Research Program

Funding Guidelines

Document Control

Content Drafted	Heart Foundation Research Program Team
Scheduled reviews	Annually in November
Security classification	Public

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Copies of this publication are available on our website at www.heartfoundation.org.au.

Contents

1. Introduction

The Heart Foundation Research Program is overseen by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC). The RAC is comprised of leading researchers and consumer representatives from across Australia with expertise in a broad range of cardiovascular health disciplines and experiences. The RAC provides expert advice on strategic research approaches and the Heart Foundation's research funding program. The RAC is responsible for reviewing the annual research funding allocation, ensuring research funding is awarded based on merit, potential impact, equity of distribution and relevance.

The Heart Foundation Research Program manages the Research Funding Portfolio. All communications relating to Heart Foundation research funding programs and Heart Foundation funded research projects should be directed to the Heart Foundation Research Program:

- **Email:** research@heartfoundation.org.au
- **Phone:** (03) 9321 1581

2. Standards for Research

2.1 Research Conduct

The Heart Foundation expects the highest standards of research integrity in all aspects of the research we support. Heart Foundation funded research must be conducted in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018.

We require all research proposals and Heart Foundation-funded research to comply with the guidelines listed below and all other relevant laws, regulations, guidelines and policies related to the conduct of research.

- Guidance to support the Code
- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023
- Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders
- Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes

Compliance is the responsibility of researchers and Administering Institutions.

2.2 Clearance Requirements

Researchers awarded a Heart Foundation grant are required to obtain the necessary ethics and/or biosafety clearance/s before payments will commence. Any clearances required for a grant, as indicated in the application for funding, must be maintained by the Administering Institution for the complete duration of the grant, and a copy provided to the Heart Foundation on request. If clearances have not been obtained before payments are due to commence, the Administering Institution must advise the Heart Foundation.

The Heart Foundation will conduct random checks of the status of clearances by contacting the Administering Institution holding the grant.

2.3 Privacy Principles

In accordance with the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 (Cth), individuals, investigators, or research institutions associated with all Heart Foundation grants must comply with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Guidelines as stipulated under Section 95 of the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). This ensures the protection of personal information in the conduct of medical and health research, balancing privacy with the public interest in significant medical research. All applications for funding are treated with the utmost confidentiality. Access to these applications is strictly limited to designated assessors, review and interview committees, and essential Heart Foundation personnel to maintain the integrity and privacy of the submission process.

For further information regarding how we manage and protect your information, please refer to the Heart Foundation's Privacy Policy available on our website. This document provides comprehensive details on our data handling practices, including collection, use, disclosure, and security of personal information.

2.4 Confidentiality and Commercial-in-Confidence

All submissions to the Heart Foundation are managed with strict confidentiality. Access is strictly limited to authorised assessors, review committees, and Heart Foundation personnel to safeguard the integrity of the application process.

The Heart Foundation acknowledges that certain applications may lead to commercial outcomes. In instances where including commercially sensitive information might compromise the Intellectual Property (IP) of the project, applicants are encouraged to provide a balanced overview. This overview must detail enough scientific rationale and underlying principles of the proposed research to allow for thorough peer review and evaluation, while safeguarding sensitive commercial information.

2.5 Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the preparation of grant applications
Permitted Uses of AI Tools
Non-Generative AI Tools
Applicants may use non-generative tools such as grammar checkers, spell checkers, and style editors.

Generative AI
Generative AI tools, including large language models (e.g. ChatGPT, Claude, Claude, Gemini, Copilot) may only be used to assist with administrative tasks or to edit content in the preparation of grant applications.

Declaration and Accountability
Applicants and institutions must declare any use of AI in preparation of the grant application at the time of submission. All information provided must be certified as accurate, with applicants and institutions remaining fully accountable for the submitted content. Disclosure of AI use will not influence review outcomes.
Applications found to contain verified hallucinations, misinformation, or obvious AI-generated errors will be deemed ineligible and removed from the review process.

Compliance and Consequences
Failure to accurately disclose AI use, if subsequently identified, may result in the proposal being deemed ineligible and withdrawn from the review process.

Reviewers engaged in the evaluation of applications are strictly prohibited from using any form of generative AI tooling to assist in their review process. This restriction is critical to maintaining the confidentiality and integrity of all submitted applications.

3. Heart Foundation Grants Management Portal

In 2024, the Heart Foundation launched an online Grants Management Portal to streamline management of the Heart Foundation's Research Funding Portfolio.

The portal is used for:

- Submission of applications for funding
- Identifying potential peer reviewers
- Peer/consumer review of applications
- Processing funding offers and agreements
- Processing invoices and payments
- Submitting progress and impact reports
- Submitting financial acquittals
- Processing variation requests

For guidance on how to navigate the portal, please refer to our FAQ page.

3.1 User Registration

The landing page allows users to register new accounts, login using existing credentials and reset passwords. From the options available for user registration, researchers and Administering Institution employees (RAOs and FOs) should register as described below:

3.1.1 Researchers

To apply for Heart Foundation Research Funding opportunities, researchers are required to register as an '*NHMRC Administering Institution Researcher'*. You will be prompted to select your institution from the list of NHMRC Administering Institutions. Once you have submitted your registration, you will be sent a confirmation email to set your password.

3.1.2 Research Administration Officers (RAOs) and Finance Officers (FOs)

RAOs and FOs are required to register on behalf of their institution as an '*NHMRC Administering Institution Employee'*. You will be prompted to select your institution from the list of NHMRC Administering Institutions, then select your role (RAO or FO).

Once you have submitted your registration it will be reviewed by the Heart Foundation and you will be notified by email when it is approved.

- Approval of registration will provide RAOs with view-only access, by default, to all applications and grants associated with their Administering Institution.
- RAOs are responsible for endorsement of applications for funding and post-award processes on behalf of their Administering Institution.
- Approval of registration will provide FOs with access to the relevant financial records associated with their Administering Institution. FOs will be responsible for submission of invoices and annual financial acquittals.

3.2 Assistance with the Grants Management Portal

Users requiring assistance with the Grants Management Portal should direct their enquiries to:

- **Email**: grantsportal@heartfoundation.org.au
- **Phone**: (03) 9321 1581

4. Funding Rules

For applications to be considered for the Heart Foundation Research Funding programs described in these guidelines (Future Leader Fellowships, Postdoctoral Fellowships, Postgraduate Scholarships, First Nations CVD Grants, Vanguard Grants and Collaboration and Exchange Grants), the following criteria apply:

- Funding is available to those conducting cardiovascular research (including stroke research).
- Applications must be submitted via the Heart Foundation's Grants Management Portal by an NHMRC Administering Institution.
- The Chief Investigator A (CIA) must be affiliated with an NHMRC Administering Institution.
- The CIA and their Administering Institution must ensure that applications meet all eligibility requirements as set out in these Funding Guidelines. Applications that do not meet these requirements may be deemed ineligible and eliminated from consideration.
- Projects may be pursued in Biomedical, Clinical, Public Health and Health Services research if relevant to cardiovascular health and disease.
- The Heart Foundation requires Administering Institutions to have appropriate policies and procedures in place to deal with any allegations of research misconduct that may arise.
- The Administering Institution (or its affiliate) shall provide the facilities and services necessary for the efficient conduct of research during the term of a grant.
- Funding will commence from 1 January, 1 April or 1 July of the year following the application submission.
- The individuals, research groups or research institutions associated with a Heart Foundation grant shall not accept any funds by way of research grants, consultancies or sponsorships from the Tobacco industry or persons connected with the Tobacco industry. This includes direct funding, as well as advertising, sponsorship, gifts or loan of goods or services, or funding by any other means.
    - Tobacco industry means any organisation or individual involved in the growth, preparation for sale, sale, shipping, advertising and distribution of tobacco and tobacco-related products, including but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, loose tobacco and e-cigarettes.
- Employees of the Heart Foundation are not eligible to apply for funding.

Each research funding program has its own set of eligibility criteria, which are listed on the following pages.

4.1 Career Disruption and Relative to Opportunity

The Heart Foundation recognises that all research careers are not the same. Our peer reviewers assess track records relative to opportunity; that is, they take into consideration whether an applicant's research productivity and contributions are consistent with the opportunities available to them at their career stage. In determining the eligibility of an application for a particular funding program, only Career Disruption is taken into account and not Relative to Opportunity.

Career Disruption refers to a prolonged interruption of at least 28 continuous days to an individual's ability to work due to:

- pregnancy
- major illness or injury
- carer responsibilities, including parental leave.

The following are not considered career disruptions:

- employment outside the research sector (e.g. time spent working in industry)
- clinical, administrative, or teaching workload
- relocation of laboratory or clinical practice setting
- other similar circumstances that impact research productivity but do not meet the criteria above

Eligibility Requirements for Career Disruption Claims

To be considered eligible, career disruptions must meet the following conditions:

1. Timing
   - Absences must occur after the award of the PhD
2. Minimum Duration
   - Disruptions must be at least 28 continuous days (this includes weekends)
   - Individual days or multiple shorter absences (e.g. several periods of 1–27 days) cannot be combined to meet the threshold
3. Exclusions
   - Annual personal leave and short-term sick leave cannot be included.
   - Absences related to the conduct of research (e.g. attending conferences, training, sabbaticals, lab placements, or study directly related to research) cannot be included.
4. Fractional work
   - Fractional work (i.e. reduced FTE due to circumstances classified as a career disruption) is not subject to the 28-day rule and can be included
5. Application Use
   - For grant eligibility, all eligible career disruptions post-PhD will be included
   - For track record extension, only eligible career disruptions within the specified track record period will be included (e.g. for a Future Leader Fellowship, only absences within the past 10 years are eligible)

Relative to Opportunity includes career disruptions as well as other personal or professional circumstances affecting research output.

When providing details of other Relative to Opportunity considerations, an applicant may include any circumstances that they believe have impacted their research output. These circumstances may include key appointments, career disruption/s, and/or their active time conducting cardiovascular research. Disruptions to careers and research projects relating to major events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, may be included under Relative to Opportunity.

4.2 Multiple Fellowships, Scholarships or Other Salary Support

The recipient of a Heart Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship or Future Leader Fellowship is not entitled to concurrently receive salary support funding from another grant, fellowship or an NHMRC Investigator Grant.

If an applicant is successful with an application to the Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellowship or Postdoctoral Fellowship program as well as a third-party funding program, the applicant will need to choose their salary funding provider. If the third party is chosen, the Heart Foundation may consider offering an Honorary Fellowship.

In limited circumstances, if the current holder of a Heart Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship or Future Leader Fellowship is successful with an application for an NHMRC Investigator Grant, they may be permitted to continue to receive salary support funding from the Heart Foundation fellowship while receiving research support funding from the NHMRC Investigator Grant for the period the funding overlaps.

A recipient of a Heart Foundation Postgraduate Scholarship is not entitled to concurrently hold more than one postgraduate scholarship. Top-Up funding may be offered to an applicant who is successful at securing an NHMRC Postgraduate Scholarship, provided both scholarships have the same commencement date. Top-Up funding will be pro rata to account for any study already completed and will end on the same date as the NHMRC postgraduate Scholarship.

The Heart Foundation does not currently have any agreements in place to partner with third-party funding providers.

