Reform of NHMRC’s grant program

Professor Anne Kelso AO
Chief Executive Officer

WORKING TO BUILD A HEALTHY AUSTRALIA
NHMRC’s New Grant Program

- A new architecture for NHMRC’s investment in health and medical research investment, for funding starting 1 January 2020

- Developed with the advice of an Expert Advisory Group and extensive consultation with the sector in 2016 – 2017.

- Announced by Hon. Greg Hunt MP on 25 May 2017:
  
  “….changes which the research community has itself proposed and agreed upon…. have been accepted in full and unchanged…….”
# NHMRC’s New Grant Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigator Grants</td>
<td>To support the research program of outstanding investigators at all career stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synergy Grants</td>
<td>To support outstanding multidisciplinary teams of investigators to work together to answer major questions that cannot be answered by a single investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas Grants</td>
<td>To support focussed innovative research projects addressing a specific question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic and Leveraging Grants</td>
<td>To support research that addresses identified national needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objectives of reform

- 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
Objectives of reform

- Encourage innovation and creativity across all fields of health and medical research

  - Investigator Grants and Synergy Grants offer flexibility for strategic, creative, collaborative research
  - Ideas Grants focus on fresh thinking – science rather than track record
Objectives of reform

• 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

- Investigator Grants will be provided for all career stages
- Synergy Grants will encourage diverse teams, e.g. by discipline, career stage and gender
- Ideas Grants will be opportunity for those with less-developed track records
Objectives of reform

• 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

- Investigator Grants consolidate funding and reduce need to apply for Project Grants every year
- Consolidation plus capping is expected to reduce application numbers in steady state
NHMRC’s New Grant Program

New information provided in this presentation:

• Investigator Grants
  o Structure
  o Salaries and Research Support Packages
  o Part-time and non-salaried grants
  o Working overseas

• Synergy and Ideas Grants
  o Eligibility
  o Budgets

• Transitional arrangements
  o Final rounds of Program and Project Grants
  o Transition from old to new schemes
## Investigator Grants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRANT TYPE</th>
<th>INVESTIGATOR GRANTS</th>
<th>SYNERGY GRANTS</th>
<th>IDEAS GRANTS</th>
<th>STRATEGIC &amp; LEVERAGING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Up to 5 years</td>
<td>Varies with scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Chief Investigators</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 – 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Salary (optional) + Research Support Package</td>
<td>Grant of a fixed budget</td>
<td>Based on the requested budget for research support</td>
<td>Varies with scheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Investigator Grants – streamlining of fellowships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current NHMRC Fellowship</th>
<th>Corresponding Investigator Grant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Senior Principal Research Fellowship  
Australia Fellowship | Leadership Level 3                      |
| Principal Research Fellowship  
Practitioner Fellowship Level 2 | Leadership Level 2                      |
| Practitioner Fellowship Level 1  
Senior Research Fellowship Levels A and B  
Career Development Fellowship Level 2 | Leadership Level 1                      |
| Career Development Fellowship Levels 1 and 2  
Translation of Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship | Emerging Leadership Level 2            |
| Early Career Fellowship  
Translation of Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship | Emerging Leadership Level 1            |
### Investigator Grants – scheme structure

#### Salary Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Salary(^a)</th>
<th>Allocation method</th>
<th>No. of terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>L3</td>
<td>$175,201</td>
<td>Self-select</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2</td>
<td>$164,911</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L1</td>
<td>$141,474</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Leadership</td>
<td>EL2</td>
<td>$107,750</td>
<td>Self-select for ≤10 years post-PhD(^c)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EL1</td>
<td>$75,738</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Salary per annum (AUD). Salaries will increase in line with indexation and are quoted as 1 FTE.

\(^b\) For example, a researcher may hold L1 once, L2 twice and L3 twice to have a total of five terms.

