

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH GRANTS SCHEME APPLICATION GUIDELINES

September 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

The HCF Research Foundation was established in 2000 by The Hospitals Contribution Fund of Australia Limited (HCF). The aim of the HCF Research Foundation is to fund health and medical research for the benefit of HCF members and all Australians, with a focus on health services research.

The HCF Research Foundation aims to increase the evidence base in the delivery of health care services and support the translation and uptake of effective health care models and services. The HCF Research Foundation strives to support research that will ultimately improve the delivery of health services for our members and all Australians.

2. TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH GRANTS

The HCF Research Foundation Translational Research Grants (TRG) scheme is focused on responding to health issues identified within health care provider communities, and the **translation of research findings into practice** by health service delivery stakeholders. Through this scheme, the Foundation aims to facilitate the **implementation of cost-effective evidence-based innovation into health care delivery** to improve outcomes and the experience of health care workers.

The HCF Research Foundation notes the existence of a wealth of health services research providing a compelling evidence-base for improved health care service delivery within Australia, including research funded by the Foundation (see <https://www.hcf.com.au/about-us/hcf-foundation/hcf-foundation-grants> for details).

Funding through the TRG scheme is available to health care providers to implement and evaluate evidence-based innovation into practice to improve outcomes.

The 2023 TRG round is calling for applications specifically addressing the topic of **“optimising the healthcare workforce to improve patient outcomes and experience”**. This topic aims to facilitate implementation of innovative solutions for addressing critical issues in the healthcare workforce across urban and rural/regional settings and includes (but is not limited to) resourcing, skills utilisation, telehealth and remote review models, and novel models of care with the aim of improving patient outcomes and the patient experience. The Foundation also welcomes applications addressing the wellbeing, mental health and resilience of the healthcare workforce.

Successful applications will incorporate both translation research (i.e. implementation research, examining how to more effectively apply best practice models) and evaluation of the outcomes of the changes that are implemented. **Significant support from health care providers for these projects is expected, in the form of cash support and/or in-kind contributions.**

There is a limited amount of funding available each year. Applicants are advised that while there is no cap on the amount of funding that they can apply for, applicants must clearly articulate the value of their project, and costing must be realistic.

The TRG scheme has a two-stage application process. The first stage requires applicants to submit an expression of interest (EOI), with the second stage being a full application. The Foundation will conduct an initial review of EOIs, with a selection invited to prepare and

submit full applications. The full application form will be emailed directly to the project lead specified in the submitted EOI form on the date applications open.

3. ELIGIBILITY

In the 2023 TRG round, health care providers can apply for funding to implement evidence-based change into practice and evaluate the results of that change with regard to patient outcomes, costs and other relevant metrics. Applicant health care providers must be able to self-identify areas where performance, relative to peers is sub-optimal (i.e. using benchmarking data) and propose an appropriate solution to improve safety and quality, effectiveness and patient outcomes.

In order to be eligible for funding within the TRG scheme, research projects must address both implementation (research into the effective implementation of the new model), and evaluation (the outcomes of the implemented approach).

Applications must provide an implementation plan for their specific context that includes research in to the effectiveness of the implementation plan. Applications must also describe the intended approach to evaluate the outcomes of the implemented approach.

As the intent of this scheme is to catalyse permanent change, applications must provide a plan for sustained/permanent implementation (provided the outcomes evaluation is positive).

Health care providers should note that the application and review process would be conducted with appropriate confidentiality by HCF Research Foundation, and that HCF Research Foundation grant processes are independent of HCF.

A. KEY DATES

The 2023 round of the HCF Translational Research Grants scheme will proceed according to the below timetable. The timetable is subject to change without notice, with the exception of the closing date for applications. Please note that in order to complete a full application, an Expression of Interest must be submitted.

