



# RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM

## INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

for research into macular disease

commencing in 2020

Applications open:	<b>1 March 2019</b>
Applications close (electronic copy):	<b>5pm AEDT, 2 June 2019</b>
Grant recipient announced:	<b>10 October 2019 (World Sight Day)</b>

**Note:** One hard copy of the application plus attachments, including original signed certifications is also required and can be received up to 5pm (AEDT) on 5 June 2019, **providing the electronic copy has been sent by 5pm (AEDT) on 2 June 2019.**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SECTION A: INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
BACKGROUND .....	3
AMOUNT OF FUNDING .....	3
AREAS OF RESEARCH .....	4
ELIGIBILITY .....	4
REVIEW PROCESS .....	6
HOW TO APPLY .....	7
<b>SECTION B: INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM .....</b>	<b>9</b>
PART 1: APPLICANT AND INSTITUTION INFORMATION .....	9
PART 2: APPLICANT'S CAPACITY TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH .....	9
PART 3: PROJECT DETAILS .....	9
PART 4: RESEARCH PLAN .....	10
PART 5: BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION .....	11
PART 6: ATTACHMENTS REQUIRED .....	12

# SECTION A: INFORMATION

## BACKGROUND

The Macular Disease Foundation Australia (MDFA), a registered charity, is the only organisation in Australia specifically devoted to supporting and representing people with macular disease. MDFA's mission is to reduce the incidence and impact of macular disease in Australia. This is achieved through the pursuit of five major areas of activity: *education, awareness, support services, representation and research.*

MDFA is offering substantial research grants for researchers with expertise in macular disease to commence major projects in 2020.

The 2020 Macular Disease Foundation Australia Research Grant ("the MDFA grant") will be offered to conduct **research related to macular disease.**

For the MDFA grant, collaboration with other institutions (including those from overseas) is permissible but the Primary Investigator must be based in Australia. Grant payments will be made to the institution of the Primary Investigator (the 'administering institution').

## AMOUNT OF FUNDING

### 1. Macular Disease Foundation Australia Research Grant

A total grant pool of up to **\$AU 600,000** plus GST will be available. It is anticipated that up to 3 or 4 grants of \$AU 50-100K per annum for between 1 and 3 years duration will be awarded.

The grant is an agreement between MDFA and the administering institution that specifies financial support for specific researchers to undertake a defined research project.

The 2020 Grant funding commitment may be drawn down on a basis to be agreed between MDFA and the administering institution and will be contingent upon the applicant meeting certain agreed research deliverables.

## AREAS OF RESEARCH

**Bio-medical:** eg genetics, risk factors, treatment outcomes, early intervention and prevention, pathogenesis, epigenetics.

**Low vision:** eg incidence/prevalence data, accessibility and affordability of services and support, referral pathways, daily living, independence and psychological well being, national guidelines and accreditation for the delivery of low vision services in Australia, models of care, evaluating and supporting early referral services and adherence/compliance with rehabilitation.

**Nutrition, supplements and/or lifestyle:** eg risk reduction, preventing or attenuating disease progression, impact of diet, supplements and lifestyle interventions, utilisation/adherence to diet/lifestyle recommendations, epigenetics.

**Practices and protocols:** eg best practice for eye health professionals, referral pathways, optimising communication with patients, family and carers.

## ELIGIBILITY

- Researchers working in any field of research relevant to macular disease are eligible to apply.
- The Primary Investigator must be based in an Australian institution.
- Co-Investigators may be based in overseas institutions, but are not eligible to draw a salary from the grant.
- Primary Investigators must be Australian citizens, permanent residents or, if relevant, be eligible for permanent residency on completion of their studies being undertaken in an Australian university. If the latter, research cannot begin until evidence of permanent residency has been supplied.
- Funding cannot commence until all relevant ethical and other approvals have been obtained and evidence provided to MDFA. If these approvals have not been obtained by 30 June, 2020, MDFA reserves the right to withdraw the offer of funding.
- The successful applicant must commence the research no later than June 30, 2020.
- Institutions can submit more than one application.
- The application must be complete and adhere to all instructions/guidelines including word limits and formatting.
- The administering institution must be registered as an Administering Institution with the NHMRC and/or the ARC.
- **The administering institution accepts responsibility for indirect costs of the research and for grant administration.**
- Applicants must be willing to enter into the Research Funding Agreement, a reference copy of which can be obtained by contacting [research@mdfoundation.com.au](mailto:research@mdfoundation.com.au).
- Half-yearly progress reports must be completed by the Primary Investigator upon commencement of funding. The final report will be due two months after the project concludes. A report pro forma, downloaded from MDFA's website, should

be used for the written report. MDFA reserves the right to withhold funding if progress reports are not received by the due date.

