



Refresh of the Medical Research Future Fund Assessment Criteria (October 2022)

The Department is continually seeking to refine its policies and procedures to ensure that the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) supports the highest quality health and medical research to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians, and to better support applicants and assessors to submit and review applications.

The descriptors for the four criteria that are used to assess applications to MRFF grant opportunities have recently been refined and will be implemented across new MRFF grant opportunities over the coming months. This document explains what the changes are and what they mean.

What are the MRFF assessment criteria?

Applications to MRFF grant opportunities are assessed against four criteria:

- Project Impact
- Project Methodology
- Capacity, Capability and Resources to deliver the project
- Overall Value and Risk.

To assist applicants, the guidelines for MRFF grant opportunities include descriptors that specify what information should be provided in response to each criterion. These descriptors can be different depending on the type of research projects the Department is seeking to fund under a particular grant opportunity.

The scoring materials included with the guidelines provide guidance to assessors on how the information provided by applicants should be assessed. Applications are selected for funding based on their performance against each of the assessment criteria.

Why are the assessment criteria changing?

The MRFF funds priority-driven research with a strong focus on research translation. Specific funding opportunities are tailored towards identified health priorities, and

the assessment criteria descriptors for each grant opportunity are tailored to ensure that funds are appropriately targeted to the best research.

The MRFF utilises several mechanisms to ensure that grant opportunities are appropriately designed, targeted, and assessed, including:

- continuously implementing improvements to the program based on feedback and lessons learned, including from previous grant opportunities
- regular engaging with stakeholders, e.g. through public consultation and roundtable discussions
- seeking advice from [Mission Expert Advisory Panels](#), e.g. from the Indigenous Health Research Fund Expert Advisory Panel on how to best promote and assess First Nations leadership and involvement in proposed research projects
- consulting with the [MRFF Consumer Reference Panel](#) on how to strengthen consumer involvement in research and engage appropriately with priority populations (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, older people experiencing diseases of ageing, people with rare or currently untreatable diseases/conditions, people in remote/rural communities, people with a disability, individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ people, youth)
- utilising different grant models to fund projects across the research pipeline (incubator, accelerator, innovation and targeted call for research grants)
- recruiting of a broad and diverse range of assessors to assess MRFF applications, including consumers and assessors with expertise in research translation, implementation, commercialisation and transdisciplinary research.

The updated descriptors that underpin the MRFF assessment criteria have been informed by these mechanisms.

The key changes to the assessment criteria descriptors include:

- reducing the number of descriptive dot points to assist applicants and assessors
- using simpler language to clearly draw out the elements to be assessed
- incorporating specific expectations for research focusing on priority populations
- including more explicit expectations for consumer involvement.

Where required, the scoring materials have also been updated to reflect what applicants must demonstrate to be assessed as “fundable”.

What do the changes mean for me?

Applicants are encouraged to carefully review the grant opportunity guidelines to familiarise themselves with the refined MRFF assessment criteria descriptors (section 5) and guidance for applicants (section 6).

The Department will continue to provide guidance and support to grant assessment committee members on how to interpret and use MRFF assessment criteria and scoring materials when reviewing applications.

The Department is also committed to strengthening the involvement and representation of priority populations in the MRFF and will continue to listen and work across the Australian community to integrate diverse voices and experiences into the design and assessment of MRFF granting activities. As an initial priority, the Department will work with the grant hubs administering MRFF grant opportunities to further strengthen inclusion of the unique knowledge and experiences of First Nations people on grant assessment committees.

To support the changes to the assessment of MRFF applications, the Department is seeking expressions of interest from researchers with expertise in priority populations and individuals from priority population groups to join MRFF grant assessment committees. Please register your interest at: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/2022-23-medical-research-future-fund-mrff-grant-opportunities>.

Further information

The Department will monitor the implementation of this change to assess its impact.

If you have any questions, these should be directed towards your Research Administration Officer (or equivalent) in the first instance.