\(^c\) Or equivalent

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\(\) Maximum five terms in total
# Investigator Grants – Research Support Packages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Tiers</th>
<th>RSP per annum(^a)</th>
<th>Allocation Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>LT4</td>
<td>$600,000</td>
<td>Peer review – based on overall score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LT3</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LT2</td>
<td>$400,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LT1</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Leadership</td>
<td>ELT2</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>Automatic allocation according to EL level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ELT1</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Average Project Grant is approximately $600,000 ($200,000 per annum of a typical 3-year grant). RSPs will be reduced by 50% or 100% if one or two Ideas Grants are held, until those grants expire.
## Investigator Grants – salaries and RSPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Research Support Package</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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RSPs for EL1 and EL2 are awarded based on seniority. RSPs for L1–L3 are awarded based on score in like-for-like assessment, rather than seniority.
**Investigator Grants – eligibility in steady state**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Investigator Grant held</th>
<th>EL1</th>
<th>EL2</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>L3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None previously held</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Leadership level 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Leadership level 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership level 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership level 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership level 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent**
- **eligible**
- **limitations apply to the number of terms an Investigator Grant can be held**
- **ineligible**
Investigator Grants – part-time and non-salary grants

Part-time Investigator Grants

- Aim to cater for personal (e.g. carers) and professional (e.g. clinical) commitments
- Applicant selects salary in the range 0 – 90% in 10% increments
- Applicant selects full or <100% Research Support Package (RSP)
- Salary and RSP components provided for 5 years and finish on same date

Investigator Grants without salary

- Aim to support research of outstanding investigators who do not need a salary
  - applications expected from tenured university academics (e.g. Dean, DVC, DVC-R, Pro-VC) and directors of independent medical research institutes
  - not designed to subsidise appointments with substantial administrative responsibilities
- Successful applicants would receive RSP only
Investigator Grants – research overseas

Under the streamlined Investigator Grants scheme, specific grants for overseas research will not be offered.

Instead:

- **Emerging Leaders**
  - May spend 50% of grant time overseas
  - Must spend final two years of grant in Australia

- **Leaders**
  - May spend 20% grant time overseas
  - If receive <100% salary, may spend non-NHMRC time overseas (e.g. joint appointments)
## Synergy Grants

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*Note: Varies with scheme indicates that the duration, number of investigators, and funding amount will depend on the specific scheme.*
Synergy Grants

• Fixed budget of $5 million per grant
• Up to 10 awarded per year
• Budget can be used for Personnel Support Packages (PSPs) and direct research costs
• Chief Investigator salaries can be paid from budget up to PSP5
• Each Chief Investigator (CIA – CIJ) may apply for and hold one Synergy Grant
# Ideas Grants

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Ideas Grants

• As for current Project Grants:
  o Grant size will be based on requested budget
  o Budget request will be based on Personnel Support Packages (PSPs) and direct research costs
  o Chief Investigators may request their salary up to PSP5

• Chief Investigators (CIA – CIJ) may apply for and hold up to two Ideas Grants concurrently
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Strategic and Leveraging Grants

- Centres of Research Excellence
- Development Grants
- International Collaborative Grants (e.g. GACD, EU, NIH, NIHR)
- Targeted Calls for Research
- Partnership Projects
- Partnership Centres
- Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies (new scheme)
  - Details to follow analysis of submissions to recent public consultation
Principles for transition to New Grant Program

Goal is to reach the new steady state while ensuring:

• Transparency and equity
• Minimal disadvantage or selective advantage
• Simplicity to understand and administer

- Honour existing grants
- Stage entry to new schemes where possible
- Treat access to Investigator Grant and Ideas Grant schemes equitably
## New Grant Program eligibility – steady state

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum number of applications allowed per round</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not capped relative to Investigator, Synergy or Ideas Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum number of each grant type that can be held</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not capped relative to Investigator, Synergy or Ideas Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transition to New Grant Program – 2018 round

• Final Project grant round in 2018 (for funding in 2019):
  o Applicants may submit up to two Project Grant applications
  o Applicants must comply with current cap of six Project Grants held
  o Capping applies to all Chief Investigators (CIA – CIJ)

• No Program Grant round in 2018 (for funding in 2020) as this scheme will be replaced by the Synergy Grant scheme (2019 round for funding in 2020).
Transition to New Grant Program – 2019 round

• All existing grants will complete their term.

