



# 2026 Brain Foundation Research Grants Guidelines

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## 1. Introduction

For more than 50 years, the Brain Foundation has supported high-quality Australian research into brain diseases, disorders and injuries. Each year, we are inspired by the talent, creativity and commitment of researchers across Australia whose work advances understanding and drives innovation in neurological health.

Applications for the 2026 Brain Foundation Research Grants Program are now open. In 2026, there are changes to the structure of the grants program and application process. Applicants should read these Guidelines carefully before submitting an application.

For enquiries, please contact [grants@brainfoundation.org.au](mailto:grants@brainfoundation.org.au).

## 2. Key Dates

- **Applications Open:** Monday 30 March 2026
- **Applications Close:** Friday 19 June 2026
- **Notification of outcome:** Friday 18 September 2026

## 3. Overview of 2026 Grants Program

Code	Funding Opportunities	Description	Funding
1-BF	2026 Brain Foundation Research Grants	Research into all brain diseases, disorders, or injuries.	Up to \$40,000 per grant

	<b>Special Awards</b>		
2-AGB	Andrew and Greg Bell Grant for Muscular Dystrophy Research	Muscular dystrophy research.	One grant, up to \$50,000
3-JAH	Jocelyn Ann Hawkins Grant for Migraine and Headache Research <i>Established in memory of Dr Max Henry Williams</i>	Migraine or headache disorder research.	One grant, up to \$40,000
4-AVM	Darren (Muddy) Laycock Grant for AVM Research	Arteriovenous malformation research.	One grant, up to \$40,000
5-FKA	Fishing for Kyan Grant for Aneurysm Research	Cerebral aneurysm research.	One grant, up to \$40,000
6-ANR	The Sandy Richards Grant for Acoustic Neuroma Research	Acoustic neuroma research.	One grant, up to \$40,000

#### **4. General Eligibility Criteria**

The following eligibility criteria applies to all grants:

- The Chief Investigator (CI) must be an Australian citizen, permanent resident, or hold an appropriate visa that permits them to work in Australia for the proposed duration of the project.
- The CI must be in the early or middle stage of their research career, relative to opportunity. This is defined as within 5 years of PhD (or equivalent qualification) for early career, and within 5 to 15 years of PhD for mid-career. For clinician applicants without a PhD, equivalent research experience and career stage may be considered. Career breaks and interruptions will be taken into account.
- The CI must not be a current or past holder of an NHMRC Ideas Grant, Investigator Grant, or Synergy Grant (as Lead Investigator / CIA).
- The proposed research must have clear clinical relevance to neurological disease.
- The proposed research must be conducted predominantly in Australia.
- The proposed research must be achievable within a 12-month funding period.
- The budget and research plan must be specific. Applications seeking funds for general or unspecified use will not be considered.
- Application must be approved by the Administering Institution's research office prior to submission.
- Only one grant application may be submitted per CI across all funding opportunities..

Additional eligibility criteria apply to the special awards and are set out in section 6.

## 5. 2026 Brain Foundation Research Grants

### a) Purpose

The purpose of the Brain Foundation Research Grants Program is to support individual researchers and research teams to undertake high quality, innovative research in clinical neuroscience.

A further objective is to support early-career researchers to establish their research careers and develop ongoing programs of work

### b) Grant Details

**Funding:** Brain Foundation Research Grants provide funding for 12 month projects up to \$40,000, which may be stand-alone projects, pilot studies, or projects that are part of a larger research program.

**Eligibility:** See General Eligibility Criteria in section 4. No additional criteria apply.

### c) Research Categories

Category	Description
1	Alzheimer's disease and other dementias
2	Brain tumour incl. acoustic neuroma
3	Cerebrovascular incl. stroke, aneurysm, AVMs
4	Concussion & traumatic brain injury
5	Epilepsy
6	Infections, meningitis & encephalitis
7	Headache & migraine
8	MND/ALS & other neurodegenerative diseases
9	Multiple sclerosis & other inflammatory diseases
10	Movement disorders incl. Parkinson's & related diseases, dystonia, Huntington's, PSP
11	Paediatric neurology
12	Neuromuscular incl. Muscular Dystrophies, Myopathies & Neuropathies
13	Other

These categories are used to help assign applications to SAC members for scoring according to their specialty. Please note that **only one category can be selected** when submitting your application. If your research fits into more than one category, please choose the one that best

reflects the primary focus of the proposed research (and consider that this will be used to assist in scorer allocation).

