

NDRP 2025 Research Grant Funding Overview

Safety of People with Disability



NDRP Research Grant Funding 2025

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## Acknowledgement of Country

The National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) acknowledges the traditional custodians of Country throughout Australia. The peoples on whose land we live and work have lived on and cared for Country for thousands of generations, and has never been ceded. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, values and worldviews, and to Elders past and present. We respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the world’s first researchers and acknowledge the wisdom and diversity of Indigenous knowledge systems.

## Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the NDRP’s research funding program for 2025. It covers information about the NDRP, our Research Agenda, the focus area topic, the types of research we will fund in 2025 and who can apply. It also covers the ways of working that we expect from people who are involved in research we fund, and instructions on how to apply.

## Summary

The National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) funds research by and with people with disability. Our purpose is to facilitate collaborative and inclusive disability research that builds evidence for policy and practice to advance the rights of people with disability. Our vision is policy and practice in Australia are transformed by disability-led research.

In 2025 we will fund projects led by and done with people with disability to advance the safety of people with disability, in Australia.

The NDRP shares the vision of Australia’s Disability Strategy for an inclusive and accessible Australian society where all people with disability can fulfil their potential as equal members of the community[[1]](#footnote-2). People with disability have the right to access the support, trust and resources needed to live full, independent lives, free from discrimination, and the freedom to make their own choices. People with disability have repeatedly told their stories about safety and the consequences of lack of safety —through the Disability Royal Commission, own-motion inquiries from the NDIS Commission into group homes and NDIS participant deaths, investigations into deaths, state and territory inquiries, service failures, and institutional violence and many other submissions and reports made by people with disability and Disabled Persons and Representative Organisations (DPO/DROs). Too often, these inquiries have placed the burden on people with disability to keep proving harm, which is retraumatising, rather than moving towards real change. Despite this wealth of testimony, funding for research to drive solutions has been scarce. We aim to bring people together to build on what is already known and co-create evidence that supports real change.

The NDRP aims to work in ways that position people with disability as leaders in collaborative research.

We fund research and work in partnership with the disability community and their organisations in ways that are guided by the [NDRP Principles](https://www.ndrp.org.au/principles). The ways we work will disrupt ‘business as usual’ research structures and approaches that exclude people with disability from having real power in research processes. There is more information about the NDRP Principles within this document, and they are available in Easy Read on our website.

The research we fund will prioritise the expertise, knowledges, skills, leadership and labour of people with disability, alongside those of families, kin, carers and communities, and academically qualified researchers. There is no single "right" way to do research that has a positive impact for everyone involved. We will fund both community-led and university-led projects. We recognise that building relationships and preparing to do research well takes skill, time and resources—this work is rarely funded but critical to success.

Any organisation with an ABN can apply for a grant. Organisations must appoint one person to be the Project Lead and other people to form their Project Team. Project teams will include at a minimum: people with disability, including those with direct experience of the problem or opportunity that is the focus of the project, organisations and people who shape or affect disability policy, practices and/or programs and researchers with experience in disability research.

#### The NDRP will run two grant funding rounds in 2025

**The first round will open in March**. This will fund projects that take between six and ten months on the topic of safety of people with disability. This funding will provide time and resources for relationship building, knowledge sharing, and the work of preparing to do research well. Projects will have outcomes and benefits that are realised in the short-term. All funded projects will use co-design approaches. They will be funded via two streams.

For some areas of the topic of safety, it will be clear that new knowledge or solutions are needed to address an issue or opportunity about safety of people with disability. Where this is the case, projects can use this funding to co-design the future research that is needed and develop a proposal to use in an application for research funding. This can be to apply for funding from the NDRP or another funding body.

For other areas, there might already be a lot of evidence that exists but has not been accessible to the people who need it or is not being used. Where this is the case, applicants can apply to use knowledge synthesis methods to bring together what is already known and co-produce reports, briefs, guidelines or similar. They must use formats that are accessible and useful for people who need them. These projects should deliver quick wins that can immediately inform action.

