



NATIONAL BLOOD AUTHORITY
AUSTRALIA

National Blood Sector Research and Development Program

Grant Opportunity Guidelines Round 4

> CLOSING DATE AND TIME:
11:59pm, 5 April 2019
Australian Eastern Daylight Time (AEDT)

These Grant Opportunity Guidelines should be consulted when completing applications for the National Blood Sector Research and Development Program.

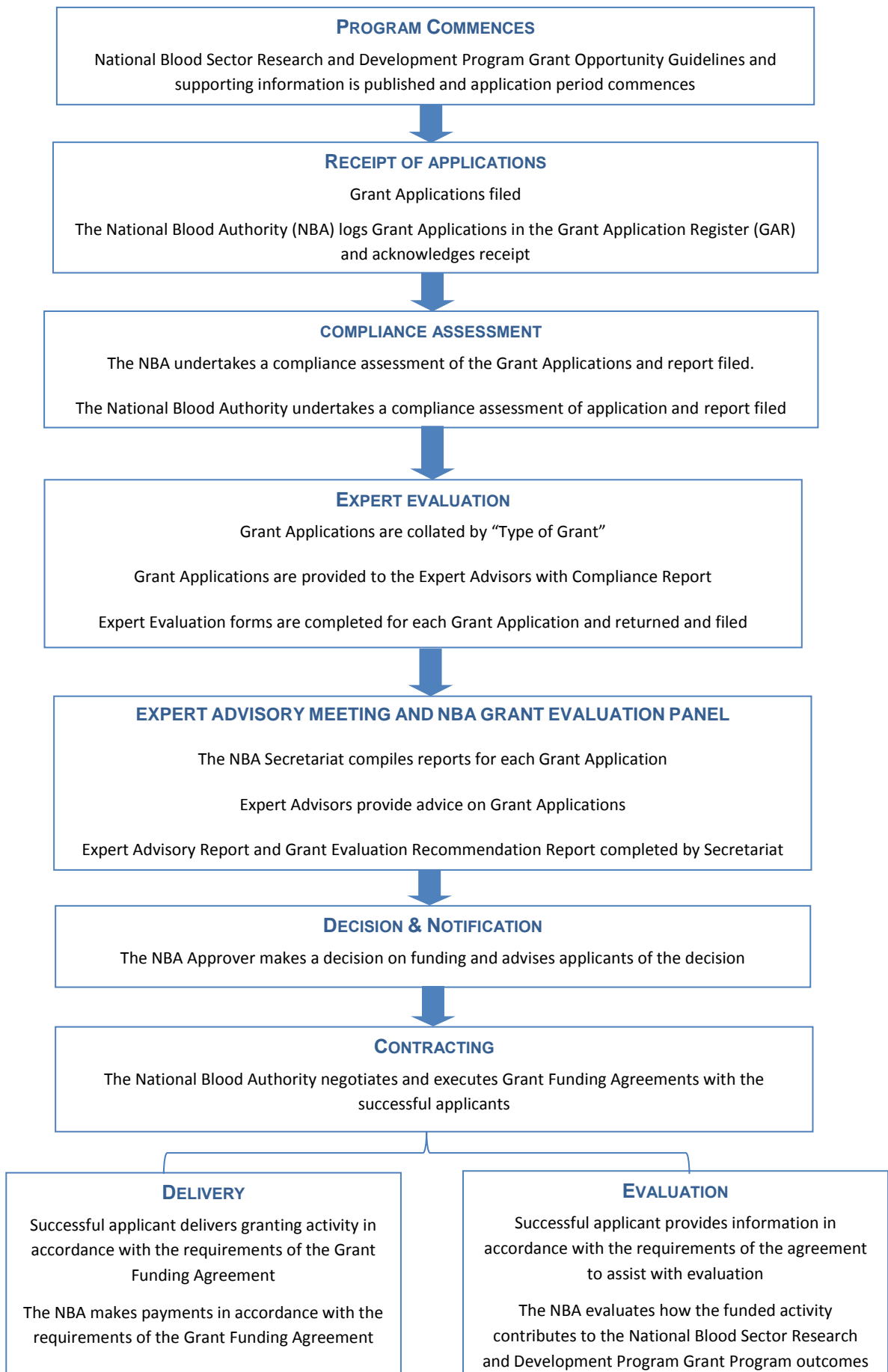


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Process Flowchart



1. Introduction

In December 2011, the Jurisdictional Blood Committee (JBC) agreed to the development of a strategy to promote blood sector specific research. In 2013, the *National Blood Research and Development Strategic Priorities 2013-2016* (Version 4.1, 5 March 2013) were published on the National Blood Authority (NBA) website following broad consultation and stakeholder input. During 2014 and 2015 a two-step business case for a blood sector specific research and development framework was completed, and JBC endorsement was obtained for a Pilot to inform the development of a National Blood Sector Research and Development Program (Program). It was developed to provide niche funding to support projects in two identified target areas relating to existing priority programs under the national blood arrangements, namely:

1. efficient and effective utilisation of immunoglobulin products
2. patient blood management research gaps.

Following the success of the Pilot, a preliminary evaluation was undertaken that confirmed that the Pilot fulfilled a key niche not addressed by other funding providers and that provision of blood sector specific research and development (R&D) funding does have the potential to deliver on its stated objectives. A proposal to JBC to continue the provision of blood sector specific R&D funding through a National Blood Sector R&D Program was accepted and an initial two further funding rounds in 2018 and 2019 endorsed.

Under section 8(l)(h) of the *National Blood Authority Act 2003* and clause 25(n) of the National Blood Agreement, the NBA is charged '...to facilitate and fund appropriate research, policy development or other action in relation to new developments by relevant government or non-government persons or bodies' on behalf of state and territory governments. A total of \$1.275 million is available under Round 4 of the Program for single year or multiple year projects. Funding will commence in the 2019-20 financial year and will cease on 31 December 2022. Multi-year projects must be scheduled for completion and final payment made on or before 31 December 2022.

These Grant Opportunity Guidelines (Guidelines) apply to all projects considered for funding under the Program.

1.1 Program Outcome

The Program is to facilitate world-class research and development in Australia that contributes to optimising the use, management and administration of blood products, and improve patient outcomes.

