

Guidelines for Applicants

The Bryant Stokes Neurological Research Fund (BSNRF) supports scientific research projects aimed at improving the lives of people affected by neurological conditions whilst supporting our Western Australian researchers.

This program awards merit-based grants to researchers based in WA, whose applications are subject to external independent review by national and international peers.

The fund has a particular focus on neurological research across the translational pipeline.

Although all researchers can apply, early and mid-career researchers are a particular focus of this fund. Through a merit-based selection process, overseen by the BSNRF Executive Committee, funds are quarantined for the different career stages: early-career and mid-career researchers as well as a limited number of established researchers.

Scoping Criteria for Grant Applications

The BSNRF supports research projects that meet two objectives: advancing our knowledge of the pathogenesis, diagnosis and treatment of neurological disorders and progressing research along the translational pathway towards the point of delivering benefits to patients with neurological disease. Applications should:

Focus on innovative research aimed at advancing our knowledge of neurological disorders

The BSNRF supports all types of research – molecular, genetic, cellular, physiological, rehabilitative, clinical, population-based etc – aimed at improving our knowledge of the pathogenesis, diagnosis and treatment of neurological diseases; including discovery and development of therapeutic interventions targeted at neurological conditions:

- Identifying and characterising cellular, molecular and/or genetic changes underpinning neurological disease
- Designing and testing therapies that target the cellular and/or molecular events underpinning neurological disease processes (can be preventative or restorative)
- Development of model systems to evaluate therapies
- Mechanisms of functional recovery
- Development and clinical evaluation of interventions, including rehabilitation/exercise programs/lifestyle interventions, to prevent or reduce symptoms, improve health and wellbeing and/or enhance functional recovery.

and

Demonstrate progress along a translational pathway

BSNRF acknowledges that the pathway from basic discovery through to implementation into new diagnostics, new treatments and changes in health policy and clinical practice can be very long, however, BSNRF expects grants to deliver outcomes that progress knowledge along this translation pathway.

Early and Mid-Career Researcher (EMCR) Definitions

Based on the NHMRC Investigator Grants 2021 Peer Review Guidelines.

Early Career Researchers (ECR)

It is expected that BSNRF ECR recipients will be between **0- and 5-years post-PhD** (or equivalent) and will be beginning to gain recognition in their research area, with demonstrated:

- original contribution(s) in their field of expertise
- ability to contribute to the conception of research projects
- scientific contributions within their region, state, or territory (e.g., community leadership, state level contribution to a professional society)
- limited but developing supervision of research staff and students
- contributions within their department, centre, institution, or organisation e.g., organising journal clubs, seminar series etc.

Mid-Career Researchers (MCR)

It is expected that BSNRF MCR recipients will be between **5- and 10-years post-PhD** (or equivalent) and be recognised for their expertise in their research area with demonstrated:

- original contributions of influence in their field of expertise
- ability to contribute to the conception and direction of research projects, while developing independence
- experience in supervising a small research team
- national contributions to their scientific discipline (e.g., public advocacy, community leadership, peer review and professional societies)
- contributions within their department, centre, institution, or organisation e.g., organising journal clubs, seminar series etc.

Career Disruption

- Includes: pregnancy, major illness/injury, carer responsibilities including parental leave and clinician training. This must involve a continuous absence from work for 90 days or more or return to work on a part-time basis.
- Does not include clinical, administrative, or teaching workload, relocation of applicants or research/lab, periods of unemployment or employment in other sectors.
- Written evidence must be provided on request.



Notes

- It is expected that all BSNRF ECR and MCR applicants will be working within a larger team under the mentorship of more senior researchers.
- Only one EOI is permitted per Lead Investigator in each grant round.
 - Each EOI application should be accompanied by a brief CV for the Lead Investigator and any Associate Investigators that includes:
 - A full list of publications over the last 5 years, highlighting publications relevant to this application
 - A list of grants and industry funds awarded over the last 5 years, including grant title, investigators, funding source, amount and duration of funding
 - Information on conference presentations, student supervisions, awards and prizes over the last 5 years
 - The research track record of the Lead Investigator will be the primary consideration in determining track record overall.
- For clarity, a PhD candidate can submit for shortlisting in the EOI process, but acceptance of full application requires a letter detailing the pass date of their doctoral thesis. The intention of this is to allow very early career researchers to be part of the process, but PhD completion is required to proceed into the peer review stage.
- Evidence of EMCR status and career disruption must be provided on request.



General Requirements

- Lead Investigator must be based in WA but may involve collaboration with national and/or international researchers and/or clinicians.
- Research must be carried out in WA
- Each grant budget must not exceed \$100,000.
- All grant funds must go to research, none toward institutional infrastructure.
- Grants are for one-year duration only.

