innovation strategy 2016–21*](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australian-medical-research-and-innovation-strategy-2016-2021) and is planned to be in place from 2020–21 to

2023–24. The Strategy will be reviewed each year, and will help to develop a work program for MRFF evaluation and monitoring activities.

The MRFF is a $20 billion priority-driven endowment fund, established by the Australian Government to support medical research and innovation to improve health outcomes and increase economic growth.

The [*Medical Research Future Fund Act 2015* (MRFF Act)](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2020C00008) sets out the operations of the MRFF, including:

* how the endowment fund will be managed
* the purposes for which MRFF funding can be used
* the organisations that will be able to receive MRFF funding

In addition, the MRFF Act specifies that an Australian Medical Research Advisory Board (AMRAB) be established. The AMRAB’s duties include determining the [*Australian medical research and innovation strategy*](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australian-medical-research-and-innovation-strategy-2016-2021)[*2016–21*](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australian-medical-research-and-innovation-strategy-2016-2021) and [*Australian medical research and innovation priorities 2020–*](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/medical-research-future-fund/about-the-mrff/mrff-strategy-and-priorities#mrff-priorities)[*2022*](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/medical-research-future-fund/about-the-mrff/mrff-strategy-and-priorities#mrff-priorities), both of which are required under the MRFF Act.

As part of the 2019–20 Federal Budget, the Australian Government announced a [$5 billion, 10-year investment plan from the MRFF](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/medical-research-future-fund-mrff-10-year-investment-plan).

The MRFF is a key contributor to the Australian Government’s *N*[*ational*](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-health-and-medical-industry-growth-plan)[*health and medical industry growth plan*](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-health-and-medical-industry-growth-plan), and is complemented by a range of government investments in health and medical research. This includes

funding from the [National Health and Medical Research Council](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/) (NHMRC) and the [Biomedical Translation Fund](http://www.business.gov.au/Grants-and-Programs/Biomedical-Translation-Fund).

In addition, 3 legislative and policy documents provide the framework for MRFF’s operation:

* [Medical Research Future Fund Investment Mandate Direction 2015](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2015L01817)

* [*Medical Research Future Fund – funding principles*](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/medical-research-future-fund-mrff-funding-principles)

* [*Commonwealth grant rules and guidelines 2017*](https://www.finance.gov.au/government/commonwealth-grants/commonwealth-grants-rules-and-guidelines)

# MRFF’s program structure

The Australian Government’s MRFF 10-year Investment Plan (the Investment Plan) is structured around 4 themes (patients, researchers, translation

and missions) as part of the [Health Portfolio Budget Statements 2019–20](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/health-portfolio-budget-statements-2019-20) [(pp 22–24)](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/health-portfolio-budget-statements-2019-20). Under these themes are 20 initiatives (Appendix A). Grant opportunities are made available under the initiatives and are the mechanisms for offering grant agreements through the MRFF.

Grant opportunities can result in a:

* single project being funded (ie results in a single grant agreement)
* program of activities (2 or more projects) being funded within a topic area (ie results in multiple grant agreements)

The MRFF’s program structure aligns with these financial and grant arrangements (see Figure 1).

Medical Research Future Fund

Theme

Initiative

Grant opportunity

Grant agreement

**Figure 1** MRFF program structure

The MRFF is complex, because it:

* spans 20 inter-related initiatives across the Investment Plan, and across a range of health and medical research areas
* funds activities across the research spectrum, from discovery research to commercialisation and translation of innovative ideas and products, and improved health services
* provides funding across a decade, using funding agreements that range in
  + length (up to 5 years)
  + quantum (from hundreds of thousands to tens of millions of dollars)

# Monitoring and evaluation

## Principles for monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating funded projects, programs and initiatives within the MRFF will be:

* independent from the policy areas responsible for administering the grant opportunities and from grant recipients
* impartial in its treatment of information for all grant programs and recipients
* transparent in process and outcomes
* inclusive of consumers and stakeholders
* future focused to incorporate learnings that provide ongoing improvements to future evaluation and grant opportunities
* regular and systematic

Monitoring and evaluating the MRFF must:

* consider the key objectives of the MRFF, which are
  + better patient outcomes
  + beneficial change to health practices
  + evidence of increased efficiency in the health system
  + the commercialisation of health research outcomes
  + community support for the use of, and outcomes from, funding1
* account for the complexity within the MRFF program structure
* support continuous refinement and improvement of MRFF initiatives and evaluation processes during the 10-year investment
* ascertain whether unmet needs have been met
* consider whether other complementary investments are required to address identified areas of need

1. Department of Health (2015). *Australian medical research and innovation strategy 2016–2021,*

DoH, Canberra.

