
NATIONAL BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION

PINK SKY 2026 GRANT GUIDELINES

Key Dates:

EOI Applications open	06 July 2026
EOI Applications close	06 August 2026 at 5pm NSW local time
Full Application open (by invitation)	21 September 2026
Full Application close	30 October 2026 at 5pm NSW local time
Outcome advice to Applicants	1 March 2027
Commencement of Funding	Prior to 30 June 2027

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1. The National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF)

The National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF) is Australia's largest not-for-profit organisation funding world-class breast cancer research towards our vision of Zero Deaths from breast cancer.

Since our inception in 1994, NBCF has invested over \$250 million dollars towards more than 650 world-class research projects across Australia. In this time, the death rate from breast cancer in Australia has reduced by over 40%.

We have seen remarkable progress, but the job is not done.

At NBCF, we're determined to create a better tomorrow. We know research matters, and it is central and critical to improving breast cancer outcomes. That's why we fund the very best breast cancer research in Australia by awarding grants via open national, competitive, and rigorous peer review processes.

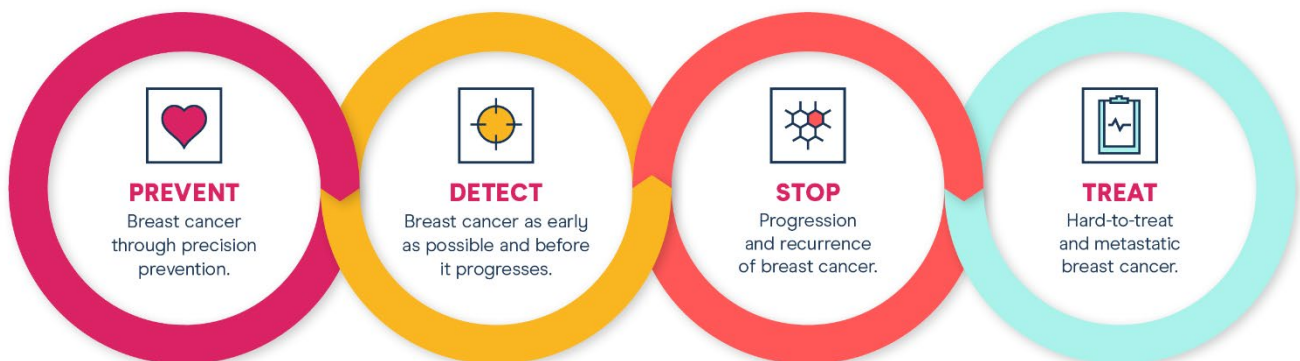
1.1 Pink Horizon Research Strategy

The *Pink Horizon Research Strategy*, launched in November 2023, is a pioneering five-year research strategy intended to support a diverse yet connected portfolio of research at a scale of investment that matches the boldness of our vision. NBCF is investing up to **\$125 million over 5 years** to help drive progress towards ending the 3,300 deaths from breast cancer each year in Australia.

The *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* is informed by our knowledge of who is dying from breast cancer and was developed with deep engagement with researchers, clinicians, and people with lived experience of cancer. This ensures that research objectives target the real-world challenges and opportunities that are critical to realising our vision of Zero Deaths from breast cancer.

The strategy directs investment towards research that asks and addresses significant, intractable questions, driving the breakthroughs required to reduce mortality. Through targeted and sustained funding, and a commitment to collaboration and impact, we will enable and accelerate the innovative research needed to end deaths from breast cancer.

The NBCF *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* objectives are:



1.2 Funding Principles

All research proposals supported under the Pink Horizon Research Strategy must describe and demonstrate:

- How the research will contribute to advancing progress towards the NBCF vision of *Zero Deaths from breast cancer*.
- Active involvement of people with a lived experience of breast cancer appropriate to the type of research.

- A proactive commitment to multidisciplinary, national and/or international collaboration.
- Clear opportunities for early and mid-career researcher development.
- Openness to contribute actively as part of the NBCF research community (for example, attend scientific exchange forums, participate in future peer /expert review panels if required).
- Willingness to share ideas and data to accelerate progress towards Zero Deaths from breast cancer.

2. Pink Sky Grant Scheme

The Pink Sky Grant Scheme supports innovative, high-risk, high-reward research projects with significant paradigm shifting potential to revolutionise approaches to combating breast cancer.

NBCF recognises that research into novel or unconventional ideas, especially those being applied to breast cancer for the first time, comes with a high likelihood of failure. However, this high-risk, high-reward approach is also what makes such research capable of delivering truly groundbreaking insights and impact.

Aligned with NBCF's *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* and vision of Zero Deaths from breast cancer, the Pink Sky Grant Scheme aims to:

- **Enable researchers to be bold and ambitious**, pursuing innovative ideas with the potential to fundamentally shift our current understanding of breast cancer.
- **Attract researchers from both inside and outside the breast cancer and biomedical research field**, encouraging them to apply fresh perspectives, novel concepts and approaches, and new technologies to tackle breast cancer challenges.
- **Fill a critical gap in the research funding landscape** by enabling researchers to test potentially transformative ideas and build early evidence to support their viability.

Research projects must relate to one or more of the four Pink Horizon Research Strategy core objectives:

1. Prevent breast cancer through precision prevention.
2. Detect breast cancer as early as possible and before it progresses.
3. Stop the progression and recurrence of breast cancer.
4. Treat hard-to-treat and metastatic breast cancers.