PHASE	DATE
EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST OPEN	Late September 2023
EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST DUE	23 October 2023 (5pm AEDT)
FIRST REVIEW PERIOD	November 2023
APPLICATIONS OPEN	27 November 2023
APPLICATIONS CLOSE	29 January 2024 (5pm AEDT)
SECOND REVIEW PERIOD	February 2024
BOARD DECISION	April 2024
OUTCOMES COMMUNICATED TO APPLICANTS	April 2024
FUNDING START DATE	From 1 May 2024

The funding start date is flexible and successful applicants would be able to choose a start date within 12 months of 1 May 2024. Nevertheless, applicant health care providers must be able to demonstrate in their application that their project is feasible in these conditions.

B. ADMINISTERING INSTITUTION

A single reputable research institution must be nominated as the Administering Institution. Typically, these are a university, hospital or health district – if your proposed Administering Institution is not one of the above please contact us PRIOR to submitting an application to confirm eligibility as an Administering Institution. The Administering Institution must have in place policies and procedures for the management of research funds, management of intellectual property, and for the conduct of research consistent with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

The Administering Institution must review the Funding Agreement (<https://www.hcf.com.au/about-us/hcf-foundation/hcf-foundation-applications>) prior to submission of any application and agree to signing the terms of the agreement should funding be awarded.

There is a limit of three applications per Administering Institution. Please note there is no limit on the number of EOIs submitted per institution. Should more than three EOIs for an institution be received, HCF Research Foundation will contact the institution to ensure only 3 full applications are submitted.

C. PROJECT LEAD AND INVESTIGATOR TEAM

Each application must have a single nominated project lead who is the primary individual responsible for delivering the program of research should it be funded. There is no limit on the number of applications an individual may be listed as a project lead and/or co-investigator.

Collectively, the team must show that they are ideally positioned and have the requisite skills to implement and evaluate the proposed changes within their institution.

Awarded grants are generally not transferable to an alternative project lead, nor are they transferable to an alternative administering institution based outside of Australia.

A maximum of 5 Co-Investigators can be included in any application. Co-Investigators are those key individuals involved in the research application whose participation is required for successful completion of the project. Associate Investigators may also be listed in the application. It is appropriate for individuals with minor supporting roles and input in the research program to be listed as Associate Investigators. The roles of each Co-Investigator and Associate Investigator should be adequately described and justified.

D. BUDGETS

All items in the requested budget must be directly related to the project and fully justified. Failure to sufficiently justify items may result in a reduced offer of funding. Please note that funding for clinical services will not be provided. Submitted budgets should be divided into three components – salaries, direct research costs and translation costs. The below guide is not exhaustive, and all funding is at the discretion of the HCF Research Foundation Board.

1. Salaries:

- HCF Research Foundation will only support salaries for individuals for their time committed to the project. For example, an investigator requesting salary who is only working 0.6 FTE on the project will only be eligible for 0.6 of their per annum salary. We do not fund business as usual staff salaries providing in or out of hospital services, or other healthcare services.
- Additional salary on-cost support is limited to 20%.
- We do not fund salaries for staff based outside Australia.
- For administrative and technical support staff hourly rates of pay are to be determined from the relevant Award Rates.

2. Direct Research costs:

- **Equipment, materials and consumables:** The purchase of essential items and equipment specifically required for the project is allowed if such items are normally not available.
- **Research services:** Research services directly required for the successful conduct of the project are permitted. Budgets must include information of the facility to be used, rates per hour, and number of hours required. Reasonable expenses for computer services, or purchase/licensing of software is also permitted.
- **Travel:** Funds for travel will only be considered when they form an integral part of the project.
- **Participant recruitment:** costs for participant recruitment may be included where there is a justifiable need.
- **Software development:** Software development costs will not be funded.

