

MRI Giving Day Grant Program Guidelines

1. Background

The MRI Giving Day Grant Program will be established to support early and mid-career researchers at QIMR Berghofer. Funded through MRI Giving Day, a national initiative that brings together Australia's leading medical research institutes to raise vital funds for research, the program aims to provide targeted support at a critical stage of a researcher's career. Through this funding, QIMR Berghofer seeks to help talented researchers establish research independence, generate new discoveries and build the foundations for future research leadership.

2. Purpose

The MRI Giving Day Grant Program supports early and mid-career researchers at a critical stage of their careers, where access to funding can help overcome barriers to research independence and career progression. By providing targeted funding, the program aims to retain talented researchers within the medical research sector, accelerate promising discoveries, and support the development of future research leaders whose work will improve health outcomes and advance medical research.

3. Grant Funding

Two or more grants of up to \$50,000 may be awarded, with all funds to be utilised within two years. The number of grants awarded will depend on the funds raised through MRI Giving Day.

4. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:

- Hold a research appointment at QIMR Berghofer and meet the eligibility criteria outlined below.
- Hold a doctoral degree (PhD or equivalent research doctorate)
- Be classified as an:
 - o Early Career Researcher: within eight years of PhD conferral * (adjusted for eligible career interruptions).
 - o Mid-Career Researcher: within fifteen years of PhD conferral * (adjusted for eligible career interruptions).
- Hold an employment contract at QIMR Berghofer extending for a minimum of 12 months from the grant application closing date.

5. Eligible Appointments

Eligible applicants must hold a research appointment at QIMR Berghofer, or another position formally classified by QIMR Berghofer as an equivalent research appointment.

6. Ineligible Applicants

The following individuals are not eligible to apply:

- Employees of affiliated entities
- Group Leaders, Senior Group Leaders, Distinguished Scientists

The senior positions outlined above are not eligible as the MRI Giving Day Grant is intended to support researchers as they progress towards research independence and career progression.

7. Recognition of Career Interruptions*

QIMR Berghofer recognises that researchers may experience career disruptions that affect the progression of their research careers.

Periods of eligible career disruption may be considered when determining an applicant's eligibility. These may include:

- parental leave
- caregiving responsibilities
- illness or injury
- time away from research

Applicants must provide sufficient information to support any claimed interruption.

The Deputy Director and Chief Scientist will assess interruptions against published criteria and determine the adjusted career stage.

8. Exceptional Circumstances

The MRI Giving Day Grant aims to apply eligibility requirements consistently and transparently. Exceptional circumstances may be considered only where an applicant's situation is not adequately addressed by these Guidelines and strict application of the criteria would be inconsistent with the purpose of the program.

Applicants seeking consideration under exceptional circumstances must gain approval from their immediate Manager to approach Program Directors with supporting information and obtain a written exemption. The Program Directors will develop this exemption and provide it to the Deputy Director and Chief Scientist.

The Deputy Director and Chief Scientist will determine requests for exceptional circumstances having regard to:

- the purpose of the MRI Giving Grants;
- fairness and equity across applicants;
- consistency with previous determinations; and
- the intent of the published eligibility criteria.

All exceptional circumstance determinations will be documented as part of the grant assessment record.

9. Conflict of Interest

Any person involved in assessing or endorsing applications must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

Individuals with a conflict must not participate in assessment or decision-making relating to that application.

10. Selection Process

- Applications will be submitted through the published Expression of Interest process.
- Fundraising and Philanthropy team will advise Program Directors of the EOIs received for their program.
- Fundraising and Philanthropy team will review applications against eligibility criteria and advise eligible applicants to the Deputy Director and Chief Scientist.
- The Deputy Director and Chief Scientist makes the final selection of applicants against:
 - o eligibility against the published criteria;
 - o alignment with the purpose of the MRI Giving Day Grant.

11. Grant Assessment Criteria

Alignment with Program Objectives

The extent to which the proposed project aligns with the purpose and objectives of the MRI Giving Day Grant and how it will contribute to the program's intended outcomes and measures of success.

Impact

The potential for the proposed research to translate into tangible benefits for patients or the medical research sector in Australia and beyond.

Need

The extent to which funding is required to enable the applicant to undertake and advance their research. Existing grant or philanthropic support will not preclude eligibility; however, preference may be given to researchers demonstrating a clear funding need.

12. Announcement & notification of successful applicants

Each successful applicant will be contacted individually after the Deputy Director and Chief Scientist has confirmed the successful applicants. It will also be announced in the Institute update.