



Neuromuscular Research New Zealand

Neuromuscular Research New Zealand*

Protocols for assessing research proposals for grants funding

Research supported by Neuromuscular Research New Zealand may be qualitative or quantitative, and/or investigative, and/or experimental.

External reviewers and The Trustees will assess research proposals in accordance with the following criteria, as relevant and appropriate to each proposal:

- 1. Executive Summary:** The rationale and general design of the research should be described in a way which will allow non-expert reviewers, as well as specialist referees, to judge whether the design is sound. The summary should be clear about what is to be measured, the impact of the research and its feasibility.
- 2. Consistency with MDANZ Research Focuses:** The Trustees will place considerable weight on the significance of the work to the lives of New Zealanders living with neuromuscular conditions (covered by MDANZ).
- 3. Background/Rationale:** Succinctly describe the background of the research/neuromuscular disease, including any preliminary data of the applicants that supports the rationale and overall hypothesis. The aim of the project should be briefly and clearly defined. The way in which the subject of the proposed research arose and its position in the current thinking on the subject should be given in the context of a review of all significant and relevant literature.
- 4. Research Project:** Describe the experimental design and any novel laboratory procedures. Applicants should describe the general strengths and weaknesses of the prior research being cited to support the application. Sample sizes should be clearly delineated and justified using power analyses. A timeline should be provided in the form of a Gantt chart. Strong justification must be provided for applications proposing to study only one sex. Succinctly state the potential difficulties, limitations and identified risks of the proposed procedures in achieving the specific aims of the project. Discuss how data will be analysed and interpreted.
- 5. Māori Health Advancement:** Proposals should reflect the responsibilities of researchers to protect the rights and interests of Māori when conducting research. If Māori are involved

*Neuromuscular Research New Zealand is legally known as the Neuromuscular Research Foundation Trust (NRFT). This Trust is affiliated with the Muscular Dystrophy Association of New Zealand (MDANZ)

as participants, proposals should address the needs of Māori in their research methodology and design.

6. **Project Management:** Research projects that foster collaboration will be considered. However, the proposal should include written confirmation from the named collaborator(s) to demonstrate that he or she has considered the proposal and is willing and able to contribute to it as described. Resources and facilities available for the proposed project should be described. Human and/or animal ethics, as well as the expertise of the investigators should be described.
7. **Innovation:** Applicants should clearly explain how their research proposal is distinctly novel from current concepts, approaches, methodologies, technologies or interventions in order to demonstrate innovation.
8. **Impact:** The applicant should describe the importance/significance of the problem and the extent to which the outcomes and outputs of their proposed research will result in advancements to the research or health area. A description of planned outcomes should be included.
9. **Budget and Justification:** The appropriateness of the level of funding requested: Funding and grants requests should be sufficiently detailed and justified to allow the reviewers and Trustees to decide as to the sufficiency or otherwise of the requested level of financial support, and should include; the total amount of funding sought; details of the costs, number and qualifications of staff who will be engaged to carry out the project; equipment requirements and costs (including quotes); and, working expenses. Proposals will be considered which have requested and/or received funding from other sources, in which case full details will be required. Overhead expenses or permanent academic staff employment expenses will not be funded.
10. **References:** A complete list of relevant references detailed in the proposal. Details must include a full list of all author(s), title of article, journal, year, volume and page numbers.
11. **Details of any previous research supported by grant(s) from the NRFT:** The Trustees will require available details of previous projects, level of financial support and the outcome of the research. If the project encountered problems these also need to be discussed. Relevance to the present project should be explained if appropriate.
12. **Reviewers:** Proposals should nominate, and confirm their availability, two people in the field who the Trustees can approach for the purposes of peer review. The reviewers cannot have a conflict of interest with any of the applicants within three years of the submission date (e.g., collaboration with a manuscript, grant, supervision of a student, previous or ongoing research). The quality of the proposal in the opinion of appropriate national and international referees will be considered by the Trustees (the final decision however is that of the Trustees and need not correspond with the opinions of its advisors).

- 13. MDA support:** All proposals must be consistent with the research priorities of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of New Zealand (available separately in the Research section of the MDA website www.mda.org.nz).
- 14. The standard of submission:** All proposals must be submitted in writing on the correct application form (available separately in the Research section of the MDA website www.mda.org.nz), be clearly laid out, and use single space text in a Calibri font of point size 12.
- 15. Postgraduate support:** If a postgraduate student scholarship is being sought this should be clearly indicated as part of the application and be by, or on behalf of, a named student. If a research proposal is being led by a postgraduate student (Masters, PhD or MD), up to \$20,000 of the funding pool will be allocated.

September 2024