



## Key Characteristics of Ideas Grant Applications

Each year, Ideas Grant assessors are asked to provide NHMRC with advice on common characteristics they have noticed of high scoring and low scoring applications based on their own peer review experience. Below is a summary of key themes against the assessment criteria, and incorporates feedback from the 2019, 2020 and 2021 funding rounds. The advice is based on feedback provided by assessors through our annual Peer Reviewer Survey (post-round), and is not informed by overall scores.

### Characteristics of High Scoring Ideas Grant Applications

#### Clarity of responses to the Criteria

- Addressed all criteria clearly, followed applicant guidance correctly.
- Well written, easy to read, no errors.
- Clear, concise and well-written statements.
- Written for a general audience, avoided jargon and was easy to follow by reviewers who did not have expertise in the specific field of the application.
- The applications were clearly written for the Ideas Grant scheme, and did not read as re-purposed from other schemes.
- Clear identification and justification of assessment criteria
- Innovative, logical hypotheses backed up by strong rationales
- A new and exciting area of research.

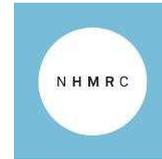
#### Research Quality

- Well-defined research project with logical and cohesive arguments and a rationale supporting the hypotheses
- Clear and well-considered research aims, questions and hypotheses which are solid, justifiable, testable, and ambitious while still remaining realistic. Research aims were linked to specific outcomes and matched the research methodology, predicted outcomes and project budget.
- A well-presented, clear, precise, thorough and coherent Research Plan which provides sufficient detail to allow peer reviewers to assess Research Quality while describing the research project in a way that is understandable to someone outside the relevant discipline(s).
- Research Plan anticipated particular questions or issues that peer reviewers might raise and addressed these.
- Applied robust, appropriate and feasible experimental approaches, research designs and statistical/measurement methods which were well-explained and clearly linked to the hypotheses.



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- Scientific and technical risks clearly identified and explained, with sufficient consideration given to risk management and mitigation.
- Well-defined timeline.
- Clear explanation of the roles of the team members to carry out the project aims.

### **Innovation and Creativity**

- Presented innovative and creative ideas, novel and important research questions, new approaches to problems and utilised new technologies and innovative methods.
- The innovations were outside traditional practice and had the potential to lead to ground-breaking discoveries and change paradigms and practices to improve health outcomes.
- The innovations were described clearly within the application, including through the use of category descriptors to separate out and distinguish the Innovation and Creativity statement from the Significance statement.
- Points of difference from current concepts, approaches, methodologies, technologies or interventions were clearly articulated and demonstrated innovation and creativity in the proposed research.
- Innovation and Creativity statements that felt tangible and rested on strong rationales.

### **Significance**

- The potential outcomes and impact are possibly transformative, with the potential to change or advance the field or result in a clear impact for the relevant community.
- The significance and impact of the research project were clearly described and explained but not overstated, including explicitly linking the proposed project to a bigger picture goal or body of work that could have implications well beyond the field of the initial project.
- There was a compelling case made for the fundamental or translational significance of the work with emphasis on why the proposed project was needed.
- Connections were made between the research project's rationale, research question/hypothesis, methodology and the significance of the planned research.
- Significance statement clearly distinguished from the Innovation and Creativity statement.
- The significance of the project is explicitly explained and highlighted.

### **Capability**

- Strong, collaborative and balanced applicant team with appropriate and complementary expertise, skills and/or connections to undertake the research project.
- There were clearly described roles for all team members, and all bases of the research project were covered by the team as a whole. Where particular Chief Investigators had less scientific leadership experience or lacked particular skills, sufficient support was provided by other members, including Assistant Investigators.
- Applications clearly outlined and demonstrated – not just stated - why the team had the leadership, skills, experience and expertise to perform the required work, and linked methodology and risk mitigation to team members where relevant.



- Applicant team had access to internationally competitive or world-leading resources.
- The project displays evidence of excellent capability to execute ambitious projects..

## Characteristics of Low Scoring Ideas Grant Applications

### Clarity of responses to the Criteria

- Poorly constructed or poorly written.
- Too technical or assumed knowledge.
- Either overly technical and dense or did not provide adequate detail.
- Did not follow the instructions provided in applicant guidance or adequately address criteria.
- The application was poorly prepared.
- Not aligned with the objectives of the scheme.
- Poor alignment between the research scope, the suggested innovation in approach and poorly conceived (i.e. unrealistic) budgets and justification.

### Research Quality

- Research projects which are poorly prepared, underdeveloped or which attempt to do too much.
- Research aims, questions and hypotheses are unclear, incoherent, not well-justified, unrealistic or not stated.
- Research aims not aligned with the proposed Research Plan, including the methodology, research questions or predicted outcomes.
- Inclusion of sequential research aims where subsequent aims are dependent on the outcome of previous aims.
- Weak or insufficient rationale.
- Methodologies which were not appropriate for the proposed experiments, or not described in sufficient detail.
- Failure to identify, mention or adequately discuss scientific and/or technical risks and strategies to address these.
- Research project not feasible within identified timeline.
- Lack of coherent planning of experiments that would answer the proposed research question.
- Focussing too much on significance and team capability in the proposal at the expense of proper description of the methodology of the proposal

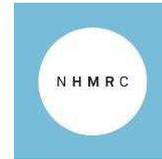
### Innovation and Creativity

- Focused on incremental advancement of previous or existing concepts, work or practices rather than on novel ideas.
- Failed to clearly or fully articulate the innovative and creative nature of the research project.
- Made overstated claims with regard to innovation, or incorrectly claimed particular existing approaches or ideas as being new.



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- Application displays a reliance on "gimmicks" rather than genuine innovation.

### **Significance**

- Failed to provide convincing or clear arguments as to the significance of the research project, including only providing limited text addressing the significance of the project.
- Made unrealistic or overstated claims regarding the significance of the research project.

### **Capability**

- Applicant team missing important expertise key to the research project.
- Roles and linkages of team members to specific project work, including reasons why particular researchers have been assigned specific roles, not adequately described or explained.
- Lack of information or evidence included in the application regarding the applicant team's skills, expertise and experience.
- Plans for sophisticated techniques without evidence of capability of the team to carry out those techniques.