

2023

HEALTH+MEDICAL RESEARCH

Motor Neurone Disease Research Grants

Guidelines



NSW Health

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www.health.nsw.gov.au

www.medicalresearch.nsw.gov.au

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Call for Applications

NSW Health invites eligible individuals with an established or developing track record of research and research impact in Motor Neurone Disease, or related research, to apply for the Motor Neurone Disease Research Grants.

Funding for these grants will be distributed over three-four years. Research under this program will focus on improving the understanding of distribution rates of Motor Neurone Disease in NSW regions with potential clusters, exploring possible environmental or occupational exposures; and on improving diagnostic approaches that have the potential to improve rates of early referral.

Eligible researchers are encouraged to apply, including clinician researchers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, researchers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and primary carers who have experienced career disruptions.

Indicative Grant timeline

Stage	Date
Applications close	15 February 2024
Applicants notified of outcomes	May 2024
Commencement of funding	May-June 2024

Submission of applications

Application submission process

1. All applications should be submitted by email to MOH-OHMRGrants@health.nsw.gov.au by 5pm on 15 February 2024.
2. Applicants must use the Motor Neurone Disease Research Grants 2023 Application Form (available on the [Motor Neurone Disease Research Grant webpage](#)) and attach any supporting evidence. Please submit both a word and PDF version of the application.
3. All email applications will receive an email to acknowledge receipt within 72 business hours. It is the applicant's responsibility to follow up if no acknowledgement email is received.
4. The maximum email size is 20MB. Larger emails will be rejected by the NSW Health server and you may not be notified that the email has been rejected.

All applications are encouraged to have undergone a peer review process before being submitted to NSW Health. Please arrange informal peer-review by a colleague or mentor prior to submission.

Any queries regarding the Motor Neurone Disease Research Grants may be directed by email to: MOH-OHMRGrants@health.nsw.gov.au.

Funding

The objectives of the Motor Neurone Disease Research Grants are to:

- fund research that improves wellbeing and health outcomes
- encourage collaboration, leadership, and capacity building in the NSW research environment
- bridge the gap between research, policy and practice to increase research impact and translation
- support NSW researchers to leverage national funding opportunities to further research and its translation in NSW.

Funding amount

A total \$2 million will be awarded over the next three-four years. Individual grants of up to \$1 million in Stream One and up to \$500,000 in Stream Two will be awarded (see Eligible areas of research below).

Funding conditions and exclusions

1. Research funded must be conducted in the New South Wales health system or an affiliated organisation (university, medical research institute, industry partner).
2. Funding is conditional on the Chief Investigator and the Chief Executive(s) of the host and administering (if applicable) organisation(s) agreeing to the **required declarations** when submitting the application form. These declarations outline the obligations of each party.
3. Funding must not be spent on capital works, general maintenance costs, organisational infrastructure or overheads, telephone/communication systems, basic office equipment, such as desks and chairs, rent and the cost of utilities.

4. Grants may be applied for regardless of other funding currently held or applied for, including NHMRC fellowships.
5. Applicants are required to declare the source, duration and level of funding already held for research in the subject area of the application. Applications must clearly describe the purpose of the additional funding and justify that the additional research will be complementary not duplicative.
6. Researchers may submit a maximum of **one application** as Chief Investigator in each Stream.

Clinician researchers

Clinicians, including medical, nursing, and allied health professionals, are encouraged to apply.

Clinicians may use up to 50% of the grant to backfill their clinical role, with appropriate justification. If the grant is to be used for this purpose the application must be signed by the appropriate department head in the local health district. The salary limits are as follows:

- Clinician – medical: Salary limit – up to 0.6 FTE Staff Specialist or Visiting Medical Officers.
- Clinician – non-medical: Salary limit – up to 0.6 FTE as per Allied Health (including pharmacists and radiographers) and Nursing awards.

Eligible areas of research

Funding will be provided across two streams to support researchers working in Motor Neurone Disease research to:

1. Stream One: improve gaps in understanding of distribution rates of Motor Neurone Disease in NSW regions with potential clusters, exploring possible environmental or occupational exposures
2. Stream Two: improve diagnostic approaches that have the potential to improve rates of early referral. Research on diagnostic approaches should include a focus on equity of access for rural, regional and remote patients.

Stream One: Applicants may apply for grants of up to \$1 million over three-four years.

Stream Two: Applicants may apply for grants of up to \$500,000 over three-four years.

Applicants may submit one application as Chief Investigators in both Streams.

Eligibility criteria

Applications must meet all eligibility criteria.

Researcher requirements

- *Based in NSW and employed by an eligible host/ administering organisation*

For the duration of the grant, the researcher must reside in NSW and be employed by an eligible host/ administering organisation (see below).

- *Submit a complete application*

The researcher must complete the application form fully, attach all relevant and required documentation, agree to the declaration on the form and receive certification from the host/ administering organisation.

- *Australian citizen, permanent residency status or appropriate visa*

The researcher must be an Australian citizen, a permanent resident of Australia or have an appropriate working visa for the full term of the Grant.