3. Research Translation costs:

It is important to comprehensively explain and itemise the costs of translation activities. Translation costs may include:

- Publishing fees
- Peer engagement and training
- Consumer/patient education
- Government, funder, college, national body and other stakeholder engagement
- Clinical guidelines and/or policy change
- Media and promotions

HCF Research Foundation will not fund:

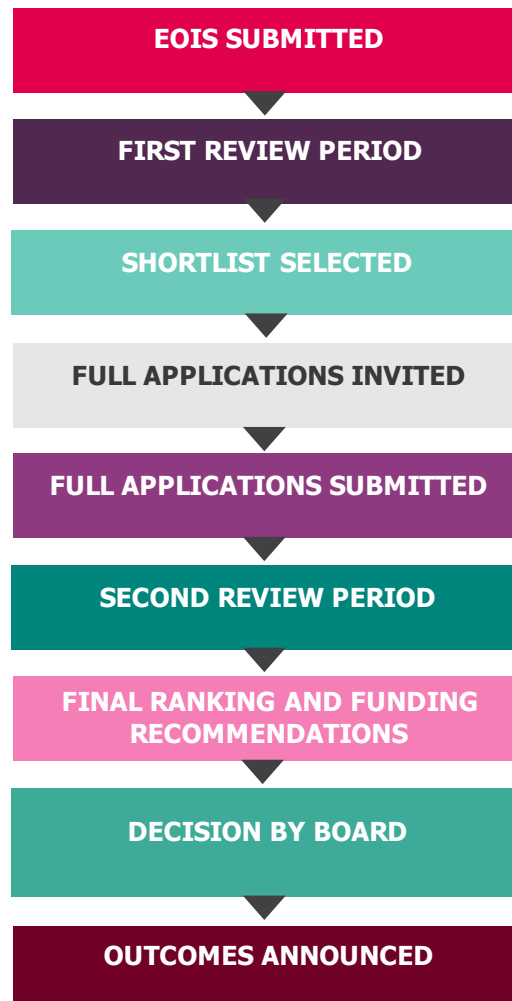
- Provision of clinical services
- Institutional overhead and administration costs (including office supplies)
- Research infrastructure
- Insurance costs
- Costs related to intellectual property
- Entertainment, hospitality and personal expenses (including subscriptions and professional membership fees)

Co-funding and in-kind support

Co-funding should be itemized and included so HCF Research Foundation can appropriately assess the value proposition of the investment. In-kind support that has been committed should also be included.

4. REVIEW PROCESS

The HCF Research Foundation review process is designed as shown below, however remains subject to change without notice. In the event of a significant change to the process HCF Research Foundation will use its best efforts to notify all affected parties.



The decisions of the HCF Research Foundation Board will be final. The HCF Research Foundation will ensure all applicants are made aware of their application outcome. No feedback will be provided regarding specific applications.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

All applications to HCF Research Foundation’s Translational Research Grants scheme are to be assessed against the four Assessment Criteria described below and in detail in the Appendix. HCF Research Foundation will generate a single overall score for each application based on the weighted scores for each of the criteria from the reviewers. This overall score will be used to rank applications.

i. The case for change

Applicants must clearly articulate the foundation of the project; the area of need and what evidence-based innovative practices will be introduced to address the issue. The Background section should clearly state the rationale for the project, and why this area is a priority for change. The proposed practice change must be described in detail, and the case must be made for the new approach to address the area of need.

ii. Implementation

All applications must detail the implementation plan, along with key milestones. Applicants should also identify any risks and barriers to successful implementation, and outline mitigation strategies. The implementation plan should intend for the sustainable and permanent implementation of the evidence-based approach.

iii. Evaluation

The application should clearly describe what is being measured for the evaluation, as well as the study end-points. Applicants should be clear about the study methodology and list all metrics that will be measured and state where data measurements will come from. The application **must** include detail on the statistical methods to be employed during the study.

iv. Team and stakeholders

Applicants will need to provide sufficient information for each investigator and justify their selection as part of the research team. The team should collectively display the requisite strength, experience and diversity to achieve the project’s aims. Additionally, all key stakeholders and partners that will be impacted by, or able to assist with, the research project should be identified.

5. EXPECTATIONS IF SUCCESSFULLY FUNDED

Following submission of their applications, applicants must notify HCF Research Foundation if any additional or overlapping funding is obtained from another source (or sources) for delivering the research project described in their application. Applicants should also notify HCF Research Foundation if there are any significant and material changes to circumstances that affect their ability to complete the research as described in their application.