2.1 Key Grant Details

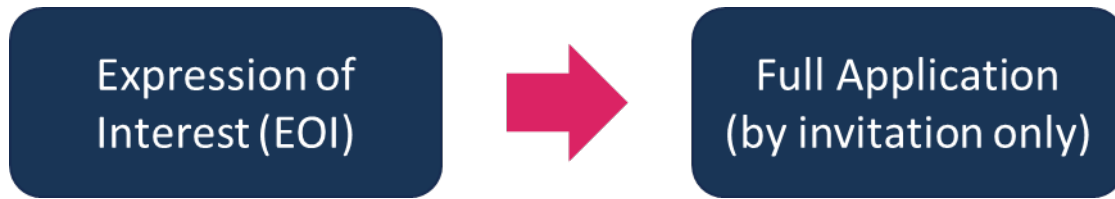
Grant Amount: maximum \$500,000 AUD per project

Grant period: maximum of 3 years

Key Dates:

EOI Applications open	06 July 2026
EOI Applications close	06 August 2026 at 5pm NSW local time
Full Application open (by invitation)	21 September 2026
Full Application close	30 October 2026 at 5pm NSW local time
Outcome advice to Applicants	March 2027
Commencement of Funding	Prior to 30 June 2027

Application format: This funding call will follow a two-stage application process:



3. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must demonstrate:

- Alignment of research question to one or more NBCF Pink Horizon research objective(s): Prevent, Detect, Stop or Treat.
- Lead Institution must be an Australian Administering Institution with an ABN committed to sub-contracting other collaborating institutions.
- Principal Investigator must be an Australian citizen / permanent resident or have the appropriate working visa valid for the duration of the grant and be affiliated with / employed by an Australian Administering Institution.
- Total grant value is equal to or less than \$500,000 over a maximum of 3 years.
- Only one Pink Sky can be submitted by a Principal Investigator in any Pink Sky grant round.
- Active involvement of people with a lived experience of breast cancer appropriate to the type of research (including a minimum of two named consumers).
- Principal Investigator is not an NBCF Endowed Chair.
- If successful, the Principal Investigator will hold less than or equal to \$2,000,000 in active NBCF funding across Pink Sky, Research Project Grants and previous IIRS grant schemes. An **active grant** is defined as one that remains within the Term of the Funding Agreement. Refer to [NBCF's Principal Investigator Funding Eligibility Guidelines](#) (see website).

Applicants should note that they are required to provide detailed information in their application to address these eligibility criteria.

NBCF will not consider any application that does not satisfy all eligibility criteria.

Projects are ineligible for funding by NBCF, if funded or under offer of funding, from another source for the same purpose (see Section 10.2).

See Section 10 for further conditions and limits.

3.1 Institutions

Administering and National Collaborating Institutions

A single institution must be nominated as the Administering Institution. Institutions (university, hospital or medical research institutes) must be Australian administering institutions that meet the defined research governance requirements as specified by the [National Health and Medical Research Council](#)¹. See Sections 11.2 and 11.3 for further information relating to administering institution contractual conditions and project compliance.

¹<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/manage-your-funding/nhmrc-funding/administering-institutions#:~:text=NHMRC%20funds%20research%20through%20institutions,meet%20defined%20research%20governance%20requirements.>

International Collaborating Institutions

NBCF recognises the value that international collaboration offers to Australian research efforts and strongly encourages collaboration to strengthen impact. Non-Australian (International) Institutions can be included where:

1. the research endeavour will be strengthened by this inclusion; and
2. where the research expertise involved is not available in Australia.

However, all funding must remain within Australia and so international collaborating institutions, and their investigators, cannot receive funding from NBCF's Pink Sky Grant Scheme.

3.2 Investigators

Investigators

Applications are open to researchers of any discipline or at any career stage, provided they are employed by an approved Administrative Institution in Australia, or by a recognised international research institution (university, hospital or medical research institute).

Types of investigators are:

- **Principal Investigator (PI):** PI is responsible for leading the proposed research, must be an Australian citizen, have resident status or have an appropriate visa to work in Australia for the entire duration of the funding period. The PI must be based in Australia for work purposes for the duration of the grant.
- **Co-Investigators (Co-Is):** Investigators with a specific expertise that is critical for the successful completion of the proposed research. At least half of the nominated Co-Is must be Australian citizens, have resident status or have an appropriate visa to work in Australia for the entire duration of the funding period. Co-Is are expected to remain as active researchers for the duration of the grant.
- **Associate Investigators (AIs):** Investigators providing intellectual or practical input, such as consumers, laboratory support or in providing access to unique samples. AIs may be advisors and mentors to the project team to deliver the proposed work.

Early to Mid-Career Researchers (EMCR) should be actively involved in this grant opportunity as Principal Investigators, Co-Investigator or Associate Investigators. An Early to Mid-Career Researcher is defined as an individual who is within ten years of their PhD award date, excluding career disruptions.

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consider involving people with lived experience of breast cancer as members of the research team, including where appropriate as named investigators.

Conditions:

- Only one application can be submitted by a Principal Investigator (PI) in any Pink Sky grant round.
- There is no limit on the number of Co-Is that can be named on an application.
- There is no limit on the number of AIs that can be named on an application.
- There are no restrictions on the number of applications a Co-I or AI can be named on for this grant opportunity, and a PI can be named on another application as a Co-I or AI.
- Successful award of a previous, current or future NBCF grant/award will not preclude an individual's eligibility to be named as a PI, Co-I or AI on a Pink Sky application, with the exception of a PI who holds an active CRA grant or a PI who holds more than \$2M in active NBCF funding across Pink Sky, Research Project Grant and IIRS grant schemes. Refer to [NBCF's Principal Investigator Funding Eligibility Guidelines](#) (see website).

- Endowed Chairs are not eligible to apply as a PI in any Pink Sky grant round; however, they can be named as a Co-I or AI.
- An investigator cannot submit an application that is the same as or similar (in whole or in part) to a project funded by NBCF, or any other funder, or on work already published.

Please contact NBCF prior to submitting your application if you require clarification.

Additional Personnel

Additional Personnel is for research personnel necessary for successful delivery of the project, including; research assistants and research officers; junior or senior postdoctoral researchers; specialised personnel (e.g., bioinformaticians, statisticians, technical project managers); technical staff; PhD stipends.

Information on salary support for Additional Personnel can be found in the [NBCF's Grant Expenditure Guidelines](#) (see website).

3.3 Additional Eligibility Requirements

An application may be deemed ineligible if it does not meet the eligibility criteria and other requirements set out in these guidelines. This could include (but is not limited to) reasons such as the requested budget being over the maximum amount available and/or including ineligible expenditure not in line with [NBCF's Grant Expenditure Guidelines](#) (see website), minimum data not being entered into the application form in the [NBCF Grants Portal](#), not having the required documentation or sign-offs upon submission, or the proposed research duplicates research previously or currently being undertaken (see Section 10.2).

4. Funding Information

4.1 Funding Amount and Timeframe

- Total grant value is equal to or less than AUD\$500,000 over a maximum of 3 years.
- Commencement of funding will be upon Funding Agreement execution and must be before 30 June 2027.