Host organisation requirements

The host organisation is where most of the research is conducted.

The host organisation must be in NSW, conduct health and medical research, and be one of the following:

- a university
- an independent medical research institute
- a not-for-profit organisation
- a local health district or other public health organisation.

Clinician researchers may undertake clinical work separately from where research is undertaken. If the grant is to be used to quarantine research time and backfill a clinical position, the application must also be endorsed by the Chief Executive/ Executive Director of the organisation where clinical duties are undertaken.

The host organisation will provide the appropriate infrastructure support for the research project, including wet/dry lab space, computer equipment, and desk space.

An authorised representative of the host organisation is required to review the application form and to certify that the organisation complies with the requirements of the grant.

If the host organisation is a NSW Health organisation, grant funds must be paid to an administering organisation that can manage funds across financial years. Please refer to administering organisation requirements.

Administering organisation requirements

An administering organisation is only required where the funds are held by a separate organisation to the host organisation.

In such cases, the administering organisation will enter into the funding agreement with NSW Health, manage the funds, submit financial reports and coordinate other reporting requirements as outlined in the funding agreement.

Grant funds must be paid to an administering organisation that can manage funds across financial years where required.

The administering organisation must be:

- a university
- a medical research institute, or
- a not-for-profit organisation that conducts health and medical research in NSW.

Note: For-profit industry organisations are not eligible to be host or administering organisations or to apply for funding but may be partners on the grant.

Relative to opportunity policy

Applicants may present a declaration and/ or evidence of circumstances that have affected the applicant's research productivity for consideration by the review panel. These circumstances might include career disruption due to pregnancy, illness/ injury and/ or carer responsibilities, as well as other relative to opportunity considerations. Please refer to the NHMRC relative to opportunity policy [here](#).

Selection criteria

All applications for funding that meet the eligibility criteria will be assessed against the following selection criteria. In addressing the selection criteria, applicants should specifically highlight the relevance to Motor Neurone Disease research.

Applications should be written in plain English, as applications may be reviewed by a panel member with expertise in a different area to that of the application.

Chief Investigator (35%)

Applicants will be assessed on:

- academic and relevant clinical qualifications
- research, clinical and industry experience, including demonstrated capacity to work in multidisciplinary teams
- skills and experience directly related to the topic area(s) and methodology of the research project
- track record in research and research impact, relative to opportunity
- potential for the Chief Investigator to leverage this grant to gain research funding and fellowships from other funding bodies.

Research project and team (65%)

A clear and detailed description and justification for the project is required, including aims, methodology, and expected outputs and outcomes. The research project will be assessed against the following criteria:

- evidence of a gap in knowledge, provided by prior systematic reviews and/or gap analyses, and a clearly articulated need for the research
- how the proposed project will advance existing knowledge and why this is important
- the extent to which the proposed research is innovative and novel
- clarity of the research aim(s) and research question(s)
- strength, rigor and appropriateness of the research methodology in achieving the aims of the project
- consideration of priority population groups if relevant

- program logic, with the potential outputs and outcomes of the research and how the research will improve clinical practice and/or patient outcomes in the short or long term
- feasibility of successfully delivering the research project within the proposed timeframe
- the plan for research translation and impact, including consideration of data management and access, commercialisation, and intellectual property where appropriate
- engagement with appropriate partners to support translation where appropriate
- the skills of the proposed research team that are relevant to the project, and each team member can contribute meaningfully to the research
- relationship to existing research undertaken by the host organisation and the research team
- strong project governance structure with evidence of appropriate and sustainable relationships with key stakeholders including those who will likely use the research findings
- budget should be detailed and well-justified and will be assessed on:
 - appropriateness and purpose of each line item
 - existing funding for the research, and how this relates to the additional funding requested
 - other contributions and support for the project.

Selection process

Step 1: Eligibility check

Following the closing date for applications, NSW Health will determine if each application has satisfied the eligibility criteria.

Step 2: Review by independent expert panel

An independent panel of expert reviewers will assess each eligible application against the selection criteria.

Step 3: Funding recommendation

The independent panel will agree on the final ranking of all eligible applications and will make a recommendation for funding to NSW Health.

Step 4: Decision and notification

NSW Health will determine grant recipients and amounts. All applicants will be informed as to whether they have been awarded funding.

Step 5: Grant Agreements

NSW Health will contact host/ administering organisation(s) for successful project(s) to execute a funding agreement. A standard, non-negotiable funding agreement will be used.

Post award requirements

A schedule for reporting will be outlined in the funding agreement and will include a requirement to provide:

- annual progress reports
- annual financial reports
- a final report and financial acquittal following the conclusion of the term of the grant
- post-grant reports related to research translation and research impact
- ad hoc requests for information or interviews to support program evaluation if required.

Important Considerations

Program Logic and research impact

Applicants are required to submit a Program Logic diagram with their application, including project aim, inputs, activities, outputs, and expected outcomes and impacts.