* assess
  + research impact (over appropriate timelines)
  + research outputs (including, where relevant, negative results of research and unintended outcomes)
* account for the challenges in assessing the impact of health and medical research effectively — notably, the difficulties with attributing outcomes to specific grants and the time taken for research to translate to clinical practice

The monitoring and evaluation process also offers an opportunity to:

* determine what impact (direct or indirect) has been made on the health status of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
* determine what impact (direct or indirect) has been made on the health status of vulnerable people, including older Australians
* implement innovative grant management, performance management and evaluation processes based on results, and action learning and action- based research (plan, act, observe, reflect)
* learn from and align with
  + other Australian medical research and innovation funding activities
  + existing reviews, evaluations and assessments, such as the [McKeon Review 2013](https://cheba.unsw.edu.au/sites/cheba2/files/blog/pdf/Strategic_Review_of_Health_and_Medical_Research_Feb_2013-Summary_Report.pdf)
  + international best practice, where relevant and available
  + earlier work, including a MRFF evaluation framework developed by Research Australia2

## Learning from monitoring and evaluation activities

The Strategy aims to establish a learning system, whereby the:

* MRFF’s ongoing design and implementation accounts for the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation activities
* selection, design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities focus on providing information to support continued improvements within the MRFF

1. Research Australia (2019). *An evaluation framework for the Medical Research Future Fund*, commissioned by the Department of Health, Research Australia, Sydney.

## Conceptual framework for monitoring and evaluating the MRFF

The MRFF Act (section 3) specifies that its objective is to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians by establishing the MRFF to provide grants of financial assistance to support medical research and medical innovation.

In setting out the [*Australian medical research and innovation strategy*](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australian-medical-research-and-innovation-strategy-2016-2021)[*2016–21*](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australian-medical-research-and-innovation-strategy-2016-2021), the AMRAB articulates the MRFF’s vision, aim and objectives, and 5 impact measures:

* better patient outcomes
* beneficial change to health practices
* evidence of increased efficiency in the health system
* the commercialisation of health research outcomes
* community support for the use of, and outcomes from, funding

Impact is an important component of research evaluation. The United Kingdom’s National Institute for Health Research defines impact as the ‘demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy …’.3 Impact can be made by:

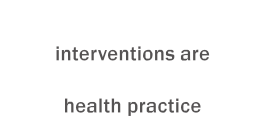
* treating disease and improving health
* creating and sharing new knowledge
* developing and commercialising new diagnostics or treatments
* implementing new health services or policies

The AMRAB also sets the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities every 2 years, which must align with the Strategy in force (see the [MRFF Act](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2015L01817)).

Through the *N*[*ational health and medical industry growth plan*](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-health-and-medical-industry-growth-plan), the Australian Government also committed to improving health outcomes, and increasing   
jobs and economic growth.

Figure 2 presents the MRFF monitoring, evaluation and learning conceptual framework, which integrates the aims, visions, objectives and impact measures from these documents. It also sets out the MRFF’s measures of success that are required to support achieving MRFF outcomes. Table 1 defines the measures of success, with their relative contribution towards the 5 MRFF impact measures on each of the measures of success.

1. National Institute for Health Research (2020). [*Plan for impact*](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/researchers/apply-for-funding/how-to-apply-for-project-funding/plan-for-impact.htm), NIHR, London. (Accessed 5 November 2020)



Measures of success

Increased focus of research on areas of unmet need

New health

More Australians

New health technologies are embedded in

embedded in

Research community has greater capacity and capability to undertake translational research

Health professionals adopt best

The community

new technologies and treatments

Increased

commercialision of health research outcomes

**Medical Research Future Fund outcomes**

**Vision:** A health system fully informed by quality health and medical research **Aim:** To transform health and medical research and innovation to improve lives, build the economy and contribute to health system sustainability

.