• A researcher’s portfolio of NHMRC Fellowship, Project and Program Grants held on 1 January 2020 will affect:
  o Eligibility to apply for Investigator, Synergy and Ideas Grants
  o Percentage of Research Support Package (RSP) awarded for an Investigator Grant
  o Number of Ideas Grants for which they can apply.

• These effects will cease as the existing grants expire.
## NHMRC Fellows – transitional eligibility

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<tr>
<th>Highest NHMRC Fellowship held</th>
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<th>EL2</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>L2</th>
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<td>Career Development Fellowship Level 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Development Fellowship Level 2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner Fellowship Level 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Research Fellowship Levels A and B</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner Fellowship Level 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Research Fellowship</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Principal Research Fellowship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia Fellowship</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **EL1**: Ineligible
- **EL2**: Eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent
- **L1/L2/L3**: Eligible
NHMRC Fellows – transitional eligibility

Existing NHMRC Fellows:

- may not hold a concurrent Investigator Grant
- may apply for Ideas Grants and/or a Synergy Grant (subject to caps)
- may apply for an Investigator Grant in the penultimate year of their Fellowship, to commence the next year
- may apply for an Investigator Grant and one Ideas Grant in the final year of their Fellowship.
  - If both are successful, only the Investigator Grant will be awarded.
Program Grants – transitional eligibility

Chief Investigators on Program Grants:

• may apply for an Investigator Grant (with 100% RSP reduction until Program Grant expires)

• may not hold a concurrent Synergy Grant or Ideas Grant

• may apply for a Synergy Grant in the final year of their Program Grant

• may apply for Ideas Grants in the final year of their Program Grant (subject to eligibility and caps)
Project Grants – transitional eligibility

Transition
- Investigator Grant RSP reduced by 25% for each Project Grant held, to 50% maximum
- Access to Ideas Grants unaffected by one Project Grant held
- Access to Ideas Grants reduced from two to one if two or more Project Grants held

Steady state
- Investigator Grant RSP reduced by 50% for each Ideas Grant held, to 100% maximum
- Access to Ideas Grants reduced 1:1 for each Ideas Grant held
## Transition to New Grant Program – 2019 round

Grants held as Chief Investigator (CIA – CIJ) on 1 January 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CI on 0 Project or Program Grants</th>
<th>CI on 1 Project Grant</th>
<th>CI on ≥2 Project Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigator Grant scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideas Grant scheme</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% RSP</td>
<td>25% reduction of RSP</td>
<td>50% reduction of RSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible for 2 Ideas Grants</td>
<td>Eligible for 2 Ideas Grant</td>
<td>Eligible for 1 Ideas Grant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eligibility for 2 Ideas Grants based on the number of grants held as Chief Investigator (CIA – CIJ) on 1 January 2020.
Next steps

- Develop funding rules
  - Targeted consultations with sector and RAOs
  - Government approvals

- Design peer review for Investigator, Ideas and Synergy Grants
  - Advice from expert advisory groups
  - Consultation on peer review
    - consultation paper, September 2017
    - public fora in key capital cities, October – November 2017
    - targeted consultations in Q1, 2018
Implementation of new grant program

December 2017
Introduction of Project Grant capping

Late 2019
First grants awarded under new grant program

2017
August 2017
Webinar

2018
From late 2018
Applications open under new grant program

2019
January 2020
Grants commence under new grant program

2020
Implementation of new grant program

Funding Rules

- Draft
- Revise and submit to Dept Finance & Minister for Health

2017
- Webinar

2018
- Targeted consultations on funding rules
- Publish funding rules

2019
- Applications open

2020
- First grants awarded
- Grants commence

NHMRC
Implementation of new grant program

Peer Review Guidelines

- Public consultations on peer review
- Targeted consultations on peer review

2017
- Webinar

2018
- Peer review applications

2019
- Applications open

2020
- First grants awarded
- Grants commence
Where to find information

• Webinar slide set and transitional eligibility information will be available on NHMRC website today:
  o look under latest media releases and updates

• Webinar recording and updated details of new grant program will be available soon at:

  future.nhmrc.gov.au
Thank you