**Postdoctoral Fellowships** **– Guidelines and Application Form 2024-2026**

**Closing date: Thursday 31st August 2023 at 6:00 pm AEST**

Late or incomplete application forms will not be accepted.

Please read these instructions carefully before completing the application form.

1. **Introduction**
	1. The MNDRA Postdoctoral Fellowships are directed towards postdoctoral researchers with a track record in MND or areas related to MND, or who can bring new skills and knowledge into Australian MND research.
	2. The fellowships aim to encourage young researchers to focus their interest on [classical forms of MND](https://www.mndaustralia.org.au/getattachment/80b04404-6103-4d3a-81ce-806438ffd3b7/Definition-of-MND-for-website.pdf?lang=en-AU). Classical MND includes amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and bulbar palsies (progressive bulbar palsy and pseudobulbar palsy), progressive muscular atrophy (PMA) and primary lateral sclerosis (PLS). Research investigating other forms of MND should demonstrate a potential benefit to the classical forms of MND.
	3. MNDRA Postdoctoral Fellowships provide a full-time salary of $100,000 p.a. for three years plus a one off research expense payment of $50,000 which will be made along with the first grant payment.
	4. A minimum of 0.7FTE commitment to the Fellowship is required. The Fellowship salary will be paid pro-rata according to the FTE. The one-off $50,000 research expense payment will be paid in full regardless of FTE
2. **Key eligibility criteria**
	1. The applicant should have a track record in MND research or in areas related or applicable to MND.
	2. The applicant must be one of;
		1. An Australian citizen;
		2. Have permanent resident status;
		3. Be a New Zealand citizen with Australian work rights;
		4. A foreign researcher with a work visa extending for a minimum of 12-months after the grant concludes (this is to maximise the opportunity to realise grant outcomes).
	3. The applicant must be based in Australia for the duration of the grant.
	4. At 31st August 2023 applicants must have no more than **five** years research experience from the date their doctoral thesis was passed. Career disruptions can be taken into account when calculating the five-year eligibility as outlined in the [MND Research Australia Relative to Opportunity Guidelines.](https://www.mndaustralia.org.au/getattachment/102adb27-a05a-4ab8-83de-b24a3aa7a6a4/MNDRA-Grant-Review-Criteria-and-Relative-to-Opportunity-2022-Final.docx)
	5. Applicants who will submit their completed doctoral thesis before the end of 2023 will be considered but the Fellowship cannot be taken up by the applicant until the thesis has been passed.
3. **Application**
	1. **Application process**
		1. **Applications will only be accepted through** [NHMRC administering institutions](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/manage-your-funding/nhmrcs-administering-institutions). **Applications should be submitted by the institution research office**. Applications submitted by the applicant will not be accepted.
		2. Applicants must use the relevant application form on the MNDRA website.
		3. All applications will be assessed by the [MNDRA Research Committee](https://www.mndaustralia.org.au/research/our-research/about-mnd-research-australia) and external reviewers against the selection criteria as outlined in these guidelines. Applicants must meet all of the eligibility criteria. Applicants who fail to meet any one of the eligibility criteria will be deemed to be ineligible.
		4. The MNDRA Research Committee is responsible for ranking the applications and making their recommendation for funding approval to the Board of MND Australia.
	2. **Applications close at 6:00pm AEST Thursday 31st August 2023.**
		1. Proposals are to be sent to Dr Gethin Thomas, Executive Director Research by email to research@mndaustralia.org.au.
		2. All sections of the application, including the cover sheet, must be saved and forwarded as a single PDF document.
		3. Font must be Arial and at least 11 pt.
	3. **Incomplete or misleading information**
		1. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that applications are complete and accurate. If an application is incomplete or inaccuracies are identified, MNDRA will exclude it from further consideration.
		2. If any application is found to have been intentionally completed (or failed to be completed) in such a way as to mislead MNDRA, or is otherwise false or misleading in any material respect, the applicant will be disqualified from the Fellowship.
4. **Proposal**
	1. Applications should include the following;
		1. **Aims and hypotheses** (maximum 1 page)
			1. List the specific aims and potential significance of the project. The aims of the research must be clear to the reviewers and relevant to the development of an understanding of the causes, treatments, cures or care of classical MND.
			2. State clearly which hypotheses are to be tested.
		2. **Significance** (maximum 1 page)
			1. What is innovative about the proposed research plan?
			2. What is the potential to significantly contribute to the knowledge base around the following research priorities?

**Advance MND research to understand its causes:** Research that improves knowledge of the underlying disease mechanisms causing MND and the development of representative laboratory models.

**Foster treatment development and clinical trials:** Research that aims to lead to new treatments, including research that is linked to or involves conducting clinical trials.