Beneficial change to health practice

Increased job and export potential

**Figure 2** MRFF monitoring, evaluation and learning conceptual framework

Increased health efficiency

Economic growth

Better health outcomes

Table 2 articulates how each MRFF initiative will contribute to the measures of success identified in the MRFF monitoring, evaluation and learning conceptual framework. The table shows how investment and efforts will be prioritised (ie in the short or longer term) in contributing towards the MRFF’s measures of success.

The measures of success and the MRFF impact measures do not preclude longer-term priority measures of success and MRFF outcomes being relevant to individual grants at any stage of the initiative, nor is it expected that every grant will deliver on every measure of success. The performance of the initiative over time is expected to deliver on the identified measures of success shown in Table 2.

Note that Table 1 uses the following definitions:

* MRFF defines unmet need as ‘serious health conditions whose diagnosis   
  or treatment is not adequately addressed by existing options’ ([MRFF Rare Cancers, Rare Diseases and Unmet Need Grant Opportunity](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/find-funding/mrff-rare-cancers-rare-diseases-and-unmet-need-grant-opportunity))
* Health technologies are ‘the applications of organized knowledge and skills in the form of devices, medicines, vaccines, procedures and systems developed to solve a health problem and improve quality of lives’ ([What is a health technology?](https://www.who.int/health-technology-assessment/about/healthtechnology/en/))
* Health practice is a clinician’s use of skills and knowledge in any way that affects the safe, effective delivery of health services
* Precision medicine is an approach to patient care that uses an understanding of a patient’s disease to tailor interventions or treatments, and includes technologies such as genomics, computing, connectivity and artificial intelligence
* A health intervention is ‘any action that intervenes to improve health, such as medical treatment and preventive campaigns’ ([Australia’s health 2016](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/australias-health-2016/contents/glossary)

[– glossary](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/australias-health-2016/contents/glossary))

* The research community is individual researchers and academics, universities, medical research institutes, hospitals and other medical research organisations undertaking and supporting medical research in Australia, including the medical technology and pharmaceutical sector
* Translational research is the process of applying ideas, insights and discoveries generated through scientific inquiry to the treatment or prevention of human disease. Transfer of knowledge can include changes to practice, policy or further research
* Health professionals are people who operate within any branch of health care, including the medicine, surgery, dentistry, midwifery, pharmacy, psychology, nursing or allied health profession
* Community refers to the general public, including patients, consumers and carers
* Commercialisation is the process of bringing new products or services to market. For MRFF, this is anticipated to include the development of

drugs, devices and other products or services that may ultimately benefit patients

**Table 1** Defining measures of success

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Level of emphasis | | | | |
| Measure | This measure considers the extent to which outcomes of MRFF-funded research: | Better health outcomes | Beneficial change to health practice | Increased health efficiency | Economic growth | Increased job and export potential |
| Increased focus of research on areas of unmet need | * identifies areas of unmet need and facilitates more research into these areas * leads to new health treatments, drugs, interventions, devices and diagnostics * embeds such approaches into clinical practice | High | High | High | Low | Low |
| More Australians access clinical trials | * creates better opportunities for Australians to access clinical trials by funding activities that support research to progress to the clinical trial stage, and directly supporting additional clinical trial activity * builds Australia’s clinical trial capability and leadership at the national and international level | High | High | High | High | High |
| New health technologies are embedded in health practice | * identifies or validates new health technologies, including precision medicine * measures the awareness of new health technologies among clinicians and patients * embeds new health technologies into clinical practice | High | High | High | High | High |
| New health interventions are embedded in health practice | * identifies or validates new health interventions * measures the awareness of new health interventions among clinicians and patients * embeds new health interventions into clinical practice | High | High | High | Low | Low |
| Research community has greater capacity and capability to undertake translational research | * increases researcher capacity * improves awareness of translational research within the research community * supports capability development to undertake translational research | Low | High | Low | High | High |
| Health professionals adopt best practices faster | * identifies or establishes best practices * assesses the speed at which best practices are communicated to clinicians and health service administrators * identifies how best practices are understood and adopted | High | High | High | Low | Low |
| The community engages with and adopts new technologies and treatments | * involves the community in prioritising, designing and conducting research * promotes community awareness of new technologies and treatments, and their benefits * promotes community support for new technologies and treatments | High | High | High | Low | Low |
| Increased commercialisation of health research outcomes | * identifies research or products that are viable for commercialisation and lead to creating new Australian companies or expanding existing companies * leads to new commercially available treatments or products for the benefit of Australian patients | High | High | High | High | High |