- At six monthly intervals, the Primary Investigator may be asked to make an informal presentation (either in person or via teleconference) to representatives of MDFA.
- Any public dissemination of the research, including publications and conference presentations, requires the written permission of MDFA. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld.
- MDFA reserves the right to withhold all or part of the 2020 grant.
- The application is to be complete and adhere strictly to all instructions/guidelines including word limits and formatting.
- MDFA has a zero tolerance policy toward non-compliant applications. If applicants are unsure of any requirements, they should contact MDFA for clarification.
- MDFA will not fund indirect research costs, institutional overheads or any institutional administrative charges.
- All attachments listed in this document (Part 7: Required Attachments) are to be submitted along with the completed application form.
- Presentation of the research in any form or medium is to include acknowledgement of the Macular Disease Foundation Australia.
- MDFA may, from time to time and where appropriate, request the recipient to assist with publicity, advocacy or to provide other assistance at special events. The recipient should make all reasonable efforts to assist.
- The recipient must comply with the regulations and requirements of their host institution in relation to leave entitlements, work arrangements, discipline, supervision, equipment, security or other work-related matters. It is not the responsibility of MDFA to provide materials, equipment, supervision, overhead recovery, or any other resources needed to conduct the research.
- The research must conform to relevant standards of ethics, safety and privacy. Applicants must provide evidence of adherence to these standards.

## **REVIEW PROCESS**

Grant applications will be subject to a full peer review process. This assessment will be undertaken by suitably qualified reviewers who are independent of MDFA.

Final approval of Grant funding rests with the MDFA Board upon recommendation of MDFA's Research Committee.

### **Assessment Criteria**

#### **✓ Scientific quality of the research proposal (60% weighting)**

- The clarity of the research hypotheses, research questions, aims and objectives.
- The strengths and weaknesses of the project's design.
- The clarity and feasibility of the research plan.

#### **✓ Significance of proposed research (10% weighting)**

- Potential impact on MDFA's objectives of reducing the incidence and impact of macular degeneration.
- Potential to increase knowledge about macular disease.
- Potential to be extended into further research of significance.

#### **✓ Innovation of proposed research (10% weighting)**

- The extent to which the proposed work uses an innovative research approach.

#### **✓ Applicant's track record, relative to opportunity (20% weighting)**

- Evidence that the investigator/s have the skills and experience to achieve the aims of the research.
- Record of achievement.
- Contribution to their research field.

**Additional contribution to the project (financial and in-kind) from the administering institution will be favourably regarded.**

## HOW TO APPLY

- Applicants are encouraged to contact MDFA prior to submission of an application.
- Applications for both grants are to use the same forms which are available at <http://www.mdfoundation.com.au>.
- Applications open on 1 March 2019 and close at **5pm (AEDT) on 2 June, 2019** for electronic submission via email to [research@mdfoundation.com.au](mailto:research@mdfoundation.com.au)
- **One hard copy of the application plus attachments, including original signed certifications is also required. The hard copy can be received up to 5pm (AEDT) on 5 June, 2019, providing the electronic application has been sent by 5pm (AEDT) on 2 June, 2019.**
- Once submitted electronically, the application will be considered final and no changes will be accepted.
- Late applications will not be accepted.
- MDFA will email an acknowledgment of receipt of application within one working day. If acknowledgement of receipt is not received within one working day, the applicant should contact MDFA.
- The successful applicant(s) will be announced on World Sight Day - 10 October 2019. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing.
- Name electronic files beginning with the applicant's last name, followed by their first name.
- Other Attachments (detailed in Part 7 of this document) should be included along with the completed application form.

The application form must be completed with close reference to the instructions provided in Section B of this document. Applicants must adhere to word and page limits.