An infographic that says: Grant Round 1 – Opens March 2025  
Projects that use co-design approaches to:  
•       Stream 1 - develop research proposals, or  
•       Stream 2 - synthesise existing knowledge about a topic relevant to the safety of people with disability.  
Timeframe: up to ten months 
Budget: Up to $60,000.  
Total funding Round 1: $600,000 available.


**The second round will open in October.** It will fund larger research projects about safety of people with disability for up to 18 months, to create new knowledge and solutions.

An infographic that says: "Round 2 – opens October 2025 
Discovery or longer-term translational research projects that tackle issues or opportunities relevant to the safety of people with disability.  
 
Timeframe: up to 18 months 
Budget: it is estimated these grants will be up to $300,0002.  
Total funding Round 2: $1,300,000 available. "

#### Assessing and selecting projects to fund

Projects will be assessed based on their potential for creating a large and positive impact. Other considerations include how appropriate, acceptable, safe and accessible the methods and approaches described in the application are, how people with disability are involved in leadership of the project, and the capacity of the project team to make the project a success.

The selection and assessment criteria are explained in the grant guidelines.

Applications will be reviewed and scored by independent review panels overseen by the NDRP Research Committee, ensuring fairness and transparency. The Research Committee will then consider the highest-scoring projects and rank those which, when funded together, will have the greatest collective impact. The NDRP Board will make the final funding decisions following recommendations from the Research Committee.

#### Leading and learning together

The NDRP’s role is not limited to funding research. We will bring the people and organisations whose projects we fund together as part of a program of active support aiming to strengthen capacity for disability-led research. We will provide opportunities for connection, shared learning as projects start and progress. We will co-create and nurture a culture of collaboration and creativity so the collective learning can be shared.

The real drivers of change are you—the people designing, leading, and implementing research. Our role is to create and nurture structures and relationships that support and make it easier for you to generate the evidence needed to drive meaningful, lasting improvements in safety for people with disability across Australia.

#### Support for applicants

To assist applicants in preparing and applying for NDRP grant funding, we will offer:

* Guidelines and resources outlining key requirements
* Information sessions and events for understanding the opportunity and encourage people to connect with each other
* Drop-in sessions for information and guidance

We are committed to accessibility. If you need accommodations to participate in the application process—including alternative formats, assistive technology support, or tailored assistance—please reach out. We will work with you to support equitable access.

## How to apply for NDRP research funding in 2025

**Step 1:** Read this document

**Step 2:** Read the Grant Guidelines for the upcoming funding Round

**Step 3:** Prepare for and plan your grant application with your project team and partners. It is important to do this step well, so your project will be inclusive and collaborative.

You can find more guidance, answers to your questions and tips for preparing an application by:

* reading the [Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on our website](https://www.ndrp.org.au/research/2025-research-funding#:~:text=Frequently%20Asked%20Questions%20(FAQs))
* joining one of our [online learning or networking sessions](https://www.ndrp.org.au/resources/events)
* joining a drop-in [Question and Answer (Q&A) session](https://www.ndrp.org.au/resources/events)

**Step 4:** Complete the online application form.

The form will open March 17, 2025. Applications close April 28, 2025.

Find the online application form and register for sessions on the NDRP’s SmartyGrants page <https://ndrp.smartygrants.com.au/>.

## 

## About the National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP)

The NDRP is a not-for-profit charitable organisation registered by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). We are governed by an independent Board. The research program is overseen by our Research Committee and supported by NDRP staff. For more information about how the research program is governed and managed please see the Research Funding Policy [on our website](https://www.ndrp.org.au/research/research-policy).