MRFF = Medical Research Future Fund

**Table 2** How initiatives contribute to the measures of success

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Measure of success | | | | | | | | | |
| Theme | Initiative | Increased focus of research on areas of  unmet need | More Australians access clinical trials | New health technologies are embedded in health practice | New health interventions are embedded in health practice | Research community has greater capacity and capability  to undertake translational research | Health professionals adopt best practices faster | Community engages with and adopts new technologies and treatments | Increased commercialisation of health research outcomes |
| Patients | Emerging Priorities and Consumer-Driven Research | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term |
| Clinical Trials Activity | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term | Long term | Long term | Long term |
| Global Health | Short term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term | Long term |
| Researchers | Frontier Health and Medical Research | Short term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term | Short term | Short term |
| Researcher Exchange and Development within Industry | Long term | Long term | Long term | Long term | Short term | Long term | Long term | Long term |
| Clinical Researchers | Long term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term | Long term | Long term |

*continued*

**Table 2** *continued*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Theme | Initiative | Increased focus of research on areas of  unmet need | More Australians access clinical trials | New health technologies are embedded in health practice | Measure of success  New health Research community interventions has greater capacity  are and capability embedded to undertake  in health translational  practice research | | Health professionals adopt best practices faster | Community engages with and adopts new technologies and treatments | Increased commercialisation of health research outcomes |
| Research Missions | Australian Brain Cancer Mission | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Long term |
| Million Minds Mental Health Research Mission | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term |
| Genomics Health Futures Mission | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term |
| Dementia, Ageing, and Aged Care Mission | Short term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term |
| Indigenous Health Research Fund | Short term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term |
| Stem Cell Therapies Mission | Long term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term |
| Cardiovascular Health Mission | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term |
| Traumatic Brain Injury Mission | Short term | Short term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term |

*continued*

**Table 2** *continued*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Measure of success | | | | | | | | | |
| Theme | Initiative | Increased focus of research on areas of  unmet need | More Australians access clinical trials | New health technologies are embedded in health practice | New health interventions are embedded in health practice | Research community has greater capacity and capability  to undertake translational research | Health professionals adopt best practices faster | Community engages with and adopts new technologies and treatments | Increased commercialisation of health research outcomes |
| Research translation | Preventive and Public Health Research | Long term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term |
| Primary Health Care Research | Long term | Long term | Long term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term |
| Rapid Applied Research Translation | Long term | Long term | Long term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term |
| Medical Research Commercialisation | Long term | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term | Long term | Short term |
| National Critical Research Infrastructure | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term |
| Research Data Infrastructure | Long term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Short term | Long term | Long term | Long term |

Note: This table shows the how short- and long-term investment and efforts will be prioritised towards the Medical Research Future Fund’s key measures of success for each initiative. Individual grants may not be able to deliver on every measure of success.

## Financial and administrative data

Existing MRFF financial and administrative reporting includes:

* Department Portfolio Budget statements (annual)
* Department annual reports
* GrantConnect
* Financial Assistance to Support the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities (biennial report to Parliament)
* Future Fund Board of Governors
* grant agreements
  + annual reports with financial administrative information
  + end-of-project reports with financial and administrative information
* Department’s administered reporting information by program, which provides visibility of the administered funds and brings together financial information from a number of other systems, including the
  + Government Estimates Update System
  + Australian Department of Social Services Community Grants Hub
  + Australian Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources Business Grants Hub
  + NHMRC Research Grants Management System

## Proposed approach for monitoring and evaluating the MRFF

A multicomponent, mixed-methods approach is proposed for monitoring and evaluating the MRFF, based on the program structure. Table 3 outlines the proposed activities.

