

CARE RESEARCH SEED GRANTS

BACKGROUND

Motor Neurone Disease (MND) remains a terminal diagnosis with no effective treatments or cure. The rapid and progressive nature of MND and resulting high level of disability impacts many aspects of people living with MND, and the lives of those around them. Management of their care is complex and requires a multi-disciplinary approach to ensure the physical, mental and emotional well-being of a person living with MND, as well as that of their family members and carers.

While evidence-based research in MND healthcare is evolving, limited investment in the space has meant that there is little definitive research about best-practice care and support for people living with, or affected by, MND.

FightMND's investment in care research aims extend life and improve the quality of life of people living with and affected by MND, through improving current standards of care and bridge knowledge gaps in clinical care, generate innovation and discovery, whilst laying the groundwork for future research initiatives.

PURPOSE

The purpose of FightMND's Care Research Seed Grants is to:

1. Support and encourage non-research clinicians and other professionals to collaborate with researchers to co-design and perform research in MND care research.
2. Support the pursuit of novel ideas, facilitate early-stage research, or development of preliminary data for future funding schemes.

OBJECTIVES

Research projects must address one or more of the below **objectives**:

1. Improve, innovate, and advance MND clinical care and support.
2. Address knowledge gaps in MND Care and develop evidence to support future larger ongoing studies.
3. Reduce inequities in MND care.

4. Develop evidence to support advocacy work and policy changes

GRANT INFORMATION

Funding for projects **up to** the value of \$60,000, with a time frame of between 12 – 18 months. Support will not exceed 18 months, and applicants should submit proposals that are focused and reflect the project duration and budget.

Proposals must consider the involvement and the impact, on:

1. People living with MND
2. Genetic carriers of MND
3. Family members and carers of people with MND

Proposals are strongly encouraged to consider how groups from underserved populations and diverse backgrounds, including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, can be consulted, involved and included in the research project.

LIVED EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT

The overall objectives of this grant are to solve an unmet need or gap for people living with or affected by MND, to ensure that the outcomes will benefit them. As such, those with lived experience should ideally be engaged throughout all stages of the project (ie. *ideation, planning, project delivery, evaluation, and outcome communication*), where relevant and feasible.

All applications should consider the level of involvement, as well as the methods that will be used to engage people with lived experience. FightMND recognises that this may vary, depending on the project. If people with lived experience are not engaged, the application form must explain and justify why.

If your proposal requires additional engagement and involvement of people living with and/or affected by MND, please get in contact with the Lived Experience Network:

<https://www.mndaustralia.org.au/get-involved/national-mnd-lived-experience-network/connecting-with-the-lived-experience-network>

For further information around engagement, please see:

1. [Engagement checklist: Partnering with people with lived experience of MND](#) (MND Australia)

2. While the project is not a clinical trial, the Australian Clinical Trials alliance website contains information relevant to consumer involvement and engagement.

<https://involvementtoolkit.clinicaltrialsalliance.org.au/toolkit/summary/>

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

INVESTIGATOR AND COLLABORATOR ELIGIBILITY

Applications are invited from Healthcare and Allied Health professionals.

- I. The Primary Investigator must be employed in an organisation where research may be carried out in (e.g. clinical setting, academic institution, research facilities, or equivalent) that meet best-practice and ethical standards.
- II. The Primary Investigator must be a clinician or allied health professional with little or no formal research training, but is collaborating with other researchers / health professionals with more substantial research and mentoring expertise.
- III. At least one Co-investigator must have a research track record, and mentoring expertise.
- IV. At the time of application, the Principal and Co-investigators must be based in Australia. FightMND will not impose any criteria on the nationality of the investigators. Collaborators listed on the application may be located at overseas institutions.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

- I. All research activities funded directly by the grant must be conducted in Australia.
- II. Applicants are expected to present proposals with a clear rationale and demonstrate strong feasibility of delivery in a 12 to 18-month time frame, and up to \$60,000;
- III. Proposals should be hypothesis-driven with defined aims and milestones;
- V. A full detailed budget for the proposed project with a breakdown must be included. Note that FightMND does not fund Institutional indirect, overhead or on-costs. Salary on-costs are acceptable if itemised (e.g. superannuation, payroll tax, work cover); See “Budget” on page 7 for further eligible costs.
- VI. Contributions (if applicable) from other funding sources should also be included.

The funded project can commence on receipt of a signed Grant Agreement and first invoice and **must** commence within six (6) months of the agreed start date (or the grant shall lapse).

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Research proposals are submitted to FightMND and are independently peer-reviewed prior to consideration by FightMND's Health Research Advisory Panel (HRSAP). The HRSAP's funding recommendations are then considered by the Board of FightMND. Key factors in the determination of awarding a Care Seed grant will include:

1. Collaboration
2. Scientific assessment, project feasibility and innovation.

If your proposal requires additional engagement and involvement of people living with and affected by MND, please get in contact with the Lived Experience Network (<https://www.mndaustralia.org.au/get-involved/national-mnd-lived-experience-network/connecting-with-the-lived-experience-network>).