4.3 Major Events

The Heart Foundation acknowledges that major national and world-wide events could disrupt the way we work. We will consider the impact of major events, such as natural disasters or world-wide pandemics, on the health and medical research sector. Factors taken into account may include the ability of researchers to submit applications and undertake their research. In some cases, application closing dates may be extended or grant extension or Leave of Absence requests may be approved.

5. Consumers in Research

The Heart Foundation embraces the view that greater consumer involvement allows health-services professionals to plan more confidently, develop more robust policies, and deliver their services more effectively.

Research efforts find their fullest expression in the advancement of health care for all Australians, and only with the participation of consumers can we ensure that both the questions we ask and the answers we pursue are rooted in the most beneficial context possible. Involving consumers throughout the research process is a critical component of the research process.

The Research Program's *Consumer Guide for Researchers* covers the involvement of consumers in your research and includes:

- elements of consumer involvement
- why consumer involvement is important
- levels of consumer involvement
- considerations for researchers
- best practices for consumer involvement
- research cycle

Check with the Research Office at your Administering Institution if your institution has consumer groups you could reach out to.

Co-design and consultation from the planning stages are preferable for consumer engagement.

6. Applying for Funding

Applications for Heart Foundation Research Funding opportunities included in these Funding Guidelines are to be submitted via the Heart Foundation Grants Management Portal by the specified deadline.
Application opening and closing dates are published on the Heart Foundation website.

Before commencing an application for funding, applicants must read the applicable funding program guidelines.

It is the responsibility of the applicant and the Administering Institution's RAO to ensure that the application is complete, accurate, and meets the applicable eligibility criteria.

Application questions will be made available from the funding program opening date. From the funding program opening date researchers will be able to start completing an application. Instructions are provided within the Grants Management Portal at each step to clarify the information required.

The CIA must submit their application to their RAO for endorsement. The RAO will submit the application to the Heart Foundation. The endorsement process is managed through the Grants Management Portal.

No changes can be made to applications after submission to the Heart Foundation.

6.1 Integration with ORCID

Integration with ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) is a key feature of the Heart Foundation's Grants Management Portal that allows track record information to be imported from researchers' ORCID records to be used in their grant applications and progress/impact reports.

Completing an applicant's track record information will require them to register for an ORCID ID and create or update their ORCID record.

The following table explains which sections of ORCID must be populated to complete the corresponding track record questions in relevant applications. A guide with additional detail is available on the Heart Foundation website.

Heart Foundation Application - Track Record	ORCID Record Category
Applicant Work History	Employment
Qualifications	Education & Qualifications
Publications	Works
Presentations	Works
Awards & Distinctions	Professional Activities

The Heart Foundation accepts the following types of publications: Accepted for Publication; Books/Chapters; Editorials; Journal Articles (Original Research); Journal Articles (Review); Letters to the Editor; Research Reports – commissioned by Government, Industry or Other; Technical Reports; Policy Briefs and Text Books.

Publications and other research outputs can continue to be updated in ORCID for use in future applications but these updates will not appear in submitted applications. Only the ORCID details at time of application submission will be associated with that application. Hyperlinks should not be included in any part of an application.

NHMRC and ARC Statement on Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID)

6.2 Research Plan Templates

A Word template for each funding program will be available for applicants to provide their Research Plans and Figures. These templates will be available in the Grants Management Portal and on the webpage for each funding program, accessible from Appling for research funding with the Heart Foundation.

Applicants **must** use the provided template and upload the document into their application in the Grants Management Portal saved as a PDF file no larger than **5MB**. Applications that fail to comply with the formatting requirements below may be excluded from consideration.

6.2.1 File naming and formatting requirements:

- CIA name and application ID in header
- Font: 12pt Arial
- Line spacing: single
- Page margins: 2cm top, bottom, left, right
- Page size: A4
- Page numbers in footer
- PDF file name format: **Application ID_CIA surname_Research_Plan.pdf**

6.2.2 Research Plan components:

Funding Program	A. Research Plan Description	B. Project Milestones	C. References
Future Leader Fellowship	Up to 6 pages	Table provided	15 references
Postdoctoral Fellowship	Up to 4 pages	Table provided	15 references
Vanguard Grant	Up to 4 pages	Table provided	15 references
First Nations CVD Grant	Up to 4 pages	Table provided	15 references
Postgraduate Scholarship	Up to 4 pages	Table provided	15 references

A maximum of 3 images/figures may be included in the Research Plan.
The Research Plan Description should comprise the Aims, Background, and Methods of the proposed research project. Further details will be available in the Grants Management Portal.
Project Milestones and References are additional to the pages allocated to the Research Plan Description.
Expected outcomes are to be provided elsewhere in the application.

6.3 Submission Deadlines

Applications must be received by the Heart Foundation by no later than 5.00 pm AEST or AEDT (where applicable) on the funding program deadline date. It will not be possible to submit a late application.

Extensions to submission deadlines will be granted only in extreme circumstances, including but not limited to:

- Major events - natural disasters or major pandemics
- Major illness of the applicant
- Heart Foundation related IT disruptions causing the Grants Management Portal to be non-operational.

Any request for an extension must be made by the Administering Institution prior to the submission deadline.

6.4 Assistance with Applications

Applicants requiring assistance should direct queries to their Administering Institution's RAO. RAOs can contact the Heart Foundation Research Program for further advice:

- **Email:** research@heartfoundation.org.au
- **Phone:** (03) 9321 1581

7. Future Leader Fellowship

The Future Leader Fellowship program aims to support the best and brightest in cardiovascular research. It supports aspiring leaders who are developing independence and their own research portfolio, through to established leaders of cardiovascular research groups with extensive research programs.

7.1 Eligibility Criteria

For applications to be considered for funding, the following criteria apply:

- The application must be submitted via the Heart Foundation Grants Management Portal.
- The applicant will be considered the Chief Investigator A (CIA) on the proposed project.
- CIA must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, an Australian permanent resident, or have applied for Australian permanent residency at the stage 1 application closing date.
- CIA must be involved in cardiovascular research (including stroke research).
- Applicants are expected to have at least two years of research experience relevant to the context of the grant.
- CIA must be from an NHMRC Administering Institution.
- CIA must be based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period.
- Applicants may choose to apply at one of three levels:
  - **Level 1** applicants to be a minimum of **three** years and less than **seven** years post PhD pass date prior to the stage 1 application closing date.
  - **Level 2** applicants to be a minimum of **seven** years and less than **ten** years post PhD pass date prior to the stage 1 application closing date.
  - **Level 3** applicants to be a minimum of **ten** years and less than **fifteen** years post PhD pass date prior to the stage 1 application closing date.
  - The PhD pass date is the date of the letter advising that the PhD was passed. It is not the conferral date.
  - Applicants may apply at a level lower than they are eligible for based on the number of years since their PhD pass date if they can demonstrate that their 'effective' number of years since their PhD pass date falls within the eligibility range once Career Disruptions are considered (**not** other Relative to Opportunity factors).
  - Applicants may apply at a level higher than they are eligible for based on the number of years since their PhD pass date; however, applications will only be considered in the requested category. This does not apply to Level 1; applicants less than 3 years post PhD pass date cannot apply under this rule.
  - Applicants should refer to the Indicative Criteria for the expectation of performance at each of the levels.
  - Applicants may apply to progress through the Future Leader Fellowship levels; however, they cannot receive the same level twice.
  - Applicants may apply to undertake the Future Leader Fellowship between 0.6 FTE and 1.0 FTE.
- Applicants may apply for only one Heart Foundation Fellowship category or type (including Heart Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowships) in any year. Should an applicant apply for

multiple Fellowship categories or types, all applications from that applicant will be removed from further consideration.

- A successful applicant may not concurrently receive salary support funding from another fellowship or an NHMRC Investigator Grant (refer to section 4.2 of these guidelines for more information).
  - Should an applicant be successful with applications to both the Heart Foundation Future Leader Fellowship program and a third-party funding program, the applicant will need to choose their funding provider. If the third party is chosen, the Heart Foundation may consider offering an Honorary Fellowship.

7.2 Funding Amount and Duration

Full time Future Leader Fellowships are funded for four years, with salary support and project support at the levels specified below. The salary support component will be adjusted pro rata for part time fellowships (minimum 0.6FTE).

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Project support	$40,000 p.a.	$50,000 p.a.	$50,000 p.a.
Salary support – Year 1	$90,000	$110,000	$120,000
Salary support – Year 2	$91,500	$112,000	$122,000
Salary support – Year 3	$93,000	$114,000	$124,000
Salary support – Year 4	$94,500	$116,000	$126,000

The Salary support component is provided to assist in employing the fellowship recipient.

The Project support component is to be spent on other research costs (refer to 14. Application Budgets for information on allowable and prohibited costs). A budget for the project support component must be completed in the application.

7.3 Specific Considerations

If successful in obtaining funding, please note the special considerations set out in Annexure B of the Funding Agreement. These are to be considered in conjunction with the terms and conditions set out within the Heart Foundation Funding Agreement.

- Grantees shall spend a minimum of 80% of their FTE time on research.
- Grantees are expected to devote the FTE specified in their application research plan to the grant activity, which must not be less than 0.6 FTE.
- Participation in teaching and attendance at advanced courses relevant to the grant activity may be permitted by the Heart Foundation if participation occupies only a small proportion of the Grantee's FTE.
- The private practice of medicine and routine clinical or administrative duties are not compatible with the full-time Future Leader Fellowship. Full-time Fellows may spend no more than 20% of their FTE performing routine clinical duties or teaching. Part-time Fellows may spend their non-research FTE performing routine clinical duties or teaching.
- Grantees may not receive regular remuneration or grants that contain additional salary support in addition to the Fellowship except with prior approval from the Heart Foundation.
- A grantee proposing to accept a substantive paid appointment will normally be required to relinquish their fellowship. In such cases, the grantee shall advise the Heart Foundation in writing and in advance.

- Full-time grantees may apply to reduce their FTE for personal reasons such as carer responsibilities, but not for vocational reasons such as wishing to work part-time. Requests to reduce a full-time grant to part time will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. If approved, the grant will be extended pro-rata to account for the change in FTE.
- The Heart Foundation is to be notified immediately via a Variation Request if the grantee's employment circumstances change during the tenure of a fellowship, particularly when the ability of the grantee to undertake the grant activities may be affected by the change in circumstances. The Variation Request must detail any financial and/or administrative implications for the grantee, as well as any implications of the change on their ability to undertake the roles and responsibilities associated with the grant.

7.4 Indicative Criteria

Throughout all stages of the peer review process, assessment is based on the below ***Indicative Criteria*** for a Future Leader Fellow relative to opportunity.