4.2 Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Applications may include salaries for investigators, additional other personnel, consumer engagement costs, and student stipends needed to deliver the project, as well as costs of materials and equipment. NBCF encourages the inclusion of early- and mid-career researchers and supports career development across all career stages.

Funding can support all reasonable and justified research project costs in line with [NBCF's Grant Expenditure Guidelines](#) (see website). Refer to that document for all eligible and ineligible costs.

5. Assessable Criteria

Applications are assessed by an independent panel of experts, including people with lived experience of breast cancer.

The panel evaluates both EOI and full applications against the **four** assessable criteria (below) and scoring descriptors (Appendix 2: Scoring Matrices).

There are three weighted assessable criteria with varying percentage weightings. In addition, there will be a fourth assessable criteria, scored using a different rating scale. This is to reflect NBCF’s commitment to fund only the highest quality research projects that will achieve outcomes through appropriate budget management and strong risk mitigation.

The assessable criteria are:

	Assessable Criteria	Total weighting (out of 100%)
1	Research Methodology, Quality and Feasibility	40%
2	Transformative Potential and Impact	40%
3	Capacity and Capability to Deliver	20%
4	Overall Value, Governance and Risk	Non-weighted (rated using a separate scale)

More details for each assessable criterion are outlined below.

5.1 Assessable Criteria 1: Research Methodology, Quality and Feasibility (40% weighting)

Reflects the scheme’s intent to fund bold, original, unconventional research with the potential to fundamentally transform approaches toward Zero Deaths from breast cancer. The research should prioritise novel, innovative, high-risk, high-reward ideas, including those originating outside breast cancer or oncology, or applying perspectives, methods, or technologies from other disciplines in entirely new ways.

Incremental advances or optimisation of existing approaches will be considered less competitive than proposals that challenge current paradigms or open new areas of inquiry. Assessment will consider the originality, clarity, coherence and scientific quality of the proposed research. Proposals are not expected to have extensive preliminary data and may pursue ambitious ideas with uncertain outcomes, provided there is a credible scientific rationale.

Proposals must also demonstrate how the research aligns with, and delivers on, one or more of the *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* objective/s and include meaningful involvement of people with lived experience of breast cancer.

Responses MUST clearly articulate:

Research

- the ground-breaking or paradigm-challenging research question(s) and the proposed approach to address them
- a well-defined research hypothesis supported by strong, scientific rationale (even if untested) and/or any preliminary data
- a clear description of how the research explores and utilises novel, unconventional and/or first-in-field concepts and why these represent a departure from current approaches, including methods and technologies or perspectives drawn from outside breast cancer or cancer research
- robust, coherent and achievable research design and methodology, with appropriate milestones and timelines for delivery within the grant period
- originality of the research, and how it is distinct from and not an incremental extension or duplication of existing work, and how it addresses a critical gap in breast cancer research
- how the proposed research aligns with one or more of the *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* objective/s and directly contributes toward NBCF’s vision of Zero Deaths from breast cancer

Research coordination and integration

- where applicable, how the research will be coordinated across collaborating laboratories or institutions to form a cohesive body of work that delivers against the overarching research purpose

Consumer involvement

- how people with lived experience will be involved in the proposed research, both as dedicated research consumer partners and, if applicable, through other community consumer engagement (e.g. focus groups, community contributors), to provide diverse insights and ensure meaningful input across the entire grant period

5.2 Assessable Criteria 2: Transformative Potential and Impact (40% weighting)

Reflects the scheme's intent to fund high-risk/high-reward research with the potential to deliver step-change improvements or explore entirely new directions towards ending deaths from breast cancer, supported by a clear and feasible description of a pathway to impact. Assessment will consider the scale, significance, and nature of the potential impact, including whether the research will fundamentally shift current paradigms, redefine key assumptions or enable new breakthroughs, and the extent to which the proposed research is informed by, and delivers meaningful impact for, people affected by breast cancer.

Responses MUST clearly articulate:

Transformative potential and impact

- the magnitude and nature of the potential impact, including how the transformative research could lead to step-change advances rather than incremental improvements
- the high-risk nature of the research is clearly defined and justified by the high-reward transformative potential
- how the research contributes to a defined and realistic translational pathway to impact, and the timeframe in which research outcomes could be implemented into practical applications or real-world interventions beyond the grant period

Collaborative contribution

- where applicable, how multidisciplinary and/or multi-institutional collaboration will enable and accelerate transformative outcomes, including feasibility, translation, scalability and sustainability

Consumer impact

- the significance of the research in addressing unmet needs or persistent challenges for people affected by breast cancer
- how the needs, values and priorities of people with lived experience of breast cancer have informed the project's design, development and the feasibility and acceptability of the proposed pathways to translation and implementation

5.3 Assessable Criteria 3: Capacity and Capability to Deliver (20% weighting)

Reflects the schemes intent to fund a strong and appropriately resourced team with the capability, leadership and experience required to deliver the proposed research. Assessment will consider the collective strength of the research team, as well as the individual expertise, skills, experience and leadership capacity of team members. Consideration will also be given to the team's commitment to

developing emerging research leaders, and to their capability and readiness to meaningfully involve and support people with lived experience of breast cancer throughout the research.

Responses MUST clearly demonstrate:

Team expertise and roles

- the research team's collective expertise and experience, including a demonstrated track record of delivering high quality research
- the roles and responsibilities of each team member, ensuring they collectively demonstrate the appropriate mix of skills and knowledge (e.g. across disciplines, genders, cultures, career stages) to enable successful research delivery

Development

- a clear and proportionate plan to involve, support and develop early- and mid-career researchers*

Consumer support

- the research team has the appropriate experience and capacity to involve and support people with lived experience of breast cancer in the proposed project in a meaningful, effective and efficient manner

*See Section 9 for NBCF Fellowship opportunities that could form part of the development plan to support emerging research leaders.

5.4 Assessable Criteria 4: Overall Value, Governance and Risk (Non-weighted – assessed using a separate rating scale)

Reflects the scheme's intent to fund a research program that will achieve its outcomes through appropriate budget justification and strong risk mitigation. Assessment (using a separate rating scale) will consider whether the research demonstrates justified use of funds and proactive identification and management of risks.

