DCRC
Dementia Centre for
Research Collaboration

A Guide to Reviewing Research Grant Applications

Introduction

Every year, researchers are invited to submit applications for research grants, by funders of dementia research such as the Dementia Australia Research Foundation. Researchers must comply with certain eligibility criteria and submit a research proposal and an application form by a stated closing date.

As a Lived Experience Expert, you may be asked to review a grant application.

This guide will explain the grant assessment process, show you which areas you might be asked to review and things to consider when reviewing an application.

Grant Application Assessment Process

The assessment process involves the following stages:

1. Eligibility check

    All applications are checked to ensure that they comply with the eligibility criteria and conditions of the award.

2. Initial Screening of applications

    Members of the Scientific Panel screen all eligible applications to identify those which are unlikely to receive an award due to weakness in one or more of the assessment criteria. Applications that have been ranked to be in the lower half, by at least two members of the Scientific Panel, will be removed from the application process.

3. External review (if required)

    Applications are assessed by the Scientific Panel; expert external reviewers may also be approached for selected comment and/or rating against the assessment criteria.

4. Final review and ranking by members of the Scientific Panel

    Members of the Scientific Panel, **including members with dementia and carers**, will consider and rank all the remaining applications for an award after reviewing the feedback from external reviewers. Awards are allocated to applicants in order of ranking within each category. Applicants whose projects are considered fundable but are not

allocated one of the available awards are placed on a reserve list and may be offered an award if an applicant with a higher-ranked project turns down the award.

5. Notification of successful and unsuccessful applicants

Successful and unsuccessful applicants are informed of the outcome of their application by email.

6. Announcement of awards

An official announcement of the award winners is made on the funding organisation's website. This announcement describes each successful applicant's name, type of award, project title and institution. Award winners will be expected to assist the funding organisation, if required, by being featured in media articles/releases and public announcements.

7. Feedback to unsuccessful applicants

Unsuccessful applicants are provided with individual feedback in terms of how their application ranked in relation to all applications. This feedback can help unsuccessful applicants improve the quality of subsequent applications. No correspondence regarding the accuracy or merits of feedback are provided.

Assessment Criteria

The following assessment criteria may be used:

1. Scientific Merit and Quality (40% weight)
   The significance and value of the proposed research is considered, along with the clarity of the research aim/s, hypotheses or research objectives, and the suitability of the research methodology and research plan in achieving the research aim/s. The general scientific relevance should be clear in the project proposal, and the research methodology should be sound and clearly presented. Projects must also be feasible and realistic within the available timeframe and budget.

2. Track record of the research team (25% weight)
   The research team's previous research experience must demonstrate that they are capable of successfully undertaking the proposed research and disseminating the outcomes. The track record of the Chief Investigator (research training, publications, awards and other relevant experience) will be assessed relative to opportunity.

3. Innovation and Originality (25% weight)
   The novelty and originality of the proposed project is considered as well as the extent to which it may introduce innovative and new research directions in the field of dementia research, with benefit to people with dementia, their carers, and families and the wider public.

4. Knowledge Translation (10% weight)
   How the research findings will be translated into practice and/or how the research will be applied in the real world (over the short, medium or long term) to achieve the stated benefits. Knowledge translation must be specifically addressed in the proposal.

Summary for Consumers

Some grant applications, such as Dementia Australia Research Foundation grants, call for a Summary for Consumers. This should be a standalone document and not require review of any other documentation to understand the aims and methods of the project. The summary may include:

- title of the project
- abstract/lay summary
- implications/significance of the project
- how the project aligns with the specified research priorities
- summary of knowledge translation approach
- consumer involvement - how people living with dementia, their carers, families and/or the wider public will be involved in the research.

What you may be asked to do

Lived Experience Experts may be asked to comment on grant applications within a specified timeframe. If you are available and have time to provide comments, you may be asked to provide feedback on the applications based on the relevance of the project objectives, the plan for consumer involvement and relevance of potential outcomes. This information will be used in the assessment of proposals and for discussions on how to improve projects that are funded. You may also be invited to express an interest in being involved in a particular project.

Things to think about when reviewing a grant application

1. Is it a good research question?
   - Is it important?
   - Is it interesting?
   - Is it answerable?
   - Is it original?

2. Are the aims and objectives clearly set out?

3. Does the background information provide a good reason for the project?

4. Are the proposed methods appropriate to the research questions/objectives?

5. Is the sample appropriate to the research questions?

6. Are the sources of data and techniques for collecting data appropriate to the research questions?

7. Are the methods of data analysis appropriate?

8. Are the resources requested appropriate for the proposed project?

9. Do the proposed investigators have the skills, knowledge, and experience to carry out the research project?

10. Are there appropriate procedures to manage and monitor progress?

11. Are the project outcomes clear and measurable?

12. Have people with lived experience of dementia been involved in developing the proposal and is it clear how will they be involved in the project if funded?