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

All applications are to be submitted through the FightMND Grant Management System, Fluxx (<https://fightmnd.fluxx.io>).

- Select "Care Seed grants" in the Fluxx Grant Management System to access the Care Research Grant application form.

RESOURCES FOR APPLICATION

FightMND will only accept applications submitted via the Fluxx Grant Management System, which can be accessed at the following link <https://fightmnd.fluxx.io>.

All administrative information and project proposals as outlined below are to be entered into the application forms in Fluxx. Resources are available to help you with this new submission procedure.

Select "Care Research Grants" in the Fluxx Grant Management System to access the Care Research Grants Application form;

- How to register a new user account in Fluxx ([Written Manual](#))

- How to submit an application in Fluxx ([written manual](#))
- How to submit an application in Fluxx ([guided video](#))

If you experience any issues or have questions regarding the submission process, please contact the FightMND Cure team at care@fightmnd.org.au

REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICATIONS

Applications must include the following:

APPLICATION FORM

NOTE: Fluxx DOES NOT AUTOSAVE .

Please click the save button regularly on the bottom right-hand corner when filling out the application form.

Details on the application form must be entered directly into the Fluxx Grant Management System, and should include the following:

- Primary Investigator and co-Investigators.
- Name of the Institution where the project work will be undertaken.
- Other collaborators (not listed as Investigators).
- Administering Institution information.
- Summarise how application meets grant objectives and areas of support (1200 characters).
- A lay summary of the project suitable for publication (1500 characters / 250 words).
 - *Provide background information necessary for readers without scientific or medical training to understand the rationale and feasibility of the proposed research project. It should also clearly describe the scientific objective the project is designed to achieve, as well as the significance or anticipated outcomes of the work.*
- How have people living with, or affected by MND been, or will be involved in the research project (1500 characters / 250 words).
- What are the key impacts the project will have on people living with, or affected by MND (1500 characters / 250 words).
 - *Provide evidence and logic to support your impact claims.*
- Budget

- Provide a high-level budget summary of total expenditure (in AUD) per year, entered directly into Fluxx (see page 7 of instruction manual, or instruction video from 3:36)
- Note this should be the same expenditure as presented in the 1-page budget within the PDF proposal, but entered separately in Fluxx as high level line items.

PROJECT PROPOSALS

Proposals must be uploaded as a **single pdf file** onto Fluxx (max 5MB) and contain the following details:

1. Project Plan and Background (1 - 4 pages)
2. References (Max 2 pages)
3. Timeline (Max 1 page)
4. Budget (Max 1 page)
5. Declaration of research funding from other sources
6. Curriculum Vitae (Max 2 pages per named Investigator)
7. Letter of support from:
 - a. The Administering Institution
 - b. Co-Investigators
 - c. Collaborators not named as Investigators (if applicable)

Project Background and Plan

(1 - 4 pages).

Include:

- Aims and hypotheses.
- Background/supporting data.
- Research plan.
- Project outcomes.
- Collaborations (refer to *Collaborators not named as investigators* section below).

References

(maximum 2 pages)

Milestones and Timeline

(max 1 page)

- Include milestones and detailed timeline for the project in Gantt chart format. Explanations relating to the timeline of the project, order of experiments and feasibility may be included.
- An extension of the body of the 'Project Plan and Background' into the timeline page will make the application ineligible.

Budget

(max 1 page)

Provide an itemised budget (in AUD) with justification and breakdown of annual expenditure.

- Budget items **can** include:
 - Salaries for team members (Exceptions apply, see below)
 - Salaries for academic researchers will be supported up to a level equivalent to the Personnel Support Package 4 outlined by the NHMRC of Australia. See <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/manage-your-funding/nhmrc-funding/personnel-and-salary-support-packages>
 - Salaries to support or backfill clinical positions may be included.
 - Salary oncosts if itemised (e.g. superannuation, payroll tax, work cover);
 - Direct research costs (consumables, research related travel costs, remunerations and reimbursements etc)
 - Suitable remunerations and reimbursements for people living with and affected by MND **MUST** be included.
 - Travel for attendance and participation at conferences (maximum \$5,000 per annum); and
 - Costs that enable open access for publications (but no other publication costs).
- Budget items **cannot** include:
 - Salaries for:
 - Senior career researchers (NHMRC PSP 5 and above)
 - Senior members of staff, including managers and directors (Please contact care@fightmnd.org.au to discuss if required)
 - Capital Equipment;
 - Indirect, overhead or on-costs of the institution.

Declaration of research funding from other sources.

Details of research funding from FightMND or other sources (obtained or proposed) over the last 5 years that relate to the Care Seed Grant's Hypothesis, Aims and Research Plan must be declared.

Include:

- Investigator, and Title of other Application;
- Funding Source/Organisation and Application ID;
- Role of Investigator on other Application; and
- Total amount requested.

Curriculum Vitae (maximum 2 pages).

Provide a CV of maximum 2 pages for each Investigator named on the application.