Responses MUST demonstrate:

Budget and Value

- whether the budget is appropriate, well-justified, and offers good value for the funding requested to deliver the research project

Risk Management

- the risk management plan's adequacy, including identification of key risks (e.g. scientific, technical, operational, data) and mitigation strategies

6. Consumer Involvement

The appropriate level and type of consumer involvement will vary depending on the nature of the project. NBCF expects applicants to:

- Include a minimum of two named consumers on their application (who are expected to provide written agreement (e.g. via email or a letter addressed to the PI) that they agree to be named as a consumer in the application, prior to submission)
- Consider including named consumers as Associate Investigators (strongly encouraged)
- Conduct ongoing meaningful (bidirectional) engagement in the preparation of the application, which will be continued throughout the project should the application be successfully funded

Applicants are advised to refer to NBCF's [Guidelines for Consumers and Researchers](#) (see website).

7. Governance

Each application must nominate an **Administering Institution** and a **Principal Investigator (PI)** who will be responsible for:

- submission of the application
- signing the Funding Agreement with the NBCF
- receiving and distributing the grant funding
- agreeing and signing Institution Agreements with each Collaborating Institution as required
- overseeing delivery of the grant
- overarching grant reporting and other obligations requested by NBCF.

8. Application and Review Process

The applications include administrative and assessable sections and are to be completed on an online application form for submission via the [NBCF Grants Portal](#). PIs must first register and create an account in the Grants Portal.

8.1 Application Process

This funding call will follow a two-stage application process:

1. **Expression of Interest (EOI)** - written application submitted via the [NBCF Grants Portal](#).
 - The EOI Application is a shorter, streamlined application aimed to provide an overview of the research project and team.
 - The EOI Application must be completed and submitted by the PI.

Top ranking EOI applications that best meet the EOI criteria will be invited to submit a more comprehensive Full Application. The Full Application will be required to provide further detail about the proposed research and justification for funding.

2. **Full Application** (by invitation only following EOI stage)
 - Written application – completed and submitted by the Pink Sky PI via the [NBCF Grants Portal](#).

8.2 Completing the Grant Application

Both the EOI and Full Application will be completed via the [NBCF Grants Portal](#), with associated documents to be uploaded. The budget and risk templates are available via the Grants Portal.

Checklist:

Item	Stage (EOI and Full Application)	Description	Format
Application content	EOI and Full	Direct input into NBCF Grants Portal	Online application form
Budget	EOI and Full	Summary budget information to be captured in NBCF Grants portal (EOI and Full). Separate budget spreadsheet to be completed and uploaded at Full Application stage	Budget template available via NBCF Grants Portal

Risk Management	Full only	Risk register (including mitigation strategy) to be completed in online application form	Direct input into main online application form
Consumer commitment letters	Full only	Written agreement to be named as a consumer in the application (see Section 6)	No prescribed template
Relative to opportunity / career disruption breaks evidence	Full only	Letters (e.g. from institutions / employers) confirming any relevant career disruptions of PIs or Co-Is	No prescribed template (see Appendix 3: Relative to Opportunity Assessment and Career Disruptions for details)

8.3 Review Process

The NBCF Research team will check all Pink Sky Expressions of Interest (EOIs) and Full Applications for eligibility, completeness, and adherence to guidelines.

Expert Review Panel

Eligible applications will be assessed at both EOI and Full Application stage by an independent, expert review panel. The review panel will consist of a non-scoring Chair and members comprised of scientists, clinician researchers, and consumers.

The role of the Chair is to ensure that a fair, consistent, and equitable process is adhered to, and to facilitate reaching agreement on the final ranking through a balanced and considered discussion of applications.

The role of the members is to evaluate and score applications using the assessable criteria in Section 5 and score descriptors in Appendix 2: Scoring Matrices and participate in discussions of the applications.

The Chair and all members must act in confidence and are required to sign a Deed of Confidentiality. Reviewers must declare interests of scientific as well as a non-scientific nature, following NBCF's [Potential Declaration of Interest Guide](#) (see website).

The review panel's scoring is reviewed, and funding recommendations are endorsed by NBCF's Research Advisory Committee (RAC) and provided to NBCF's Board of Directors for approval. The NBCF Board retains ultimate authority for all funding decisions.

Score Weighting

EOI and Full Applications will be assessed according to the 3 weighted assessable criteria (Section 5) by both scientific and consumer reviewers. Consumer reviewers scoring will account for 15% of the total percentage weighting, reflecting the significance of the consumer voice in the grant review and decision-making process.

Consumer and scientific weightings will vary across the 3 weighted assessable criteria as per the table below. This approach ensures the consumer voice is elevated in areas most relevant to those with lived experience, the challenge being addressed, consumer involvement, and the potential impact gained.

Criterion (Total Weighting)	Scientific Reviewers	Consumer Reviewers
Research Methodology, Quality and Feasibility (40%)	35%	5%
Transformative Potential & Impact (40%)	32%	8%
Capacity and Capability to Deliver (20%)	18%	2%
Total (100%)	85%	15%

The scientific reviewers only will assess the fourth assessable criteria (overall value, governance and risk) using a separate rating scale (see Appendix 2: Scoring Matrices).

8.4 Feedback on Applications

NBCF is dedicated to supporting high-quality research that drives progress towards our vision of Zero Deaths from breast cancer. Given our finite resources and the need to prioritise research investment, we are currently not able to provide individual feedback on applications. We value the significant effort applicants put into their proposals.

9. Fellowships

9.1 NBCF Fellowships

Any PI or Co-I named on the application and committing at least 0.5 FTE or greater (salary support) are invited to self-nominate for an honorary NBCF Fellowship.

Clinical practitioners who are PIs or Co-Is on Pink Sky applications may also nominate for an NBCF Fellowship, provided they meet **both** following requirements:

- They are committing at least 2 days per week (greater than or equal to 0.4 FTE) to research, and;
- They are requesting salary support for 50% or more of their research time.

For example: To be eligible for a NBCF Fellowship, a clinical practitioner dedicating 2 days a week (0.4 FTE) to research must request salary support of 0.2 FTE or greater. A clinical practitioner dedicating 3 days a week (0.6 FTE) to research must request salary support of 0.3 FTE or greater.