	FLF: Level 1 ***3 years & less than 7 years post PhD*** ***Relative to opportunity***	**FLF: Level 2** ***7 years & less than 10 years post PhD*** ***Relative to opportunity***	**FLF: Level 3** ***10 years & less than 15 years post PhD*** ***Relative to opportunity***
Leadership, mentoring and training	• beginning to gain recognition for their expertise in their research area • demonstrate commitment to cardiovascular research • original contribution(s) in their field of expertise • ability to contribute to the conception of research projects • works within a larger team under the mentorship of more senior researchers • limited but developing supervision of research staff and Honours and PhD students • beginning to build their own team	• recognised for their expertise in their research area • demonstrate commitment to cardiovascular research • leading own research projects • original contributions of influence in their field of expertise • ability to contribute to the conception and direction of research projects, while developing independence • works within a larger team under the mentorship of more senior researchers • supervise PhD students • experience in supervising a small research team • building a team and mentoring ECRs / MCRs	• recognised as a national authority in their research area • demonstrate commitment to cardiovascular research • original contributions that are of major benefit to health and medical research, the health system, economy and/or the health of the population • independently leading and directing research projects • have established a team that is achieving independent outcomes • supervise PhD students • supervision, mentoring and promotion of early and mid-career researchers • demonstrated success as a mentor of emerging and future research leaders
Publication Record	• producing quality, cited publications in high-ranking journals with the majority being cardiovascular research publications • producing medium to high impact publications	• establishing a strong track record in their field through highly cited publications in high-ranking journals with the majority being cardiovascular research publications	• high publication output to a level eligible to lead Category 1 grants • high impact publications with the majority being cardiovascular research publications

	• producing several publications as first author	• producing several publications as first author but also moving to senor author position • input into reports to government and/or other organisations • input into translational documents such as guidelines	• producing a considerable number of publications as senior author • may be producing reports to government and/or other organisations • may be producing translational documents such as guidelines
Presentation Record	• successful abstract and poster invitations to present at national or international conferences	• invited presentations and invitations to present at national or international conferences	• keynote invitations and Orations to present at national or international conferences, including several invited presentations
Grant Record	• CI on successful applications to national and/or international competitive funding programs or CIA on local grants	• CIA on successful applications to national and/or international competitive funding programs	• CIA on successful applications to national and/or international competitive funding programs
Scientific Community Contribution	• scientific contributions within their region, state, or territory (e.g., community leadership, state level contribution to a professional society) • contributions within their department, centre, institution, or organisation e.g., organising journal clubs, seminar series etc.	• national contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g., public advocacy, community leadership, peer review and professional societies) • contributions within their department, centre, institution, or organisation e.g., organising journal clubs, seminar series etc.	• national contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g., public advocacy, peer review, research advisory boards or professional societies) • contribution(s) within their department, centre, institution, or organisation that extend beyond their research e.g., membership of regulatory or management committees
The **research proposal** should: • be of outstanding design with negligible weakness • be feasible and almost certain to be achieved within the term of the fellowship • make an outstanding case for the research to be important in addressing a cardiovascular health issue • achieve integrated translational outcomes			
The **research environment:** • is **very well matched** to the applicant's proposed project • includes **remarkably high quality** administrative and technical support systems for the applicant • offers outstanding collaborative and mentoring opportunities for the applicant • offers outstanding potential for team building for the applicant			

7.5 Application Assessment

At each review stage, applications will be assessed on the extent to which they address the assessment criteria. Reviewers will provide a score for each criterion using the seven-point scale and associated score descriptors designated in the Peer Review Guide. Depending on the review type (peer or consumer) the same application question may be reviewed against different criteria

and may form part of the review for more than one criterion. Refer to the tables summarizing the questions and review stage for further details.

An overall score for each application will be determined using each reviewer's score for each assessment criterion. The overall score will take the weighting of each criterion into account. A ranked list of applications will be created.

All applications will be reviewed at Stage 1. The highest ranked applicants will be invited to proceed to the second application stage (Stage 2), where they will complete the full application. Those applicants ranked highest after stage 2 review will be invited to attend an interview (Stage 3).

Reviewers will consider Career Disruption/s and Relative to Opportunity when assessing track record.

7.5.1 Stage 1 Review: Review of the Executive Summary (Leadership Potential)

Each application will be reviewed by up to five peer reviewers.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Executive Summary: Leadership Potential

This is the only assessment criterion in the first stage of review

In the Executive Summary, applicants are expected to provide a concise overview of the trajectory of their career, leadership and proposed project. This overview should give reviewers a full understanding of their leadership potential and/or experience and how that experience will achieve the outcomes in the proposed research plan. Reviewers will consider whether the applicant has the skill base, support, environment and team to achieve their proposed research plan.

Reviewers will refer to the Indicative Criteria as well as the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion. Note that this criterion is only assessed by peer reviewers.

Criteria	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Leadership potential *Weighting*	*100%*		
Leadership summary	✓		
Research team	✓		
Project overview	✓		
Research environment	✓		
Post-Fellowship plans	✓		
Translation & dissemination	✓		
Track record:	✓		
1. Applicant's work history	✓		
2. Qualifications	✓		
3. Publications	✓		
4. Presentations	✓		
5. Awards and distinctions	✓		
6. Grant record	✓		

Track record data (ORCID data) will be included in Stage 1 review in the form of a summary table only. Justifications for track record selections will form part of the Stage 2 application. Applicants

who are invited to submit a Stage 2 application will also be able to provide an update to their track record with their Stage 2 application.

When selecting items for their track record, the applicant should include their most impactful, high-quality publications, presentations, and awards, and demonstrate their ability to attract funding.

7.5.2 Stage 2 Review: Detailed review of the full application

Applicants must be invited to progress to Stage 2 Review. Each application will be reviewed by up to five peer reviewers and two consumer reviewers.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Person: Track Record

To assess the career of a researcher, reviewers look at what the applicant has achieved to date in their career, taking into consideration any career disruptions.

In relation to track record, the applicant should include their most impactful, high-quality publications, presentations, and awards, and demonstrate their ability to attract funding.

Reviewers will also consider where the proposed piece of research is expected to take the applicant in their career, as well as their post fellowship career plans.

As this fellowship is focused on leadership, it is important that the applicant can demonstrate their ability to work in and/or establish a competitive research team, along with how they plan to continue to build their team's capacity.

A high scoring applicant will be able to show the impact of their career to date, have a clear career path planned and clearly articulate their ability to develop their team.

Reviewers will refer to the Indicative Criteria as well as the application questions as indicated in the tables below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Fellowship potential *Weighting*			*40%*
Leadership summary			✓
Post-Fellowship plans			✓

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Track record *Weighting*		*50%*	
Training contribution		✓	
Scientific community contribution		✓	
Track record:		✓	
1. Applicant's work history		✓	
2. Qualifications		✓	
3. Publications		✓	
a. Justification - Publications		✓	
4. Presentations		✓	
a. Justification – Presentations		✓	
5. Awards and distinctions		✓	

a. Justification - Awards and distinctions		✓	
6. Grant record		✓	
Leadership summary		✓	
Research team		✓	
Post-Fellowship plans		✓	

Project: Quality and Feasibility of Research Proposal

The Heart Foundation is looking to support cardiovascular research projects where the application is well written, clear, and concise, the methodology is logical and well explained, the budget is well justified, and the expected outcomes are realistic and impactful.

Reviewers will assess the quality of the environment in which the research will be undertaken, the quality of the project and how achievable it is in the prescribed timeframe. The applicant must be able to show how they will deliver this project with the budget provided and it should be feasible and almost certain to be achieved within the term of the fellowship. If the project is beyond the scope of funding, the applicant should be able to identify other funding streams that will support the work.

While previous Heart Foundation funding is not required to progress through fellowship levels, consideration may be given where it is clearly articulated that the proposed project builds upon a previous project where important cardiovascular outcomes were achieved.

The research environment should be very well matched with the applicant's proposed project and include remarkably high quality administrative and technical support systems for the project.

A high scoring application will provide a clear and concise design with negligible weakness and make an outstanding case that the project is fresh, innovative and, most importantly, addressing a gap or major issue in cardiovascular health.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Quality and feasibility of research proposal *Weighting*		*25%*	
Project overview		✓	
Research environment		✓	
Research plan and figures:		✓	
1. Background		✓	
2. Method		✓	
3. Project milestones		✓	
4. References		✓	
Expected outcomes		✓	
Budget		✓	
Previous funding		✓	

Significance and Potential Impact of the research

The Heart Foundation is looking to support high-impact cardiovascular research that is likely to produce results that will bring about significant change.

Consumer engagement and health equity requirements have been introduced into applications as end users of research need to be considered from the first to the last step. When assessing applications, reviewers will consider what a consumer is (patients, doctors, nurses, carers, those with lived experience or the public) to understand the need for all proposals to address consumer engagement in a meaningful way. It is important to note that not all proposals will be able to address all health equity areas but it is important for the applicant to explain why or why they are not addressing these areas. The proposal should demonstrate how the applicant plans to integrate translational outcomes, what happens once they have completed this funding, how the outcomes will be disseminated to consumers or the end user, and how they will lead to widespread improvements in cardiovascular health practices.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the tables below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Significance and potential impact of the research *Weighting*		*25%*	
Consumer engagement		✓	
Promoting health equity:		✓	
1. Socioeconomically disadvantaged		✓	
2. Regional, rural and remote		✓	
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse		✓	
4. First Nations Peoples		✓	
5. Gender		✓	
Translation and dissemination		✓	

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Potential impact of the research *Weighting*			*60%*
Project synopsis			✓
Research environment			✓
Expected outcomes			✓
Consumer engagement			✓
Promoting health equity:			✓
1. Socioeconomically disadvantaged			✓
2. Regional, rural and remote			✓
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse			✓
4. First Nations Peoples			✓
5. Gender			✓
Translation and dissemination			✓

7.5.3 Stage 3 Review: The Interview

Applicants who have progressed to Stage 3 will be interviewed by the peer and consumer review committees who will all score the applicant.

Interviews will be held over three days via a video platform, on **Tuesday 15 (Level 1), Wednesday 16 (Level 2) and Thursday 17 (Level 3) September 2026**.

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

- Applicants will be invited to give a **brief** overview of their application.
- The Primary Spokesperson will ask three standard questions and two exploratory questions.
- The interview will be open to the committee to ask two additional questions.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

People

Accounts for 70% of score

Within the interview, the applicant should be able to answer all questions in a concise and informative manner. Within their responses they should focus on their ability as a leader in their field and how they can leverage that role to build their team through mentoring and training. The applicant should be able to talk to their track record achievements as well as their contribution to the cardiovascular/scientific community.

Project

Accounts for 30% of score

In the interview, the applicant should be able to express extensive knowledge of their project and the impact they hope to achieve. Not only should they be able to discuss their methodology but also demonstrate how they plan to integrate translational outcomes, what happens once they have completed this funding, how the findings will be disseminated to consumers or the end user, and how the outcomes will lead to widespread improvements in cardiovascular health practices.

8. Postdoctoral Fellowship

The Postdoctoral Fellowship program is aimed at early career researchers and seeks to identify the strongest emerging Australian talent in cardiovascular research who have just completed or are nearing completion of their PhD studies. Successful Postdoctoral Fellows will have a demonstrated strong track record during their PhD and will be working towards gaining recognition for expertise in their research area.

