



Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council

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A glowing blue DNA double helix structure is the central focus of the graphic, set against a background of soft, out-of-focus blue spheres and light rays, creating a scientific and futuristic atmosphere.

Peer review for NHMRC's new grant program

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WORKING TO BUILD A HEALTHY AUSTRALIA

Objectives of the new grant program

- Encourage innovation and creativity across all fields of health and medical research
- Provide opportunities for talented researchers at all career stages and across all disciplines
- Minimise burden on researchers, freeing up time for research

... while retaining core focus on improving human health and wellbeing through research

NHMRC's new grant program

INVESTIGATOR GRANTS

To support the research program of outstanding investigators at all career stages

SYNERGY GRANTS

To support outstanding multidisciplinary teams of investigators to work together to answer major questions that cannot be answered by a single investigator

IDEAS GRANTS

To support focussed innovative research projects addressing a specific question

STRATEGIC AND LEVERAGING GRANTS

To support research that addresses identified national needs – *Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies*

Peer review consultation

- Peer review processes were explicitly excluded from the Structural Review of NHMRC's Grant Program in 2016-2017.
- NHMRC consulted on peer review processes for new grant program in 2017-2018. Feedback included:
 - need for appropriate expertise among peer reviewers
 - focus on impact and outcomes in track record assessment
 - support for streamlined processes
 - request for more feedback to applicants and reviewers

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/restructure/changes/peer-review/consultation-peer-review>

Goals in designing peer review for the new grant program

- Streamline peer review to reduce the burden on the research sector
 - reduce the number of touch points per application
- Improve the confidence of the sector in peer review
 - increase appropriate expertise per application
- Achieve more than one round per year
 - particularly for Ideas Grants
- Stagger application open/close dates across schemes

Considerations for the first year

- Uncertainties:
 - application numbers
 - impact on review and reviewer time
- Major change for the research sector:
 - new grant program
 - new grants management system (RGMS replacement)
 - new format for funding rules (Australian Government's GrantConnect)
- Staged implementation of new peer review processes

**INVESTIGATOR
GRANTS**

To support the research program of outstanding investigators at all career stages

- **Criteria: Track Record (70%) and Knowledge Gain (30%)**
 - new Track Record assessment framework: publications, impact, leadership
 - Knowledge Gain: research significance and quality

Framework for track record assessment

1. Publications

10 year list (taking Career Disruption into account)

Five best publications

2. Research Impact

Knowledge

Health

Economic

Social

3. Leadership

Research programs and team leadership

Institutional leadership

Research policy and professional leadership

Research mentoring

- Shift focus away from inputs (e.g. grants received) towards outcomes
- Future trial of bibliometric indicators

Framework for track record assessment in 2019

1. Publications (35%)

10 year list (taking Career Disruption into account)

Five best publications

2. Research Impact (20%)

Knowledge

Health

Economic

Social

3. Leadership (15%)

Research programs and team leadership

Institutional leadership

Research policy and professional leadership

Research mentoring

- Shift focus away from inputs (e.g. grants received) towards outcomes
- Future trial of bibliometric indicators

Framework for track record assessment: Impact

Research impact to be presented as a case study

2. Research Impact indicators

Knowledge	Health	Economic	Social
Evidence of scientific reach and influence	Engagement Participation in clinical research Policy leadership Clinical guidelines Standards Development of product/intervention	Healthcare cost savings IP development Industry collaboration Start-up company Product to market Employment	End-user/public engagement Community health benefit Wellbeing of end-user and community Reducing inequalities

