



Australian Government  
National Health and Medical Research Council

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# Reform of NHMRC's grant program

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WORKING TO BUILD A HEALTHY AUSTRALIA

# NHMRC's New Grant Program

- A new architecture for NHMRC's investment in health and medical research investment, for funding starting 1 January 2020
- Developed with the advice of an Expert Advisory Group and extensive consultation with the sector in 2016 – 2017.
- Announced by Hon. Greg Hunt MP on 25 May 2017:  
*“...changes which the research community has itself proposed and agreed upon.... have been accepted in full and unchanged.....”*

# NHMRC's New Grant Program

## INVESTIGATOR GRANTS

To support the research program of outstanding investigators at all career stages

## SYNERGY GRANTS

To support outstanding multidisciplinary teams of investigators to work together to answer major questions that cannot be answered by a single investigator

## IDEAS GRANTS

To support focussed innovative research projects addressing a specific question

## STRATEGIC AND LEVERAGING GRANTS

To support research that addresses identified national needs

## Objectives of reform

- Encourage innovation and creativity across all fields of health and medical research
- Provide opportunities for talented researchers at all career stages and across all disciplines
- Minimise burden on researchers, freeing up time for research

... while retaining core focus on improving human health and wellbeing through research

# Objectives of reform

- Encourage innovation and creativity across all fields of health and medical research
  - Investigator Grants and Synergy Grants offer flexibility for strategic, creative, collaborative research
  - Ideas Grants focus on fresh thinking – science rather than track record

## Objectives of reform

- Encourage innovation and creativity across all fields of health and medical research
- Provide opportunities for talented researchers at all career stages and across all disciplines
  - Investigator Grants will be provided for all career stages
  - Synergy Grants will encourage diverse teams, e.g. by discipline, career stage and gender
  - Ideas Grants will be opportunity for those with less-developed track records

## Objectives of reform

- Encourage innovation and creativity across all fields of health and medical research
- Provide opportunities for talented researchers at all career stages and across all disciplines
- Minimise burden on researchers, freeing up time for research
  - Investigator Grants consolidate funding and reduce need to apply for Project Grants every year
  - Consolidation plus capping is expected to reduce application numbers in steady state

# NHMRC's New Grant Program

New information provided in this presentation:

- Investigator Grants

- Structure
- Salaries and Research Support Packages
- Part-time and non-salaried grants
- Working overseas

- Synergy and Ideas Grants

- Eligibility
- Budgets

- Transitional arrangements

- Final rounds of Program and Project Grants
- Transition from old to new schemes



# Investigator Grants

GRANT TYPE	INVESTIGATOR GRANTS	SYNERGY GRANTS	IDEAS GRANTS	STRATEGIC & LEVERAGING
Duration	5 years	5 years	Up to 5 years	Varies with scheme
Number of Chief Investigators	1	4 – 10	1 – 10	Varies with scheme
Funding	Salary (optional) + Research Support Package	Grant of a fixed budget	Based on the requested budget for research support	Varies with scheme

# Investigator Grants – streamlining of fellowships

Current NHMRC Fellowship	Corresponding Investigator Grant
Senior Principal Research Fellowship Australia Fellowship	Leadership Level 3
Principal Research Fellowship Practitioner Fellowship Level 2	Leadership Level 2
Practitioner Fellowship Level 1 Senior Research Fellowship Levels A and B Career Development Fellowship Level 2	Leadership Level 1
Career Development Fellowship Levels 1 and 2 Translation of Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship	Emerging Leadership Level 2
Early Career Fellowship Translation of Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship	Emerging Leadership Level 1

# Investigator Grants – scheme structure

Salary Support				
Category	Levels	Salary <sup>a</sup>	Allocation method	No. of terms
Leadership	L3	\$175,201	Self-select	5
	L2	\$164,911		2
	L1	\$141,474		2
				} Maximum five terms in total <sup>b</sup>
Emerging Leadership	EL2	\$107,750	Self-select for ≤10 years post-PhD <sup>c</sup>	1
	EL1	\$75,738		1

<sup>a</sup> Salary per annum (AUD). Salaries will increase in line with indexation and are quoted as 1 FTE.

<sup>b</sup> For example, a researcher may hold L1 once, L2 twice and L3 twice to have a total of five terms.

