HEAL Innovation Fund 2025

Guiding Principles

1.   Description and purpose of the HEAL Innovation Fund

The Healthy Environments And Lives (HEAL) Innovation Fund is a key initiative of the HEAL – National Research Network funded by the NHMRC Special Initiative in Human Health and Environmental Change.

The HEAL Innovation Fund is a competitive funding program established to assist the implementation of research priorities of the HEAL interdisciplinary research themes to develop solution-focused ideas. The HEAL Innovation Fund aims to support research with engagement and fund well-defined projects that include community and stakeholder co-design and have the potential to lead to further external funding.

Effective research translation, implementation and impact are important goals across the HEAL Network. It is expected that the HEAL Innovation Fund will promote research translation and implementation into policy and practice relevant to the HEAL themes, priority actions, and communities of practice to support meaningful real-world impact. Key considerations for the HEAL Innovation Fund Program are:

- Overall, HEAL aims to allocate around 20% of the HEAL resources to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused research and related engagement activities. Please refer to attached Appendix NHMRC Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria for more
information.
- Projects should support areas of research and groups with clear potential of achieving impact through innovative research and translation into policy and practice.
- Projects help build critical mass in key research areas, and are well supported by research teams potentially comprising community, policy makers, service providers, senior researchers, early and middle-career researchers, and PhD students.
- Projects may support an under-funded area of research where there are important evidence gaps that need to be addressed.
- They have the potential to generate additional funds, for example through competitive research grant applications.
- They promote community/stakeholder engagement and collaboration, for example through support to HEAL Communities of Practice.
- Geographical balance is a consideration in the distribution of NHMRC resources to partner institutions in different regions across Australia.

2.   Funding

Total funding for The HEAL Innovation Fund is $1,000,000 over four years. Funding rounds will be conducted in 2023-2025. Total funding on offer each year will be determined by the HEAL Leadership Executive.

As a guide, each year the total funding on offer will be in the range of $250,000 – $300,000 and will be for **direct research costs** only. 2025 HEAL Innovation Fund Grants will be capped at **$30,000 each.**

Projects led by Indigenous researchers will be prioritised for 20% of the available funds each year. All funds must be spent within 12 months from execution of the subcontract. The number of projects may be adjusted based on yearly funding availability. Any unspent funds from a funding round will be rolled over to the next funding period.

A successful grant application cannot be transferred to a different Principal Investigator after their written acceptance of the grant. If the Principal Investigator cannot complete the project due to movement to other institutions outside research, the unspent funds must be returned to the HEAL Innovation Fund administering organisation. However, if the Principal Investigator moves to a different research institution and is still able to carry out the program of work, a transfer of the grant can be requested.

3.   Eligibility criteria

The HEAL Innovation Fund will support a wide range of projects that consider new or revised research priorities, partners, and stakeholders as the HEAL interdisciplinary research themes evolve.

The following requirements must be met by applicants and their organisations:

- Investigator
    - Applications _must_ be led by a HEAL Early and Mid-Career Researcher (EMCR) as Principal Investigator. HEAL Affiliate Members that identify a EMCR can participate in proposals as Principal Investigators or Co-investigators.

      An EMCR is considered as a researcher who is within ten years of the award of the PhD or with equivalent research experience.

    - Applications _must_ include at least one investigator (either Chief Investigator or Associate Investigator) of the HEAL – National Research Network.

    - Applications which include an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander researcher as Principal Investigator are encouraged

    - Applicants can be Principal Investigator on only one application, but they can be Co-investigators on multiple proposals.

- Type of organisation
    - Applications _must_ include at least two HEAL Network partner organisations
    - Applications with links to industries and/or entities that are not consistent with the objects and aims of the HEAL Network _will not_ be considered. Please refer to Appendix for HEAL Network Partner organizations and HEAL

Financial Support Policy for more information.

- Collaboration
  - Applications including collaboration between HEAL themes and/or Communities of Practice are encouraged
  - International partnerships are allowable. For these applications, funding will be for direct research costs only and may be used for specific grant activities overseas, including salary support for overseas-based research support staff, only if the overseas grant activity is critical to the successful completion of the project and the equipment/resources required for the grant activity are not available in Australia.