8.1 Eligibility Criteria

For applicants to be considered for funding, they must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The application must be submitted via the Heart Foundation Grants Management Portal.
- The applicant will be considered the Chief Investigator A (CIA) on this project.
- CIA must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, an Australian permanent resident or have applied for Australian permanent residency at the time of the application.
- CIA must be involved in cardiovascular research (including stroke research).
- CIA must be from an NHMRC Administering Institution.
- CIA must be based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period.
- CIA must be no more than 3 years post PhD prior to March 1st, 2026 (considering Career Disruptions only, not other Relative to Opportunity factors).
- The PhD pass date is the date of the letter advising that the PhD was passed. It is not the conferral date.
- CIA must have been awarded their PhD by the time their funding commences.
- CIA must not have held a Heart Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship.
- Applicants may apply to undertake the Postdoctoral Fellowship between 0.6 FTE and 1.0 FTE.

8.2 Funding Amount and Duration

Full time Postdoctoral Fellowships are funded for two years at the following levels. Part time fellowships (minimum 0.6 FTE) are funded for two years pro rata.

Salary support – Year 1	$75,000
Salary support – Year 2	$76,200

The Salary support component is provided to assist with employing the fellowship recipient.

8.3 Specific Considerations

If successful in obtaining funding, please note the special considerations set out in Annexure B of the Funding Agreement. These are to be considered in conjunction with the terms and conditions set out in the Heart Foundation Funding Agreement.

- Fellows shall spend a minimum of 80% of their FTE time on research.
- Fellows are expected to devote the FTE specified in their application research plan to the grant activity, which must not be less than 0.6 FTE.

- Participation in teaching and attendance at advanced courses relevant to the grant activity may be permitted by the Heart Foundation if participation occupies only a small proportion of the Fellow's FTE.
- The private practice of medicine and routine clinical or administrative duties are not compatible with the full-time fellowship. Full-time Fellows may spend no more than 20% of their FTE performing routine clinical duties or teaching. Part-time Fellows may spend their non-research FTE performing clinical duties or teaching.
- The grantee is not entitled to concurrently receive salary support funding from another fellowship or an NHMRC Investigator Grant (refer to section 4.2 of these guidelines for more information).
- Grantees may not receive regular remuneration or grants that contain additional salary support in addition to the fellowship except with prior approval from the Heart Foundation.
- A grant recipient proposing to accept a substantive paid appointment will normally be required to relinquish their Postdoctoral Fellowship. In such cases, the grantee shall advise the Heart Foundation in writing and in advance.
- Full-time grantees may apply to reduce their FTE for personal reasons, such as carer responsibilities, but not for vocational reasons such as wishing to work part-time. Requests to reduce a full-time fellowship will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- The Heart Foundation is to be notified immediately if the grantee's employment circumstances change during the tenure of a grant, particularly when the ability of the grantee to undertake the grant activities may be affected by the change in circumstances. The notification should detail any financial and/or administrative implications for the grantee, and implications of the change to their ability to undertake the roles and responsibilities associated with the Fellowship.

8.4 Application Assessment

At each review stage, applications will be assessed on the extent to which they address the assessment criteria. Reviewers will provide a score for each criterion using the seven-point scale and associated score descriptors designated in the Peer Review Guide. Depending on the review type (peer or consumer) the same application question may be reviewed against different criteria and may form part of the review for more than one criterion. Refer to the tables summarizing the questions and review stage for further details.

An overall score for each application will be determined using each reviewer's score for each assessment criterion. The overall score will take the weighting of each criterion into account. A ranked list of applications will be created.

All applications will be reviewed at Stage 1. The highest ranked applications will proceed to the next review stage (Stage 2).

Reviewers will consider Career Disruption/s and Relative to Opportunity when assessing track record.

8.4.1 Stage 1 Review: Fellowship Potential

Each application will be assessed by at up to five peer reviewers.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Executive Summary: Fellowship Potential

This is the only assessment criterion in the first stage of review

Reviewers will consider only the application Executive Summary to assess this criterion.

In the Executive Summary, applicants are expected to provide a concise overview of the trajectory of their career and their proposed project. This overview should give reviewers a full understanding of the applicant's fellowship potential and/or experience and how that experience will contribute to achieving the proposed research plan. Reviewers will consider if the applicant has the skill base, support, and environment to achieve their proposed project.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Fellowship potential *Weighting*	*100%*		
Career summary	✓		
Project overview	✓		
Research environment	✓		
Post-Fellowship plans	✓		
Track record:	✓		
1. Applicant's work history	✓		
2. Qualifications	✓		
3. Publications	✓		
4. Presentations	✓		
5. Awards and distinctions	✓		
6. Grant record	✓		

Track record data (ORCID data) will be included in Peer Stage 1 review in the form of a summary table only. Justifications for track record selections will form part of the Peer Stage 2 application review.

8.4.2 Stage 2 Review: Detailed review of the full application

Each application will be reviewed by up to five peer reviewers and two consumer reviewers.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Executive Summary: Fellowship Potential

Consumer reviewers will consider the career summary and post-fellowship plans to assess this criterion.

Applicants are expected to provide a concise overview of the trajectory of their career, proposed project and plans to continue their research after the fellowship. Enough detail should be provided to give reviewers a full understanding of the applicant's fellowship potential and how their experience will contribute to achieving the proposed research plan.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Fellowship potential *Weighting*			*40%*
Career summary			✓
Post-Fellowship plans			✓

Person: Track Record

Heart Foundation Fellows are expected to be the best and brightest in cardiovascular research. To assess the career of an applicant, reviewers look at their career achievements to date, taking into consideration any Career Disruptions; i.e., an applicant who is 3 years post-PhD but has had a 1-year Career Disruption, would be assessed as a 2-year post-PhD candidate.

In relation to track record, the applicant should include their most impactful, high-quality publications, presentations and awards, and demonstrate their ability to attract funding.

Reviewers will consider where the proposed piece of research will take the applicant in their career as well as their post fellowship career plans.

As this fellowship is about setting the foundations for a research career, it is important that the applicant can demonstrate their ability to work in a competitive research team, along with how they plan to continue to build their independence as a researcher.

A high scoring applicant will be able to show the impact of their career to date and have a clear career path planned towards research independence.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion. Note that this criterion is only assessed by peer reviewers.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Track record *Weighting*		*50%*	
Training contribution		✓	
Scientific community contribution		✓	
Track record:		✓	
1. Applicant's work history		✓	
2. Qualifications		✓	
3. Publications		✓	
a. Justification – Publications		✓	
4. Presentations		✓	
a. Justification – Presentations		✓	
5. Awards and distinctions		✓	
a. Justification - Awards and distinctions		✓	
6. Grant record		✓	
Career summary		✓	
Post-Fellowship plans		✓	

Project: Quality and Feasibility of Research Proposal

The Heart Foundation is looking to support cardiovascular research projects where the application is well written, clear and concise, the methodology is logical and well explained, and the expected outcomes are realistic and impactful.

Reviewers will assess the quality of the environment in which the research will be undertaken, the quality of the project and whether it is achievable in the prescribed timeframe. The project should be feasible and almost certain to be achieved within the term of the Fellowship.

The research environment should be very well matched with the applicant's proposed project and include remarkably high quality administrative and technical support systems for the project.

A high scoring application will provide a clear and concise design with negligible weakness and make an outstanding case that the project is fresh, innovative and, most importantly, addressing a gap or major issue in cardiovascular health.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion. Note that this criterion is only assessed by peer reviewers.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Quality and feasibility of research proposal *Weighting*		*25%*	
Project overview		✓	
Research environment		✓	
Research plan and figures:		✓	
1. Background		✓	
2. Method		✓	
3. Project milestones		✓	
4. References		✓	
Expected outcomes		✓	
Previous funding		✓	

Significance and Potential Impact of the research

The Heart Foundation is looking to support high-impact cardiovascular research that is likely to produce results that will bring about significant change.

Consumer engagement and health equity requirements have been introduced into applications as end users of research need to be considered from the first to the last step.
When assessing applications, reviewers should consider what a consumer is (patients, doctors, nurses, carers, those with lived experience or the public) to understand the need for all proposals to address consumer engagement in a meaningful way.

It is important to note that not all proposals will be able to address all health equity areas, but it is important for the applicant to explain why or why they are not addressing these areas.

The proposal should demonstrate how the applicant plans to integrate translational outcomes, what happens once they have completed this funding, how the outcomes will be disseminated to consumers or the end user, and how they will lead to widespread improvements in cardiovascular health practices.
Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the tables below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Significance and potential impact of the research *Weighting*		*25%*	
Consumer engagement		✓	
Promoting health equity:		✓	
1. Socioeconomically disadvantaged		✓	
2. Regional, rural and remote		✓	
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse		✓	
4. First Nations Peoples		✓	
5. Gender		✓	
Translation and dissemination		✓	

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Potential impact of the research *Weighting*			*60%*
Project synopsis			✓
Research environment			✓
Expected outcomes			✓
Consumer engagement			✓
Promoting health equity:			✓
1. Socioeconomically disadvantaged			✓
2. Regional, rural and remote			✓
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse			✓
4. First Nations Peoples			✓
5. Gender			✓
Translation and dissemination			✓

9. Postgraduate Scholarship

The Postgraduate Scholarship provides funding to support successful applicants to attain a research-based postgraduate degree (Doctor of Philosophy or Master's Degree by Research). The scholarship will support outstanding graduates early in their careers so they can be trained to conduct cardiovascular research that is internationally competitive.

9.1 Eligibility Criteria

Applicants who wish to be considered for a Heart Foundation Postgraduate Scholarship must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The application must be submitted via the Heart Foundation Grants Management Portal.
- The applicant will be considered the Chief Investigator A (CIA) on the project.
- CIA must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, an Australian permanent resident or have applied for Australian permanent residency at the time of the application.
- CIA must be from an NHMRC Administering Institution.
- CIA must be based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period.
- CIA must have applied for and meet the entry requirements for or be currently enrolled in a postgraduate program at an Australian university.
- The applicant must demonstrate that they have undertaken supervised individual research in which they have designed and conducted a scholarly investigation in the context of an existing body of knowledge, critically analysed and evaluated the outcome in that context, and communicated the process effectively in writing.
- To build an environment of equity for all early career researchers from all relevant disciplines, achievement and track record will be assessed on individual performance in the past three years. Reviewers will consider:
  - first and/or middle author publications
  - grants where the applicant is the lead or Chief Investigator
  - oral or poster presentations by the applicant

9.2 Duration

PhD Scholarships

- Funded for a maximum period of three years of full-time equivalent (FTE) study.
- As of 1 January in the year funding commences, the applicant may not have completed more than 12 months (full time FTE) of their PhD degree.
- Any study commenced prior to funding commencing will be deducted from the funding period. For example, if the applicant has completed six months of their PhD program as of 1 January, they will be entitled to receive 2.5 years of full-time funding.
- The duration of the Scholarship may be extended to adjust for periods in which it was held on a part-time basis. The maximum period a part-time PhD Scholarship can be held is six years.
- Funding will cease from the day the PhD thesis is submitted or at the completion of three years FTE candidature for a PhD. Scholarship recipients (through their RAOs) are required to notify the Heart Foundation at the time their thesis is submitted and provide evidence of the date of submission.