1.2 Objectives of the National Blood Sector Research and Development Framework

The objectives of the National Blood Sector Research and Development Framework are to:

1. enhance the sustainability and affordability of the national supply of blood products, including through increased efficiency and reduced blood product usage and wastage
2. identify appropriate use and reduce inappropriate use of blood products
3. maintain or enhance clinical outcomes for patients

by providing evidence or new knowledge to:

4. understand the biological action of blood products
5. identify optimum treatment, dosing or indications for use for blood products

6. compare the use of blood products with alternative strategies and treatments.

It is proposed that pursuing these objectives will enhance opportunities for blood sector specific research and build research capacity through:

1. encouraging priority-driven research related to the use and management of blood products
2. funding research aimed at addressing gaps in evidence, including where that will inform policy development and program implementation
3. fostering collaboration between researchers and other stakeholders to build Australia's research capacity relating to the use and management of blood products
4. facilitating translation of research to improve patient outcomes and cost effectiveness.

1.3 Continuous improvement objectives

The continuous improvement objectives of the Program are to:

1. confirm that the blood sector specific Research and Development Program continues to deliver on its stated objectives
2. maintain administrative processes to support various research components, including potential Program documentation and promotion, application rounds, evaluation of applications, funding of projects, and contract management and reporting
3. review governance processes for oversight of research application and funding programs.

1.4 Focus and Scope of the Program

The Program will be focussed on research areas that have been identified by pre-existing strategic programs of the NBA and governments in the blood sector:

- Patient Blood Management (PBM) evidence gaps, as identified in each module of the PBM Guidelines
- efficient and effective use of immunoglobulin (Ig) products, as highlighted through the Ig Governance Program.

1.4.1 Patient Blood Management

The PBM guidelines have resulted from exhaustive systematic reviews of the published evidence. These reviews have identified a large number of areas where additional research is required. These research gaps are articulated in each of the six Modules of the PBM Guidelines within the 'Future Directions' chapter. The PBM guidelines and the extensive systematic reviews are available for researchers to access on the NBA website at <http://www.blood.gov.au/pbm-guidelines>.