If your research does not fit within the 12 main categories, you may submit it under 'Other'. There is no penalty or disadvantage for applications in this category.

## 6. Special Awards

### a) Purpose

The purpose of the Special Awards Program is to support high quality, innovative research into specific neurological conditions or research topics. These awards provide targeted funding aligned with the intentions of donors and fundraising initiatives.

### b) Grant Details

**Overview:** The following Special Awards are available 2026:

- Andrew and Greg Bell Grant for Muscular Dystrophy Research
- Jocelyn Ann Hawkins Grant for Migraine and Headache Research - *Established in memory of Dr Max Henry Williams*
- Darren (Muddy) Laycock Grant for AVM Research
- Fishing for Kyan Grant for Aneurysm Research
- The Sandy Richards Grant for Acoustic Neuroma Research

**Funding:** Each Special Award grant provides funding for a 12-month project in a specific research area. Funded projects may be stand-alone projects, pilot studies, or projects that are part of a larger research program. The Andrew and Greg Bell Grant for Muscular Dystrophy Research accepts applications for funding up to \$50,000; all other grants are up to \$40,000.

### c) Specific Eligibility Criteria

All applications must meet the General Eligibility Criteria (section 4). In addition, proposed research must align with the relevant disease area:

- Andrew and Greg Bell Grant for Muscular Dystrophy Research - **Muscular dystrophy.**
- Jocelyn Ann Hawkins Grant for Migraine and Headache Research - **Migraine or headache disorders.**
- Darren (Muddy) Laycock Grant for AVM Research - **Arteriovenous malformation.**
- Fishing for Kyan Grant for Aneurysm Research - **Cerebral aneurysm.**
- The Sandy Richards Grant for Acoustic Neuroma Research - **Acoustic neuroma / vestibular schwannoma.**

The proposed research should be clearly and directly relevant to the selected Special Award. Applicants should apply for a Special Award only where the proposed research genuinely aligns with the stated disease area.

## 7. Application Procedure

## a) Application form

The application form is available for download on the Brain Foundation website. The same form is used for all available grants in the 2026 program. The application form contains the following sections:

1. Eligibility Check
2. Project Title & Category
3. Lay Impact Summary
4. Research Proposal
5. Budget
6. Chief Investigator
7. Co-investigators
8. Administering Institution
9. Declarations

Detailed information and instructions for each section are available on the application form. All applications must adhere to these instructions, including word counts and/or page limits.

The specific formatting guidelines are as follows:

- Font: Arial, 11pt.
- Margins: 1.75 cm on all sides (current document setup).
- Line spacing: 1.15 (current document setup).

## b) Administering Institution approval

Applications must be approved by the Administering Institution **before they are submitted**. Please contact your Administering Institution's research office well before the deadline to ensure you have enough time for approval.

## c) Deadline for submissions

Application must be submitted by email to [grants@brainfoundation.org.au](mailto:grants@brainfoundation.org.au) by **Friday 19th June 2026, 5:00pm AEST**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

## d) How to submit your application

Applicants must submit their completed application form as a PDF to:  
[grants@brainfoundation.org.au](mailto:grants@brainfoundation.org.au)

using the following naming convention:

**Funding Opportunity Code – Lastname Firstname – Project Title**

The funding opportunity codes are as follows:

- 1-BF** - 2026 Brain Foundation Research Grants
- 2-AGB** - Andrew and Greg Bell Grant for Muscular Dystrophy Research
- 3-JAH** - Jocelyn Ann Hawkins Grant for Migraine and Headache Research
- 4-AVM** - Darren (Muddy) Laycock Grant for AVM Research

**5-FKA** - Fishing for Kyan Grant for Aneurysm Research

**6-ANR** - The Sandy Richards Grant for Acoustic Neuroma Research

for example, 1-BF – Smith Cameron – Understanding Genetic Changes in Epilepsy

You will receive an acknowledgement email by Tuesday 30th June 2026. If no acknowledgement is received within that timeframe, please contact the Brain Foundation on **1300 886 660** or email [grants@brainfoundation.org.au](mailto:grants@brainfoundation.org.au) to ensure that your application has been received.