4.   Application process

Applicants should submit an application form to heal@canberra.edu.au, detailing:

- Project title

- Associated HEAL research theme(s) and/or community of practice/regional hub
- Principal investigator(s) full name and affiliation
- Co-investigators full names and affiliations
- Project information:
  - lay summary
  - how the project aligns with the aims and objectives of the selected research theme/community of practice and more broadly to the HEAL program of work
  - framework/methodology
  - timeline
  - deliverables
  - budget (administrative and research staffing, supplies, field work, travel, etc.)
  - stakeholder involvement
  - impact and translation
  - pathway for applying to other grant scheme to generate further research

The application form should follow the formatting specified in the submission form template and must be:

- no longer than 5 pages;
- 11-point Arial font;
- Single spacing;
- Standard margins (1 in × 1 in) and character spacing

In addition, one-page CVs should be submitted for principal and all co-investigators.

5.   Review process

The HEAL Global Research Centre will conduct a primary assessment to ensure applications meet the eligibility criteria and are complete. Incomplete applications will be considered ineligible.

The HEAL Leadership Executive will establish the HEAL Innovation Fund Committee (HIFC)

for each HEAL Innovation Funding round. This Committee will operate as a sub-committee of the Leadership Executive and will be subject to its own Terms of Reference.

All eligible applications in a HEAL Innovation Funding round will be independently assessed by two HIFC members. All HIFC members will be asked to declare any real or perceived conflict of interest prior to reviewing the applications. Once the peer review process is complete, the HIFC will recommend the applications for funding to the Leadership Executive. The HEAL Leadership Executive will then consider the recommendations of the HIFC and approve the grants for funding.

6.   Evaluation criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- ### Priority for community and other stakeholders (25%)

  Evidence that the proposed work is a high priority that has been identified by community(ies), policy makers, service providers and/or researchers.

- ### Public health significance and impact (25%)

  Applications must be able to demonstrate public health outcomes with evidence that is measurable, realistic and will demonstrate potential of the long-term policy and practice impact of funding, including potential to generate further research income.

- ### Scientific merit and methodology (25%)

  Evidence of interdisciplinary study design, novel and robust methodology, and potential to publish results in a peer-reviewed journal or other dissemination media.

- ### Project team expertise and potential (25%)

  Evidenced by the applicant's demonstrated ability to achieve its objectives with the resources available to it. Sustainability of the research partnership and potential to create critical mass in a key theme or geographical area. Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and EMCRs.

Please note that successful applications will be required to present the findings or outcomes of the project in HEAL Network branded events, such as a HEAL Investigators meeting, HEAL Annual Conference, or another symposium/webinar as will be stipulated in the subcontract. A mid-term report and a final report outlining the outcomes of the project will also be requested from Principal Investigators. A template for the report will be provided to the grant holders. Published outputs are required to acknowledge the NHMRC HEAL Grant (No. 2008937).

7.   Review

The HEAL Leadership Executive will review the HEAL Innovation Fund guidelines and processes every year to ensure that the initiative is compliant with the HEAL National Research Network's vision and funding objectives, and will revise them as required.

Contact:

The HEAL Global Research Centre at the University of Canberra will coordinate the HEAL Innovation Fund round each year. Any questions about funding availability, eligibility, and application process should be directed to: heal@canberra.edu.au.

Appendix

NHMRC Indigenous Research Excellence Criteria

Community engagement

The proposal demonstrates how the research and potential outcomes are a priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with relevant community engagement by individuals, communities and/or organisations in conceptualisation, development and approval, data collection and management, analysis, report writing and dissemination of results.

Benefit

The potential health benefit of the project is demonstrated by addressing an important public health issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This benefit can have a single focus or affect several areas, such as knowledge, finance and policy or quality of life. The benefit may be direct and immediate, or it can be indirect, gradual and considered.

Sustainability and transferability

The proposal demonstrates how the results of the project have the potential to lead to achievable and effective contributions to health gain for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, beyond the life of the project. This may be through sustainability in the project setting and/or transferability to other settings such as evidence-based practice and/or policy. In considering this issue the proposal should address the relationship between costs and benefits.

Building capability

The proposal demonstrates how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and researchers will develop relevant capabilities through partnerships and participation in the project.

More information available in the NHMRC Funding rules involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People webpage:

https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/indigenous-research-excellence-criteria-irec-review-discussion-paper#toc__25

HEAL Network Vision Statement

The vision of the Healthy Environments And Lives (HEAL) Network is to catalyse research, knowledge exchange and translation into policy and practice that will bring measurable improvements to our health, the Australian health system, and the environment.