Master's Degree Scholarships

- Funded for a maximum period of two years of full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) study.
- As of 1 January in the year funding commences, the applicant may not have completed more than six months (1.0 FTE) of their Master's degree.
- Any study commenced prior to funding commencing will be deducted from the funding period. For example, if the applicant has completed six months of their Master's degree program as of 1 January, they will be entitled to receive 1.5 years of full-time funding.
- The duration of the Scholarship may be extended to adjust for periods in which it was held on a part-time basis. The maximum period a Master's Degree scholarship can be held is four years.
- Funding will cease from the day the Master's Degree thesis is submitted or at two years FTE for a Master's Degree. Scholarship recipients (through their RAOs) are required to notify the Heart Foundation at the time their thesis is submitted and provide evidence of the date of submission

9.3 Top-up-funding

- Applicants applying for NHMRC Postgraduate Scholarship funding are eligible to apply for the Heart Foundation's Postgraduate Scholarship. They should note this in their application where requested.
- The funding commencement date must be the same for both schemes.
- If the applicant is successful in both funding programs, they have the option of accepting the NHMRC funding and a top-up stipend from the Heart Foundation.

9.4 Funding Amount

Scholarships are funded for a maximum period of three years at 1.0 FTE for PhD study (minimum of 0.5 FTE pro-rata) and two years at 1.0 FTE for Master's study (minimum of 0.5 FTE pro-rata).

	PhD	Master's
Stipend – Year 1	$40,000	$40,000
Stipend – Year 2	$40,700	$40,700
Stipend – Year 3	$41,400	

9.5 Specific Considerations

If successful in obtaining funding, please note the special considerations set out in Annexure B of the Funding Agreement. These are to be considered in conjunction with the terms and conditions set out within the Heart Foundation Funding Agreement.

- Scholars are expected to devote the FTE specified in their application to the grant activity, which must not be less than 0.5 FTE.
- Full-time scholars shall spend a minimum of 80% of their FTE on research. Full-time scholars may spend no more than 20% of their FTE participating in clinical duties. Part-time scholars may spend their non-scholarship time participating in clinical duties.
- Teaching and attendance at advanced courses relevant to a grantee's research program may be allowed if they occupy only a small proportion of FTE.

- The Administering Institution shall not, as a condition of administering this scholarship, expect scholars to undertake unpaid work in addition to that specified in the research plan.
- A scholarship recipient proposing to accept a substantive paid appointment will normally be required to relinquish their funding. In such cases, the Scholar shall advise the Heart Foundation in writing and in advance.
- The Heart Foundation is to be notified immediately if the scholarship recipient's employment circumstances change during the tenure of their scholarship, particularly when their ability to undertake their research activities may be affected by the change in circumstances. The notification will need to detail any financial and/or administrative implications for the scholarship recipient, and implications of the change in their ability to undertake the roles and responsibilities associated with the scholarship.
- The Heart Foundation must be notified at the time the PhD or Master's Degree thesis is submitted and provide evidence of the date of submission. Funding will cease from the day the thesis is submitted or at the completion of three years FTE candidature for a PhD or two years FTE for a Master's Degree by Research.

9.6 Application Assessment

At each review stage, applications will be assessed on the extent to which they address the assessment criteria. Reviewers will provide a score for each criterion using the seven-point scale and associated score descriptors designated in the Peer Review Guide. Depending on the review type (peer or consumer) the same application question may be reviewed against different criteria and may form part of the review for more than one criterion. Refer to the tables summarizing the questions and review stage for further details

An overall score for each application will be determined using each reviewer's score for each assessment criterion. The overall score will take the weighting of each criterion into account. A ranked list of applications will be created.

All applications will be reviewed at Stage 1. The highest ranked applications will proceed to the next review stage (Stage 2).

Reviewers will consider Career Disruption/s and Relative to Opportunity when assessing track record.

9.6.1 Stage 1 Review: Scholarship Potential

Each application will be reviewed by up to five peer reviewers and two consumer reviewers.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Executive Summary: Scholarship Potential

This is the only assessment criterion in the first stage of review and accounts for 100%

Applicants are expected to provide a concise overview of the trajectory of their career and proposed project.

This overview should give reviewers a full understanding of the applicant's scholarship potential and/or experience and how that experience will contribute to achieving the proposed project. Reviewers should consider whether the applicant has the skill base, support, and environment to achieve their project.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Scholarship Potential *Weighting*	*100%*		
Supervisor/s	✓		
Previous involvement in research	✓		
Project overview	✓		
Research environment	✓		
Post-Scholarship plans	✓		

9.6.2 Stage 2 Review: Detailed Review of Full Application

Each application will be reviewed by up to five peer reviewers and two consumer reviewers.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Executive Summary: Scholarship Potential

Applicants are expected to provide a concise overview of the trajectory of their career and proposed project.

This overview should give consumer reviewers an understanding of the applicant's research experience, ability to complete the proposed project and their career plans once they have completed their scholarship.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Scholarship Potential *Weighting*			*40%*
Previous involvement in research			✓
Post-Scholarship plans			✓

Person: Track Record

Scholarship applicants may be submitting a PhD or Master's degree proposal. To assess the career of an applicant, their career achievements to date are considered., taking into account any career disruptions.

In relation to track record: the applicant should include their most impactful achievements from the past three years. A fundable track record is one where the applicant is first and/or middle author in publications, grants where the applicant is the lead or chief investigator, and oral or poster presentations by the applicant.

Reviewers will also consider where the proposed research will take the applicant in their career, as well as their post scholarship career plans. A high scoring applicant will be able to show that they have positioned themselves within a strong research environment.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Track record *Weighting*		*50%*	
Post-Scholarship plans		✓	
Track record:		✓	
1. Applicant's work history		✓	
2. Qualifications		✓	
3. Publications		✓	
a. Justification - Publications		✓	
4. Presentations		✓	
a. Justification - Presentations		✓	
5. Awards and distinctions		✓	
a. Justification - Awards and distinctions		✓	
Previous involvement in research		✓	

Quality and Feasibility of Research Proposal

The Heart Foundation is looking to support cardiovascular research projects where the application is well written, clear and concise, the methodology is logical and well explained, and the expected outcomes are realistic and impactful.

Reviewers will assess the quality of the environment in which the research will be undertaken, the quality of the project and how achievable it is in the prescribed timeframe. The applicant must be able to show that the project is feasible and almost certain to be achieved within the term of the scholarship.

The research environment should be very well matched with the applicant's proposed project and include remarkably high quality administrative and technical support systems for the project.

A high scoring application will provide a clear and concise design with negligible weakness and make an outstanding case that the project is fresh, innovative and, most importantly, addressing a gap or major issue in cardiovascular health.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Quality and feasibility of research proposal *Weighting*		*25%*	
Supervisor/s		✓	
Project overview		✓	
Research environment		✓	
Research plan and figures:		✓	
1. Background		✓	
2. Method		✓	
3. Project milestones		✓	
4. References		✓	
Expected outcomes		✓	

Significance and Potential Impact of the research

The Heart Foundation is looking to support high-impact cardiovascular research that is likely to produce results that will bring about significant change.

Consumer engagement and health equity requirements have been introduced into applications as the end users of research need to be considered from the first to the last step.

When assessing applications, reviewers should consider what a consumer is (patients, doctors, nurses, carers, those with lived experience or the public) to understand the need for all proposals to address consumer engagement in a meaningful way.

It is important to note that not all proposals will be able to address all health equity areas, but it is important for the applicant to explain why or why they are not addressing these areas.

The proposal should demonstrate how the applicant plans to integrate translational outcomes, what happens once they have completed this funding, how the outcomes will be disseminated to consumers or the end user, and how they will lead to widespread improvements in cardiovascular health practices.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the tables below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Significance and potential impact of the research *Weighting*		*25%*	
Consumer engagement		✓	
Promoting health equity:		✓	
1. Socioeconomically disadvantaged		✓	
2. Regional, rural and remote		✓	
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse		✓	
4. First Nations Peoples		✓	
5. Gender		✓	
Translation and dissemination		✓	

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Potential impact of the research *Weighting*			*60%*
Project synopsis			✓
Research environment			✓
Expected outcomes			✓
Consumer engagement			✓
Promoting health equity:			✓
1. Socioeconomically disadvantaged			✓
2. Regional, rural and remote			✓
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse			✓
4. First Nations Peoples			✓
5. Gender			✓
Translation and dissemination			✓

10. First Nations CVD Grant

This funding opportunity is for future building within the First Nations cardiovascular health research community. Proposed projects should be aimed at producing high-impact improvements in the cardiovascular health of First Nations People.

Within this funding opportunity is the provision for an introductory research role for a First Nations Person. The role should be embedded within the project, with mentoring and guidance provided by the project's Chief Investigator, with the purpose of encouraging and maintaining our First Nations researchers.

10.1 Eligibility Criteria

For applicants to be considered for funding, they must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The application must be submitted via the Heart Foundation Grants Management Portal.
- The applicant will be considered the Chief Investigator A (CIA) on the project.
- CIA must be from an NHMRC Administering Institution.
- CIA must be based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period.
- It is highly recommended that the CIA is a First Nations Person.
- Whilst non-First Nations People may apply, it must be demonstrated how the CIA is working closely with First Nations People for project co-design and with the community for which the research is taking place.
- If the CIA is not a First Nations Person, the CIA must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, an Australian permanent resident or have applied for Australian permanent residency at the time of the application.
- The introductory research role must be designed for a First Nations Person and could be offered as, but is not limited to:
  - PhD scholarship,
  - Master's Degree by Research
  - Research assistant or trainee or
  - Research nurse
- The CIA is not eligible for the introductory research role.

10.2 Funding Amount and Duration

Funding is provided for a period of three years with Capacity Building Stipend at 1.0 FTE (minimum of 0.5 FTE funded pro rata).

Project support	$80,000 p.a.
Capacity Building Stipend – Year 1	$40,000
Capacity Building Stipend – Year 2	$40,700
Capacity Building Stipend – Year 3	$41,400

Project support component: refer to section 14. Application Budgets for information on allowable and prohibited costs.

10.3 Specific Considerations

If successful in obtaining funding, please note the special considerations set out in Annexure B of the Funding Agreement. These are to be considered in conjunction with the terms and conditions set out in the Heart Foundation Funding Agreement.

- Grantees shall spend a minimum of 40% of their FTE time on research.
- Grantees are expected to devote the FTE specified in the application Research Plan to the grant activity, which must not be less than 0.2 FTE (1 day/week).

10.4 Application Assessment

Each application will be reviewed by up to five peer reviewers and two consumer reviewers.

The applications will be assessed on the extent to which they address the assessment criteria. Reviewers will provide a score for each criterion using the seven-point scale and associated score descriptors designated in the Peer Review Guide. Depending on the review type (peer or consumer) the same application question may be reviewed against different criteria and may form part of the review for more than one criterion. Refer to the tables summarizing the questions and review stage for further details

An overall score for each application will be determined using each reviewer's score for each assessment criterion. The overall score will take the weighting of each criterion into account. A ranked list of applications will be created.

Reviewers will consider Career Disruption/s and Relative to Opportunity when assessing track record.

Benefits to First Nations Australians

The Heart Foundation is looking to invest in research that has considered the cardiovascular needs of First Nations Peoples.