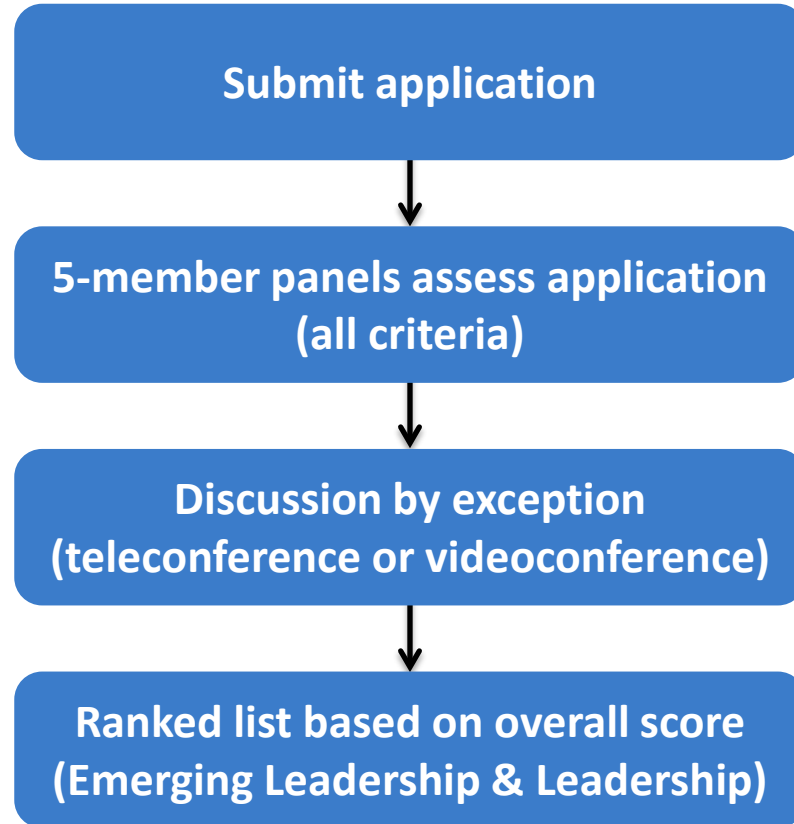


INVESTIGATOR GRANTS

To support the research program of outstanding investigators at all career stages

- **Criteria: Track Record (70%) and Knowledge Gain (30%)**
 - new Track Record assessment framework: publications, impact, leadership
 - Knowledge Gain: research significance and quality
- **Streamline process to reduce peer review burden on research sector**
 - panel only, no interviews, discussion by exception
 - shorter process allows separation of open/close dates from Ideas Grants
- **Improve confidence in the review process**
 - five assessors per application

Peer Review for Investigator Grants (2019)



**SYNERGY
GRANTS**

To support outstanding multidisciplinary teams of investigators to work together to answer major questions that cannot be answered by a single investigator

- Criteria: Track Record (40%), Synergy (30%), Knowledge Gain (30%)

Synergy assessment

Intended to encourage:

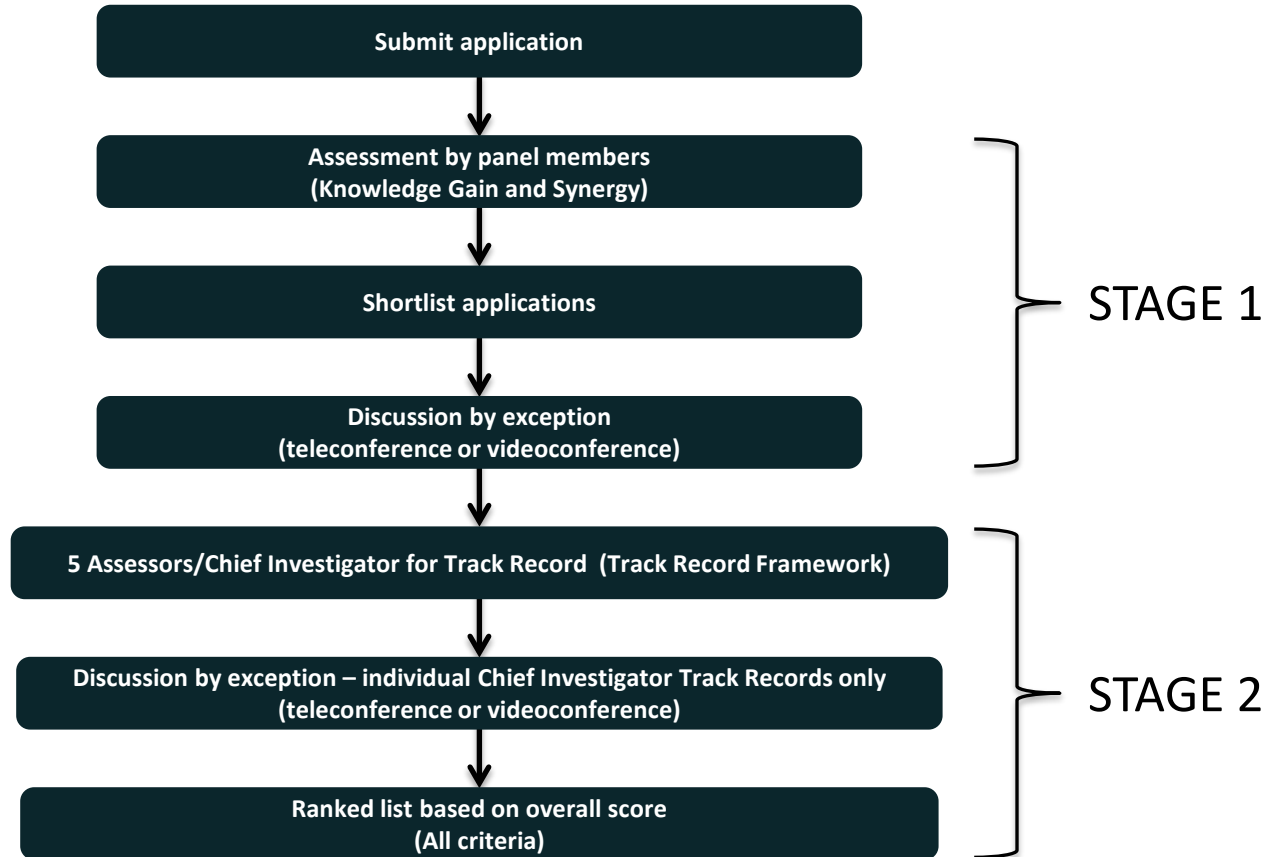
- multidisciplinary research to address a major problem
- diverse research teams, e.g. by gender, career stage, culture
- engagement:
 - people with specialised knowledge (as CI, AI, consultant etc)
 - direct beneficiaries of research

**SYNERGY
GRANTS**

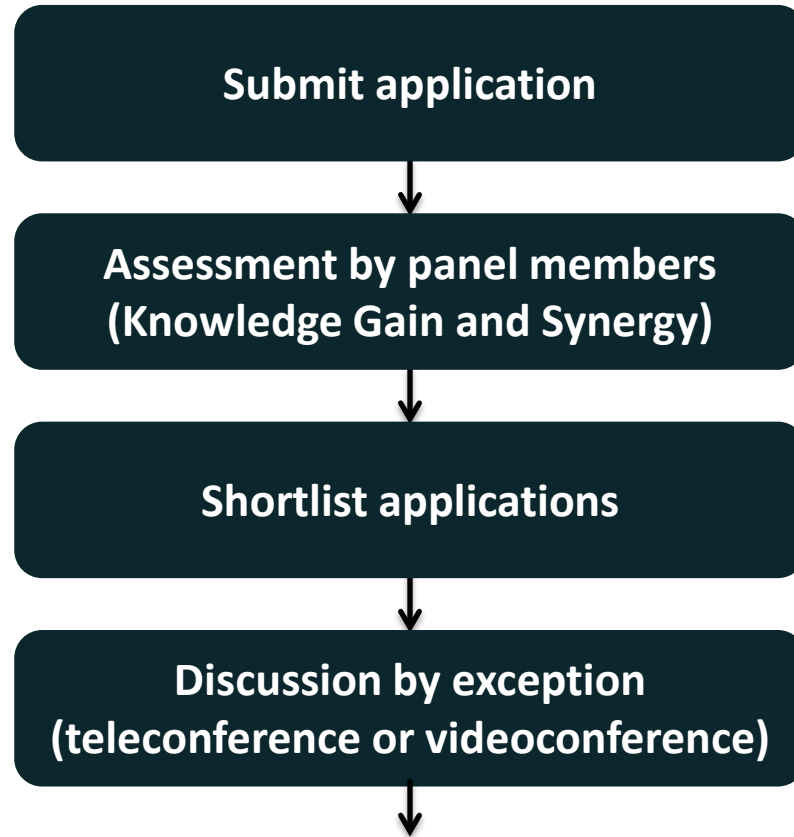
To support outstanding multidisciplinary teams of investigators to work together to answer major questions that cannot be answered by a single investigator