As part of assessing the MRFF initiatives, the Department will also consider the contribution of key drivers, or enablers, that support achieving the measures of success outlined in Table 2, including:

* collaboration
* communications
* data and infrastructure
* governance
* partnerships and engagement
* public and private funding

Assessment of the contribution of the above enablers to success will be embedded within the monitoring, evaluation and learning activities outlined in Table 3.

**Table 3** Proposed MRFF monitoring, evaluation and learning activities

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Program level | Activity | Goal | Output | Frequency |
| Grant agreementa | Monitor progress against deliverables:   * annually * at each milestone * at the end of project * beyond the end of projectb | Support MRFF monitoring, evaluation and learning activities and:   * assure that projects meet their intended objectives during MRFF funding and after it ends * oversee issues and risks as they arise, including opportunities for early intervention * provide information to support improvements in grant design (eg understanding key features of successful projects) | Grant assessment | Annually |
| Grant opportunityc | Evaluation of grant opportunities — for example, the impact of projects and programs | Provide:   * clear guidance on the intended objectives of the grant being offered and how grant recipients will demonstrate progress against those objectives * assurance that grant opportunities meet their intended objectives and outcomes as specified in the guidelines * a way to enable continuous improvement to support the design of future opportunities | Evaluation report | When required to support ongoing program delivery |
| Initiative | Mission reviews | Assess progress towards the mission’s 10-year vision and priorities, and re-align approaches as required | Progress report | Every 3 years, on a rolling basis  (2 missions each year from 2020–21) |
|  | Evaluate non-mission initiatives | Assess progress, outputs and outcomes against long-term objectives, international best practice and/or emerging trends or priorities | Progress report | Annually from 2019–20 |
| Theme | Thematic reports | Assess the MRFF’s impact on patients, researchers, missions and translation | Report | Annually, on a rolling basis from 2021–22 |
| MRFF | Internally review the MRFF administrative and grants management | Process review of financial management and grant administration to ensure efficiency and effectiveness | Report | Annually from 2020–21, then every 2 years over time |
|  | Impact evaluation against the 8 measures of success | Assess broader program performance against the MRFF’s measures of success | Report | Every 5 years from 2024 |

MRFF = Medical Research Future Fund

1. A grant agreement sets out the relationship (eg financial, milestones) between the Australian Government Department of Health (the Department) and a funded organisation, and specifies the details of the grant.
2. See Table 4. The Department will engage with grant recipients to undertake these retrospective evaluations.
3. A grant opportunity is the specific round or process through which grant agreements are offered. Single or multiple agreements can arise from 1 grant opportunity.

**Table 4** Indicative MRFF monitoring, evaluation and learning schedule

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Program level | 2019–20 | 2020–21 | 2021–22 | 2022–23 | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 |
| Grant agreement | Grant assessment | Grant assessment | Grant assessment | Grant assessment | Grant assessment | Grant assessment | Grant assessment |
| Grant opportunity | – | – | TBD | TBD | TBD | TBD | TBD |
| Initiative | Rapid Applied Research Translation Evaluation, and Medical Research Commercialisation landscape review | Clinical Trials Activity and Mission review(s) | TBD | TBD | TBD | TBD | TBD |
| Theme | – | – | Impact of researchers | Impact of patients | Impact of translation | Impact of missions | Impact of researchers |
| MRFF | – | Internally review administrative and granting arrangements | – | Internally review administrative and granting arrangements | – | Impact evaluation against the  8 measures of success | Internally review administrative and granting arrangements |