Investigators having between 3 and 12 years post-doctoral research experience (or more than three years of experience following their medical degree) will be considered eligible for the Fellowship. Individuals who have reached Associate Professor or Professor career stages will not be considered eligible.

9.2 The Elaine Henry NBCF Fellowship

The Elaine Henry NBCF Fellowship honours Elaine Henry OAM's outstanding contributions to NBCF. The Fellowship is awarded to the highest-ranking researcher out of the NBCF Fellowships awarded from funded Pink Sky each year. The Elaine Henry NBCF Fellowship award includes \$20,000 in additional funding to support further research activities and/or career development. Previous recipients will not be eligible for future Elaine Henry Fellowship awards.

9.3 The Mavis Robertson Fellowship

The Mavis Robertson Fellowship is supported by Mother’s Day Classic (MDC) and honours Mavis Robertson OAM’s outstanding contributions to both MDC and NBCF. The Mavis Robertson Fellowship award was established in 2011 and provides up to \$20,000 to further the education and training of a female investigator (PI or Co-I) who exhibits the greatest promise as a future leader in breast cancer research. Female named investigators with a 20%-time commitment or greater to an application, having between 3 and 12 years post-doctoral research experience (or more than three years of experience following their medical degree) will be considered eligible for the Fellowship. Individuals who have reached Associate Professor or Professor career stages are ineligible. Furthermore, preferential consideration for the Mavis Robertson Fellowship will be given to individuals who have not previously been recipients of this award.

9.4 Applying for Fellowship Consideration

Potential candidates wishing to be considered for any of the Fellowships are required to provide the following in the Grant Proposal:

- NBCF Fellowship Statement describing:
 - why they should be considered for the Fellowship
 - the applicants’ leadership and/or potential as a future leader in breast cancer research
 - the potential impact they would have as a future leader in breast cancer research
 - the alignment of the applicants’ research focus and potential outcomes with NBCF’s vision of Zero Deaths from breast cancer
- Details of the 5 most significant peer-reviewed publications, reports and/or contributions of the applicant’s research career to date (list each publication and provide a 100-word description).
- A full list of peer-reviewed publications (original research, review, books/chapters) to reflect the last 5 years (or full time equivalent relative to opportunity). The total number of citations and H-index may be included.
- Other achievements – last 5 years (or full time equivalent relative to opportunity) including details of most significant awards/prizes, community engagement, editorial responsibilities, patents, commercialisation and/or industry involvement).

Each eligible candidate will be considered by an independent, expert panel who will assess each candidate using the applicant’s Fellowship Statement and Relative to Opportunity section (Appendix 3) and will provide a score of 1-7 for the three assessment criteria in the table below.

Assessment category	Weighting	Descriptor
Track record	40%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant’s past achievements including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 5 most significant peer-reviewed publications, reports and/or contributions of the applicant’s research career to date. ○ Full list of peer-reviewed publications in the last 5 years. ○ Other achievements of the last 5 years. • Relative to Opportunity.

Leadership	40%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants current or future potential leadership in breast cancer research.
Alignment of the applicant's research focus with NBCF's vision of <i>Zero Deaths from breast cancer</i>	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likelihood of the fellow's research to provide knowledge, health, economics and/or social impact(s) towards NBCF's vision of Zero Deaths from breast cancer.

Only candidates who are named on successful (funded) applications in the 2026 Pink Sky grant round will be eligible to receive the Fellowship.

The top ranked fellow will be awarded the Elaine Henry Fellowship, and the highest ranked female investigator will receive the Mavis Roberston Fellowship.

The successful fellow/s will then enter into a letter of offer directly between NBCF outlining the fellowship conditions.

10. Additional Grant Conditions

10.1 Intellectual Property and Commercialisation

NBCF encourages and supports a broad range of breast cancer research, including early-stage research projects with commercial potential that can generate new Intellectual Property (IP) and may lead to commercialisation of a product (or service). However, NBCF will NOT fund projects directly focussed on the commercial development of a product (or service), as there are alternative avenues of funding available.

Applications where pre-existing IP is the major foundation for the project can apply for a Pink Sky Grant, however, the application cannot be for the commercial development of that IP.

Pre-existing IP is considered as any IP that has already been created, developed, funded, derived or otherwise brought for further development, either by the Investigators or by a commercial entity linked to the Investigators.

10.2 Justification of Research Originality and Non-Duplication

Projects are ineligible for funding by NBCF, if funded or under offer of funding from another source. NBCF will not fund research that it considers is insufficiently different to research that is either currently funded or the subject of another funding offer. If funding for a project (or similar projects) is offered concomitantly by NBCF and by another research funder, NBCF reserves the right to withdraw the offer of funding wholly, or in part, in its absolute discretion in order to maximise the opportunity for breast cancer research in Australia.

Whether a project is the subject of other funding is 'similar' to the NBCF project will be determined by the independent external review, under the governance of the NBCF Research Advisory Committee, at its absolute discretion, following its review of both the application submitted to NBCF and the application made to the other funding body. For the purposes of making this decision, the Administering Institution must provide a copy of the other funding application to NBCF if requested.

10.3 Commercial Entities

For-profit / commercial entities may participate as part of a Pink Sky where their contribution will strengthen the research. For profit / commercial organisations will not be funded directly by NBCF.

NBCF reserves the right to review individual requests for participation in a Pink Sky by a for-profit / commercial entity in line with its conflict-of-interest policy.

11. Successful Grant Applications – Funding Agreement

11.1 Funding Agreement

Upon acceptance of an offer of funding from NBCF, a funding agreement will be prepared and issued to the Administering Institution for review and signature. This funding agreement will certify that the institution endorses the application, is willing to administer the research, and has the appropriate facilities and services to be made available for use by the applicant.

The agreement will include:

- a) the research to be undertaken and milestones identified;
- b) the total budget;
- c) terms and expectations for delivery of the grant;
- d) overarching reporting requirements; and
- e) variation terms and all other general agreement terms.

All parties must accept the terms of the funding agreement and sign the agreement before the project commences, and any payments are made.

11.2 Institution Agreements

Institution Agreements are agreements between the Administering Institution and each Collaborating Institution participating in the grant. These Agreements should indicate acceptance by each Collaborating Institution of overarching terms defined in the Funding Agreement. Institutional Agreements should include details of the research, funding, budget, reporting expectations and insurances required for the research to be undertaken at the Collaborating Institution.