1.4.2 Immunoglobulin

The broad priority areas for research were identified through consultation with the Ig governance groups including Specialist Working Groups and the National Ig Governance Advisory Committee.

These broad areas are:

1. Dosing and administration:
 - pharmacokinetic studies - minimal effective dosing including lean body weight dosing
 - approaches to dosing including frequency and titration of Ig therapy
 - weaning off/cessation of Ig therapy
 - relative effectiveness of routes of administration.

2. Use of alternative or concurrent therapies that reduce reliance on Ig therapy.
3. Predictors relating to:
 - selecting patients for/responders to Ig therapy
 - achieving long term remission.

1.5 Grant Types

While the NBA will provide funding under three different grant categories (see table below), the research approach in each of these categories may encompass a wide range of activities including but not limited to clinical trials, surveys, secondary research, translational research, epidemiological investigations etc.

Type	Indicative \$ amount	Duration	Description
Project Grant	Typically \$30-150k per annum	Expended over period up to 3 years	Entire, discrete research project proposal
Seed Grant	Typically under \$50k	Expended over period up to 1 year	Seed funding for early stages of innovative new research effort Generation of preliminary data needed to support future grant application
Scholarship	Typically \$25-30k per annum for post graduate students and postdoctoral research fellows	Expended over period up to 1 year	Intended to support medical researcher in attainment of PhD or Master's degree or postdoctoral research fellow research

1.6 Roles and Responsibilities

The NBA will maintain transparent processes by providing clear but concise advice including:

- information for grant applicants
- information about grant round outcomes provided on the NBA website and the GrantConnect website.

Grant Recipients will be required (as applicable) to:

- register their research in the relevant research register such as but not limited to:
 - International Prospective Register of Systematic Reviews (for non-Cochrane Reviews)
 - Cochrane Database for Systematic Reviews if funding is to complete this type of review
 - Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry for clinical trials.
- publish research outcomes
- acknowledge the NBA as the funding source.

The Approver for projects under the Program is the Chief Executive Officer of the NBA (Australia).

For the purposes of these Guidelines, the *Grant Recipient* means the organisation that will submit the Grant Application and will have responsibility for delivery of the project, if funded.

1.7 Eligibility

1.7.1 Who is eligible for funding?

The Program is a competitive grant program.

A Grant Recipient must be a legal entity and have an Australian Business Number (ABN) or an Australian Company Number (ACN) to receive funding under the program.

Grant Recipients must be listed on the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) as an Administering Institution. This policy is available at:

<https://nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/administering-institution-policy.pdf>

The list of NHMRC registered Administering Institutions can be found at:

<https://nhmrc.gov.au/funding/manage-your-funding/nhmrcs-administering-institutions>

It is required that, at the time of submitting an application and for the duration of a grant, the Principal Chief Investigator and Chief Investigators (for Project and Seed Grants) and Scholars (for Scholarships) are an Australian Citizen or a Permanent Australian Resident or a New Zealand citizen with Special Category Visa (subclass 444) status. , The NBA may waive this requirement where it can be demonstrated that the research is based in Australia and will benefit health and medical research in Australia.

Requests to waive this requirement need to be made by the Research Administration Office of the Administering Institution on behalf of the Scholar/Applicant at the time of submitting the application. The request to waiver must also demonstrate how the research will benefit health and medical research in Australia and confirmation that the research is based in Australia.

Administering Institutions are responsible for certifying and ensuring that these requirements are met. The NBA may request further information in relation to these requirements, including evidence of residency and/or citizenship.

Applicants are required to provide information on all current grants and concurrent grant applications.

Applicants and Administering Institutions are required to indicate their full or partial agreement with the draft Grant Funding Agreement. Scholarship applicants are also required to complete a Scholar Acknowledgement form if successful.

The NBA must be assured that the funding request is unique to the research requirements contained within the submitted application. Salaries from concurrent grants should not exceed an individual's full time salary.