- Criteria: Track Record (40%), Synergy (30%), Knowledge Gain (30%)
- Streamline process to reduce peer review burden on research sector
 - panel only, no interviews, discussion by exception
- Improve confidence in the review process
 - at least five assessors per application
 - broad expertise to assess Synergy and Knowledge Gain
 - discipline expertise to assess Track Record of each Chief Investigator

Peer Review for Synergy Grants (2019)



Peer Review for Synergy Grants (2019) – Stage 1



Peer Review for Synergy Grants (2019) – Stage 2

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graph TD; A[5 Assessors/Chief Investigator for Track Record (Track Record Framework)] --> B[Discussion by exception – individual Chief Investigator Track Records only (teleconference or videoconference)]; B --> C[Ranked list based on overall score (all criteria)];
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**5 Assessors/Chief Investigator for Track Record
(Track Record Framework)**

**Discussion by exception – individual
Chief Investigator Track Records only
(teleconference or videoconference)**

**Ranked list based on overall score
(all criteria)**



IDEAS
GRANTS

To support focussed innovative research projects addressing a specific question

- Criteria: Research Quality (35%), Innovation and Creativity (25%)
Significance (20%), Feasibility (20%)

Innovation and Creativity assessment

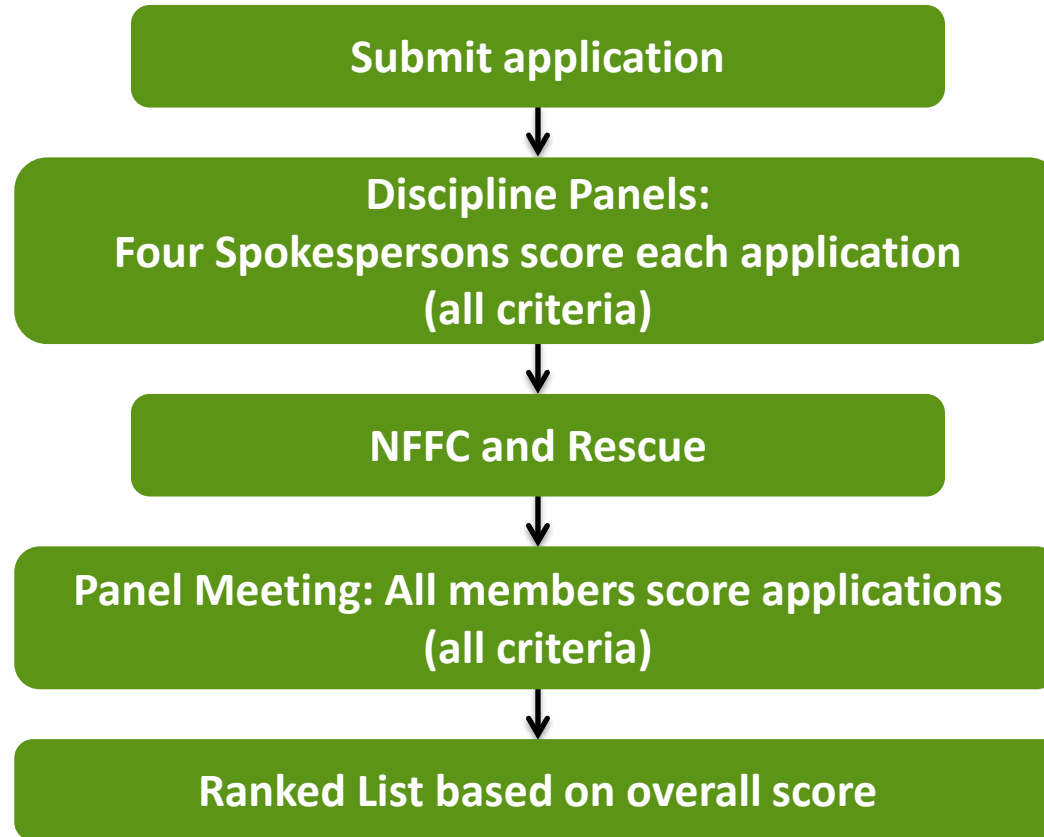
- A specific criterion for the Ideas Grant scheme
- Intended to encourage fresh thinking
- Encompasses:
 - concepts, approaches, methodologies, interventions in all Broad Research Areas
 - incremental advances
 - not only commercial innovation
 - showing what doesn't work