<sup>c</sup> Or equivalent

# Investigator Grants – Research Support Packages

## Research Support Package (RSP)

Category	Tiers	RSP per annum <sup>a</sup>	Allocation Method
Leadership	LT4	\$600,000	Peer review – based on overall score
	LT3	\$500,000	
	LT2	\$400,000	
	LT1	\$300,000	
Emerging Leadership	ELT2	\$200,000	Automatic allocation according to EL level
	ELT1	\$50,000	

<sup>a</sup> Average Project Grant is approximately \$600,000 (\$200,000 per annum of a typical 3-year grant). RSPs will be reduced by 50% or 100% if one or two Ideas Grants are held, until those grants expire.

# Investigator Grants – salaries and RSPs

	Salary		Research Support Package	
Category	Levels	Salary	Tiers	RSP per annum
Leadership	L3	\$175,201	LT4	\$600,000
	L2	\$164,911	LT3	\$500,000
	L1	\$141,474	LT2	\$400,000
Emerging Leadership	EL2	\$107,750	ELT2	\$200,000
	EL1	\$75,738	ELT1	\$50,000

RSPs for EL1 and EL2 are awarded based on seniority.

RSPs for L1–L3 are awarded based on score in like-for-like assessment, rather than seniority.

# Investigator Grants – eligibility in steady state

Highest Investigator Grant held	EL1	EL2	L1	L2	L3
None previously held	eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent	eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent	eligible	eligible	eligible
Emerging Leadership level 1	ineligible	eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent	eligible	eligible	eligible
Emerging Leadership level 2	ineligible	ineligible	eligible	eligible	eligible
Leadership level 1	ineligible	ineligible	limitations apply to the number of terms an Investigator Grant can be held	eligible	eligible
Leadership level 2	ineligible	ineligible	ineligible	limitations apply to the number of terms an Investigator Grant can be held	eligible
Leadership level 3	ineligible	ineligible	ineligible	ineligible	limitations apply to the number of terms an Investigator Grant can be held

eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent

eligible

limitations apply to the number of terms an Investigator Grant can be held

ineligible

# Investigator Grants – part-time and non-salary grants

## Part-time Investigator Grants

- Aim to cater for personal (e.g. carers) and professional (e.g. clinical) commitments
- Applicant selects salary in the range 0 – 90% in 10% increments
- Applicant selects full or <100% Research Support Package (RSP)
- Salary and RSP components provided for 5 years and finish on same date

## Investigator Grants without salary

- Aim to support research of outstanding investigators who do not need a salary
  - applications expected from tenured university academics (e.g. Dean, DVC, DVC-R, Pro-VC) and directors of independent medical research institutes
  - not designed to subsidise appointments with substantial administrative responsibilities
- Successful applicants would receive RSP only

# Investigator Grants – research overseas

Under the streamlined Investigator Grants scheme, specific grants for overseas research will not be offered.

Instead:

Emerging Leaders

- may spend 50% of grant time overseas
- must spend final two years of grant in Australia

Leaders

- may spend 20% grant time overseas
- if receive <100% salary, may spend non-NHMRC time overseas (e.g. joint appointments)



# Synergy Grants

GRANT TYPE	INVESTIGATOR GRANTS	SYNERGY GRANTS	IDEAS GRANTS	STRATEGIC & LEVERAGING
Duration	5 years	5 years	Up to 5 years	Varies with scheme
Number of Chief Investigators	1	4 – 10	1 – 10	Varies with scheme
Funding	Salary (optional) + Research Support Package	Grant of a fixed budget	Based on the requested budget for research support	Varies with scheme

# Synergy Grants

- Fixed budget of \$5 million per grant
- Up to 10 awarded per year
- Budget can be used for Personnel Support Packages (PSPs) and direct research costs
- Chief Investigator salaries can be paid from budget up to PSP5
- Each Chief Investigator (CIA – CIJ) may apply for and hold one Synergy Grant

# Ideas Grants

GRANT TYPE	INVESTIGATOR GRANTS	SYNERGY GRANTS	IDEAS GRANTS	STRATEGIC & LEVERAGING
Duration	5 years	5 years	Up to 5 years	Varies with scheme
Number of Chief Investigators	1	4 – 10	1 – 10	Varies with scheme
Funding	Salary (optional) + Research Support Package	Grant of a fixed budget	Based on the requested budget for research support	Varies with scheme

