USE OF NHMRC PROJECT GRANTS FUNDS AND OTHER RESEARCH SUPPORT GRANT FUNDS FOR TRAVEL, CONFERENCES and PUBLICATION COSTS

This advice has been prepared to provide guidance to investigators holding NHMRC grants and their Research Administration Officers on the use of grant funds for travel, conference and publication costs.

NHMRC is governed in its operations by Australian Government legislation and policies which include the National Health & Medical Research Council Act 1992, the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997, the Commonwealth Grant Guidelines, and all-of-government policy requirements. The Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) can only be used to provide assistance to institutions and persons engaged in medical research and for the latter, in respect of NHMRC approved research grants, NHMRC funds the direct costs of research.

Research Grant Applications - should travel, conference and publication costs be included in budgets?

When investigators apply for research funding, it is not possible to predict where and how knowledge translation and knowledge transfer of their work will occur (because the research is yet to be undertaken). Thus, the cost of conference attendance and publications are not to be included as direct research costs in grant application budgets. These costs however, could be direct costs of conducting funded research.

When travel is integral to undertaking the research project, such as field work, research collaborations or use of facilities in other countries, this should be included in the grant application budget.

Travel and Conference costs

NHMRC recognises that conferences can be a valuable opportunity for research translation and dissemination and for networking with peers. NHMRC research funds can only be acquitted as direct research costs if the conference and related travel costs are directly related to the approved research objectives and attendance that the conference is for the purpose of presenting the outcomes of the research funded.

All overseas travel must be formally approved and documented by the Faculty Research Committee (or equivalent in a medical research institution) prior to the travel being undertaken.

The following conditions apply to all travel:

- All travel and acquittals must be in accordance with the funding rules, travel policies and procedures of the grantee’s Administering Institution.
As basic requirements, NHMRC expects:

- No more than one overseas trip per grant, per year (single traveller usually a Chief Investigator or an Associate Investigator), economy class, including conference travel referred to above. Exceptions to be approved and documented by the Faculty Research Committee (or equivalent in a medical research institution) prior to the travel being undertaken.
  - Reasonable registration costs.
  - Reasonable domestic travel.
  - Reasonable accommodation, meals and incidentals.
  - Rent or hire of a vehicle/taxis to travel to a conference or venue.
  - Airport taxes.

Grant funds cannot be used for:

- Personal expenditure
- Visas and passports
- Travel Insurance
- Airline club membership
- Rent/hire of a vehicle other than to travel to a conference or venue
- Telephones, mail, fax, email and internet services
- Social functions, tours, entertainment and other non-research related expenditure
- Accompanying family members.

Publication costs


NHMRC recognises that publication of research outcomes is an opportunity for research translation and dissemination. NHMRC research funds can only be used for reasonable publication costs where the publication has occurred as the result of the approved research activity. Where this is the case, all expenditure is to be in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2007.

Acquittal of Funds

Chief Investigators and Administering Institutions are required to acquit funds used for all expenditure including domestic and overseas travel, conference and publications costs. The NHMRC will continue to monitor this expenditure as part of an ongoing review of the use of funds by Administering Institutions.

Inquiries and Clarifications

All inquiries are to be directed to the NHMRC’s Research Administration Section postaward.management@nhmrc.gov.au.