IDEAS
GRANTS

To support focussed innovative research projects addressing a specific question

- Criteria: Research Quality (35%), Innovation and Creativity (25%)
Significance (20%), Feasibility (20%)
- Streamline process to reduce peer review burden on research sector
 - panel only, no external assessments or rebuttals, discussion by exception
 - shorter process allows separation of open/close dates from Investigator Grants
- Improve confidence in the process
 - four assessors per application

Peer Review for Ideas Grants (2019)



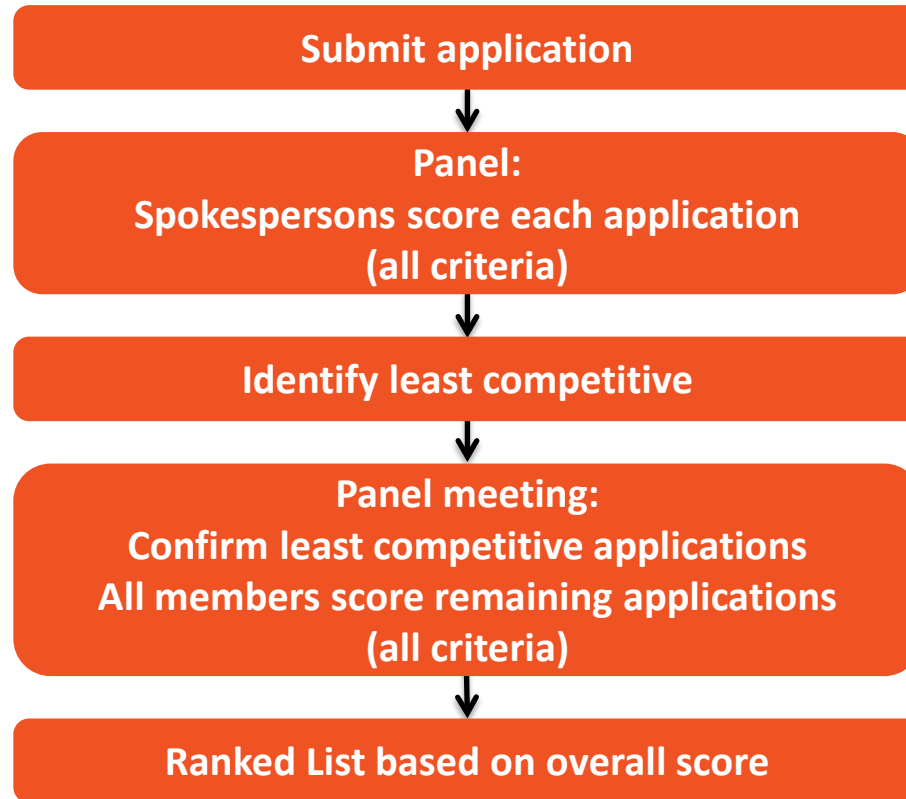
**STRATEGIC AND
LEVERAGING GRANTS**

To support research that addresses identified national needs

Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies scheme

- Not capped relative to other three schemes
- Criteria: Significance (40%), Research Quality (40%), Team Quality and Capability (20%)
- Category descriptors designed for clinical trials and cohort studies
- Peer review process based on recent MRFF clinical trials schemes

Peer Review for Clinical Trials Grants (2019)



What's next?