For Project Grants, funding will only be provided for Direct Research Costs. The principles below should be applied to determine if a cost is a 'Direct Research Cost':

- The cost must be integral to achieving the objectives and outcomes of the Research Activity as set out in the Application for Funding for that Research Activity.
- The cost must be directly related to the grant proposal as set out in the Application for Funding for that Research Activity.
- The cost must not be for a facility or an administrative cost that would be provided by an institution in the normal course of undertaking and supporting health and medical research.

The following information about successful applicants will be uploaded on to the NBA website and the Whole of Government GrantConnect website:

- Research Aim
- Recipient(s) (by name)
- Administering institution
- Value
- Approval Date
- Grant Term (months)
- Grant Funding Location

Applicants will be required to consent to this information being made available on the NBA and GrantConnect websites in order to receive a grant.

1.7.2 What is not eligible for funding

Funding cannot be used for the purchase of capital works, general maintenance costs, telephone/communication systems, basic office equipment such as desks and chairs, rent and the cost of utilities. Funding must be used for costs associated with the undertaking the research project.

The Australian Red Cross Blood Service (the Blood Service) is provided funding for research and development activities determined under a Blood Service Research and Development Framework, agreed under a Deed of Agreement between the Blood Service and the NBA on behalf of all Australian governments. Research applications from the Blood Service or Blood Service Personnel or associates, or in connection with projects being conducted, for research purposes within the scope of that Framework will be ineligible under the Program.

Research already funded by the NBA under an existing contractual agreement will be considered ineligible under the Program.

Funding will not be provided for an NBA Scholarship if the applicant is receiving an existing personal scholarship.

2. Probity

The NBA is committed to ensuring that the process for providing funding under the Program is transparent and in accordance with these Grant Opportunity Guidelines. The NBA is also committed to ensuring that it will maintain transparent processes by providing clear but concise advice to applicants in accordance with its roles and responsibilities in section 1.6 of these Guidelines.

2.1 Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest may exist, for example, if an applicant or any of the members of the project team:

- has a relationship (whether professional, commercial or personal) with a party who is able to influence the appraisal process, such as an NBA staff member or Expert Advisors
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict a successful funding proponent from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain as a result of the granting of funding under the Program.

All Expert Reviewers, Advisors and NBA Staff are required to complete the standard NBA Conflict of Interest declaration form. The management of these declarations will be considered in accordance with the NBA management of Conflicts of Interest process.

In addition to the general declaration process, the NBA also requires Expert Reviewers to consider and declare any relationships with an applicant or its chief investigator. The Chair of the Expert Reviewer group will be asked to consider the declarations and rate them as either high or low. If considered to be 'high', the Expert Reviewer will not be allocated as 'primary' or 'secondary' reviewer for that application and will be asked to leave the room during deliberations of that particular application. This process will be used for all Expert Reviewers where a 'high' conflict of interest is found to exist. It will not preclude the Expert Reviewer from participating in the review of other applications.

Under the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement, Grant Recipients are required to declare a Conflict of Interest where the applicant or the Grant Recipient subsequently identifies that an actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest exists or might arise in relation to their application for funding. The Grant Recipient must inform the NBA in writing immediately.

2.2 Handling Information

The NBA collects information from applicants, including personal information, to assess their eligibility for funding. The NBA may give some or all of this information to Australian Government agencies, persons or organisations for the purposes of assessing applications and related purposes. Personal information will be used, stored and disclosed in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988*.

Applicants should identify any specific information which is to be treated as confidential and provide legally justifiable reasons as to why it needs to remain confidential. The NBA may still be required to disclose confidential information as permitted and required by law.

All information submitted to the NBA is subject to the requirements of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

3. Submitting an Application

All Project and Seed Grant applications must be submitted using the application for Project and Seed Grant Form.

All Scholarship funding applications must be submitted using the application for Scholarship Form. Scholarship applicants are also required to submit a completed Scholarship Acknowledgement Form.

All of the above forms are located at <https://www.blood.gov.au/research-and-development>.

Applications must be lodged electronically on or before 11:59pm on 5 April 2019, (Australian Eastern Daylight Time) and in accordance with the response lodgement procedures set out in the format and form relevant form as set out above.

