**Innovator Grants** **- Guidelines and Application Form for funding commencing 2025**

**Closing date: Monday 2nd September 2024, 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**

MND Research Australia (MNDRA) funds Innovator Grants to seed innovative projects.

MNDRA will provide support for innovator grants in three key strategic priority areas:

* 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 treatment development and clinical trials:** Research that aims to lead to new treatments, including 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.

Each of these research priorities are vital and equal components of the MND research pipeline.

1. **Objectives of the Innovator Grants**
   1. MNDRA’s Innovator Grants support research that aims to answer ***new research questions or new aspects of research***. They are not intended to act as a funding stream to continue the same projects previously supported by MNDRA, support minor iterative advances, or undertake minor variations of findings already established in other models or disease areas.
   2. The potential benefit and relevance of the research to the MND community should be very clearly delineated.
   3. The research focus should be directed towards [classical forms of MND](https://www.mndaustralia.org.au/getattachment/57036d08-646e-4468-969b-4db22a4f7c0e/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 clearly demonstrate a potential benefit to the classical forms of MND.
   4. MNDRA Innovator Grants are offered to a maximum value of $100,000 for a twelve-month project. Projects can be for shorter time periods and smaller budgets but must be feasible in the proposed time period with the requested resources.
2. **Application**
   1. **Key eligibility criteria**
      1. The applicant should have a track record in health and medical research.
      2. Applicants holding an MNDRA Postdoctoral Fellowship are not eligible to apply for an Innovator Grant in the first year of their fellowship.
      3. Applicants who have held two or more MNDRA grants since 2021 (inclusive) are not eligible to apply
      4. 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).
   2. **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 through the Research Office of their institution.** Applications submitted directly by the applicant will not be accepted.
      2. Applicants can be a Principal Investigator on only one Innovator Grant application and a Co-Investigator on no more than three Innovator Grant applications. The applicant must be the Principal Investigator.
      3. Applicants must use this application form.
      4. If the **applicant** has received previous funding from MNDRA **in the past five years**, outcome reports (no more than 1 page each) for each of the previously funded projects must be sent with the current application. These reports should consist of a brief synopsis of the project or fellowship funded. Importantly, **please detail the outcomes and impacts of the project and the relevance of these to the MND community**. This summary will be considered in the review of the application.
      5. If the applicant has received or will be receiving funding for a similar project from another funding body, the application must clearly define what additional benefit will result from the MNDRA funding.
      6. Researchers should not apply if they are unable to provide a financial acquittal for previously funded work before 30 June 2025.
      7. All applications will be assessed by the MNDRA Research Committee 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.
      8. The [MNDRA Research Committee](https://www.mndaustralia.org.au/research/our-research/about-mnd-research-australia) is responsible for assessing applications and making their recommendation for funding approval to the Board of MND Australia.
   3. **Applications close at 6:00pm AEST Monday 2nd September 2024**.
      1. Proposals are to be sent to Dr Gethin Thomas, Executive Director Research by email to [research@mndaustralia.org.au](mailto: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.
   4. **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 grant.
3. **Proposal**
   1. **Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators.** 
      1. They shouldbe identified by their role in the research.
      2. The Principal Investigator should provide a brief CV (no longer than two A4 pages). Publications included in the CV should be restricted to the past five years. This list should not include publications 'in preparation' or 'submitted'.
      3. Do not include CVs for Co-Investigators.
      4. If the **applicant** is named as an investigator on other proposals for MNDRA funding for 2025, list the project title and principal investigator for those other applications.
   2. **Aims and hypotheses** (maximum 1 page).
      1. The aims of the research must be clear to the reviewers and relevant to the development of an understanding of the causes, fostering the drug development process and clinical trials, or enhancing clinical and/or healthcare research and the evidence-base for clinical and/or healthcare practice.
      2. Hypotheses should be explained in terms of the current theories about the causes, treatments, cure or care of MND.
   3. **Background and research plan** (maximum 4 pages)
      1. The potential benefit and relevance of the research to the MND community should be very clearly delineated.
   4. **Power Calculation** - to support the validity of the study or, alternatively, justification is required for why a power calculation is not needed
   5. **Reference list** (maximum 2 pages)
   6. **Justification for the requested funding** (maximum 1 page).

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

* + 1. Budget items up to $100,000 can include:
       1. Salaries
       2. Direct research costs (reagents and consumables)
       3. Attendance at the International Symposium on ALS/MND if being held face-to-face (max. $5,000).
    2. Budget items cannot include:
       1. Attendance at meetings (other than 4.6.1.3 above)
       2. Travel expenses (other than 4.6.1.3 above)
       3. Equipment (except small items included in 4.6.1.2 above)
       4. Indirect or overhead costs.
    3. **Other sources of funding** to support the project, either already received or forthcoming, **must be disclosed**. If other sources of funding are disclosed, the additional benefits of the MNDRA funding being requested must be clearly articulated and need for the MNDRA funding justified.
  1. **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 2024. 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 Innovator Grant from 1st January 2025**
   1. Successful applicants must commence their Innovator Grant no later than 30th June 2025 or the grant will lapse.
   2. A satisfactory final report and financial acquittal on previously funded grants must be received before commencement of the new Innovator Grant.
   3. **Payment and reporting**
      1. The grant will be paid in two equal amounts. The grant will commence with the first payment at the beginning of 2025 on signing a contract with MNDRA. The second payment will be made on receipt of a satisfactory six-month progress report.
      2. If the progress report is not concordant with the grant proposal, no further funds will be forthcoming. If the grantee wishes to change the emphasis of the study, that must be with prior approval of the MNDRA Research Committee.
      3. A final report and financial acquittal must be submitted on completion of the project.
      4. Lay reports may be included on MNDRA’s website and newsletters to members, patients, carers, the MND Associations and others who provide funds to MNDRA.
   4. **Alterations to the Innovator Grant**
      1. Grant-holders must adhere to the approved 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 the Innovator Grant, particularly if this affects the ability to undertake the project. MNDRA retains the right to review the grant in light of these changes and reserves the right to terminate the grant 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 grant.
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 Innovator Grant.
   2. The 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.

