



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council



Synergy Grants 2022 Outcomes Factsheet



Synergy Grants

- The Synergy Grant scheme supports outstanding multidisciplinary teams of investigators to work together to answer major questions that cannot be answered by a single investigator.
- The scheme is intended to foster collaboration between diverse researchers to ensure a range of skills and perspectives are brought to the research problem.
- The scheme provides \$5 million of funding over 5 years to support high-performing research teams.
- The 2022 Synergy Grant round is the third round for this scheme and funds grants commencing in January 2023.
- This year’s Synergy Grant funding allocation from the Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) was \$50 million.

Synergy Grant outcomes

- Ten high-performing health and medical research teams from across the country have been funded in this round.
- The teams comprise diverse researchers by gender, career stage and cultural background.

Table 1. Statistics for applications received and awarded in 2022 (2021)

Total number of applications received	69# (86^)
Number of grants awarded	10 (17*)
Percentage of applications awarded grants	14.5% (19.8%)

One of the 69 applications was ruled ineligible.

^ Three of the 86 applications were ruled ineligible.

* For the 2021 Synergy Grants round, NHMRC increased the MREA funding allocation from \$50 million to \$85 million to partially offset the impact of cancelling the 2020 round due to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2. Statistics for application and grant team sizes 2022 (2021)

Average application team size	8.0 (8.1)
Average grant team size	8.3 (8.2)

Outcomes by Broad Research Area

- NHMRC is committed to supporting a broad range of research from discovery science through to clinical research, health services research and public health research. Synergy Grants will be funded in each of these Broad Research Areas.

Table 3. Statistics by Broad Research Area – 2019, 2021 and 2022*

Broad Research Area	Year	Applications	Grants	Funded rate	Proportion of grants awarded	Total value
Basic Science research	2019	19	4	21.1%	40.0%	\$20,000,000
	2021	20	3	15.0%	17.6%	\$15,000,000
	2022	21	3	14.3%	30.0%	\$15,000,000
Clinical Medicine and Science research	2019	21	3	14.3%	30.0%	\$15,000,000
	2021	38	8	21.1%	47.1%	\$40,000,000
	2022	33	4	12.1%	40.0%	\$20,000,000
Health Services research	2019	15	2	13.3%	20.0%	\$10,000,000
	2021	12	1	8.3%	5.9%	\$5,000,000
	2022	4	1	25.0%	10.0%	\$5,000,000
Public Health research	2019	9	1	11.1%	10.0%	\$5,000,000
	2021	16	5	31.3%	29.4%	\$25,000,000
	2022	11	2	18.2%	20.0%	\$10,000,000

* NHMRC cancelled the 2020 Synergy Grants round due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outcomes for CIAs by career stage

- Most CIAs have held their PhD for at least 10 years.

Table 4. Statistics by CIA career stage – 2019, 2021 and 2022

Career Stage	Year	Applications	Average years post-PhD of applicants	Grants awarded	Average years post-PhD of awardees	Funded rate
Less than 10 years post-PhD	2019	4	6.3	1	2.0	25.0%
	2021	5	6.8	0	-	0.0%
	2022	2	5	0	-	0.0%
Equal to or greater than 10 years post-PhD	2019	55	21.2	8	23.6	14.5%
	2021	74	21.9	16	21.8	21.6%
	2022	63	21.6	8	21.5	12.7%
Do not hold a PhD/Not stated	2019	5	-	1	-	20.0%
	2021	7	-	1	-	14.3%
	2022	4	-	2	-	50.0%

Outcomes for all CIs by Career Stage

- CIs less than 10 years post-PhD averaged 5.7 years post-PhD, with a 16.9% funded rate.
- CIs equal to or greater than 10 years post-PhD averaged 21.0 years post-PhD, with a 14.1% funded rate.
- Those awardees who do not hold a PhD (or did not state that they hold a PhD) had a funded rate of 18.2%.

Table 5. Statistics by CI career stage – 2019, 2021 and 2022

Career Stage	Year	Applications	Average years post-PhD of applicants	Grants awarded	Average years post-PhD of awardees	Funded rate
Less than 10 years post-PhD	2019	120	5.3	13	4.5	10.8%
	2021	150	5.5	26	4.8	17.3%
	2022	130	5.7	22	5.1	16.9%
Equal to or greater than 10 years post-PhD	2019	308	20.5	45	20.2	14.6%
	2021	479	20.3	97	20.4	20.3%
	2022	377	21.0	53	21.7	14.1%
Do not hold a PhD/Not stated	2019	57	-	11	-	19.3%
	2021	64	-	17	-	26.6%
	2022	44	-	8	-	18.2%

Funded rates for CIAs by gender

- More men than women applied as CIAs in 2019, 2021 and 2022.
- The funded rate has been higher for female CIAs than for male CIAs in 2019, 2021 and 2022.

Table 6. Statistics by CIA gender – 2019, 2021 and 2022

Year	Female CIA				Male CIA				CIA gender other [#]			
	Applicants	Funded	Funded rate	Proportion of grants	Applicants	Funded	Funded rate	Proportion of grants	Applicants	Funded	Funded rate	Proportion of grants
2019	29	6	20.7%	60.0%	35	4	11.4%	40.0%	0	0	n/a	n/a
2021	41	9	22.0%	52.9%	45	8	17.8%	47.1%	0	0	n/a	n/a
2022	26	4	15.4%	40.0%	43	6	14.0%	60.0%	0	0	n/a	n/a

[#]Includes those who did not state their gender or declared it as Indeterminate/Intersex

Funded rates for CIs by gender

- More men than women applied as CIs in 2019, 2021 and 2022.
- The funded rate for male CIs is 1.8 percentage points higher than for female CIs in 2022.

Table 7. Statistics by CI gender – 2019, 2021 and 2022

Year	Female CI				Male CI				CI gender other [#]			
	Applications	Grants	Funded rate	Proportion	Applications	Grants	Funded rate	Proportion	Applications	Grants	Funded rate	Proportion
2019	223	35	15.7%	50.7%	256	34	13.3%	49.3%	6	0	0%	0%
2021	329	63	19.1%	45.0%	359	75	20.9%	53.6%	5	2	40.0%	1.4%
2022	266	38	14.3%	45.8%	273	44	16.1%	53.0%	12	1	8.3%	1.2%

[#]Includes those who did not state their gender or declared it as Indeterminate/Intersex

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research

- NHMRC is committed to allocating at least 5% of the MREA each year to research directed at improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Applications that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health represent 20% of the funds awarded.

Table 8. Statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island health research and researchers – 2019, 2021 and 2022

Indigenous identified/Indigenous focused	Year	Applications	Grants	Funded rate	Proportion of funds awarded
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused research	2019	4	1	25.0%	10.0%
	2021	6	2	33.3%	11.8%
	2022	3	2	66.7%	20.0%
Researchers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent	2019	5	1	20.0%	10.0%
	2021	10	3	30.0%	17.6%
	2022	8	2	25.0%	20.0%
Applications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused research led by researchers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent	2019	1	1	100.0%	10.0%
	2021	2	1	50.0%	5.9%
	2022	2	1	50.0%	10.0%

Conclusion

- The 10 funded Synergy Grant teams now have 5 years of funding to tackle research questions that cannot be answered by a single investigator.
- The diversity of these teams is critical to the success of the projects.
- NHMRC will continue to monitor the outcomes of its grant program to determine whether it is meeting the stated objectives.