Our reviewers will assess these criteria in relation to how well the applicant has addressed the purpose of the grant in consideration of the six benefits to the community. The other main components assessed by reviewers are the team and the inclusion of a First Nations student or staff member, and how the applicant plans to develop their career through mentoring and guidance.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer	Consumer
Benefit to First Nations Australians *Weighting*	*40%*	*60%*
Student or staff member	✓	✓
Role in project	✓	✓
Student or staff member development plan	✓	✓
Team track record	✓	✓
Community benefits:	✓	✓
1. Spirit and integrity	✓	✓
2. Cultural continuity	✓	✓
3. Equity	✓	✓

4. Reciprocity	✓	✓
5. Respect	✓	✓
6. Responsibility	✓	✓

Quality and Feasibility of Research Proposal

The Heart Foundation is looking to invest in cardiovascular research projects where the application is well written, clear and concise, the methodology is logical and well explained, the budget is well justified, and the expected outcomes are realistic and impactful.

Reviewers will assess the quality of the environment where the research will be undertaken, the quality of the project and how achievable it is in the prescribed timeframe. The applicant must be able to show how they will deliver this project with the budget provided, it should be feasible and almost certain to be achieved within the term of the grant. If the project is beyond the scope of funding, are they able to identify other funding streams that will support the work.

The research environment should be very well matched with the applicant's proposed project and include high quality administrative and technical support systems for the project.

A high scoring application will provide a clear and concise design with negligible weaknesses and make an outstanding case that the project is fresh, innovative, and most importantly addressing a gap or major issue in cardiovascular health.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer	Consumer
Quality and feasibility of research proposal *Weighting*	*30%*	
Project overview	✓	
Research environment	✓	
Research plan and figures:	✓	
1. Background	✓	
2. Method	✓	
3. Project milestones	✓	
4. References	✓	
Expected outcomes	✓	
Budget	✓	
Leveraging funding	✓	

Significance and Potential Impact of the Research

The Heart Foundation is looking to invest in high-impact cardiovascular research that is likely to see results and provide significant change.

Consumer and health equity requirements have been included in applications as the end users of research should always be considered from the first step to the last step. We are looking to invest in research that considers these users.

When assessing applications, reviewers should consider what a consumer is (patients, doctors, nurses, carers, those with lived experience or the public) to understand the need for all proposals to address consumer engagement in a meaningful way.

The proposal should demonstrate how the applicant plans to integrate translational outcomes, what happens once they have completed this funding, how it will be disseminated to consumers or the end user, and how it will lead to widespread improvements in cardiovascular health practices.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the tables below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer	Consumer
Significance and potential impact of the research *Weighting*	*30%*	
Consumer engagement	✓	
Translation and dissemination	✓	

Criterion	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Potential impact of the research *Weighting*		*40%*
Project synopsis		✓
Expected outcomes		✓
Consumer engagement		✓
Translation and dissemination		✓

11. Vanguard Grant

The purpose of the Vanguard Grant is to provide funding to test the feasibility of innovative concepts in clinical, public health and/or health services (including clinical service delivery) or biomedical research which may lead to larger, more rigorous studies in the future. Both pilot studies and 'stand-alone' projects will be considered. These projects are expected to produce tangible outcomes with the potential to further advance preclinical research technology or improve cardiovascular health.

The Heart Foundation offers funding for Vanguard Grants in both one- and two-year categories. Please ensure that you select the correct category when submitting your application. Applicants will be required to select and justify the project length in relation to the feasibility of their proposed project when submitting their application.

11.1 Funding Amount and Duration

One-year grant: maximum budget of **$75,000**

Two-year grant: maximum budget of **$75,000** per year, total budget of no more than **$150,000**

Refer to 14. Application Budgets for information on allowable and prohibited expenditure categories.

11.2 Eligibility Criteria

For applications to be considered for funding, they must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The application must be submitted via the Heart Foundation Grants Management Portal.
- The applicant will be considered the Chief Investigator A (CIA) on the proposed project.
- CIA must be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, an Australian permanent resident or have applied for Australian permanent residency at the time of the application.
- Up to 4 Chief Investigators can be named on an application including the applicant (CIA).
- CIs B, C and D may have citizenship outside of Australia or New Zealand.
- CIA must be involved in cardiovascular research (including stroke research).
- A minimum of 80% of the project must be conducted in Australia.
- CIA must be based in Australia for at least 80% of the funding period.
- CIA may submit only one Vanguard Grant application as CIA but can be a CIB, C or D on other Vanguard Grant applications.
- CIA must be from an NHMRC Administering Institution. Other named Investigators may be from other research organisations.
- CIA will take intellectual leadership of the project, manage the research and will be the contact person for Heart Foundation correspondence. All other named Investigators are responsible for ensuring that the project is undertaken and completed in the manner specified.

11.3 Specific Considerations

If successful in obtaining funding, please note the special considerations set out in Annexure B of the Funding Agreement. These are to be considered in conjunction with the terms and conditions set out in the Heart Foundation Funding Agreement.

- Grant recipients may request an extension in time, if necessary, but no additional funding will be provided. A request for an extension in time must be submitted no later than 3 months

prior to the completion of the funding period. Extensions requested after the agreement's end date may not be considered.

- The Heart Foundation is to be notified immediately if the grantee's employment circumstances change during the tenure of a grant, particularly when the ability of the grantee to undertake the grant activities may be affected by the change in circumstances. The notification will need to detail any financial and/or administrative implications for the grantee, and implications of the change on their ability to undertake the roles and responsibilities associated with the grant.

11.4 Application Assessment

At each review stage, applications will be assessed on the extent to which they address the assessment criteria. Reviewers will provide a score for each criterion using the seven-point scale and associated score descriptors designated in the Peer Review Guide. Depending on the review type (peer or consumer) the same application question may be reviewed against different criteria and may form part of the review for more than one criterion. Refer to the tables summarizing the questions and review stage for further details

An overall score for each application will be determined using each reviewer's score for each assessment criterion. The overall score will take the weighting of each criterion into account. A ranked list of applications will be created.

All applications will be reviewed at Stage 1. The highest ranked applications will proceed to the next review stage (Stage 2).

Reviewers will consider Career Disruption/s and Relative to Opportunity when assessing track record.

11.4.1 Stage 1 Review: Executive Summary

Each application will be reviewed by up to five peer reviewers.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Potential for Outcomes

The Heart Foundation is looking to support high-impact cardiovascular research that is likely to produce results that will bring about significant change.

The proposal should describe tangible outcomes with the potential to improve cardiovascular health. The overview and team track record should give reviewers a full understanding of the research team's potential and/or experience and how that experience will achieve the proposed project outcomes.

Reviewers will consider how this project will affect the cardiovascular health of all Australians.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Potential for outcomes *Weighting*	*70%*		
Team track record	✓		
Project overview	✓		
Research environment	✓		
Expected outcomes	✓		

Addressing the purpose of the Vanguard Grant

The Heart Foundation is looking to support innovative research with the potential to be the next big breakthrough in cardiovascular research. The Vanguard Grant is essentially seed funding and reviewers will determine whether the proposal addresses the purpose of a Vanguard Grant.

A strong proposal is one that can concisely address how it is relevant to the purpose of this grant, how the applicant, together with their team, plan to integrate translational outcomes and the potential for this team to lead a successful research proposal for funding by a third-party funder and lead to widespread improvements in cardiovascular health practices.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Addressing the purpose of the Vanguard Grant *Weighting*	*30%*		
Relevance to the purpose of the Vanguard Grant	✓		
Leveraging funding	✓		
Translation and dissemination	✓		

11.4.2 Stage 2 Review: Detailed Review of the full application

Each application will be reviewed by up to five peer reviewers and two consumer reviewers.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Potential for Outcomes

The proposal should describe tangible outcomes with the potential to improve cardiovascular health. Consumer reviewers will consider how this project will engage consumers, address health equity and affect the cardiovascular health of all Australians.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Potential for outcomes *Weighting*			*40%*
Relevance to the purpose of the Vanguard Grant			✓
Consumer engagement			✓
Promoting Health Equity:			✓
1. Socioeconomically disadvantaged			✓
2. Regional, rural and remote			✓
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse			✓
4. First Nations Peoples			✓
5. Gender			✓
Translation and dissemination			✓

Quality and Feasibility of Research Proposal

The Heart Foundation is looking to support cardiovascular research projects where the application is well-written, clear and concise, the methodology is logical and well-explained, the budget is well-justified, and the expected outcomes are realistic and impactful.

Reviewers will assess the quality of the environment in which the research will be undertaken, the quality of the project and how achievable it is in the prescribed timeframe. The applicant must be able to show how they will deliver this project with the budget provided, it should be feasible and almost certain to be achieved within the term of the grant. If the project is beyond the scope of funding, are they able to identify other funding streams that will support the work.

The research environment should be very well matched with the proposed project and include remarkably high-quality administrative and technical support systems for the project.

A high-scoring application will provide a clear and concise design with negligible weakness and make an outstanding case that the project is fresh, innovative, and most importantly addressing a gap or major issue in cardiovascular health.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Quality and feasibility of research proposal *Weighting*		*60%*	*60%*
Project overview		✓	
Project synopsis			✓
Research environment		✓	✓
Research plan and figures:		✓	✓
1. Background		✓	✓
2. Method		✓	✓
3. Project milestones		✓	✓
4. References		✓	✓
Expected outcomes		✓	✓
Budget		✓	✓
Leveraging funding		✓	✓

Significance and Potential Impact of the research

The Heart Foundation is looking to support high-impact cardiovascular research that is likely to produce results and provide significant change.

Consumer engagement and health equity requirements have been introduced into applications as the end users of research need to be considered from the first to the last step.
When assessing applications, reviewers should consider what a consumer is (patients, doctors, nurses, carers, those with lived experience or the public) to understand the need for all proposals to address consumer engagement in a meaningful way.

It is important to note that not all proposals will be able to address all health equity areas, but it is important for the applicant to explain why or why they are not addressing these areas.

The proposal should demonstrate how the applicant plans to integrate translational outcomes, what happens once they have completed this funding, how the outcomes will be disseminated to consumers or the end user, and how they will lead to widespread improvements in cardiovascular health practices.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer Stage 1	Peer Stage 2	Consumer
Significance and potential impact of the research *Weighting*		*40%*	
Project team:		✓	
1. Chief investigator/s		✓	
2. Role in project		✓	
3. Team track record		✓	
Consumer engagement		✓	
Promoting health equity:		✓	
1. Socioeconomically disadvantaged		✓	
2. Regional, rural and remote		✓	
3. Culturally and linguistically diverse		✓	
4. First Nations Peoples		✓	
5. Gender		✓	
Translation and dissemination		✓	

12. Collaboration and Exchange Grant

The purpose of the Collaboration and Exchange Grant is to enable Heart Foundation funded Fellows and Scholars to visit research facilities in Australia or overseas to collaborate and exchange innovation and knowledge. This grant aims to strengthen the recipient's research capacity.

The Fellow or Scholar can apply to fund their travel costs to participate in the collaboration and exchange activities, or the travel costs of a carer.

12.1 Eligibility Criteria

- Applications must be submitted via the Heart Foundation Grants Management Portal.
- Applications are only open to recipients of Heart Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowships, Postgraduate Scholarships and First Nations CVD Grants (CIA and capacity building roles) who are currently receiving funding or whose funding ended within the past 12 months.
- Future Leader Fellows are not eligible to apply.
- The requested 'collaboration and exchange' activity must not be for more than six months.
- A Collaboration and Exchange Grant can be received only once per Fellowship, Scholarship or FNCVD Grant.
- Travel must take place between 1 January 2027 and 31 December 2027.

