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# NATIONAL BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR FUNDING ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

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## 1. Overview

The purpose of the Principal Investigator Funding Eligibility Guidelines is to clearly articulate the conditions for holding National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF) grant funding as a Principal Investigator (PI) across the following schemes:

- Collaborative Research Accelerator (CRA) grants
- Research Project Grants (RPG)
- Pink Sky grants

For clarity, the funding limits outlined in this document only apply to funds held by a Principal Investigator, and do not apply to anyone named as a Co-Investigator or Associate Investigator on an NBCF grant.

## 2. Background

NBCF has historically set guidance on Principal Investigator eligibility across our annual grant scheme (NBCF's Investigator-Initiated Research Scheme (IIRS) or Research Project Grants (RPG) Scheme) based on a total funding cap of \$1.5 million. This approach worked well when NBCF operated a single, recurring grant scheme.

However, with the expansion of our funding program from one to three grant schemes, NBCF has undertaken a review of Principal Investigator eligibility to ensure the policy remains fit for purpose and can be applied clearly, consistently, and fairly across all schemes.

## 3. Summary of changes

- NBCF has expanded the Principal Investigator total funding cap to \$2 million which can be applied across the RPG and Pink Sky grant schemes (previously \$1.5 million in RPG grant).
- If a Principal Investigator is successful in receiving a CRA grant, that Principal Investigator cannot apply for any additional NBCF grants (CRA, RPG or Pink Sky) whilst their CRA grant is still active.
- NBCF Endowed Chairs may be Principal Investigator on a CRA grant but are not eligible to apply as Principal Investigator for either RPG or Pink Sky grant schemes.

## 4. Key Definitions

These definitions clarify important terms used throughout this document and are essential for understanding eligibility and funding conditions for NBCF grant schemes.

**Active Grant:** An active grant is defined as a grant that remains within the term outlined in the Funding Agreement (including any approved extensions).

**Associate Investigator (AI):** A named investigator providing intellectual or practical input (e.g., consumers, sample access, lab support) and may act as an advisor or mentor.

**Co-Investigator (Co-I):** A named researcher with expertise critical to the research.

**Principal Investigator (PI):** Lead researcher responsible for coordinating the grant, overseeing delivery, and reporting; must be Australian based with appropriate residency/visa status for the grant duration.

**Total Awarded Funding Value:** The total dollar value awarded for a grant at commencement (i.e., the full awarded amount, not the remaining funds at any point in time).

## 5. Principal Investigator Eligibility Rules

A PI may hold either:

- one active CRA grant, or
- a combination of active RPG and/or Pink Sky grants up to a total cap of \$2 million.

These conditions apply to grants held as a PI only (not as a Co-I or AI).

### 5.1 Principal Investigator on a CRA Grant

If you are PI on a CRA grant, you may not hold any additional NBCF Grants as a PI (CRA, RPG or Pink Sky) for the duration of your CRA grant.

- This is valid from the time you are successful in being awarded a CRA grant and for the duration of your active CRA grant.
- There is no restriction on being named as Co-I or AI on other NBCF grants.
- Any active RPG or Pink Sky grants that you hold as PI prior to being awarded a CRA are not affected. However, in this situation, NBCF reserves the right to discuss potential capacity constraints that may affect the timelines and/or delivery of the high-quality, high-impact research on those RPG and Pink Sky grant projects.

For clarification, the \$2 million funding eligibility cap does not apply to CRA; CRA is treated as a separate, standalone grant category.

### 5.2 Principal Investigator on RPG and/or Pink Sky Grants

A PI may hold a combination of active RPG and/or Pink Sky grants, provided the total awarded funding value across all active grants does not exceed \$2 million.

- The funding cap is assessed based on the total awarded funding value of each active grant, not the remaining unspent funds.
- If a PI is at or above the \$2 million cap, they must wait until at least one existing grant is no longer active (i.e. has completed its Term) before being eligible to hold any additional NBCF grants as a PI under the RPG or Pink Sky schemes.
- A PI may apply for a new NBCF grant only where they can reasonably demonstrate that their existing NBCF grant(s) will have completed and be outside their Term at the time the new grant would be awarded.
- There is no restriction on being named as Co-I or AI on other NBCF grants.

### 5.3 NBCF Endowed Chairs

NBCF Endowed Chairs may be PI on a CRA grant but are not eligible to apply as PI for either RPG or Pink Sky grant schemes.

## 6. Example Scenarios

### Permitted:

- **Example A:** A PI holds one active RPG awarded at \$1.2 million and one active Pink Sky grant awarded at \$0.5 million. Total awarded value = \$1.7 million ( $\leq$ \$2.0 million).
- **Example B:** PI holds one CRA grant (up to \$25 million). The PI does not hold, and cannot apply for, any other NBCF grants as PI during the CRA term.
- **Example C:** Researcher X is PI on \$2 million of active RPG and/or Pink Sky funding. Researcher X is also named as a Co-I on another NBCF grant led by Researcher Y. This is allowed as the cap applies to grants held as PI only.
- **Example D:** A PI currently holds an active RPG grant with a total awarded value of \$1.5 million and applies for a new RPG grant valued at \$1.5 million, on the basis that their existing RPG grant will have completed and be outside its Term at the time the new grant outcomes are announced. As the PI will not exceed the \$2 million cap across active grants at the time of award, the application is permitted.

### Not Permitted:

- **Example D:** PI holds one active RPG grants awarded at \$1.5 million until December 2027 and applies for another RPG grant with a \$1.0 million budget, where funding would commence June 2027. Total awarded value in active grants would be \$2.5 million ( $>$  \$2.0 million). PI would be deemed ineligible and their new grant application would not proceed.
- **Example E:** PI holds an active CRA grant and applies for a Pink Sky grant. PI would be deemed ineligible and their new grant application would not proceed.
- **Example F:** NBCF Endowed Chair submits an application as PI on an RPG grant. PI would be deemed ineligible and their new grant application would not proceed.

## 7. Frequently Asked Questions

**Q1:** How does the \$2 million cap apply if a CRA can be up to \$25 million?

A: The \$2M cap applies only to PIs holding a combination of RPG and/or Pink Sky grants. A CRA is separate. If you are awarded a CRA as PI, you cannot apply for any new grants (CRA, RPG or Pink Sky) as PI for the duration of the CRA.

**Q2:** Is the \$2 million cap per year, or over the full term of the grant?

A: The cap is based on the total awarded funding value of any RPG/Pink Sky grants that are still active (i.e., within the Term in the funding agreement). It is not based on the remaining unspent balance. Once you reach the cap, you must wait until one of your grants is no longer active (outside of its Term) at the time a new grant would be awarded if applying for a new NBCF grant.

**Q3:** If I am Co-I on a CRA grant, do I need to explain how much of the CRA funding will come to my laboratory and does that affect my PI funding eligibility cap?

A: No. For the purposes of these eligibility rules, CRA funding is treated as a standalone category and is not apportioned to assess the \$2M cap. These rules only apply to grants held as PI.

**Q4:** Does the \$2 million cap include grants where I am a Co-Investigator?

A: No. The \$2M cap applies only to grants you hold **as PI**. It does not restrict the total funding that may flow to a broader research group through grants led by different PIs (for example, another researcher in the same lab applying as PI, with you named as a Co-I).

## 8. Need help checking your eligibility?

Before applying, review any NBCF grants you currently hold (or have been awarded) as PI and confirm whether they are still within their Term. If you are unsure how these rules apply to your circumstances, contact the NBCF Research team for guidance [research@nbcf.org.au](mailto:research@nbcf.org.au).