Applications lodged wholly or partly after the Closing Time will be deemed to be late. A late application will not be admitted to the assessment process unless it is shown that the lateness was due solely to mishandling of the application by the NBA.

Applications must be emailed to:

R&D@blood.gov.au marked for the attention of the Program Director.

4. Appraisal

4.1. Compliance Assessment

A compliance check will be undertaken by NBA officers on all grant applications to ensure all key information is present. If all key information is not present and in the required form such applications may be considered invalid and may not be considered further.

The compliance check will seek to ensure that the application:

- is completed in English in a usable electronic format
- uses the correct Application Form for the type of grant being sought
- provides attachments as requested within the Application Form
- provides contact details as required in the Application Form
- includes ALL signatures and approvals as required in the Application Form
- addresses the evaluation criteria as required in the Application Form
- confirms that the administering institution is registered under the NHMRC Administering Institutions policy 2015
- confirms that the research will be completed within the required timeframes
- confirms that the research will be conducted predominately within Australia
- confirms that the Principal Chief Investigator (for Project and Seed Grants) and Applicant (for Scholarship Grants) is an Australian citizen, a permanent resident of Australia, or a New Zealand citizen with Special Category Visa (subclass 444) status. or, a waiver for this requirement has been submitted and there is demonstrated evidence of how the research will benefit health and medical research in Australia.

4.2 Assessment Process

Based on the information provided in the application form, the NBA will undertake a value for money assessment of proposals against the criteria outlined below. The assessment will be undertaken by a panel of Expert Reviewers. The Expert Review Panel is comprised of members of the PBM Steering Committee, Expert Working Group or Clinical Reference Groups, members of the Ig Governance groups (National Ig Governance Advisory Committee or Specialist Working Groups) or referred nominees.

4.3 Assessment Criteria

This section sets out the evaluation criteria that will be utilised to assess value for money. Applicants should note that the evaluation criteria are not listed in any order of importance.

Applications will be assessed as to whether they meet the minimum content and formatting requirements as set out in Section 4.1 of the Guidelines. Applications will be also assessed on the basis of the following evaluation criteria:

- Research Scope, Focus and Potential Value
- Quality
- Governance and Ethics

- Efficient and Effective Use of Funds.

4.3.1 Research Scope, Focus and Potential Value

Assessment against this criterion will consider whether a project will contribute to the Outcome of the Program.

Key considerations will include, but may not be limited to:

- whether the proposal aligns with the Outcome of the Program (see Sections 1.1, 1.2, 1.3).

4.3.2 Quality

An assessment against this criterion will consider:

- whether the study design methods include a clear research plan
- whether the proposal has a clearly defined hypothesis/es, objectives and outcomes
- the capacity to achieve the proposed outcomes to a suitable quality with the available resources, timeframe and budget
- consideration of strengths and weaknesses of the experimental design/methodology
- the research team (for Project and Seed Grants)
- relevant prior research experience (e.g. projects of similar size and complexity as the proposed project)
- the appropriate mix of expertise for the project
- the publications record (attached and relevant)
- the research scholar and supervisor (for scholarship)
- whether there is an experienced supervisor with a track record of successful post graduate completions
- whether the student is of high quality with a sound referee report from the primary supervisor.

Page 7 of the Scholarship Application Form and page 8 of the Project Grants and Seed Grants Application Form requires a comment on how feasible is it that the advised milestones will be met.

Applicants must outline whether the milestones are realistic and achievable, or not and justify why you believe this may be the case.

4.3.3 Governance and Ethics

Assessment against this criterion will seek to confirm that:

- appropriate oversight, and governance arrangements are in place
- all organisations, collaborators and partners involved in the research have been identified and have indicated commitment
- an appropriate lead applicant has been identified for dealings with the NBA
- required Human Research Ethics Committee approvals have been obtained
- research will be conducted in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
- the application describes robust data governance arrangements
- the application describes appropriate consent and privacy arrangements
- the Grant Recipient agrees to the NBA draft Funding Agreement and reporting requirements
- appropriate accountability, probity and transparency arrangements are in place
- appropriate reporting arrangements are in place between the applicant and the Grant Recipient
- there is a commitment to publish reports and findings

- all relevant Conflict of Interests have been declared, considered and managed.