12.2 Specific Requirements

- The Collaboration and Exchange Grant will provide up to **$5,000** to fund the Fellow or Scholar's travel costs to participate in the 'collaboration and exchange' activities, or the travel costs of a carer.
- Funds will be distributed as a one-off payment at the commencement of the grant but must be acquitted against expenditure (and receipts provided).
- Funds may be used for any legitimate travel related expenses (e.g., airfares to and from destination, accommodation at destination, food at destination and conference registrations).
- Any funds for which legitimate receipts cannot be provided must be returned to the Heart Foundation.
- The funds may not be used to offset salary, stipend or leave entitlements, or to cover overheads. Funds may not be used to support project costs.
- Recipients will be required to provide a final report and financial acquittal at the completion of the grant, including copies of invoices.
- Grant recipients will be required to comment on the impact of the Collaboration and Exchange Grant in their Fellowship/Scholarship Impact Report.

12.3 Application Assessment

All review committee members will review all applications. There are no consumer reviews of the applications.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Quality of Collaboration and Exchange

Accounts for 100% of the score

This grant should build on the Fellow or Scholar's research project. Collaboration and exchange activities should strengthen the recipient's research capacity and ability to translate their research outcomes.

Reviewers will refer to the application questions as indicated in the table below when assessing this criterion.

Criterion	Peer
Quality of collaboration and exchange *Weighting*	*100%*
Travel duration - departure and return date	✓
Collaboration and exchange locations	✓
Conference name	✓
Description of conference	✓
Description of collaboration and exchange activity	✓
Budget allocation	✓

13. Peer Review Committees

The Heart Foundation employs a rigorous, transparent, and independent peer and consumer review process to assist in the selection of applications for research funding. Only eligible and complete applications will proceed to review. Reviewers consider Career Disruption/s and Relative to Opportunity when assessing an applicant's track record.

It is not appropriate for applicants or Administering Institutions to contact any of our reviewers to discuss assessment results or seek further feedback. Should this occur, applicants or Administering Institutions may be deemed ineligible for future applications.

Where possible, the Heart Foundation provides reviewer feedback on applications.

13.1 Committees

A review committee is established for each funding program. For stage 1 reviews, the committees are made up of peer experts only, selected from the peer assessors for the program. For stage 2 reviews (Postgraduate Scholarships, Postdoctoral and Future Leader Fellowships, Vanguard Grants), committees include both peers and consumer representatives. For programs with a single-stage review (First Nations CVD Grant), both peers and consumers participate, whereas the Collaboration & Exchange program involves only peers.

Peer reviewers are selected from researchers who have demonstrated specialised knowledge in their area covering biomedical, clinical, public health, and health services research. For each funding program, committees are created by drawing from this group of reviewers. Attention is given to ensure as far as possible that each committee reflects diversity, striving for a balanced representation of genders, participants from different Australian states and territories, and a variety of professional backgrounds.

Each review committee is led by a Chair, who oversees the entire assessment process. While the Chair may assess applications, their main role is to act as a neutral party and resolve any ties in application scores.

Consumers are involved in assessing only the second stage of an application, except in single-stage reviews like the First Nations CVD Grant, where they assess that stage. Consumer reviewers are volunteers and may include consumer representatives, patients, carers, health professionals, people with lived experience, and members of the broader community with an interest in heart disease.

In every stage of the assessment process, confidentiality is of the utmost importance. The integrity and discretion of reviewers is trusted to protect the confidential nature of all applications, not only concerning the contents of the applications but also the assessments. Peer reviewers will:

- comply with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)
- comply with the Heart Foundation's privacy policy
- be fair and timely in their reviews
- act in confidence and not disclose the content or outcome of any process in which they participate
- not enter any part of an application, or any information from an application, into an artificial intelligence / machine learning / natural language processing tool to assist in their assessment of an application
- ensure that they are informed about, and comply with, the criteria to be applied
- not take undue or calculated advantage of knowledge obtained during the peer review process

- declare all Conflicts of Interest (COI)
- not permit personal prejudice to influence the peer review process and will not introduce considerations that are not relevant to the review criteria
- be aware of and avoid allowing their conscious or unconscious biases to influence their assessments
- consider research that challenges, or changes accepted ways of thinking
  consider their expert knowledge of their field of research

Any information or documents made available to Committee members during peer review are confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than to fulfil their assessor role.

13.2 Conflicts of Interest

Before the commencement of any peer or consumer reviews, each member of our committees must complete a COI declaration in the Grants Management Portal. At any time throughout the process, a committee member can update their COI declaration.

13.2.1 Peer Reviewers

Conflict Levels and Management Actions

Level	Examples of Conflict	Required Action	Additional Detail
Level 1: High Risk	• Direct collaboration with applicant/applicant supervisor • Co-authors of co-grant applicants (within last 5 years) • Proposed future co-authorship or grant application • Current or previous supervisor or mentor of applicant • Current personal relationship (applicant, family, close friend, partner, spouse) • Financial interest in outcome • Verbal or written dispute • Same institution in similar research area • Same department • Intellectual property interests	Must declare conflict Will not assess application	These conflicts present a clear and direct risk to impartiality. Reviewers will be excused from assessing application.
Level 2: Moderate Risk	• Collaboration in different area (within last 5 years) • Co-authors or co-grant applicants (over 5 years ago) • Close colleague collaboration (within last 5 years) • Same institution with knowledge of applicant/application/applicant supervisor • Professional relationship (within last 5 years) with family member, close friend, partner, spouse • Personal relationship (within last 5 years) with family member, close friend, partner, spouse • Consulting, or advisory roles	Must declare conflict Will not assess application	These conflicts may influence judgment and represent a potential risk. Reviewers will be excused from assessing application.

Level 3: Low Risk	• Collaboration in same area (over 5 years ago) • Same institution, no knowledge of applicant • Professional relationship (over 5 years ago) with family member, close friend, partner, spouse • Personal relationship (over 5 years ago) with family member, close friend, partner, spouse	Must declare conflict May assess application	These conflicts are historical or indirect. Disclosure is required, but exclusion is not mandatory unless further concerns arise.

13.2.2 Consumer Reviewers

Level	Conflict	Action
Level 1: Highest level of conflict	Reviewer: – has a current personal relationship (family member, close friend, partner, or spouse) with an applicant, – has a financial interest in the outcome, – is a current work colleague, – is a current/Past consumer representative on the project.	Conflict must be declared, and the reviewer may not assess application nor be involved in any conversation regarding the application.
Level 2: Medium level of conflict	Reviewer: – is a previous work colleague, – has a personal relationship with the applicant in the last 10 years.	Conflict must be declared; however, the reviewer is still able to assess the application

13.3 Scoring System

The Heart Foundation uses a 1-7 scoring system in its review process.

At each review stage, reviewers assess the applications on the extent to which they address the assessment criteria. Reviewers provide a score for each criterion using the seven-point scale and associated score descriptors designated in the Reviewer Guide for the specific funding program. Reviewers will log into the Grants Management Portal to conduct their reviews.

An overall score for each application is determined using each reviewer's score for each criterion. The overall score will take the percentage weighting of each criterion into account. A ranked list of applications will be created and used to determine which applications proceed to the next stage of application (Future Leader Fellowships only), review or will be offered funding.

14. Application Budgets

14.1 Stipend/Salary Support

A stipend is a fixed regular sum paid as a salary or allowance. Stipend support is provided with Postgraduate Scholarship funding and must be allocated only to the salary of the scholar.

Salary support is provided with Future Leader Fellowships and Postdoctoral Fellowships to assist with their employment and must be allocated only to the salary of the Fellow.

Stipends and Salary support do not include Superannuation Guarantee, workers compensation, leave loading, payroll tax or other on costs.

14.2 Project Support

Project Support, provided with Future Leader Fellowships, Vanguard Grants and the First Nations CVD Grant, is to support the costs of conducting the proposed research. The costs must be directly related and integral to achieving the outcomes of the project. Project support funds cannot be used to supplement the salary of the CIA.

Project support funds **must not** be used for facility, administrative or other indirect costs that would be provided by the Administering Institution.

Two categories of Project support expenditure are available:

14.2.1 Personnel Costs

This category is for the cost of personnel required to conduct the project and may include but is not limited to: Project Manager/Officer, Site Coordinator, Research Coordinator / Assistant, Consumer Engagement, Information Technology support, Consultants, Data Analysis.

14.2.2 Other Research Costs

Other types of research costs may include but are not limited to (provided they are integral to the proposed research):

- Biomarkers
- Blood tests
- Genomic sequencing
- Specialised computer hardware or software
- Tablet computers
- Training equipment, materials, manuals and other training costs
- Data collection
- Data linkage
- Data storage
- Cost of interviews
- Participant reimbursement
- Laboratory consumables
- Animal costs
- Travel
- Ethics and/or governance fees
- Cost of advertisements
- Printing costs

14.2.3 Prohibited Costs

Project Support funds may **not** be used for the following types of expenditure:

1. salary for the applicant (CIA) or other Chief Investigators
2. stipend for a postgraduate student
3. administrative or employment costs and overheads

14.3 Collaboration and Exchange Grants

This grant is intended to support the travel of the recipient to conferences and /or exchange activities. There are four budgetary options:

- Accommodation
- Flight
- Conference costs
- Other travel related costs

14.4 Innovation Awards

An Innovation Award provided by the Heart Foundation may be used to:

- support the salary of a person (other than the awardee) to conduct part of the grant activity
- pay for consumables to be used in connection with the grant activity
- for other related costs that have not been exclusively prohibited for the program that this award is connected to

An Innovation Award may not be used to:

- support the salary of the awardee or administrative costs
- support the stipend of a PhD or Master's Degree student

15. Funding Agreements

Upon the successful awarding of a grant or funding, both the recipient and their Administering Institutions are required to enter into a formal agreement with the Heart Foundation by signing the Heart Foundation's Funding Agreement. This step is essential, as acceptance and compliance with the agreement's terms are prerequisites for grant eligibility and disbursement.

Key Elements of the Funding Agreement

- **Detailed Provisions**: These guidelines and the Funding Agreement outlines all terms and conditions governing the grant, including reporting requirements, grant stipulations, and procedures for amendments.
- **Understanding and Acknowledgement**: Both the recipient and their Administering Institutions are encouraged to thoroughly review the Funding Agreement. Familiarity with its provisions is important for a smooth commencement and execution of the grant-supported activities, ensuring all parties are aligned with their roles and responsibilities.
- **Responsiveness to Concerns**: Recognising the importance of fairness and equity in our funding operations, the Heart Foundation is committed to addressing any concerns regarding specific terms of the Funding Agreement. While the foundational structure of the agreement remains consistent to uphold the integrity and objectives of our grant programs, we welcome inquiries or requests for clarification on any of its terms. Our team is available to discuss and provide further information to ensure mutual understanding and agreement.
- **Administering Institution Coordination**: The Administering Institution plays a central role in overseeing the grant-supported research activities, ensuring all reporting and compliance requirements as stipulated in the Funding Agreement are met.