Applicants should also be aware of HCF Research Foundation's expectations, should they be awarded funding. HCF Research Foundation will strive where possible to minimize the administrative and logistical burden on funded applicants, however this must be balanced with the needs of HCF Research Foundation.

A) FUNDING AGREEMENT

On submission, applicants acknowledge that they and their administering institution have had the funding agreement reviewed and that the funding agreement can be signed with no amendments. Successful applicants may request to defer the start date for a period of no more than 12 months.

Project Leads may request variations to the executed funding agreement during the project due to changes in circumstance. This may include changes to the Co-Investigator team, or changes to the budget allocation (note that the HCF Research Foundation will not increase the overall amount of funding, however will consider re-purposing the funding to increase the value of the research investment).

B) GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS (ETHICS, INSURANCE ETC.)

The HCF Research Foundation will not provide any funds until such time as the Foundation is assured that all ethics approvals and other governance approvals have been granted, for the research to proceed. Additionally, the Foundation must be assured that the administering institution has all the appropriate insurance and relevant policies in place prior to the provision of funding.

C) COMMUNICATIONS (CONFIDENTIALITY, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT, MEDIA ETC.)

All publications, including journal articles, conference presentations and media releases that emerge from awarded grants must acknowledge the support of the HCF Research Foundation. The HCF Research Foundation requests all non-academic articles and media releases be provided to the Foundation for review and approval prior to public release.

HCF Research Foundation may also request funded researchers make themselves available to present their work at conferences and webinars from time to time, and for public communications.

D) REPORTING

Project Leads of funded awards will be required to submit progress reports (including financial reports) at regular intervals through the funding period. The format of these reports is standard and available on the HCF Research Foundation website. Payment of grant installments by the HCF Research Foundation will be conditional on receipt and approval of progress reports. Unsatisfactory reports, or failure to submit reports may result in the suspension of funding by the HCF Research Foundation.

E) PEER REVIEW PARTICIPATION

In order to deliver a fair review process and ensure that the very highest quality research projects are identified for funding the HCF Research Foundation relies on the support of the research community through taking part in peer review. All named Investigators on submitted applications are strongly encouraged to take part in peer review, and all named investigators on successfully funded grants are expected to take part in the HCF Research Foundation's peer review through the duration of the grant.

6. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST INSTRUCTIONS

Applicants should make sure their EOI is easy to read and understand. The purpose of this form is to provide brief details of the proposed research, yet enough information to ensure it meets the topic brief and the guidelines and meets the Foundation's expectations in terms of significance and impact before it progresses to full application stage.

To be invited to submit a full application, EOIs must make a compelling case for funding. Key factors considered during the review of EOIs are:

- The proposed intervention is backed by relevant evidence;
- The intervention directly addresses an issue of scale and significance; and
- Post-implementation there will be a significant (measurable) and material impact on relevant outcomes.

Information within the EOI is not considered strictly binding, and applicants may change details of the project (for e.g. intervention site(s), co-investigators). However, significant changes to the project should be discussed with the Foundation prior to submission of the full application as the changes may result in the project no longer meeting eligibility requirements.

Applicants need only provide their EOI in electronic form, via email with a single PDF attachment to hcffoundation@hcf.com.au

FORMAT		FILE NAME	FILE NAME EXAMPLE
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM	PDF	PISurnameFirstname_EOI	SmithJohn_EOI.pdf

Note: The email subject for electronic submission should be the same as the grant EOI file name.

The EOI email must be received in the HCF Research Foundation email inbox by **5.00pm AEDT on 23th October 2023**. All applicants are encouraged to submit their EOI well in advance of the deadline. The HCF Research Foundation will confirm the successful receipt of your EOI submission by return email as soon as practical.

7. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Lead investigators on EOIs will be sent the application form over email at the commencement of the application phase. Applicants should make sure their applications are easy to read and understand. Use plain language, do not use acronyms, jargon or buzz-words. Use headings, bold, underline, bullets to make the text readable and easy on the eye. Avoid large blocks of text without paragraph breaks.