## **8. Assessment of Applications**

### **a) Scientific Advisory Committee**

The Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) is responsible for assessing the scientific merit of eligible applications and oversees the review process in accordance with principles of integrity, fairness and confidentiality. The SAC evaluates applications against the published assessment criteria, including scientific quality, significance and/or innovation, and feasibility and track record relative to opportunity.

### **b) Review Process**

The review process consists of the following stages:

#### **Eligibility Check**

All applications will be checked by the Brain Foundation to ensure they are compliant with eligibility requirements. Once an application has passed the eligibility check it will proceed to SAC review, and the applicant will receive a confirmation email. If an application is not eligible, the Brain Foundation will notify the applicant and their application will not proceed to the next phase of the review process.

#### **SAC Review**

All eligible applications will be assessed by two or more members of the SAC according to the Assessment Criteria set out in section 9. Grants will be awarded to the highest-ranked applications, subject to available funding. Successful

### **c) Notification of Outcomes**

All chief investigators will be advised by email of:

- Receipt of their application by Tuesday 30th June 2026.
- Whether or not their application for a research grant was successful by Friday 18th September 2026.
- Feedback on individual applications will not be available from the Foundation's secretariat.

In addition, all successful chief investigators will be notified by telephone. Please ensure that you provide a mobile phone number and a telephone number which is answered during business hours.

## 9. Assessment Criteria

All eligible applications will be assessed against the three following criteria:

### Criteria 1: Scientific Quality (35%)

- Clarity and rigour of the research question, aims, and study design.
- Appropriateness of the methods and analysis for answering the research question.
- Awareness of relevant literature and how the project builds on existing evidence.

### Criteria 2: Significance and/or Innovation (50%)

- Potential of the research to advance understanding, prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of brain diseases, disorders, or injuries.
- Clear articulation of what is new, different, or important about the proposed work (e.g. novel approach, population, method, or application).
- Likely impact of the findings, including relevance to people living with neurological conditions and/or future research or clinical practice.

### Criteria 3: Feasibility and Track Record (relative to opportunity) (15%)

- Feasibility of delivering the proposed aims within the funding amount and timeframe.
- Applicant(s)' skills, experience, and access to appropriate resources or supervision to complete the project.
- Track record assessed relative to career stage, discipline, and opportunity, including consideration of career interruptions.

## 10. Conditions of Award

Successful applicants must comply with the following conditions:

- a) Each grant recipient is required to participate in a brief Zoom interview to introduce their project. This will be published on our website with professional editing done by the Brain Foundation. Recipients must indicate if they do not wish the Brain Foundation to publish such information.
- b) Grant recipients may be invited to attend a Brain Foundation award evening in Sydney, where grants will be formally acknowledged and certificates presented. This is a wonderful opportunity to recognise the outstanding research the Brain Foundation is proud to support. Further details will be provided to recipients in due course.
- c) Grant recipients are required to sign a formal grant agreement, which confirms the funding period, due date of final report, and confirmation of special conditions.
- d) Grant recipients are required to provide a Final Report to the Brain Foundation, which is due 1 month after the end of the funding period. A template will be provided for this report.
- e) Acknowledgement of the Brain Foundation as donor of the Grant wherever possible, such as in media interviews, and on papers, posters and publications relating to the research.
- f) Where practical and feasible, assist the Brain Foundation on an ad-hoc basis by providing expert opinion and information in their project area, such as:  
Reviewing information for the Brain Foundation websites and Neurological Directory;  
Participating in events such as Brain Awareness Week webinars;

The provision of information required by Brain Foundation staff to answer queries from the general public; and

Responding to media releases if required.

The Brain Foundation recognises the time constraints of researchers, and endeavours not to “overload” any one researcher with such requests for assistance.

- g) It is expected that grant recipients will participate in, and present progress reports/findings to fellow neurologists, neurosurgeons, neuroscientists at appropriate Brain Foundation events, if / when these events are scheduled.
- h) The Brain Foundation donates grants to support the research of successful applicants, and it is a condition of the grant that no administration fee can be deducted by the university or institution from an individual recipient’s grant award.
- i) Funds must be claimed before June 30th 2027 (end of financial year). If you do not claim your grant prior to June 30th 2027, the funds will be reallocated to our 2027 grant round.