4.3.4 Efficient and Effective Use of Funds

Assessment against this appraisal criterion is intended to consider whether the research proposal indicates an efficient and effective use of NBA funding, including that:

- all other financial and non-financial contributions to the proposed research project are identified, adequate, and sufficiently secured;
- the research proposal does not duplicate funding potentially available under other government programs, and does not relate to Blood Service research within the scope of the Blood Service R&D Funding Framework under the Blood Service Deed of Agreement;
- the research Administering Institution demonstrates capacity to effectively and efficiently manage research projects successfully; and
- it is likely that the research will be completed within the allocated timeframe to a suitable standard including:
 - career interruptions
 - competing work commitments (other research, teaching, clinical and administrative demands)
 - status of ethics approvals
 - cooperation of/support from collaborating/participating organisations/institutions
 - staffing allocations
 - participant consent / recruitment challenges
 - data access issues
 - The likelihood the research will be completed within the estimated budget
 - feasible budget for the complexity of the project.

5 Decisions

5.1 Approval of funding

Following assessment of applications and meeting of Expert Reviewers including a Grant Evaluation Panel, a recommendation on funding will be provided to the Approver.

The Approver will consider whether the application will make proper use of Commonwealth resources, as required by Commonwealth legislation, and whether any specific requirements will be imposed as a condition of funding, should funding be approved.

Funding approval is at the discretion of the Approver and the Approver's decision is final.

5.2 Advice to the Applicant

Applicants will be advised in writing of the funding decision.

Letters to successful applicants will contain details of any specific conditions attached to the funding.

Feedback will be offered to both successful and unsuccessful applicants, with the aim of assisting applicants to be more competitive in the future, and potentially helping the NBA to achieve better value for money in future Research and Development grant processes.

Grant offers must be accepted within the timeframe specified in the Letter of Offer.

During the period between acceptance and publication of results, the offer will be embargoed.

An embargo is the prohibition of publicising information or news provided by NBA until a certain date or until certain conditions have been met.

Imposing an embargo enables applicants to know whether, or not, they have been successful in advance of the official announcement as there may be a delay between the approval of National Blood Sector R&D grants and an official announcement on the NBA website/GrantConnect.

The NBA recognises that such delays can make it difficult to maintain partner commitments and employment contracts associated with research projects. By releasing grant funding results under embargo, NBA aims to facilitate researchers taking necessary steps to initiate research projects so they commence on time.

All applicants will be advised as to what can and cannot happen during an embargo period.

Applicants can share outcomes with the research team and partner organisations (where applicable) but they must also keep the information confidential until the embargo has been lifted.

Successful applicants may accept offers and proceed with planning. This includes seeking necessary approvals (for example, ethics approvals) and recruiting staff. Successful applicants may add grants to CVs for review (for example, as part of a new grant application) provided they add the words 'under embargo'. Research projects may commence if the embargo continues past the commencement date.

Applicants should facilitate research activities proceeding as usual.

Applicants and Administering Institutions are NOT permitted to share outcomes publically until the embargo is lifted. This includes posting comments regarding outcomes in public domains such as social forums, websites, journals or newspapers.

6. Conditions of Funding

6.1. Contractual arrangements

Successful applicants will be required to use reasonable endeavours to enter into a formal Grant Funding Agreement with the NBA within four weeks of receiving advice of a successful funding decision. The Grant Funding Agreement establishes the obligations of both parties.

It is recommended that applicants familiarise themselves with the conditions of the agreement relevant to them, or consider seeking independent advice on the implications of agreement conditions and their capacity to meet these conditions if funding is approved prior to the submission of applications.

6.2. Agreements

The Grant Funding Agreement is a legally enforceable document and action may be taken under the law where an obligation is not met.

A template of the Grant Funding Agreement is available on the NBA website at <https://www.blood.gov.au/research-and-development>

The NBA will work with successful applicants with the aim of having Agreements signed within four weeks of funding approval.

Applicants should not make financial commitments based on approval of funding until the Grant Funding Agreement has been executed.