**Enhance clinical and healthcare research and the evidence-base for clinical and healthcare practice:** Clinical and healthcare research to promote innovation and best practice to improve quality of life for people living with MND and their families and carers.

A clear vision of how this research can be utilised and/or a path to translation is required.

The potential benefit and relevance of the research to the MND community should be very clearly delineated.

* + 1. **Background** (maximum 2 pages)
		2. **Research plan** (maximum 3 pages)

Adetailed research plan for a full-time three-year project (which will be relevant to the cause, treatment, cure or care of [classical forms of MND](https://www.mndaustralia.org.au/getattachment/80b04404-6103-4d3a-81ce-806438ffd3b7/Definition-of-MND-for-website.pdf?lang=en-AU)).

Other sources of funding to support the project, either already received or forthcoming, must be disclosed. The additional benefits of the MNDRA funding must be clearly articulated and need for the MNDRA funding justified.

* + 1. **Reference list** (maximum 2 pages)
		2. **Justification for the requested funding for the research expenses component (maximum $50,000)** (maximum 1 page)**.**

The budget must be directed to the aims of the project.

* + - 1. Budget items up to $50,000 can include:
				1. Direct research costs (reagents and consumables)
				2. Attendance at the International Symposium on ALS/MND if being held face-to-face (max. $4,000).
			2. Budget items cannot include:
				1. Salaries
				2. Attendance at meetings (other than 4.1.6.1.2 above)
				3. Travel expenses (other than 4.1.6.1.2 above)
				4. Equipment (except small items included in 4.1.6.1.1 above)
				5. Indirect or overhead costs.
		1. **Suitability of the candidate for the Fellowship** (maximum 1 page)
		2. **Curriculum vitae** (max 2 pages).

This list should not include publications 'in preparation' or 'submitted'.

* + 1. **Referees**

Provide the names of three academic referees for the principal applicant who must provide reports (sent to Dr Gethin Thomas at research@mndaustralia.org.au) before the deadline. Referee reports should address the strengths of the candidate and application in regards to the scoring criteria: 1) Research Quality; 2) Innovation and creativity; 3) Significance and 4) Capability. Further information on these criteria is available on the MNDRA website.

* + 1. **Details of institution where the work will be carried out**
			1. State in which department and which institution this project will primarily be carried out.
			2. A covering letter is required from the sponsoring institution confirming that the required facilities and support will be provided for the project.
		2. **Completed cover sheet**
			1. Applicants must complete all sections of the cover sheet as part of the application form.
1. **Review process**
	1. Applications will be reviewed by a minimum of three independent reviewers as part of a competitive, peer review process.
	2. Applications will be scored according to 1) Research Quality; 2) Innovation and creativity; 3) Significance and 4) Capability. Further information on these criteria is available on the MNDRA website.
	3. Funding decisions will be made by the MNDRA Research Committee at a Grants Allocation Meeting in late 2022. Successful applicants will be notified after this meeting.
	4. The decision of the Research Committee is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
2. **Commencement of the Postdoctoral Fellowship**
	1. Successful applicants must commence their Postdoctoral Fellowship before 30th June 2024 or the grant will lapse.
	2. The Fellowship must be completed within 48 months from the date of commencement.
	3. **Payment and reporting**
		1. A full-time salary will be funded at $100,000 per year for up to three years. If a part-time fellowship is agreed to, the salary will be paid pro-rata.
		2. The grant will commence with the first payment at the beginning of 2024 on signing a contract with MNDRA.
		3. The Research Expense component will be paid in the first instalment.
		4. Six-monthly payments will be made following receipt of a satisfactory progress report and an annual financial report.
		5. Where a recipient fails to submit satisfactory reports as required, MNDRA may determine that funds have not been used in accordance with conditions applicable to the Fellowship and the grant may be terminated.
		6. If the studies requiring the research expenses are not undertaken, MNDRA reserves the right to request return of those funds.
		7. A detailed final report is required at the end of the funding period.
		8. Lay reports may be included on MNDRA’s website and newsletters to members, patients, carers, the MND Associations and donors.
	4. **Alterations to the Postdoctoral Fellowship**
		1. Fellows must adhere to the approved fellowship project.
		2. Any proposed alterations should be submitted in advance for approval by the MNDRA Research Committee.
		3. MNDRA must be notified immediately if circumstances change during the tenure of a Fellowship, particularly when the ability of the fellow to undertake the roles and responsibilities of the fellowship may be affected by the change in circumstances. MNDRA retains the right to review a Fellowship in light of these changes and reserves the right to terminate a Fellowship should this be deemed appropriate.
	5. **Publications, presentations and acknowledgements**
		1. The successful applicant will be expected to publish their findings in an appropriate scientific or professional journal.
		2. Publications and presentations must acknowledge MNDRA and the name of the Fellowship.
3. **Privacy of individuals/ confidentiality**
	1. All personal information provided in the application and assessment details will be kept by MNDRA and only be used for the purposes of administering this application, and if successful, the Fellowship.
	2. Applicant’s personal information will be disclosed to reviewers as noted above.
	3. Some details of successful applications will be published on the MNDRA website, including name, location, project title and a brief description of the project.
	4. Information contained in applications will be regarded as confidential except as stated in 7.1-7.3 above.