## **11. Confidentiality**

Information contained in applications will be treated as confidential by the Brain Foundation unless otherwise indicated. Brain Foundation staff and members of the Scientific Advisory Committee must not disclose confidential information obtained through the application and assessment process, except as required for the administration of the grants program or as otherwise permitted by law.

The Brain Foundation may publish the names of successful applicants and their administering institutions, together with the project title and lay summary, in its communications, including its website and newsletter. The lay summary may also be used in media communications.

## **12. Privacy**

The Brain Foundation handles personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). Personal information provided in grant applications will be collected, stored, used and disclosed only for the purposes of administering the grants program, or as otherwise permitted or required by law.

## **13. Incomplete, false, or misleading applications**

Once submitted to the Brain Foundation, the application will be considered final and no changes can be accepted. The application is the main source of information available for assessment. As such it must contain all the information necessary for assessment of the project without the need for further written or oral explanation, or reference to additional documentation. All details in the application, particularly concerning any successful Grants, must be current at the time of application.

If an application contains information that is false or misleading, it will be excluded from any further consideration for funding.

## 14. Removal of applications

The Brain Foundation reserves the right to remove an application from consideration at any stage of the selection process if the application:

- is ineligible;
- is incomplete;
- contains false or misleading information;
- is otherwise clearly not competitive within the scope of the grants program.

## 15. Frequently Asked Questions

### a) Eligibility

**I am not a neurologist or neuroscientist, but my research focuses on a brain disease, disorder, or injury. Can I apply?**

Our research grants are mainly for neurologists, particularly to encourage trainee neurologists and neurosurgeons. Applications from non-neurologists or neuroscientists are usually not highly ranked. However, if the research was pressing and clinically relevant, it could be of interest.

**Are clinical trials eligible for funding?**

They are eligible, but most of the time they are of low priority in our grants program. Clinical trials of sufficient size to provide meaningful results are expensive and commonly sponsored by pharmaceutical companies, and usually run for a number of years. We can provide only \$40k for one year, and that is normally insufficient for any meaningful trial – hence the low priority.

**Can researchers from other countries apply?**

The funded project must be conducted predominantly in Australia, and the Chief Investigator must meet the eligibility requirements in section 4. International collaborators may be included as co-investigators, provided the CI is eligible and the project is based predominantly in Australia.

**I'm currently a PhD student. Am I eligible to apply?**

PhD students may apply only if they meet the Chief Investigator eligibility criteria in section 4. This includes meeting the requirement to be in the early or middle stage of their research career, relative to opportunity, as defined in these Guidelines. Applicants must also have appropriate institutional support and all required approvals in place before submitting an application.

### b) Use of funding

**Can we include indirect or administrative costs in our grant application?**

No - the Brain Foundation donates grants to support the research of successful applicants, and it is a condition of the grant that no administration fee can be deducted by the university or institution from an individual recipient's grant award. This is listed in our grant guidelines.

### **Can the grant be used for the Chief Investigator's salary?**

No. The grant is not intended to fund the Chief Investigator's salary. Applicants should ensure that the CI holds a position that supports delivery of the project for the duration of the grant.

### **c) Project and Application Form**

#### **Can I see a previous successful application as a guideline?**

We are not able to share previous applications because this would be a violation of our privacy obligations. Applicants may refer to information about previous grant recipients published by the Brain Foundation.

The best guide is the published assessment criteria in section 9 of these Guidelines. Applicants should ensure that the research proposal is clear, well-structured, and explains both the scientific rationale and the potential impact of the work.

#### **Does the \$40,000 budget include GST?**

No – please ensure your budget is prepared excluding GST. If you receive a \$40,000 grant, the total invoice amount will be for \$44,000.

If you need to include the incl. GST total on your application, please make it very clear that the figure includes GST.

#### **When should I declare previous Brain Foundation grants?**

All members of the research team (CIs and co-investigators) should declare previous Brain Foundation grants in which they were the Chief Investigator. Prior grants in which a team member participated only as a co-investigator do not need to be declared unless specifically requested in the application form.

## **16. Further Information**

If you require any further information about the Brain Foundation's Research Grants Program, please contact Anniel Grundy, Programs and Impact Manager, on **1300 886 660** or email [anniek@brainfoundation.org.au](mailto:anniek@brainfoundation.org.au)