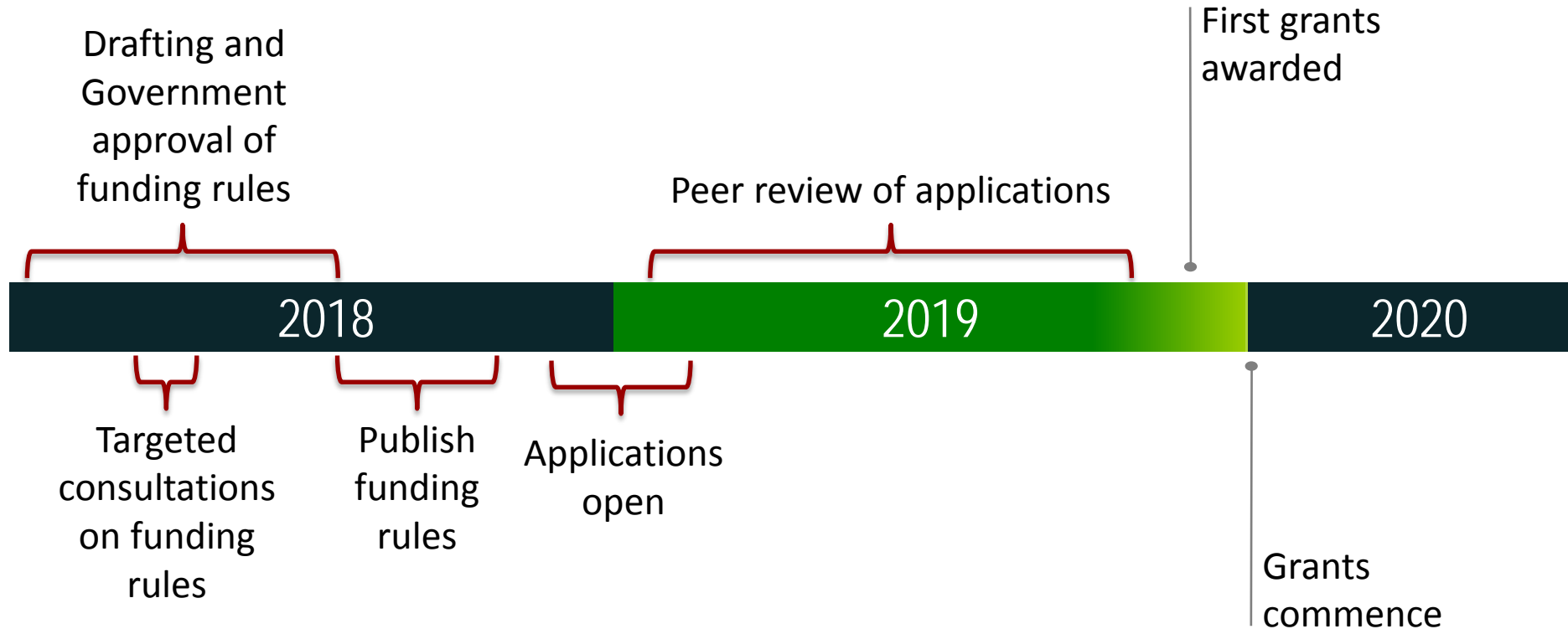
Work is continuing on:

- Category descriptors for peer review of new schemes
- Guidance on peer review criteria (e.g. impact case studies)
- Open/close dates and peer review timetable for 2019
- Relative to Opportunity/Career Disruption policy
- Development of new grants management system

NHMRC's new grants management system

- Replacing RGMS in 2018 in time for new grant program
- Iterative development in consultation with external reference group
- Intuitive new user interface
- RGMS data to be transferred to new system
- Linkage to external data sources (e.g. ORCID)

Implementation of the new grant program



In summary

- Peer review processes for new grant program in 2019:
 - designed to support aims of each scheme
 - responsive to feedback from consultation
 - streamlined compared with current Project Grants process
- Further refinement anticipated in the future:
 - evolution of peer review processes
 - two rounds a year for Ideas Grants
 - improvement of feedback to applicants
 - peer review training



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Discussion

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Thank you
<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/restructure>

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