11.3 Compliance

Administering Institutions must have in place and maintain for the term of the Funding Agreement, appropriate insurances, and policies and procedures for the management of public funds, management of Intellectual Property, and good scientific conduct. All institutions and NBCF-funded research projects must comply with the requirements for responsible and ethical research practice including, but not limited to:

- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2023:
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)
- Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (NHMRC, 2013)
- National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research
- Principles and guidelines for the care and use of non-human primates for scientific purposes (NHMRC, 2016)
- Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities (NHMRC, 2018)
- Ethical guidelines on the use of assisted reproductive technology in clinical practice and research (NHMRC, 2017)
- Guidelines for Genetic Registers and Associated Genetic Material (NHMRC, 1999)
- Guidelines under section 95A of the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards

- National Clinical Trials Governance Framework
- Gene Technology Act 2000

12. Successful Grant Applications - Monitoring

12.1 Agreement Variations

The PI / Administering Institution can request amendments to the Funding Agreement, such as, transfer of PI or changes to research budgets and milestones. These requests must be made to NBCF in line with the terms outlined in the Funding Agreement.

All variations must be submitted at least 60 business days before the project's end date.

12.2 Staying up to date

Administering Institutions must inform NBCF of any significant organisational or business changes, especially those affecting your ability to complete the grant, continue operations, or meet financial obligations.

12.3 Reporting Requirements

PIs will be contractually required to report on progress of funded projects per the schedule of reporting provided in the Funding Agreement. Annual Progress Reports, Final and Follow Up Reports will be submitted via [NBCF Grants Portal](#).

The report templates will be made available to successful applicants.

- **Annual Progress Reports** must be submitted annually from the project commencement date. All reports must be submitted through the NBCF Grants Portal and include (but not limited to):
 - progress against agreed milestones
 - research outputs and impact
 - Financial Reports which outline budget progress
- The **Final Report** must be submitted no later than three (3) months after the end of the term or the completion of the project.
- **Follow-Up Report** must be submitted two (2) years after the end of the term or the completion of the project.
- NBCF may continue to collect information on research outcomes and impacts beyond the Follow-up Report to support long-term reporting and evaluation.
- At the completion of the funding, an **audited financial statement** is required.

NBCF reserves the right to audit financial statements and to amend, suspend or terminate funding, or reduce progress payments in the event that:

- progress is unsatisfactory
- reports are not submitted on time
- if more than 20% of the funds are unspent at the time of the Progress Report.

13. Additional Ongoing Requirements

13.1 Peer Review Committee Participation and Community Engagement

Administering Institutions (Lead or Collaborating Institutions) must agree to ensure that any of their research personnel operating as a PI or Co-I will, from time to time, and as reasonably requested by NBCF:

- join an NBCF Expert/Peer Review Committee and participate in assessing and scoring applications for NBCF funding grants and other activities
- provide presentations, tours, and host meetings with NBCF donors.

13.2 Content and media opportunities

NBCF requests that all planned content opportunities (photo moments, written content) related to the awarded grant are shared with NBCF ahead of time to assess the opportunity to collaborate and/or amplify across NBCF owned, earned, or paid channels. This is an important aspect of the terms of engagement as it assists in demonstrating NBCF's impact and supports future fundraising activities. NBCF will lead all media activities related to the awarded grant. This ensures a coordinated and consistent approach to how the research program is represented publicly and helps maximise visibility and impact across all communications.

13.3 Acknowledgement of Support

All publications including journal articles/books, media releases and presentation of data derived from the awarded grant must acknowledge the support of NBCF. NBCF requests that the correct branding (NBCF logo) is used and that investigators reference their NBCF grant code.

14. Privacy and Confidentiality

NBCF respects and upholds your applicable rights to privacy protection under the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) (including the Australian Privacy Principles), in regulating how we collect, use, disclose and hold your personal information. Please refer to NBCF's [Privacy Policy](#).

The security of confidentiality of your personal information is important to NBCF, and we aim to apply robust practices to ensure privacy is protected and respected. Privacy management is a continuous and evolving process, and we regularly update our practices to accommodate change in technology, the organisation's function and legislation. Grant application information such as name, contact details, and identification details are collected. NBCF may disclose your personal information to any other individuals or organisations with your prior consent or where required or authorised by law. The parties to which we disclose personal information include our contractors who provide service, for example conducting surveys, facilitating information collection, event registration, fundraising, database management, printing, mailing, data storage, banking, payment processing, auditing, accounting, legal, business consulting, marketing, research and technology services.

15. Acknowledgements

We are indebted to all committed individual, community and corporate donors, and would like to acknowledge their support and commitment to funding breast cancer research.

NBCF acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

16. Enquiries

Enquiries can be directed to the NBCF Research team at research@nbcf.org.au. Please include the application ID in the subject line of the email.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Term	Definition
Active Grant	An active grant is defined as a grant that remains within the term outlined in the Funding Agreement.
Additional Personnel	Additional Personnel is for research personnel necessary for successful delivery of the project
Administering Institution	An Australian university, hospital or medical research institute that meets NHMRC's research governance requirements and is eligible to administer NBCF funding.
Annual Progress Report	A yearly report submitted by the PI outlining progress toward milestones, outputs, and finances.
Associate Investigator (AI)	Investigator providing intellectual or practical input (e.g., consumers, sample access, lab support) and may act as an advisor or mentor.
Career Disruption / Career Break	A prolonged interruption (≥ 1 month) to a PI or Co-I's research capacity due to parental leave, major illness, carer responsibilities, COVID-related factors, or similar.
Consumer	A person with lived experience of breast cancer (patient, survivor, carer, family member) involved in research design, governance, conduct, or dissemination. See NBCF's Consumer and Researcher Guidelines.
Consumer Commitment Letter	Written agreement (email or letter) from each named consumer confirming their willingness to be included in the application.
Consumer Involvement	Meaningful, bidirectional involvement of people with lived experience in planning and delivering the research. Includes both named partners and broader contributors. See NBCF's Consumer and Researcher Guidelines.
Co-Investigator (Co-I)	Researcher with expertise critical to the research. At least half must be Australian-based for the duration of the grant.
Declaration of Interest	A mandatory disclosure of conflicts of interest by reviewers, based on NBCF's Declaration of Interest Guide.
Early to Mid-Career Researcher (EMCR)	Researcher within 10 years post-PhD, excluding career disruptions; encouraged to be Co-Is or AIs.
Eligibility Criteria	Requirements all applicants must meet, including alignment with Pink Horizon objectives, institutional eligibility, co-funding, consumer involvement, and other constraints.
Expression of Interest (EOI)	First-stage, shorter application outlining the research overview and team composition.
Full Application	Detailed, invitation-only application including methodology, budget, and risk management plan.
Funding Agreement	Legal agreement between NBCF and the Lead Institution outlining the research program, budget, milestones, governance and reporting obligations.
NBCF Pink Horizon Research Strategy	NBCF's five-year research strategy guiding investment to reduce mortality by focusing on intractable research challenges.
Pink Sky Grant	Innovative, high-risk, high-reward research projects
Principal Investigator (PI)	Lead researcher responsible for coordinating the Pink Sky, overseeing delivery, and reporting; must be Australian-based with appropriate residency/visa status for the grant duration.
Relative to Opportunity	An assessment approach taking into account personal circumstances that have affected research productivity.