– = not applicable; MRFF = Medical Research Future Fund; TBD = to be determined

# Appendix A Initiatives and their goals

**Table 5** MRFF initiatives and their goals

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Theme | Initiative | Goal |
| Patients | Emerging Priorities and Consumer-Driven Research | To support research that improves patient care and translation of new discoveries, and encourage collaboration between consumers and researchers |
|  | Clinical Trials Activity | To increase clinical trial activity in Australia, help patients’ access clinical trials, and enable researchers to bring international trials to Australian patients |
|  | Global Health | To develop understanding and tools to fight threats to Australia’s national health security from the regional and global challenges of antimicrobial resistance and drug-resistant tuberculosis |
| Researchers | Frontier Health and Medical Research | To create opportunities for researcher collaborations to explore bold and innovative ideas, and make discoveries of great potential and global impact |
|  | Researcher Exchange and Development within Industry | To foster partnerships between industry, universities, registered training organisations and governments, and strengthen Australia’s success in research translation and commercialisation |
|  | Clinician Researchers | To help the next generation of talented Australian health professionals drive research questions, develop new discoveries and ensure implementation of best practice care for their patients |
| Research missions | Australian Brain Cancer Mission | To double the survival rates and improve the quality of life of patients with brain cancer over the 10 years to 2027, with the longer term aim of defeating brain cancer |
|  | Million Minds Mental Health Research Mission | To help an extra one million people be part of new approaches to mental health prevention, detection, diagnosis, treatment and recovery |
|  | Genomics Health Futures Mission | To save or transform the lives of more than 200,000 Australians through genomic research to deliver better testing, diagnosis and treatment |
|  | Dementia, Ageing, and Aged Care Mission | To improve quality of life for Australians as they age |

**Table 5** *continued*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Theme | Initiative | Goal |
| Research missions (continued) | Indigenous Health Research Fund | To improve the health of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people through:   * Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander–led research practice and governance * knowledge translation * evidence-based structural change in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health practice |
|  | Stem Cell Therapies Mission | To support world-leading translational stem cell research that develops and delivers innovative, safe and effective stem cell medicines to improve health outcomes, in partnership with patients and carers |
|  | Cardiovascular Health Mission | To make transformative improvements in heart health, vascular health and stroke for all Australians |
|  | Traumatic Brain Injury Mission | To make transformative improvements to the lives for people affected by traumatic brain injury through personalising care, developing and implementing tailored treatments and identifying how to reduce barriers to support people to live their best possible life after traumatic brain injury |
| Research translation | Preventative and Public Health Research | To support targeted research on new ways to address risk factors for chronic and complex diseases in Australia |
|  | Primary Health Care Research | To increase Australia’s evidence base in primary health care through research to improve service delivery and patient outcomes, and translate this knowledge into action |
|  | Rapid Applied Research Translation | To support research centres that conduct transformative translational research, so patients can benefit from better quality of care. These centres have been [accredited for excellence by the NHMRC](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/research-translation-and-impact/recognised-health-research-and-translation-centres) |
|  | Medical Research Commercialisation | To support early-stage health and medical research and innovation in Australia through to proof-of-concept and beyond, providing opportunities for commercialisation |
|  | National Critical Research Infrastructure | To establish and extend infrastructure of critical importance that will be used to conduct world-class health and medical research |
|  | Research Data Infrastructure | To establish and extend research data infrastructure to support world-class health and medical research |

MRFF = Medical Research Future Fund; NHMRC = National Health and Medical Research Council

# Appendix B MRFF program logic overview

**Situation** | Health and medical research and innovation improves health outcomes, creates jobs and drives economic growth. The Australian Government has made available $5 billion over 10 years through the MRFF, which complements funding made available through the NHMRC, Australian Research Council, university block grants, and industry support such as the Research and Development Tax Incentive.

##### Outcomes

###### Inputs

**Funding**

* + Annual appropriations (Priority 4)
  + Budget measures

**Staffing**

* + Dedicated ASL in the HMRO and across DoH
  + Specialist contractor staff as required

**Legislation**

* MRFF Act 2015
* MRFF Investment Mandate Direction 2015
* *Australian medical research and innovation strategy 2016–21*
* *Australian medical research and innovation priorities 2020–22*
* MRFF funding principles
* *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*

**Government policy and guidelines**

* *Commonwealth grant rules and guidelines 2017*
* WCAG 2.0 and DTA Digital Service Standard
* Centralised grant hubs

###### Participantsa

**Australian Minister for Health**

**Program consumers**

* Patients
* Patient advocates (eg foundations)
* Consumers
* Researchers
* Research bodies (universities, medical research institutes, peak bodies)
* Industry and commercial entities (eg SMEs)
* DoH advisory committees (eg MSAC, PBAC, PLAC)
* Health and allied health professionals