- Responses required in the application form should be entered directly into the Microsoft Word document. Please use regular Arial or Helvetica 12 point font (except for references which can be in 10 point font), 2 cm margins and A4 paper. If inserting scanned pages into the Word document, ensure that the font size is not reduced below a size equivalent to the required 12 point. Applications with font sizes that appear smaller than 12 point (other than for references) will be considered non-compliant.
- Ensure that the Coversheet (Attachment A) appears as the first page of the Application.
- An electronic copy of the fully completed application form with attachments must be submitted in pdf format by **5pm (AEDT) 2 June, 2019**. The Application may be in the form of multiple attachments to an email, or combined into a larger file. If combined, Attachment F ('nomination of possible assessors form') must remain a separate file so that it can be easily detached.
- Applications submitted as more than one electronic file must be emailed as a single email. **The total file size of all attachments should not exceed 5MB.**

Send one hardcopy of the completed Application, including original signed certifications to:

**MDFA Research Grants Program  
Macular Disease Foundation Australia  
Suite 902, 9th Floor  
447 Kent St  
Sydney NSW 2000**

Applicants may be contacted for an interview.

**Further information**

For further information, please contact:

Research Grants Program  
Macular Disease Foundation Australia  
Ph: (02) 8268 8415  
Email: [research@mdfoundation.com.au](mailto:research@mdfoundation.com.au)

## SECTION B: INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM

### PART 1: APPLICANT AND INSTITUTION INFORMATION

This part requests information on the current and former appointments for the primary investigator and co-investigators, as well as details of the proposed host Institution. If the proposed host Institution is not registered as an Administering Institution with the NHMRC and/or the ARC, please contact MDFA to discuss eligibility.

**Citizenship status:** For the primary investigator, if born in Australia, supply a copy of passport or birth certificate. If born outside Australia, please provide a copy of Australian citizenship or permanent resident certificate. If permanent residency certificate is pending, please provide evidence (Attachment B). Evidence of change of name is required if the name on the documents provided is different from the applicant's name on this application.

**Research Environment:** The applicant is to describe the host Institution's research environment, and how it will support their research. A description of the facilities available for the project should be included. Address how the research environment will improve the applicant's capacity to conduct macular degeneration-related research.

### PART 2: APPLICANT'S CAPACITY TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

In reverse chronological order (i.e., most recent first), list publications (peer reviewed only), patents and commercialisation activity, if appropriate, for the primary investigator and up to two co-investigators since 2014. For the list of grants, ensure that full details are provided, including years and amounts.

This part also asks about the applicant's contribution to the field, and contributions to people with macular disease.

Career disruptions: provide details of any career interruptions that may have affected the primary investigator's track record.

### PART 3: PROJECT DETAILS

- This section includes the project title and project summaries. The 'media summary' should be appropriate for the general public and/or the media, using language appropriate to non-experts.
- Copies of human, animal or bio-safety ethics clearances should be attached, if available (Attachment C). Funds will be released to the successful administering Institution when copies of appropriate ethics approvals have been provided to MDFA.
- Conflict of interest: Any actual or potential conflict of interest that the applicant may have in relation to this research must be disclosed in the application. For

example, declaration of any support received from, or being sought from, the tobacco industry, any of its agencies or subsidiaries.

## **PART 4: RESEARCH PLAN**

Include a research plan of no more than 8 pages by inserting text into the appropriate boxes in the Microsoft Word application form, in regular 12 point Arial or Helvetica.

References are to be included in the 8 pages, and can be in 10 point font. Applications with Research Plans exceeding 8 pages will not be accepted.

### **Project Title**

Insert the title of the project.

### **Aims and Background**

Provide a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the proposed research, research question and/or hypotheses to be tested. Provide the context and background to the proposed research project. Indicate how the primary research subject and approach fit with existing knowledge and other research currently being undertaken.

### **Milestones**

Milestones for the research should be identified with dates so that progress of the project can be measured. Presentation in the form of a table is preferred.

### **Approach**

Referring to milestones, please describe the approach to the research, including its design, sampling, techniques, protocols, data analysis procedures (including statistical tests and power calculations, if appropriate). Also describe the procedural checks/auditing that will be used to ensure compliance with the study protocol.

### **Outcomes and Significance**

Describe the ways in which the proposed research is innovative and/or significant. Describe the expected outcomes of the research, including expected outcomes for people with macular degeneration. Is the project likely to lead to the development of patents and/or the commercialisation of any technology? How will the results of the research be disseminated?