# Ideas Grants

- As for current Project Grants:
  - Grant size will be based on requested budget
  - Budget request will be based on Personnel Support Packages (PSPs) and direct research costs
  - Chief Investigators may request their salary up to PSP5
- Chief Investigators (CIA – CIJ) may apply for and hold up to two Ideas Grants concurrently

# Strategic and Leveraging Grants

GRANT TYPE	INVESTIGATOR GRANTS	SYNERGY GRANTS	IDEAS GRANTS	STRATEGIC & LEVERAGING
Duration	5 years	5 years	Up to 5 years	Varies with scheme
Number of Chief Investigators	1	4 – 10	1 – 10	Varies with scheme
Funding	Salary (optional) + Research Support Package	Grant of a fixed budget	Based on the requested budget for research support	Varies with scheme

# Strategic and Leveraging Grants

- Centres of Research Excellence
- Development Grants
- International Collaborative Grants (e.g. GACD, EU, NIH, NIHR)
- Targeted Calls for Research
- Partnership Projects
- Partnership Centres
- Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies (new scheme)
  - Details to follow analysis of submissions to recent public consultation

# Principles for transition to New Grant Program

Goal is to reach the new steady state while ensuring:

- Transparency and equity
  - Minimal disadvantage or selective advantage
  - Simplicity to understand and administer
- Honour existing grants
  - Stage entry to new schemes where possible
  - Treat access to Investigator Grant and Ideas Grant schemes equitably

# New Grant Program eligibility – steady state

GRANT TYPE	INVESTIGATOR GRANTS	SYNERGY GRANTS	IDEAS GRANTS	STRATEGIC & LEVERAGING
Maximum number of <u>applications</u> allowed per round	1 1 0 0	1 0 1 0	0 1 1 2	Not capped relative to Investigator, Synergy or Ideas Grants
Maximum number of each grant type that can be <u>held</u>	1 0	1 1	0 2	Not capped relative to Investigator, Synergy or Ideas Grants



# Transition to New Grant Program – 2018 round

- Final Project grant round in 2018 (for funding in 2019):
  - Applicants may submit up to two Project Grant applications
  - Applicants must comply with current cap of six Project Grants held
  - Capping applies to all Chief Investigators (CIA – CIJ)
- No Program Grant round in 2018 (for funding in 2020) as this scheme will be replaced by the Synergy Grant scheme (2019 round for funding in 2020).

# Transition to New Grant Program – 2019 round

- All existing grants will complete their term.
- A researcher's portfolio of NHMRC Fellowship, Project and Program Grants held on 1 January 2020 will affect:
  - Eligibility to apply for Investigator, Synergy and Ideas Grants
  - Percentage of Research Support Package (RSP) awarded for an Investigator Grant
  - Number of Ideas Grants for which they can apply.
- These effects will cease as the existing grants expire.

# NHMRC Fellows – transitional eligibility

Highest NHMRC Fellowship held	EL1	EL2	L1	L2	L3
None previously held	eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent	eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent	eligible	eligible	eligible
Early Career Fellowship	ineligible	eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent	eligible	eligible	eligible
Translating Research into Practice (TRIP) Fellowship	ineligible	eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent	eligible	eligible	eligible
Career Development Fellowship Level 1	ineligible	eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent	eligible	eligible	eligible
Career Development Fellowship Level 2	ineligible	ineligible	eligible	eligible	eligible
Practitioner Fellowship Level 1	ineligible	ineligible	eligible	eligible	eligible
Senior Research Fellowship Levels A and B	ineligible	ineligible	eligible	eligible	eligible
Practitioner Fellowship Level 2	ineligible	ineligible	ineligible	eligible	eligible
Principal Research Fellowship	ineligible	ineligible	ineligible	eligible	eligible
Senior Principal Research Fellowship	ineligible	ineligible	ineligible	ineligible	eligible
Australia Fellowship	ineligible	ineligible	ineligible	ineligible	eligible

■ ineligible

□ eligible if ≤10 years post-PhD or equivalent

■ eligible

# NHMRC Fellows – transitional eligibility

## Existing NHMRC Fellows:

- may not hold a concurrent Investigator Grant
- may apply for Ideas Grants and/or a Synergy Grant (subject to caps)
- may apply for an Investigator Grant in the penultimate year of their Fellowship, to commence the next year
- may apply for an Investigator Grant and one Ideas Grant in the final year of their Fellowship.
  - If both are successful, only the Investigator Grant will be awarded.