Program-Specific Provisions: Certain grants may come with unique considerations, detailed in the Funding Agreement. These are tailored to the specific requirements of different funding programs and are designed with the intent of supporting the program's unique objectives.

Navigating the Agreement Together

The Heart Foundation is dedicated to maintaining an open and transparent dialogue with our grant recipients and their institutions. Should you have any concerns or need further explanations regarding the Funding Agreement, we encourage you to reach out to us. Our goal is to facilitate a collaborative partnership that not only supports groundbreaking cardiovascular research but also aligns with best practices in contract fairness and compliance.

For assistance or enquiries related to the Funding Agreement, please do not hesitate to contact the Heart Foundation's Research Program team.

16. Compliance Reporting

16.1 Progress and Impact Reports

As a part of the terms outlined in the Funding Agreement, grant recipients are obliged to provide periodic progress reports and a comprehensive Impact Report upon completion of the funding period. These reports assist the Heart Foundation to showcase the progress and achievement of funding research to our donors and stakeholders, demonstrating the tangible impact on cardiovascular health in Australia.

Submitting a Progress Report

- **Scheduling**: Grantees should refer to Annexure A of their Funding Agreement for specific deadlines for their progress reports.
- **Compliance**: Timely submission is critical. Delays or failures to submit may affect subsequent disbarments and could impact future funding eligibility for both the researcher and the Administering Institution.

Submitting an Impact Report

- **Scheduling**: This report is due 15 months after the funding end date. Submission details and specified dates are listed in Annexure A of the Funding Agreement. Submission is made via the Grants Management Portal.

16.2 Financial Acquittals

Administering Institutions are required to submit a detailed financial acquittal annually, aligning actual expenditure with the items and amounts approved in the Funding Agreement.

Financial acquittals are due within 3 months of the end of a calendar year (by 31 March) and within 3 months of the end of the Funding Agreement. All financial acquittals require endorsement by the Administering Institution's Finance Officer (FO).

Funding from the Heart Foundation must be expended according to the approved application budget.

Key Requirements for Financial Acquittals

- **Expenditure Reporting**: Classification of expenditure categories must be as itemised in the application budget.
- **Budget Integrity**: Shifting funds between budget categories is not allowed without prior approval from the Heart Foundation.
- **Carrying Over Funds**: Any unspent funds by the year's end require Heart Foundation approval to be carried over or returned. Any such request must be accompanied by a detailed justification of the reasons for funds not being expended.

Submitting a Financial Acquittal

- **Scheduling**: Financial acquittals must be submitted by 31 March of the following year for the preceding calendar year's funds. Financial acquittals are to be submitted via the Grants Management Portal. Administering Institutions and grantees should refer to Annexure A of their Funding Agreement for the exact due dates of all financial acquittals that are due during the agreement.

Non-Compliance: Failure to submit by the deadline can result in halted payments and may affect future funding opportunities.

Upon funding termination, a final financial acquittal is required and any balance specified as remaining unspent will be invoiced by the Heart Foundation. Any unspent funds will need to be returned to the Heart Foundation, as unauthorised carry-over or spending is prohibited.

Transferring funds between different Heart Foundation grants is not permitted.

Carry-over of unspent funds

Requests for carrying over funds into the next year must be detailed in the financial acquittal submission, with detailed justification. Grantees, in conjunction with their Administering Institution's finance department, should ensure that carry-over amounts are accurate. For unspent funds at the funding period's end, a formal request for an extension (known as a Variation Request) or the return of funds is necessary.

When requesting to carry-over funds, the following should be considered:

- **Stipends/Salary**: Stipend/salary support funding should have been expended unless the grantee has taken leave of absence throughout the year.
- **Project Support Funds**: Grantees are permitted to carry-over unexpended Project support funds, provided the funds will be expended as per the approved application budget.
- **Innovation Award Funds**: Innovation Award funding must be expended as detailed in the award letter/funding agreement and may be carried over.

For further details on the reporting and acquittal process, including how to submit variation or extension requests, please refer to the guidelines provided in Annexure A of your Funding Agreement or contact our grants administration team.

17. Invoicing and Payments

The Heart Foundation is committed to supporting cardiovascular research through funding provided directly to Administering Institutions, as designated in the grant application. Our financial operations, including invoicing and payments, adhere to a structured calendar year framework, ensuring transparency and predictability for all parties involved.

The Heart Foundation operates on a calendar year basis. Funds not invoiced within the calendar year may not be available after 31 December of that year.

Funding Disbursement Guidelines

- **Administering Institution**: All grant payments are made directly to the Administering Institution specified in the grant application. It is the responsibility of the Administering Institution to manage the funds in accordance with the agreed terms.
- **Payment Schedule**:
  - **Stipend/Salary Support**: If funding includes a stipend or salary support, these payments will be made quarterly.
  - **Project Support Funds**: Project Support amounts will be paid quarterly.
- **GST Considerations:** All invoices submitted to the Heart Foundation should be inclusive of Goods and Services Tax (GST) where applicable (Heart Foundation Postgraduate Scholarship invoices should be **exclusive** of GST). It is crucial for Administering Institutions to comply with current Australian Taxation Office (ATO) guidelines regarding GST.
- **Invoice Submission**:
  - **Procedure:** Tax Invoices must be accurately prepared and submitted via the Grants Management Portal during the **first month** of each **quarter**. This ensures timely processing and payment within the relevant funding period.
  - **Year-End Consideration**: It is essential to note that funds not invoiced by the Administering Institution within the designated calendar year may not be carried over post-31 December of that year, underscoring the importance of timely invoice submission.

Support and Assistance

The Heart Foundation Research Program is here to assist with any queries or clarifications needed regarding the invoicing and payment process. Our goal is to facilitate a seamless financial administration process that supports the vital research conducted by our grant recipients.

18. Funding Agreement Variations

The Heart Foundation recognises that circumstances can evolve, potentially impacting the ability of grantees to proceed with their research exactly as planned. In such instances, a variation to the Funding Agreement may be necessary to accommodate these changes and ensure the continuity and integrity of the research.

Types of Variation Requests and Submission Guidelines

Grantees may seek amendments to their Funding Agreement for the following reasons, with requests to be submitted via the Grants Management Portal by the Administering Institution:

- **Defer commencement date**: Adjusting the project's commencement to accommodate unforeseen delays.
- **Leave of absence**: Pausing the grant for significant personal reasons.
- **Extension request**: Extending the grant duration to complete research activities.
- **Change in Administering Institution**: Transferring the grant to another eligible institution.
- **Change in full-time equivalent (FTE)**: Modifying the grantee's committed time.
- **Grant relinquishment**: Formally ending the grant before its completion.

For modifications concerning the project's budget or research plan, grantees are encouraged to initiate discussions with the Research Program team. Please email research@heartfoundation.org.au prior to the grant's scheduled end date.

Assessment and Approval Process

The Heart Foundation reviews all variation requests on an individual basis with reference to these Funding Guidelines and the individual grant agreement. These documents guide our decision-making process, ensuring that all requests are evaluated with fairness and transparency and in alignment with the agreed rules and regulations. It is important that grantees provide as much information and supporting documentation as possible with their variation request to allow the Heart Foundation to make informed decisions.

We are committed to supporting our grantees through unforeseen challenges and changes, aiming to facilitate flexible solutions that allow for the successful completion of valuable cardiovascular research.

19. Obligations of Grant Recipients

Grant recipients play a crucial role in advancing cardiovascular health through research supported by the Heart Foundation. The Funding Agreement, specifically in section 16 “Acknowledgments and Publicity”, outlines the obligations of grant recipients, which are important for promoting the impact of research and maintaining the integrity and recognition of the Heart Foundation's contributions. Grant recipients are expected to contact the Research Program in advance of:

- publications going to press, and
- delivery of conference presentations (where possible)
- acknowledge the Heart Foundation in publications and presentations
- provide details of published papers to the Research Program
- participate in peer review of applications
- participate in Heart Foundation promotional initiatives

There are many opportunities to promote research at the Heart Foundation. To do this, we need the cooperation of researchers and institutions. This section elaborates on these obligations and the opportunities available for researchers to engage with and promote their work.

19.1 Your Researcher Profile

Upon accepting your funding offer, you will be invited to access an induction pack and to complete a Researcher Q&A in the Grants Management Portal, including providing the Heart Foundation with a high-resolution portrait photograph. This information will assist the Heart Foundation in promoting the achievements of its Research Funding Program.

19.2 Media

The Heart Foundation has a reputation for providing reliable information on cardiovascular health and the media often approach us for stories or comments. Our media team will work collaboratively with researchers and institutions to promote research to the wider community.

If you have a publication due for release, please contact us at research@heartfoundation.org.au. The Heart Foundation Media and Communications team will help you assess whether your findings would be of interest to journalists and the wider community.

19.3 Social Media

The Heart Foundation has a strong social media following who love hearing about our funded research. Using social media is a terrific way to show off research and stay connected with fellow researchers. We ask researchers who receive funding to tag us in their posts.

 @heartfoundation

 HeartFoundationAU

 HeartFoundationAU

 Heart Foundation / Heart Foundation Research Alumni

Researchers can also forward any posts, messages, or content to research@heartfoundation.org.au and we will publish them as appropriate on our social media channels.

19.4 Publications and Presentations

The main purpose of Heart Foundation funding research is to have an impact on the cardiovascular health of all Australians. For that reason, grant recipients should advise the Heart Foundation of any publications or presentations relating to projects we are currently or have previously funded. Grantees must acknowledge the support of the Heart Foundation in any publication or presentation, public announcements, social media posting, advertising material, research reports or any other material relating to the funded research.

Examples of our preferred acknowledgment are in the format:

- [Title] [Surname] was supported by a [Grant Name, (Grant ID number)] from the National Heart Foundation of Australia.
- This work was supported by a [Grant Name (Grant ID number)] from the National Heart Foundation of Australia.

19.5 Logo Guidelines

When funded researchers are publishing a paper or doing a presentation, they can use the Heart Foundation logo to promote the funding connection. There are a variety of branding options available to best suit any collateral. Further details including correct use of the logo are available in the Researcher Induction Pack provided to all new grantees.

19.6 Campaigns and Appeals

To maintain research funding levels, the Heart Foundation relies on the generosity of donors. To keep them engaged, the Heart Foundation delivers annual marketing campaigns complemented by smaller more personalised donor appeals. All campaigns and appeals are themed and feature a case study matched with a piece of currently funded research. The Heart Foundation Research Program may reach out to researchers where there is an alignment to particular case studies.

19.7 Alumni

The Heart Foundation has a proud history of supporting outstanding researchers and we are delighted to be bringing together our previously funded researchers through our Alumni Program.

On conclusion of their funding, Heart Foundation grant recipients are automatically entered into our Alumni database. Heart Foundation Alumni may have access to additional exclusive webinars, events and newsletters. The Heart Foundation appreciates the length of time research takes to develop and achieve impact. Researchers are likely to publish future results based on work completed during the Heart Foundation funding period, and the Alumni program is a platform to continue active engagement with the Heart Foundation.

The Heart Foundation is committed to supporting and promoting the work of our grant recipients. By fulfilling these obligations and engaging with the provided opportunities, researchers can significantly contribute to the Heart Foundation's mission of improving cardiovascular health for all Australia.