### **Impact of Research on Aims of MDFA**

The Macular Disease Foundation Australia aims to reduce the incidence and impact of macular degeneration in Australia. Describe how the proposed research project impacts on these aims.

### **References**

References are included within the page count (8 pages). References can be in 10 point font.

## PART 5: BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

### Budget

For this application, the budget does not form part of the research plan; hence it is not included in the eight page limit.

Provide a budget for each year of the project (up to three years in total).

The combined cash and in-kind contribution to the project from the administering Institution must be included.

The Grant is exclusive of GST. In the budget table, show the cost of individual items excluding GST. Include GST in the final row of the table as indicated.

Only include items that are essential to the proposed project.

**MDFA will not fund indirect research costs, institutional overheads, institutional infrastructure or any institutional administrative charges.**

Cash contributions from the Institution are those that are incurred directly to contribute to the proposed project.

In-kind contributions are made without the direct expenditure of cash on the project; they include goods, services, materials or time. Examples include time of existing staff and facilities access.

Ensure that all figures are calculated accurately.

Use the headings provided in the budget tables in the application form. Add or delete rows as required.

Provide a detailed project budget, covering:

- *Personnel*: (for each personnel request, include details of employment level, hourly rate/salary and percentage of time on project),
- *Consumables*; include individual consumables costing less than AU\$10,000 such as postage, printing, survey production costs, software.
- *Equipment*: that is unique to the proposed research project and is essential for the project to succeed. The grant will not fund the purchase of computers unless they are of a specialised nature required for the operation of laboratory equipment.
- *Travel*: (specify whether for data collection, collaboration and/or dissemination)
- *Other* research costs including research materials.

### Budget justification

The budget justification should not exceed one page. Please indicate why a budget item is necessary and what it costs. For travel budget items, explain the necessity for, and timing of, travel, as well as the location.

### Other information about budget

Provide details of any other funding sources that have been, or are currently being pursued for this or a similar project. If this project or a similar project has any additional source of funding, explain how it will relate to this Grant.

Provide details of procedures to ensure financial accountability.

## PART 6: ATTACHMENTS REQUIRED

Attachment	Requirement	Filename
Attachment A	Coversheet	<b>MDFA Grant 2020 Attachment A (Coversheet).doc</b> to be downloaded from MDFA's website. Please attach this to the FRONT of your application.
Attachment B	Evidence of Australian citizenship or permanent residency (of Primary Investigator)	<b>(Provided by applicant)</b> <i>Australian citizen:</i> If born in Australia, supply a copy of passport or birth certificate. <i>If born outside Australia,</i> please provide a copy of Australian citizenship or permanent resident certificate. If permanent residency certificate is pending, please provide evidence.
Attachment C	Ethics clearances	<b>(Provided by applicant)</b> Please attach copies of human, animal or bio-safety ethics clearances, if available.
Attachment D	Host institution letter	<b>(Provided by applicant)</b> A letter from the proposed host Institution is required to confirm that the institutional support described in this application will be provided if the Grant is awarded.
Attachment E	Certifications	Please ensure that all relevant signatures have been obtained, as required in the Certification form. <b>MDFA Grant 2020 Attachment E (Certifications).doc</b>
Attachment F	Nomination of possible assessors & 'request not to assess' form	This information will be removed from the application before it is given to assessors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>MDFA Grant 2020 Attachment F (Nomination of Possible Assessors Form).doc</b></li> </ul> <p>At least two potential assessors for the application should be nominated. These assessors will not necessarily be asked to assess the application. Possible assessors must not have a conflict of interest with the Grant applicant or the proposed research. Possible conflicts of interest include collaborations (past or current), working in the same institution and having a close personal relationship.</p> <p>Requests to exclude individuals as potential assessors can also be made on this form. Possible reasons for requesting that an individual not assess the application include: concern that the</p>

		<p>person may be unreasonably biased, personal conflict or hostility, they are a direct competitor or have a potential conflict of interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Information about nominated assessors and requests not to assess will be removed from the application before it is given to external assessors, and only individuals involved in the selection of assessors will be made aware of these requests. Confidentiality will be maintained.</li></ul>
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Templates for Attachments A, E and F, mentioned in the above table can be downloaded from MDFA's website at: <http://www.mdfoundation.com.au>