**APPLICATION COVER SHEET – POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP 2024 - 2026**

Please complete this cover sheet and submit with your application for funding for a postdoctoral Fellowship before 6 pm AEST on Thursday 31st August 2023 to Dr Gethin Thomas, Executive Director Research at research@mndaustralia.org.au

Applications should not be submitted by researchers who will be unable to provide a financial acquittal before 30th June 2024 for previously funded projects.

**Please read the application guidelines before completing your application**.

**APPLICATION CHECK LIST**

Please check the three boxes below with an X.

1.) I have read and understood the application guidelines [ ]

2.) I comply with the residency/citizenship/visa requirements [ ]

3.) Application has been saved as a single PDF document which includes: [ ]

* Cover sheet
* Aims and hypotheses
* Background
* Research plan
* Significance
* Reference list
* Budget
* Suitability of the candidate for the Fellowship
* Curriculum vitae
* Referees
* Name and covering letter from the institution where the work will be carried out.

**APPLICATION COVER SHEET – POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP 2024 - 2026**

**APPLICATION DETAILS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Name and qualifications of applicant |  |
| 2 | Date PhD thesis was passed(or submission date of doctoral thesis) |  |
| 3 | Email address of applicant |  |
| 4 | Mobile phone number of applicant |  |
| 5 | Project title |   |
| 6 | Sponsoring investigator |   |
| 7 | Sponsoring institution |   |
| 8 | Department (if applicable) |   |
| 9 | Name, email address and phone number of administrator lodging the application |  |
| 10 | Academic referees (name and affiliation) | (i) |  |
| (ii) |  |
| (iii) |  |
| 11 | Mark one box (or **no more than two** boxes) in the grid below that most closely describes the category of your project |
|  | Project category  |  |
| genetics |   |
| genomics |   |
| proteomics |   |
| cell biology |   |
| clinical measurement |   |
| metabolism |   |
| immunology |   |
| environment |   |
| epidemiology |   |
| health care |   |
| social research |   |
| other (specify) |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 12 | Check one box with an X to select the research priority that has the greatest relevance for your project |  |
| 1) | **Advance MND research to understand its causes** |  |
|  | Research that improves knowledge of the underlying disease mechanisms causing MND and the development of representative laboratory models. |[ ]
| 2) | **Foster the drug development process and clinical trials** |  |
|  | Research that aims to lead to new treatments. Research that is linked to or involves conducting clinical trials. |[ ]
| 3) | **Enhance clinical and healthcare research and the evidence-base for clinical and healthcare practice** |  |
|  | Clinical and healthcare research to promote innovation and best practice to improve quality of life for people living with MND and their families and carers. |[ ]

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 13 | **Lay Abstract** (100 words)Briefly describe, in clear, simple lay terms the general public will easily understand, the overall aims, methods and expected outcomes of your project. It is also critical to explain how the research might lead to benefit for people with MND. Do not include a definition of MND as this is readily available. |
| 14 | **Social media**(a) Proposed tweet should your application be successful (280 characters max) |

**APPLICATION FORM - POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP (2024 – 2026)**

**1. Aims and hypotheses (maximum one page)**

**2. Significance (maximum 1 page)**

1. What is innovative about the proposed research plan?
2. What is the potential to significantly contribute to the knowledge base around the causes, treatments, cure or care for MND? A clear vision of how this research can be utilised and/or a path to translation is required.
3. The potential benefit and relevance of the research to the MND community should be very clearly delineated.

**3. Background (maximum 2 pages)**

**4. Research plan (maximum 3 pages)**

Other sources of funding to support the project, either already received or forthcoming, must be disclosed. The additional benefits of the MNDRA funding must be clearly articulated and need for the MNDRA funding justified.

**5. Reference list (maximum two pages)**

1. **Budget and justification (one page)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |   | BUDGET ITEMS | $ |  |
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|  | 10 |  |  |  |
|  | **Total** | Not to exceed $50,000 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Expand table if needed**

**Justification;**

**7. Suitability of the candidate for the Fellowship (maximum one page)**

**8. Curriculum vitae (max 2 pages)**

**9. Referees**

**10. Covering letter from institution**