## Program Grants – transitional eligibility

### Chief Investigators on Program Grants:

- may apply for an Investigator Grant (with 100% RSP reduction until Program Grant expires)
- may not hold a concurrent Synergy Grant or Ideas Grant
- may apply for a Synergy Grant in the final year of their Program Grant
- may apply for Ideas Grants in the final year of their Program Grant (subject to eligibility and caps)

# Project Grants – transitional eligibility

## Transition

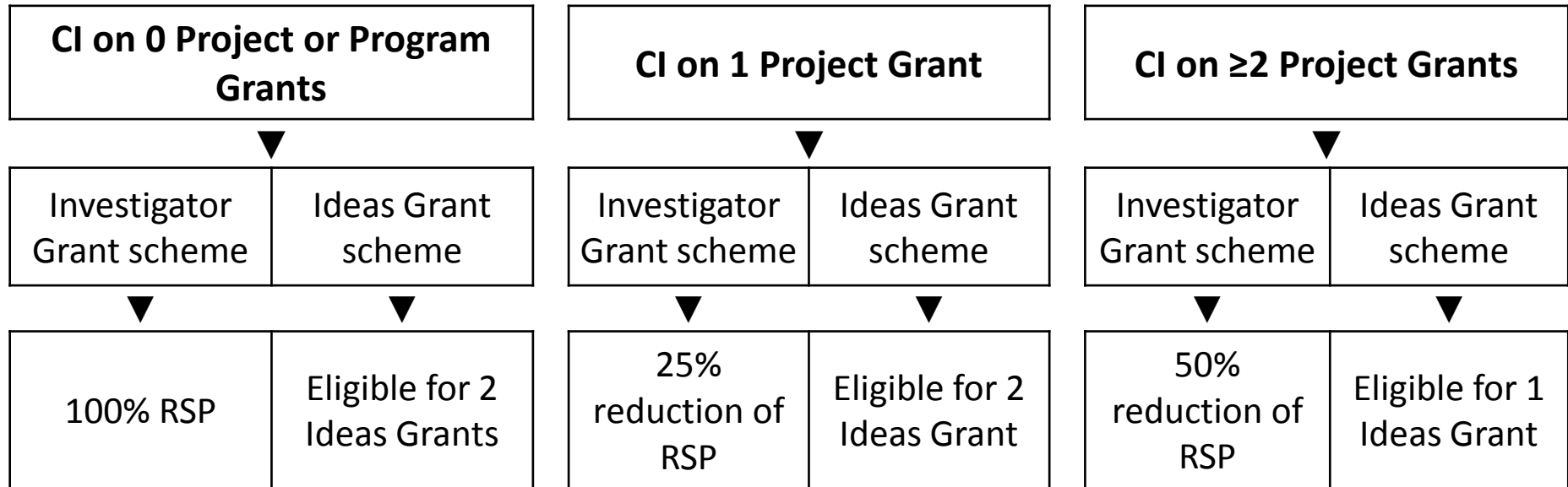
- Investigator Grant RSP reduced by 25% for each Project Grant held, to 50% maximum
- Access to Ideas Grants unaffected by one Project Grant held
- Access to Ideas Grants reduced from two to one if two or more Project Grants held

## Steady state

- Investigator Grant RSP reduced by 50% for each Ideas Grant held, to 100% maximum
- Access to Ideas Grants reduced 1:1 for each Ideas Grant held

# Transition to New Grant Program – 2019 round

Grants held as Chief Investigator (CIA – CIJ) on 1 January 2020



## Next steps

- Develop funding rules
  - Targeted consultations with sector and RAOs
  - Government approvals
- Design peer review for Investigator, Ideas and Synergy Grants
  - Advice from expert advisory groups
  - Consultation on peer review
    - consultation paper, September 2017
    - public fora in key capital cities, October – November 2017
    - targeted consultations in Q1, 2018