Financial commitments dependent on the funding which are entered into before a Grant Funding Agreement has been finalised with the NBA, are done so at the risk of the Grant Recipient.

6.3. Specific conditions

There may be specific conditions attached to the funding approval as a result of the appraisal process or further considerations by the Approver. These will be identified in the Letter of offer or during agreement negotiations.

6.4. Reporting and acquittal

Grant Recipients will be required to report on the progress of the project and acquit the expenditure of Program funding at the times and in the manner stipulated in the Grant Funding Agreement.

The NBA requires Grant Recipients to monitor research progress in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) (Updated 2018).

6.5. Interim Reports and Advice to the NBA

Interim reports may or may not be required depending upon the timeframe of the funding period. Reporting requirements will be agreed at the time of negotiation of the Grant Funding Agreement.

Regardless of whether or not interim reporting is required, the NBA must be advised as soon as possible, by the contact officer of the following:

- changes to nominated research personnel, or research supervisors
- withdrawal of resources, or a substantive research partner or organisation
- changes to project timelines
- substantive changes to the research aims, objectives or approach
- cessation of research (as soon as known by the researchers)
- advice of any media releases (in advance of the release of the media release)
- advice of any unplanned publicity (within one day of the publicity).

6.6. End of Research Grant Report to the NBA

A Completion Report must be provided within three months of completion of the research project and comprise of the following information:

Research performance:

- degree to which the research aims/objectives and outcomes were attained
- key research findings
- publications/presentations.

Project Management performance:

- management of Governance and Ethics
- contributions from the research team and partner organisations
- risk management - summary of risks and how they were managed
- performance against project timelines
- final expenditure against budget.

6.7. Monitoring

Grant Recipients will be required to actively manage the delivery of the project. The NBA will monitor progress against the Grant Funding Agreement through progress reports submitted by the Applicant and Grant Recipient and undertake regular teleconferences to monitor progress of the project.

6.8. Branding and Recognition

Grant Recipients are required to acknowledge the support of the NBA in any publications or presentations arising from research supported by the NBA. An example of appropriate wording for acknowledgements is outlined below:

'[Title] [Surname] or [Research Project name] was supported by a [Project Grant / Seed Grant / Scholarship Research Grant] from the National Blood Authority, Australia.'

6.9. Evaluation

Future evaluations may be undertaken by the NBA to determine the extent to which the granting activity contributed to the outcomes of the Program. Grant Recipients may be required to provide information to assist with evaluations for a period of time.

The NBA will work with successful applicants and Grant Recipients to determine the information required to undertake an evaluation. The nature of information required will be determined with consideration to the complexity and purpose of the evaluation.

7 Payment of Funding

7.1 Payment arrangements

Payments will be made on achievement of agreed milestones.

Before any payment can be made, Grant Recipients will be required to provide:

- a tax invoice for the amount (GST inclusive) of the payment
- a satisfactory progress report and supporting documentation providing evidence of meeting the requirements for payment.

The duration of funding will not be ordinarily extended beyond the period agreed in the Grant Funding Agreement. Extension will only be considered in exceptional circumstances which could not be reasonably have been avoided or mitigated, and the NBA reserves the right to approve or not approve an extension at its discretion.

7.2 GST and Tax implications

It is recommended that applicants consider seeking guidance about the implications for receiving funding from a tax advisor or the Australian Taxation Office <www.ato.gov.au> prior to submitting an application.

In accordance with the terms of Australian Taxation Office ruling GSTR 2012/2, if payments to other entities that are registered or required to be registered for GST with the Australian Taxation Office are payments in consideration for a taxable supply, those payments are expected to attract GST.

8 Complaint Handling Mechanism

All complaints should be emailed to the NBA Research and Development Program mailbox at R&D@blood.gov.au

Complaints concerning assessments and/or decisions will, in the first instance, be directed to the NBA Program Director.

If the complaint is unresolved, the complaint will be referred to the Senior Management of the NBA.

9 Enquires

Any enquires relating to aspects of the Program, should be directed to the Program email box at R&D@blood.gov.au.

The NBA will endeavour to ensure enquiries are attended to in a timely manner.