**APPLICATION COVER SHEET – INNOVATOR GRANT for grants commencing 2025**

Please complete this cover sheet and submit with your application for funding before 6 pm AEST on Monday 2nd September 2024 to Dr Gethin Thomas at research@mndaustralia.org.au

Applications should not be submitted by researchers who will be unable to provide a financial acquittal before 30th June 2025 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
* Significance
* Background and Research Plan
* Power calculation
* Reference list
* Budget
* Other sources of funding to support the project
* Other MNDRA applications for 2025 in which applicant is named as a co-investigator
* Principal Investigator CV
* Reports on MNDRA projects funded in the past five years if the applicant was the principal investigator for the project

**APPLICATION DETAILS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Project title |  |
| **2** | Principal Investigator (PI) |  |
| **3** | Email address of PI |  |
| **4** | Mobile phone number of PI |  |
| **5** | Names and institutions of  Co-Investigators  Note: Associate Investigators should not be listed |  |
| **6** | Institution administering the grant |  |
| **7** | Name, email address and phone number of administrator lodging the application |  |
| **8** | Name and email address of research grant post award administrator |  |
| **9** | Total budget funds requested (maximum $100,000) | $ |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **10** | | Mark one box (or **no more than two** boxes) in the grid below to indicate the category that most closely describes your project. | | | |
| Project category | |  | |
| genetics | |  | |
| genomics | |  | |
| proteomics | |  | |
| cell biology | |  | |
| clinical measurement | |  | |
| metabolism | |  | |
| immunology | |  | |
| environment | |  | |
| epidemiology | |  | |
| health care | |  | |
| social research | |  | |
| other (specify) | |  | |
|  | |
| **11** | 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 treatment development process and clinical trials** | |  |
|  | Research that aims to lead to new treatments, including 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. | |  |

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**12. 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.

**13. Career Stage**

At what stage of your research career do you consider you are at?

Early-career researcher

Mid-career researcher

Senior Researcher

Please provide a brief (50 word max) justification for your selection

**14. Social media: Proposed tweet should your application be successful** (280 characters max)

**APPLICATION FORM – INNOVATOR GRANT COMMENCING 2025**

**Aims and Hypotheses (one page)**

**Significance (maximum one 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 people living with MND should be very clearly delineated.

**Background and Research Plan (maximum four pages)**

**Power Calculation (maximum eight lines per power calculation)**

This section ensures applicants have thought about whether their study is powered sufficiently (the sample size is adequate) to answer the question to be addressed.

For the stated sample size, key features of a power calculation are:

1. the hypothesis to be tested
2. the effect size to be detected
3. the statistical test that will be conducted, including whether it is one-sided or two-sided
4. the alpha level – significance threshold, which should take into account the number of tests conducted.

Alternatively, applicants may provide justification why a power calculation is not needed or not appropriate. For example, in novel paradigms effect sizes may not be known, and hence one goal of a pilot study is to generate data for estimation of approximate effect size that can inform the design of a subsequent study.

Sometimes, the constraints of the grant funds available mean that it is not possible to conduct a well-powered study; in this case applicants should provide justification for how this grant, if awarded, will contribute to a properly powered study in future.

**Reference List (maximum two pages)**

**Budget and Justification (one page)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | BUDGET ITEMS | $ |  |
|  | 1 |  |  |  |
|  | 2 |  |  |  |
|  | 3 |  |  |  |
|  | 4 |  |  |  |
|  | 5 |  |  |  |
|  | 6 |  |  |  |
|  | 7 |  |  |  |
|  | 8 |  |  |  |
|  | 9 |  |  |  |
|  | 10 |  |  |  |
|  | **Total** | Not to exceed $100,000 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Expand table if needed**

**Justification;**

**Other proposed sources of funding to support the project**

If this project or a similar project has received or has forthcoming funding from another source this **must be disclosed**. The additional benefits of the MNDRA funding must be clearly articulated and need for the MNDRA funding justified below.

**Other MNDRA applications for 2025 in which applicant is named as a Co-Investigator**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project Title:** | **Principal investigator/ applicant** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Principal investigator CV (maximum two pages including publications)**

**Reports on projects for which the applicant has received funding from MNDRA as PI in the past five years (maximum one page for each report)**

This report should consist of a brief synopsis of the project or fellowship funded (including project title, chief investigator, organisation, year of grant, $ amount received). Importantly, please detail the outcomes and impacts of the project and the relevance of these to the MND community. This summary will be considered in the review of the application.