

Targeted Call for Mental Health Research

Guidelines

2026

NSW Health

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www.medicalresearch.nsw.gov.au

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Call for applications

NSW Health invites eligible individuals to apply for Mental Health Research Grants.

Funding for these grants will be provided for four years. 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.

Grant objectives

- fund research that improves wellbeing and health outcomes
- 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.

Indicative timeline

Stage	Date
Applications open	16 March 2026
Applications close	30 June 2026
Applicants notified of outcomes	By 4 December 2026
Commencement of research	By 1 July 2027

Funding amounts

A total of \$4 million is available for this targeted call for mental health research. Applicants can apply for grants of up to \$1 million in total, which have a four-year duration.

Grants are for research projects or programs and can cover a combination of salaries of the research team (clinical and/or non-clinical), backfill for clinicians to quarantine research time, consumables and equipment.

Eligibility

Eligible areas of research

Funding will support researchers working on new and emerging treatment approaches for severe and persistent mental illness, with a focus on basic science and pre-clinical research.

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 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.

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 delegate 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.

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.

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

The host organisation is encouraged to provide additional in-kind and cash support to the project. All support should be detailed in the application form and will be assessed against the selection criteria during the review process.

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. Where an applicant has noted career disruption due to pregnancy, illness/ injury and/ or carer responsibilities, the host organisation must certify that they have evidence of career disruption and can provide this to NSW Health if requested.

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.

Selection criteria

All applications 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 mental health research.

Applications should be written in plain English.

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 and project team will be assessed against the following criteria:

- potential to achieve impact against one or more of the strategic outcomes of the [Future Health: Strategic Framework](#) and the [Research and Innovation Strategy](#)
- 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 equity of health outcomes and the impact of the proposed research on this
 - active inclusion of consumers across various levels of research activity as appropriate
 - 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
 - the skills of the proposed research team that are relevant to the project and its translation, and how 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:
 - value for money
 - 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.
2. Funding is conditional on the Chief Investigator and the Chief Executive(s) of the host/ administering 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. Researchers may be named on additional applications as Associate Investigators or team members.
 7. Applicants who have received a previous NSW Health grant under any program must justify further funding according to productivity and impact specifically related to the previous grant in their application.
 8. NSW Health will consider the recommendations of the expert panel and may consider principles of equity before making a final decision.

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).

Program governance, impact and translation

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. A video explaining how to complete a program logic may be viewed [here](#).

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 six domains:

1. Knowledge advancement
2. Capability building
3. Policy and practice
4. Health and community impact
5. Economic benefit
6. Sustainability.

Further information can be found [here](#).

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.

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 grant 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.

Please refer to NSW Health's 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 comply 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
- Ethical guidelines for research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities
- Principles for consumer involvement in research funded by the Medical Research Future Fund
- Statement on consumer and community involvement in health and medical research
- Statement on Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation in Health and Medical 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.

All organisations and personnel contributing to the project must also comply with any requirements of:

- relevant Commonwealth or State or Territory laws; and 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.

Further information and resources on ethics and governance are available [here](#).

Equity of health outcomes

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 people and communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and people living in rural, regional and remote communities 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.

NSW Health is committed to achieving gender equity in healthcare. Research projects must consider gender and sex in their design, and ensure research is accessible to people of all genders. Please refer to the [NSW Health Gender Equity Action Plan](#), the [NHMRC Gender Equity Strategy](#) and the NHMRC and the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing joint [Statement on Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation in Health and Medical Research](#).

Important considerations

Research collaborations and partnerships

Applicants are encouraged to identify and engage relevant consumers, 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, statewide health services and Agency for Clinical Innovation networks

- 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 below).

Clinical trials

The NSW Government is committed to improving equity of access to clinical trials in NSW.

As part of this commitment, OHMR run a Regional, Rural and Remote Clinical Trials Enabling Program. More information can be found on our [website](#).

If your application involves a Clinical Trial, we encourage you to consider how patients in regional, rural and remote areas can access it. Our colleagues in the Program would welcome the opportunity to connect with researchers to talk about the support they can provide to make this happen. Please contact our team if you would like to discuss this further at moh-rrr-ctep@health.nsw.gov.au.

Commercialisation Training Program

NSW Health has developed a [training program in commercialisation](#), which grant recipients are encouraged to complete during the funding period unless completed previously.

Submission of applications

All applications must be submitted by 5pm (AEST) on 30 June 2026. Further information, including how to access the application form, is available on the [OHMR website](#). All applicants 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.

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 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 recommendations 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 and payment

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.

Relative to opportunity policy

Applicant's track records will be assessed by expert reviewers against the selection criteria relative to opportunity, which means in the context of their career stage and personal circumstances. These circumstances might include career disruption due to pregnancy, major illness/injury and/or carer responsibilities, as well as *other relative to opportunity considerations* as outlined in the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC's) Relative to Opportunity Policy, which can be accessed [here](#).

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.

Program evaluation

Each NSW Health grant program will periodically be assessed to ensure it is meeting its objectives. Evaluations are guided by an [Evaluation Framework](#) and done in collaboration with the host/ administering organisation(s) and funding recipients. Recipients and host/ administering organisations may be required to supply information and meet with NSW Health staff to support program evaluation.

Further Information

Any queries regarding the targeted call for Mental Health 2026 may be directed by email to: MOH-OHMRGrants@health.nsw.gov.au