Scoring Matrices	Benchmarks used by reviewers to assess applications against each assessable criterion.
Zero Deaths from breast cancer	NBCF's overarching goal of eliminating deaths from breast cancer.

Appendix 2: Scoring Matrices

These scoring matrices are a guide for assessing applications against technical criteria. It offers benchmarks to support consistent and fair scoring but is not a checklist. Assessors should use a “best fit” approach, selecting the score that reflects the overall merit of the application. This ensures assessments are thorough, equitable, and transparent.

Assessable Criteria 1: Research Methodology, Quality and Feasibility (40% weighting)

SCORE						
FUNDABLE		COULD FUND			BELOW MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR FUNDING	
7	6	5	4	3	2	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question(s) are ground-breaking and approach is exceptionally clear. • Hypothesis is especially sound and well supported. • Research concepts, methods or technologies are highly novel and innovative. • Methodology is near-flawless with robust milestones and timelines ensuring feasibility. • Demonstrates outstanding originality and addresses a critical gap in breast cancer research. • Strongly aligns with the Pink Horizon Research Strategy objective/s and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question(s) are highly novel and approach is very clear. • Hypothesis is very sound and well supported. • Research concepts, methods or technologies are novel and innovative. • Methodology is very strong and feasible, with clear milestones and timeframes • Demonstrates high originality and addresses an important gap in breast cancer research. • Well aligned with Pink Horizon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question(s) are novel and approach is clear, with only minor concerns. • Hypothesis is sound and generally supported. • Research concepts, methods or technologies are somewhat novel innovative. • Methodology is strong and feasible with appropriate milestones and timeframes, minor concerns noted. • Demonstrates originality and addresses a relevant gap in breast cancer research. • Aligned with Pink Horizon objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question(s) and approach are generally novel and clear but raise some concerns. • Hypothesis is somewhat sound and supported. • Research concepts, methods or technologies are fairly standard, with a few novel, innovative aspects. • Methodology is adequate with minor flaws in milestones, feasibility or timeframes. • Originality is moderate, and/or the gap addressed in breast cancer research is less critical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question(s) and approach lack novelty and clarity. • Hypothesis is not very sound or supported. • Research concepts, methods or technologies are largely standard. • Methodology raises major concerns about feasibility. • Originality is limited and/or the gap addressed in breast cancer is uncertain. • Major concerns around alignment with Pink Horizon objectives and potential contribution to NBCF’s vision. • Where applicable, there are concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question(s) are conventional and approach is very unclear. • Hypothesis is not sound or supported. • Research concepts, methods or technologies are nearly all standard. Methodology is flawed with significant feasibility concerns. • Originality is very limited, and/or no gap in breast cancer will be addressed. • Poor alignment with Pink Horizon objectives and very minor contribution to NBCF’s vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research question and approach are absent or inappropriate. • Hypothesis is unreasonable or absent. • Research concepts, methods or technologies are standard. • Methodology is absent or wholly inadequate. • No originality and does not address a gap in breast cancer research. • No alignment with Pink Horizon objectives and no contribution to NBCF’s vision will be made.

<p>directly drives progress toward NBCF's vision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where applicable, the research is highly coordinated across collaborating institutions and forms an exceptionally strong cohesive body of research. • Comprehensive involvement of people with lived experience across the timeframe of the grant. • Consumer engagement plan is comprehensive, well-resourced, and fully integrated into the research design. 	<p>objectives and will contribute to NBCF's vision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where applicable, the research is well coordinated across collaborating institutions and forms a strong cohesive body of research. • Strong involvement of people with lived experience throughout the grant. • Consumer engagement plan is clear, robust, and integrated into the research design. 	<p>and will somewhat contribute to NBCF's vision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where applicable, the research is coordinated across collaborating institutions and forms a cohesive body of research. • Good involvement of people with lived experience. • Consumer engagement plan is sound and practical, though some details require clarification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some concerns around alignment with Pink Horizon objectives and potential contribution to NBCF's vision. • Where applicable, the research is somewhat coordinated across collaborating institutions and may form a cohesive body of research. • Adequate, but limited involvement of people with lived experience. • Consumer engagement plan is basic and lacks depth or integration. 	<p>about the coordination of the research across collaborating institutions and the cohesiveness of the body of research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal involvement of people with lived experience. • Consumer engagement plan is unclear or incomplete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where applicable, there are major concerns about the coordination of the research across collaborating institutions and the cohesiveness of the body of research. • Little to no involvement of people with lived experience. • Consumer engagement plan is absent or tokenistic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where applicable, no evidence of coordination between collaborating institutions or cohesiveness of research. • No involvement of people with lived experience. • No plan for consumer engagement provided.
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Assessable Criteria 2: Transformative Potential and Impact (40% weighting)