**Implementation partners**

* NHMRC
* Business Grant Hub
* Cancer Australia

**Government advisory**

* AMRAB
* Expert advisory panels
* Ad hoc working groups and roundtables

**Other advisory**

* DoH
  + Health state network
  + PAS
  + LAD
  + ITD
  + PCPD (communications)
* DoF
* DPMC
* The Treasury
* AHMAC

###### Activities

**Policy development**

* Australian medical research and innovation strategies and priorities
* Priority setting for initiatives (mission and non-mission)
* MRFF Act updates as required
* Stakeholder engagement

Policies are underpinned by principles and informed by goals and objectives

**Grant design**

* Grant opportunities engineered to meet initiative aims and objectives

**Grant establishment**

* Communicating with implementation partners
* Collaborating with relevant participants

**Performance monitoring**

* Grant recipients regularly report on their progress

**Program and financial management**

* Financial management and reporting

###### Outputs

**Policy development**

* Policies and procedures reduce bias and ensure consistency in MRFF decision making
* Increased accountability for MRFF investments

**Grant design**

* Grant opportunities meet the initiative aims and objectives

**Grant establishment**

* Grant agreements and contracts
* MOUs with implementation partners

**Performance monitoring**

* Reporting at the grant, contract and program level

**Program and financial management**

* Reporting
* Dashboards

**Communication**

* Publishing MRFF content on the DoH website through media releases and updates
* MRFF monthly newsletters
* NHMRC RAO alerts

###### Short term

**Policy development**

* Areas of emerging priority and unmet need are identified and actioned
* Policies to liaise with grant hubs for the development of grant assessment panels, remuneration of panel members and so on

**Grant design**

* Grant opportunities have a longer application period
* Consistency and transparency in policy and assessment process

**Grant establishment**

* Grant agreements and contracts clearly define project activities and measures of success
* MOUs with implementation partners define roles and responsibilities

**Performance monitoring**

* Reports are informative and transparent, and help with:
* managing key risks or issues as their arise
* policy development

**Program and financial management**

* Systems are used to accurately record and monitor financial- and program-level information

**Communication**

* Patients and researchers are more aware and have better understanding of MRFF

###### Medium term

**Policy development**

* Average time from identification of research need to research funding is reduced
* Increase in workforce capacity in the health and medical research sector

**Grant design**

* Effective and efficient safety monitoring system

**Grant establishment**

* Assurance that projects have been successful and have met their intended aims

**Performance monitoring**

* Continuous improvement cycle adopted, so that new policies and projects implemented build on key successes and lessons learned

**Program and financial management**

* Visibility and transparency of expenditure of MRFF funds achieved
* Value for money achieved

**Communication**

* Understanding the information needs of patients and researchers
* Designing and tailoring information to meet needs
* Reviewing approaches to support continuous improvement

###### Long term

* Better health outcomes in the community
* Economic growth
* Beneficial change to health practices
* Increased health system efficiency

Patients access innovative and best practice care; new researcher jobs; increase in highly skilled MTP jobs

* Increased jobs and export potential (larger health and medical research and innovation sector)

A health priority with bipartisan support, research will continue to receive ongoing support from current and successive governments

While inherently self-interested in representing their organisations and constituents, key participants can work cooperatively to achieve mutually agreed activities

Activity scope is sufficient to meet outputs

Researchers and the industry continue to actively engage in the MRFF and adjust to its focus on implementation and translation

##### Assumptions

The health system and consumers are ready to adopt best practice

AHMAC = Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council; AMRAB = Australian Medical Research Advisory Board; ASL = average staffing level; DOF = Australian Government Department of Finance; DOH = Australian Government Department of Health; DTA = Digital Transformation Agency; DPMC = Australian Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; HMRO = Health and Medical Research Office; ITD = Information Technology Division; LAD = Legal and Assurance Division; MOU = memorandum of understanding; MRFF = Medical Research Future Fund; MSAC = Medical Services Advisory Committee; MTP = medical technologies and pharmaceuticals; NHMRC = National Health and Medical Research Council; PAS = Procurement Advisory Service;

PBAC = Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee; PCPD = People, Communication and Parliamentary Division; PLAC = Prostheses List Advisory Committee; RAO = research administration officer; SME = small to medium enterprise a Groupings of key participants are not mutually exclusive

20 Medical Research Future Fund *Monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy 2020–21 to 2023–24*