Letter of support from the Administering Institution.

Include a letter of support from the Administering Institution confirming that appropriate infrastructure, equipment, and consumables will be available and provided for the proposed project to completion.

Letter from co-Investigators.

Provide a letter (email correspondence) from co-Investigators confirming their involvement in the project proposed in the application.

Letter from collaborators not named as Investigators.

Where the viability of a project depends on collaboration/involvement with Researchers, Healthcare professionals or Allied health professionals not named as Investigators on the application, the exact role of the collaborator(s) should be clearly stated within the Project Plan and Background section of the application, and a confirmation letter (email) from each collaborator indicating their willingness to participate must be attached to the full application.

REPORTING

Funding recipients will be required to submit reports on a regular basis via the Fluxx Grant Management System (details will be provided to successful applicants). Research progress reports are due every 6-months from project start date, and financial reports are due annually.

These reports will be used to assess whether the project is proceeding satisfactorily against project objectives, aims and milestones, whether funds are being acquitted in accordance with the original application goals, and to ascertain the ongoing value of FightMND funding.

Funding may be suspended if progress is considered unsatisfactory, or if funds have not been utilised in accordance with the Care Research Grant Agreement.

REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR REVIEW

Applications will be reviewed by FightMND and independent national experts in MND Care on the following criteria:

Care Research Seed Grants
Engagement, involvement and impact
People with lived experience of MND (PLEx) and relevant stakeholder engagement and involvement (15%)
Impact on people living with or affected by MND (20%)
Scientific Assessment
Project rationale, strategy and design (35%)
Team capability and project feasibility (15%)
Innovation and development (15%)

Each criteria is scored out of five (5) by independent reviewers, according to FightMND guidelines.

FIGHTMND VALUES

The alignment of proposals with FightMND values are also considered when reviewing applications. These are:

Community – driving collaboration in the community, including knowledge sharing.

Integrity – supporting projects or programs with high-impact potential.

Urgency – projects or programs that are driven by and demonstrates urgency.

Boldness – supporting innovation that takes considered and justified risks aimed at improving the lives of people affected by MND

Efficiency – supporting projects and programs in a disciplined manner, being cognisant of proposed budgets and financial and non-financial costs

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All information contained in applications forwarded to FightMND will be regarded as confidential. Documents containing personal information will be handled and protected in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)*. Personal information will only be disclosed with the permission of the individual to whom it relates, or where the Act allows.

Applicants consent to the information supplied as part of their application being disclosed for the purposes of the evaluation and administration of the application and grant. Such disclosure includes but is not limited to independent reviewers/assessors, FightMND's Health Research and Support Advisory Panel (HRSAP), the FightMND Board, and relevant employees of FightMND involved in the research grant process.

Applicants acknowledge that announcement of funded FightMND Grant applications will involve a dissemination of information to the public about their general nature.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST – REVIEWERS AND HRSAP

FightMND requires its independent reviewers and HRSAP to act in an ethical manner, declare conflicts of interest, and withdraw from considering applications where such conflict does or may exist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORT

Successful applicants are required to acknowledge FightMND in any publications, public announcements, media, and scientific meeting presentations or discussion forums pertaining to research conducted. FightMND materials, logos and images can be supplied for this purpose, if required.

ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

Administering Institution: Organisation responsible for administration of the research project, and the receipt and distribution of grant funds. A grant can only have one Administering Institution.

Applicant: Researcher leading the research – the Primary Investigator (PI), who is responsible for the overall direction of the project, leading and supporting co-Investigators (CIs), completion and lodgement of the application, and progress and reporting on the project.

The Applicant must obtain written commitment from their Laboratory/Clinic Head and Heads of Departments/Administering Institution and must assume responsibility for undertaking and completing the activities outlined in the application. Where the project involves multi-site research, the Applicant must obtain written commitment from all Heads of Departments/Administering Institutions of collaborative partners and co-Investigators not within the Administering Organisation.

Collaboration and Collaborators: All people, Investigators, Facilities and Institutions involved in research activity for the Care Research Grant are considered to be collaborators.

Collaboration may be between a combination of disciplines, Departments and/or Institutions and can include Institutions or individuals that provide specific resources that contribute to the research. Collaborators may be directly involved in the conduct of research activity but are not responsible for the direction and progress of the research.

Co-Investigator(s): Key member(s) of the research team, and will contribute significantly to the project's development and execution, in partnership with the Applicant / Primary Investigator.

Goods and Services Tax: Goods and Services Tax (GST) imposed in accordance with the *A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999*, and related Acts and Regulations. GST will be paid on top of grant amounts where appropriate. This will be determined by the Administering Institution's GST status.

Motor Neurone Disease (MND): For the purposes of the Care Research Grants, the definition of MND includes the following progressive neurological disorders that destroy motor neurons: Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS); Primary Lateral Sclerosis (PLS); Progressive Muscular Atrophy (PMA); Progressive Bulbar Palsy; and Pseudobulbar Palsy.