SCORE						
FUNDABLE		COULD FUND			BELOW MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR FUNDING	
7	6	5	4	3	2	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates exceptional transformative potential. • Research is bold and novel, with high-risk nature clearly acknowledged and strongly justified by potential impact. • Translational pathway to impact is highly defined, realistic, and scalable. • Where relevant, collaboration is exemplary, spanning disciplines, institutions, jurisdictions, and borders and is fully sustained throughout the program. • Research will significantly address unmet needs or persistent challenges for people affected by breast cancer. • Program design strongly reflects needs, values, and priorities of people with lived experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates very strong transformative potential. • Research explores novel or unconventional concepts, with high-risk elements appropriately justified. • Translational pathway to impact is well defined and scalable. • Where relevant, collaboration is strong and sustained across multiple disciplines and institutions. • Research will address unmet needs or persistent challenges for people affected by breast cancer. • Program design reflects needs and priorities of people with lived experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates strong transformative potential with minor concerns. • Research contains some novel aspects and high-risk elements that are somewhat justified. • Translational pathway to impact is clear, but scalability is less certain. • Where relevant, collaboration is good and spans relevant disciplines and institutions. • Research may address unmet needs or persistent challenges for people affected by breast cancer. • Program design includes input from people with lived experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates moderate transformative potential with notable concerns. • Research has few novel or high-risk aspects, or these are not well justified. • Translational pathway to impact is partially defined, and scalability is unclear. • Where relevant, collaboration is adequate but limited in scope or sustainability. • Research may not address unmet needs or persistent challenges for people affected by breast cancer. • Program design includes little input from people with lived experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates limited transformative potential. • Research lacks novelty and/or high-risk aspects have very little justification. • Translational pathway to impact lacks clarity and details for scalability. • Where relevant, collaboration is narrow or poorly described. • Research will likely not address unmet needs or persistent challenges for people affected by breast cancer. • Program design shows minimal evidence of input from people with lived experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates very little transformative potential. • Research is standard with no high-risk approaches or an absence of justification. • Translational pathway to impact is unclear or infeasible. • Where relevant, collaboration is minimal or tokenistic. • Research will not address unmet needs or persistent challenges for people affected by breast cancer. • Program design lacks meaningful input from people with lived experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates no transformative potential. • Research lacks any novel or high-risk/high-reward aspects. • No translational pathway to impact described. • Where relevant, proposed collaboration will be detrimental to the project. • No description of how research will address unmet needs or persistent challenges. • No input from people with lived experience evident.

Assessable Criteria 3: Capacity and Capability to Deliver (20% weighting)

SCORE						
FUNDABLE		COULD FUND			BELOW MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR FUNDING	
7	6	5	4	3	2	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team demonstrates exceptional collective expertise aligned with the research. • Outstanding mix of skills, disciplines, genders, cultures, and career stages. • Very strong and clear plan to involve early- and mid-career researcher development. • Research team's expertise and capacity to support consumers is very strong, ensuring effective delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team demonstrates very strong expertise and experience. • Very good mix of skills, disciplines, genders, cultures, and career stages. • Strong and clear plan to involve early- and mid-career researcher development. • Research team's expertise and capacity to support consumers is strong. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team demonstrates strong expertise with minor gaps. • Appropriate mix of skills, disciplines, genders, cultures, and career stages. • Moderately strong and clear plan to involve early-career researcher development evident. • Research team's expertise and capacity to support consumers is fair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team demonstrates adequate expertise with some concerns. • Mix of skills, disciplines, genders, cultures, and career stages is limited. • Fair and somewhat clear plan to involve to early-career researcher development. • Research team's expertise and capacity to support consumers raises minor concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team demonstrates limited expertise. • Mix of skills, disciplines, genders, cultures, and career stages is poor. • Weak and somewhat unclear plan to involve early-career researcher development. • Research team's expertise and capacity to support consumers raises major concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team demonstrates very little expertise. • Mix of skills, disciplines, genders, cultures, and career stages is inadequate. • Unclear and disproportionate early-career researcher development. • Research team's expertise and capacity to support consumers are inadequate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team demonstrates no relevant expertise. • No mix of skills, disciplines, genders, cultures, and career stages. • No plan to involve early-career researcher development. • Research team's expertise and capacity to support consumers is absent.

Assessable Criteria 4: Overall value, governance and risk (non-weighted – rating scale)

Rating		
Excellent	Good	Marginal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application provides excellent overall value and is an excellent investment. • The proposed budget is detailed, aligns very well with the scope and scale of the proposed research program, and is sufficient to undertake all components of work. • The applicant's risk management plan is well considered and appropriate to the research program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application provides good overall value and is a good investment. • The proposed budget, with some minor shortcomings, is substantiated and will meet the scope and scale of the proposed research program. • The applicant's risk management plan is appropriate to the research program, with some minor shortcomings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application provides marginal overall value and is a poor investment. • The proposed budget is higher than expected for a research program of the same scale and scope, with some line items questionable.

Appendix 3: Relative to Opportunity Assessment and Career Disruptions

Relative to Opportunity

Capability of the research team is assessed with consideration of the achievements of individual researchers 'relative to opportunity'.

Circumstances considered under relative to opportunity include:

- Amount of time spent as an active researcher; this specifically excludes consideration of full-time or part-time work
- Employment outside the research sector including time spent working in industry
- Career disruption (further details below)
- Available resources (including situations where research might be conducted in remote or isolated communities)
- Clinical, administrative or teaching workload
- Relocation of an applicant and his/her research laboratory or clinical practice setting or other similar circumstances that impact upon research productivity
- Restrictions on publication associated with time spent working in other sectors (e.g. industry, policy, and government)
- Typical performance of researchers in the research field in question

Career Disruption/Breaks

Career Disruption/Breaks is a sub-category of 'relative to opportunity' that will be considered when determining the duration of the applicant's postdoctoral experience.

A career disruption involves a prolonged interruption to an investigator's (PI or Co-I) capacity to work, due to:

- Parental leave
- Major illness
- Carer responsibilities including parental leave and care for immediate family (e.g. spouse, children or elderly parent)
- Covid-19 pandemic related disruptions

The interruption will involve a continuous absence from full-time work for periods of one month or greater and/or a long-term partial return to work (e.g. part-time absences from work due to circumstances classified as career disruptions).

PIs and Co-Is should provide details of relative to opportunity including the effect this has had on their research, research achievements and productivity relative to the stage of career, along with supporting documents (e.g. letter from employer) for consideration.