HEAL Network Aims

HEAL aims to take national and international leadership in environmental change and health research that will provide the evidence, capacity and capability and tools urgently needed to:

1. Protect and improve community health, especially at-risk groups and people in regions and communities disproportionately affected by environmental and climate change;
2. Strengthen health system resilience, preparedness and responsiveness to changing environmental conditions and related diseases, and reduce its environmental impact;
3. Reduce inequities and inequalities within and across communities and generations.

HEAL Network Partner Organisations

HEAL Network Research Themes

Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Data & Decision Support Systems

Science Communication

Health System Resilience & Sustainability

Bushfires, Air Pollution & Extreme Events

Food, Soil & Water Security

Biosecurity & Emerging Infections

Urban Health & Built Environment

Rural & Remote Health

At-risk Populations & Life Course Solutions

HEAL Network Communities of Practice

Australian Capital Territory

New South Wales

Northern Territory

Queensland

South Australia

Tasmania

Victoria

Western Australia

HEAL Network Financial Support Policy[1]

General considerations

This policy applies to the HEAL Network itself. Individual HEAL Network members and participating institutions are encouraged to adopt a similar position/policy.

The HEAL Network Financial Support Policy relates to who the HEAL Network will solicit and accept donations, contracts, or grants from. It also applies to the eligibility of organisations able to apply for funding from the HEAL Network. It does not preclude the HEAL Network for working with particular industries or sectors to meet the objectives and aims of the network.

The HEAL Network will develop and regularly update plans for soliciting donations, contracts, or grants to help meet the objectives and aims of the network. The overarching considerations shaping the HEAL Network's acceptance of all donations, contracts or grants and granting funds are:

- The HEAL Network will solicit and accept donations, contracts or grants for projects and activities that are consistent with the objectives and aims of the network.
- Acceptance of donations, contracts or grants must enhance, and shall not impede, the HEAL Network's ability to act in the best interests of the public health.
- Sponsors will have no undue influence in the activities or decisions of the HEAL Network[2].
- The HEAL Network's name, logo and other intangible intellectual assets must be protected in the context of acknowledgement

The HEAL Network will publicly acknowledge its gratitude for the support from and recognition of its generous contributors, whether they be a for-profit or non-profit government/corporate/business/other entity, or an individual.

Prevention of conflict of interest[3]

The HEAL Network is required to have a disclosure process to identify and resolve any conflict of interest before donor support is applied for and/or accepted. The process includes the submission and review of applications for proposed contributions of funding, which includes the written disclosure of any actual or perceived conflict-of-interest.

At the discretion of the HEAL National Leadership Executive, donations will not be accepted from or

funding granted to industries and other entities:

1. with harmful impacts on public health or the environment, or;
2. That suppress or distort the scientific evidence regarding climate change and other environmental pollution and its adverse health effects.

The list of excluded industries will be updated every year or earlier if a need arises (*Annex A*). All other entities will be considered on a case-by-case basis and voted on by the HEAL Network's Leadership

Executive with direction from the HEAL Network's Indigenous Steering Group.

Annex A.

The list of industries and other entities from which donations should not be accepted by the HEAL Network

1. Coal, oil, and gas (fossil fuel) industries
2. Tobacco industry
3. Alcohol industry
4. Firearms industry
5. Gambling industry
6. Fast food or soft drink industry

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[1] The HEAL Financial Support Policy is based on the ISEE and IJPC-SE guidelines.
https://www.iseepi.org/docs/ISEE_Guidelines_on_Financial_Support_Approved_by_EC_July_5_2018.pdf
https://www.ijpc- se.org/documents/IJPC-SE_Financial_Contribution_Policy-June_8_2015_revision_approved_June_26_revised_Sep_16_2015.pdf

[2] This statement would be shared with the sponsors when the money is being raised and noted in any public acknowledgement of the sponsors.

[3] A conflict-of-interest is an affiliation or relationship, usually of a financial nature or professional and/or personal nature, with a commercial interest, organization or entity whose financial or other relationship with the HEAL Network could influence or be perceived to influence the impartiality of the HEAL Network in its decision-making in a manner that could advance the interests of the funding or other entity for reasons other than scientific or the public good. Such a relationship constitutes a conflict-of- interest because it might bias an HEAL Network member's ability to objectively participate in decisions. A conflict-of-interest may be actual or perceived. If a person might perceive a conflict-of interest, then a conflict-of-interest exists. If there is potential for a perceived conflict-of-interest, then it must be treated the same as if a conflict-of-interest actually exists.