Applicants need only provide their application in electronic form, via email with a single PDF attachment to hcffoundation@hcf.com.au

FORMAT		FILE NAME	FILE NAME EXAMPLE
APPLICATION FORM (AND APPENDED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS)	PDF	PISurnameFirstname_Application	SmithJohn_Application.pdf

Note: The email subject for electronic submission should be the same as the grant application file name.

The PDF file should contain all the information required to evaluate the application. Cover letters will not be taken into consideration.

The application email must be received in the HCF Research Foundation email inbox by **5.00pm AEDT on 29th January 2024**. All applicants are encouraged to submit their applications well in advance of the deadline. The HCF Research Foundation will confirm the successful receipt of your submission by return email as soon as practical. Once submitted the application is considered final, and no changes or resubmissions will be permitted.

8. CONTACT HCF RESEARCH FOUNDATION

For any questions relating to the Translational Research Grants application process please contact hcffoundation@hcf.com.au

1 APPENDIX A – APPLICATION ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

CRITERIA	EXCELLENT (5)	GOOD (4)	ACCEPTABLE (3)	BELOW STANDARD (2)	POOR (1)
CASE FOR CHANGE Weighting 25%	Well-founded opportunity to significantly improve healthcare provision and outcomes. Identified practice change is highly innovative, described in detail and is ideally suited to address the area targeted for improved health care provision.	Good opportunity to improve outcomes. Practice change is quite innovative, well described and very likely to address area targeted for improvement.	Reasonably founded opportunity to improve outcomes. Practice change is innovative, adequately described and likely to address area targeted for improvement.	Somewhat justified opportunity to improve outcomes. Practice change is somewhat innovative, vaguely described and may address area targeted for improvement.	Poorly justified opportunity to improve outcomes. Practice change is not innovative, not well described and insufficiently aligned to area targeted for improvement.
IMPLEMENTATION Weighting 25%	Exceptional detailed and highly feasible implementation plan provided which will result in sustainable and permanent implementation of the described change in practice. Implementation plan takes into account the specific context; key risks and barriers identified, and logical mitigation strategies well described.	Detailed and feasible implementation plan provided. Implementation plan takes into account risks and barriers, and mitigation strategies described.	Reasonably detailed and likely feasible implementation plan provided. Implementation plan acknowledges risks and barriers, and partial mitigation strategies described.	Somewhat detailed and possibly feasible implementation plan provided. Implementation plan notes some risks and barriers, and mitigation strategies vaguely described.	Poorly detailed and likely unfeasible implementation plan provided. Implementation plan takes no account of risks and barriers, no mitigation strategies described.
EVALUATION Weighting 25%	Comprehensive evaluation plan and methodology incorporating pre- and post-implementation data and benchmark metrics, appropriate study end-point(s).	Reasonably comprehensive evaluation plan and methodology, incorporating mostly suitable data, metrics, and end-point(s).	Satisfactory evaluation plan and methodology, incorporating some suitable data, metrics, and end-point(s).	Evaluation plan and methodology has limitations, and incorporates few suitable data, metrics, and end-point(s).	Vague and limited evaluation plan and methodology, not incorporating suitable data, metrics, and end-point(s).
TEAM AND STAKEHOLDERS Weighting 25%	Team have exceptional expertise in all facets of project. Highly experienced and competent team with exceptional record and outcomes in areas relevant to the research. All relevant organisations engaged during research.	Team covers most aspects of the project. Experienced and solid team with very good evidence of previous research outcomes. Most relevant organisations considered during research.	Team has some expertise relevant to the project. Team has experience in some aspects of the project and moderate research outcomes. Some relevant organisations considered during research.	Team has limited expertise needed for the project. Team has limited experience relevant to the project with minor research outcomes. Most relevant organisations omitted from consideration during research.	Team has no relevant expertise. Team has limited evidence of successful research outcomes. No consideration of relevant organisations.