# Implementation of new grant program

**December 2017**

Introduction of  
Project Grant  
capping

**Late 2019**

First grants awarded  
under new grant  
program

2017

2018

2019

2020

**August 2017**

Webinar

**From late 2018**

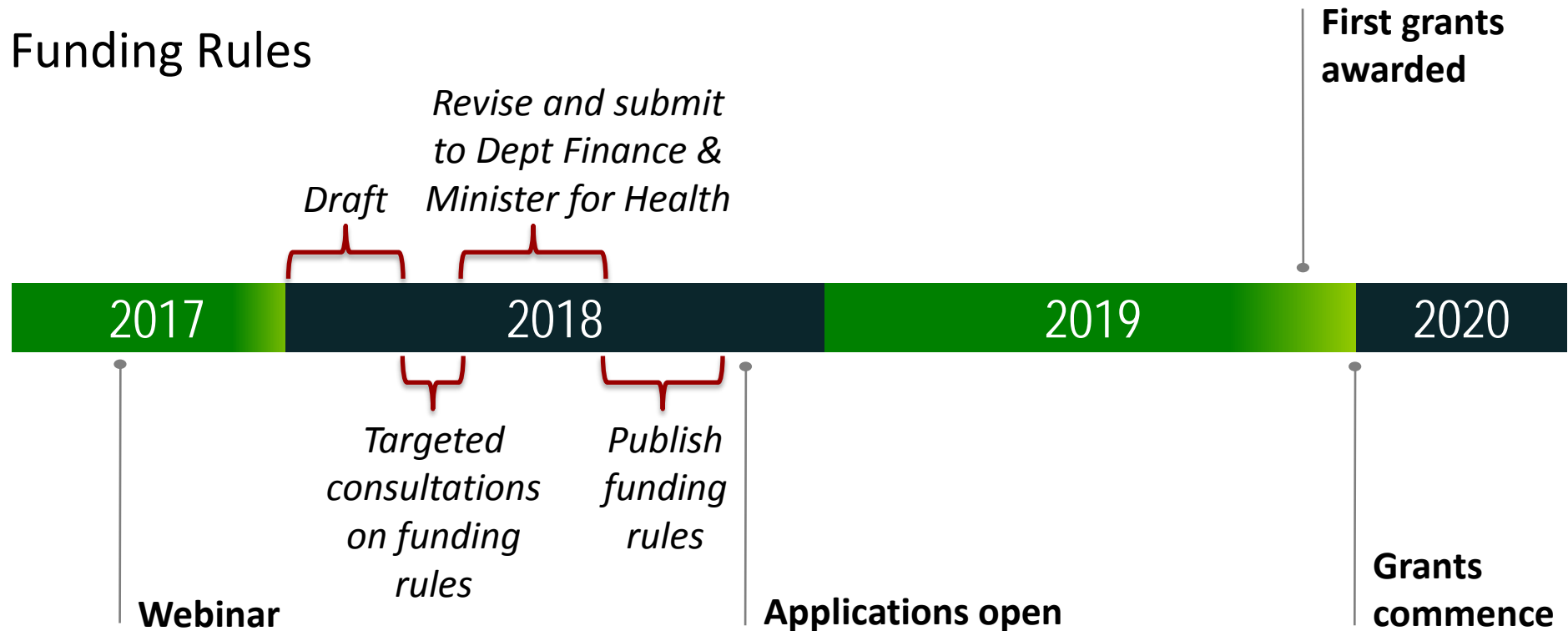
Applications open  
under new grant  
program