Projects Requiring Ethics Approval

- Ethics approvals can cause significant delays which may limit the ability of the team to meet the 12-month deadline.
- In projects where significant ethics delays have or are likely to occur, a review at 6 months will take place to determine if meaningful research can be achieved in the remaining timeframe.

Impact of COVID

- COVID can cause delays which may limit the ability of the team to meet the 12-month deadline.
- Applications will include consideration of the impact of COVID on research milestones and your ability to complete meaningful research within a 1-year timeframe. Applications are assessed in the context of these considerations, and it is expected that if funded, that research can occur. For clarity, BSNRF wants to avoid funding projects that are unlikely to be able to complete meaningful research in the timeframe.



Extensions

- In special circumstances, a one-time 6-month extension may be requested.
- Approval for this extension is at the discretion of the Executive Committee.
- Requests to be received by letter from the Chief Investigator addressed to the BSNRF Executive Committee.
- Extensions relate to time only.
- There is no capacity for additional funds to be awarded.

Eligibility Criteria

- Lead Investigator must be based in Western Australia
- Applications must be made by a WA administering institution that is a WA university or WA research institute with a registered Australian Business Number

Application Procedure

Applications are only accepted from invited applicants – these being the shortlisted EOI applications.

The project described in the EOI must be fundamentally the same as that described in the full application (no significant deviations will be accepted).

Applicants are required to

1. Submit a completed application form and supporting documents to BSNRF Executive Officer by the deadline.
2. Combine the application form and CVs into a single MS Word document. This will allow for efficient collation and correction of any formatting compatibility issues prior to sending for peer review.



Assessment Process

Expressions of Interest

- EOIs will be assessed by the BSNRF Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) according to the criteria.
- BSNRF SAP will make recommendations to the BSNRF Executive Committee regarding
 - EMCR categorisations
 - Recommendations for shortlisting
- The BSNRF Executive Committee will consider the recommendations of the SAP and determine the shortlist of applicants who will be invited to proceed to the next round (full application) which will be assessed by independent peer reviewers.
- All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their EOI via email to the Lead Investigator applicant.
- Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application and receive instructions on how to submit

Full Application

- External peer reviewers will assess and rate applications
- The BSNRF Executive Committee will allocate grants considering the external scientific reviewers' recommendations, and within the limitations of the allocated budget.
- Please be advised that decisions are final and there is no mechanism for appeal. Note that only the full application will be used for final assessment purposes (i.e., the EOI is not used and you may like to incorporate any relevant information from the EOI into your full application)

Assessment Criteria

Based on the Raine Medical Research Foundation 2022 Raine Priming Grant Assessment Criteria

Each application will be assessed, based on:

1) Scientific Merit (50%)

- i. Research Quality and Feasibility (20%) – The extent to which the conceptual framework, design, methods, analyses, applicant experience and host research environment are appropriate to achieve the aims of the project.

Significance and Potential Impact (20%) – The extent to which the project is outcomes driven and will make a valuable contribution to medical and/or health science in the context of the translational pathway.

- ii. Innovation (10%) – The extent to which the project seeks to challenge and shift current paradigms and/or develop or use novel research concepts, approaches, methodologies, technologies, or interventions in the context of the translational pathway.

2) Track Record (50%)

The research track record of the Lead Investigator will be the primary consideration in determining track record overall.

- i. Publications (20%) – The productivity of the applicant and the quality of publications and journals in which the applicant has published (taking into consideration career disruption).
- ii. Leadership (20%) – The extent to which the applicant demonstrates progress towards an independent research career.
- iii. Research Impact (10%) – The reach and significance, and contribution of the applicant to research impact to-date.

3) Budget (Yes/No)

- i. Is the budget appropriate?

Project Commencement

- Administering institutions of successful applicants will be required to enter into an agreement (Participation Agreement) with the Perron Institute for Neurological and Translational Science.
- Theoretical start date is as per the advertised grant round.



Reporting Requirements

- A verbal Progress Report will take place after 3 months from the project start date by Teams, by phone or in person
- A written Progress Report must be submitted to the BSNRF at the end of every six months, as specified in the Participation Agreement.
- The administering institution is responsible for ensuring that financial reports generated by their Research Finance Office are submitted to the BSNRF by their due dates as specified in the Participation Agreement.
- A grant remains active until BSNRF has received and acknowledged all reports specific in the Participation Agreement and all funds have been fully acquitted.

Further Information

If you need further information, please email bsnrf@perron.uwa.edu.au