



Consumer Involvement in Research Funded through the Medical Research Future Fund (August 2024)

The Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians by funding health and medical research that addresses current and emerging health needs, burden of disease, and gaps in translation and health outcomes.

The involvement of consumers is critical to the ongoing successful delivery of the MRFF. This is reflected in the [Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy and the related set of Priorities](#) for the MRFF.

The Department of Health and Aged Care (Department) works closely with stakeholders, including the [MRFF Consumer Reference Panel](#), to strengthen consumer involvement in MRFF-funded research and engage appropriately with diverse populations. The Department has drawn on their advice to implement changes to MRFF application and assessment processes. This document explains what the changes are and what they mean.

How does the MRFF support consumer involvement?

Consumer involvement in MRFF research is expected. The MRFF encourages researchers to involve consumers at all stages of their proposed research, including its prioritisation, design, conduct, the dissemination of results (including to the community), and its translation and evaluation.

In 2022, the MRFF refreshed its assessment criteria to include more explicit expectations for consumer involvement in MRFF applications, and what applicants must demonstrate against each criterion to be assessed as “fundable”. A resource explaining this change can be found [here](#).

Since then, the MRFF has continued to consult with stakeholders, including the MRFF Consumer Reference Panel, on further mechanisms to recognise the valuable perspectives that Australians with lived experience as patients, clients, potential patients, users of health services, and/or providers of support as carers, family or community members bring to MRFF-funded research.

In March 2023, the Minister for Health and Aged Care endorsed the [Principles for Consumer Involvement in Research Funded by the MRFF](#) (Principles), which were

developed by the MRFF Consumer Reference Panel. The Principles set out the MRFF Consumer Reference Panel's advice on best practice, as well as implementation guidance, for consumer involvement in research.

The Department also piloted the inclusion of a Consumer Involvement Statement for applications to the 2023 Consumer-Led Research grant opportunity, as a means of capturing information on consumer involvement into a single document for assessment against all four MRFF assessment criteria.

What else is the MRFF doing to support consumer involvement?

Following the successful pilot of the Consumer Involvement Statement, the Department is implementing the following changes across all MRFF grant opportunities. These changes will come into effect progressively from mid-2024 onwards.

Inclusion of a Consumer Involvement Statement

All applicants to MRFF grant opportunities will be required to provide a Consumer Involvement Statement. The Consumer Involvement Statement should explain how the applicants propose to involve consumers at all stages of the proposed research, including its prioritisation, design, conduct, dissemination, translation and evaluation, with reference to the [Principles](#).

The MRFF grant opportunity guidelines will provide detailed instructions on how to prepare Consumer Involvement Statements.

Supporting the costs of consumer involvement

Applicants can request funding to support consumer involvement activities where they directly support the achievement of project outcomes. The form and level of consumer involvement should be appropriate to the project and to the cohort of consumers, noting that this may differ from project to project.

The MRFF grant opportunity guidelines will provide detailed guidance for applicants and assessors on allowable expenses to support consumer involvement, consulting with consumers and appropriately remunerating consumers for their time and contribution to MRFF-funded research.

Assessment of research team capacity and capability

The Department has carefully considered feedback on the diverse and meaningful contributions that consumers make to MRFF-funded research, and how these contributions can be appropriately recognised in the assessment of research team capacity and capability.

To support research teams with diverse career paths to secure MRFF funding, elements of academic track record (e.g. publications, grants held, conference invitations) will not inform the assessment of Criterion 3: Capacity, Capability and Resources to Deliver the Project.

Research team capacity and capability will be determined based on the extent to which the applicants can demonstrate they have used their skills, knowledge and/or experience to contribute to meaningful advances in health outcomes, practice and/or policy relevant to the proposed research.

Further information and resources

Applicants, including consumers, are encouraged to refer to the [Principles](#) for advice and examples on how to promote and strengthen consumer involvement in MRFF-funded research.

Applicants, RAOs and assessors are also encouraged to carefully review MRFF grant opportunity guidelines for detailed guidance on how to address the requirements for consumer involvement in a Consumer Involvement Statement, and eligible expenditure to support the reasonable costs of supporting consumer involvement in research.

The Department will continue to provide guidance and support to grant assessment committee members on how to consider research team capacity and capability and consumer involvement in MRFF research when assessing applications.

Consumers interested in applying for MRFF funding through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) can also access detailed guidance on how to navigate NHMRC's online grants management system, Sapphire, at [Applying for MRFF Funding: Guidance for Consumers \(August 2024\)](#).

For MRFF grant opportunities administered through the Business Grants Hub, a 'sample application form' that provides guidance on how to navigate the online grants management system can be found on business.gov.au each time a new grant opportunity is published.