**January 2020**

Grants commence  
under new grant  
program

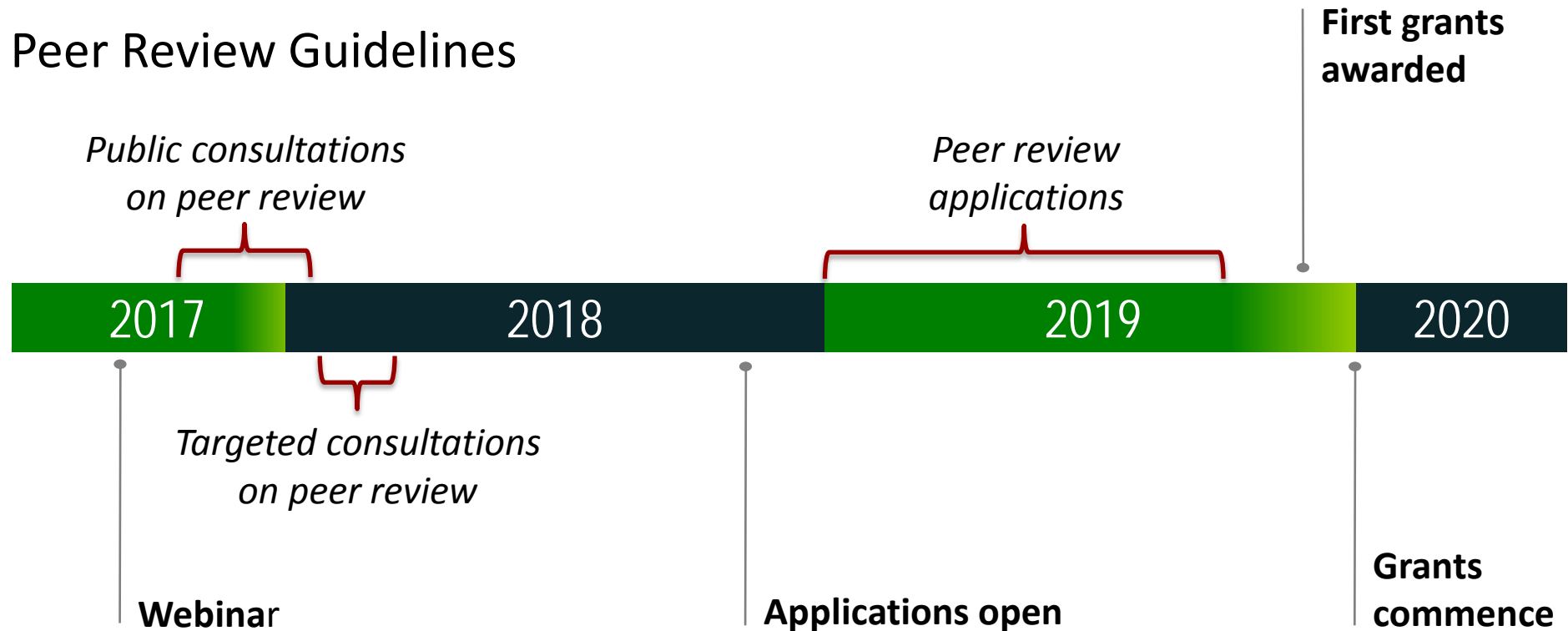
# Implementation of new grant program

## Funding Rules



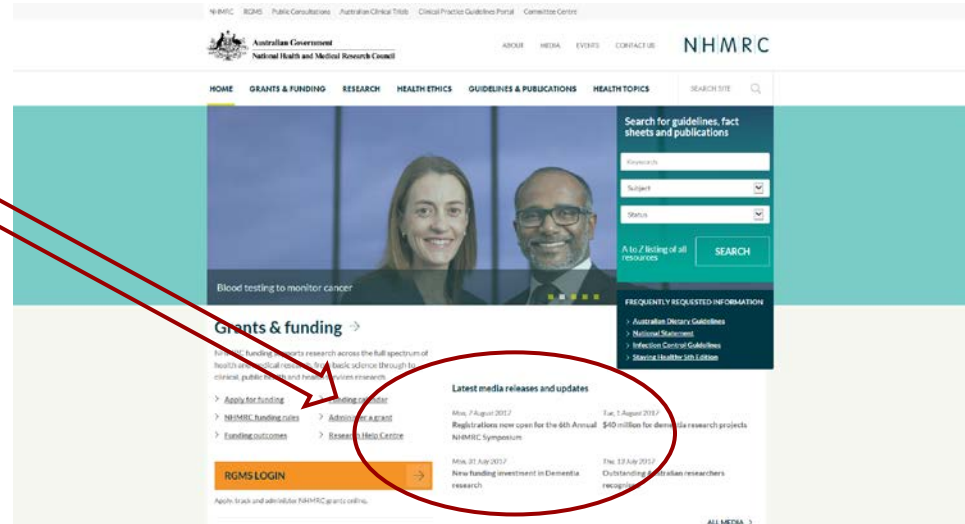
# Implementation of new grant program

## Peer Review Guidelines



# Where to find information

- Webinar slide set and transitional eligibility information will be available on NHMRC website today:
  - look under latest media releases and updates
- Webinar recording and updated details of new grant program will be available soon at:



[future.nhmrc.gov.au](http://future.nhmrc.gov.au)



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Thank you

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