Research Impact Assessment

The Program Logic will be used to optimise the probability of research impact at application stage. If the research is funded, the Program Logic will guide the measurement of impact throughout the project and at its conclusion.

Note that outcomes and impacts may not be realised during the funded period, and they may be projected to occur in the future. Particularly for basic science,

the 'next users' who are responsible for taking the research findings to the next step for translation should be involved from the start of the project so they understand the research and can move the findings towards translation.

Research impact will be considered across five domains:

Domain 1: Knowledge Advancement

- New interventions, treatments, diagnostics or drug targets.
- New clinical or medical prototypes.
- Peer-reviewed publications and presentations at conferences.
- Media coverage and other non-peer-reviewed publications.

Domain 2: Capacity and Capability Building

- New partnerships leveraged.
- Training and professional development.
- Research students supported.

Domain 3: Policy and Practice

- Instances where research findings are considered in policy development.
- Instances of change in clinical practice.
- Instances of new health technology or new treatments used in clinical care.

Domain 4: Health and community

- Improved health outcomes, including:
 - change in the time to develop an outcome
 - change in the likelihood of an outcome occurring.

Domain 5: Economic benefit

- Research jobs created and sustained.
- Patents and commercialisation.
- Value of leveraged research funding (external grants awarded due to NSW Health funding).
- Reduction in cost of delivering care.
- Potential for return on investment.

Research Translation

All research projects should have potential to lead to changes in health outcomes, clinical practice or health policy in the short and/or long term, even if

not during the funded period. Applications must clearly describe:

- the long-term goal and clinical significance of the research
- the expected pathway for this to occur (note this may not be linear)
- how the researchers will engage with 'next users', i.e. research partners and other stakeholders who will take the research to the next step on the translation pathway.

Intellectual Property

To maximise benefits arising from the public funding of research, all recipients must comply with the [National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research](#) as a condition of funding. In addition, intellectual property (IP) arrangements should be agreed between all research partners and organisations. IP arrangements must cover both background IP and IP that is developed during the project. IP arrangements should consider the contributions of all parties. The arrangements should be detailed in the application.

NSW Health has recently updated its Policy Directive *Intellectual Property arising from Health Research* which provides a clear and consistent guide for public health organisations to protect their intellectual property arising from research. NSW Health has also released a *Commercialisation Framework*. Both documents are available [here](#).

Ethics and Regulation

The host organisation (and where appropriate the administering organisation) must certify that the project has received all appropriate research ethics and regulatory approvals and must ensure these are maintained as required for the duration of the grant. All organisations and personnel contributing to the project must:

- have familiarised themselves with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, the NHMRC Open Access Policy, the National Statement of the Ethical Conduct of Human Research, the Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (including but not limited to the application of the 3Rs 'replacement', 'reduction' and 'refinement' at all stages of animal care and use) or their replacements and other relevant National Health and Medical Research Council policies

concerning the conduct of research and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with those policies;

- comply with any requirements of relevant Commonwealth or State or Territory laws; and
- comply with any requirements of regulatory bodies that have jurisdiction over the project. This includes, but is not limited to, the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator.

Priority populations

It is important that all research projects consider and respond to the distribution of the burden of disease within the population and the needs of higher risk and priority populations where appropriate. These may include women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, individuals from a non-English speaking background, socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and people living in regional and remote areas among others.

Relevant partners should be engaged early to ensure that the research design and conduct will be effective and appropriate for these population groups.

Research projects with a primary focus on Aboriginal health or involving Aboriginal people as participants should attach a completed Aboriginal Health Impact Statement to their application, available [here](#).

Research collaborations and partnerships

Applicants are encouraged to identify and engage relevant stakeholders, partners and networks who will provide a meaningful contribution to delivery of the research project and implementation of outcomes.

Partners may include:

- NSW Health system partners including NSW Ministry of Health, Pillars, and statewide health services
- local health districts and specialty health networks
- Advanced Health Research Translation Centres and Centre for Innovation in Regional Health
- universities and medical research institutes
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services
- Primary Healthcare Networks

- research networks
- non-government organisations
- industry
- consumers and patients.

Partnerships may vary in type and intensity from informal arrangements such as the provision of occasional advice, to membership of the research team or project steering committee, to formal partnerships that are the subject of a written agreement between the parties.

Where an industry organisation proposes to host a researcher at their site, the following conditions apply and NSW Health reserves the right to cancel the funding agreement with the host/ administering organisation and recoup funds if they are not met:

- the host/ administering organisation must enter into a legally binding agreement with the partnering industry organisation to ensure their obligations are met including the following:
 - accommodate and support the researcher and ensure that the researcher has the support of the industry organisation's Chief Executive Officer or equivalent position
 - meet all standard employer responsibilities and obligations in accordance with relevant regulations and value gender equity in practice
 - provide cash and/or in-kind contributions to support the project, and
 - detail intellectual property arrangements in line with the NSW Health Policy and national principles (see page 7).