The NDRP was established as an independent organisation in 2024 following four years work in establishing the NDRP which included a pilot research funding round. There is a report on learnings and recommendations from this pilot research funding round in 2021 and 2022 available on our website.[[2]](#footnote-3)

### The NDRP Principles

Our work and decisions are guided by the [NDRP principles](https://www.ndrp.org.au/principles). These principles draw on the human rights framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**The NDRP seeks to:**

**Advance high-quality research that informs disability policy and practice in Australia**

* Promote collaborative research across Australia
* Implement the NDRP Research Agenda
* Build an evidence base that informs Australian disability policy and practice

**Value the knowledge of people with disability in research**

* Respect different sources and forms of knowledge and research
* Support research that gives people with disability real decision-making power
* Support research that involves a wide range of people with disability, including those who are often left out or are not well represented in research
* Make sure people with disability are paid properly for their research work

**Strengthen disability research capacity**

* Build an active and connected community of disability researchers
* Build career pathways for researchers with disability
* Strengthen Australia’s capacity to conduct disability research
* Build capacity in the community to develop and use evidence produced by research

**Share research findings widely in useful and accessible ways**

* Make information available in useful and accessible ways
* Share what we learn with the disability and wider community
* Use a range of new and traditional ways to share research findings.

### The NDRP Research Agenda

The research we fund is guided by the NDRP Research Agenda. The Research Agenda was developed after long consultation with the disability community. It covers many topics that are organised into 12 major areas of research. It also sets out some themes to underpin all the research we fund. These are:

* upholding the rights of people with disability,
* focusing on safety,
* addressing ableism and improving attitudes,
* understanding intersectionality, and
* applying a gendered lens.

There is more information about the Research Agenda [on our website](https://www.ndrp.org.au/researchagenda).

### Who can apply for research grant funding from the NDRP?

We encourage applications where people, groups and organisations come together to work in partnership.

One organisation must be nominated by the project team and partners to apply as the **Lead Organisation**. Any organisation that has an Australian Business Number (ABN) that is not a government organisation can take this role. The Lead Organisation will enter a contract with the NDRP and will receive and administer the funding. This organisation is responsible for setting up clear, and where appropriate, formal agreements with partner organisations.

To beeligible for a grant, an organisation must demonstrate its capacity to receive and administer grant funding. They must also demonstrate their capacity to support the safe, ethical, and timely delivery of a project by and with people with disability. This must include people with disability that are directly impacted by the research.

## Ways of working for projects funded by the NDRP

### Forming partnerships and working collaboratively

Applicants must assemble a team of people and set up partnerships with other organisations. This is so, together, they have the skills, knowledge, networks and experience to co-design a high-quality research project that will have a significant impact on policy and practice.

There is no ‘correct’ number of partners or team members. However, all teams should include, at a minimum:

* people with disability including those with direct experience of the topic, issue or opportunity that the project will address (sometimes known as ‘consumers’).
* people with experience in conducting research.
* organisations and people who shape or affect policy and practices relevant to the safety of the people with disability the project is about. This could include Disabled Persons/Representative Organisations, consumer or advocacy organisations, capacity building organisations, service providers or other relevant organisations.

Having a large number of partners will not necessarily make a project better. Applicants should think about the project timeframe, budget, logistics and the relationships they already have when deciding how many partners and team members will be right for their project.

### Ethical conduct and ethical reviews

In Australia, the ethical standards for research about people or their data is set by the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2023)](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/publications/National-Statement-Ethical-Conduct-Human-Research-2023.pdf). Where research we fund is specifically by and with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, it must comply with either the [Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders (2018)](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/resources/ethical-conduct-research-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-and-communities), or the [AITSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (2020).](https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/ethical-research/code-ethics) The AIATSIS Code comes with an excellent guiding document[[3]](#footnote-4) that offers a range of best practices to anyone engaging in ethical research with any people or communities. The AIATSIS Code comes with an excellent guiding document[[4]](#footnote-5) that offers a range of best practices to anyone engaging in ethical research with any people or communities.

The research process can be understood in several phases. The AIATSIS guiding document explains these well, in a way that is relevant for all research, as (1) getting started, (2) project implementation, (3) communicating research results, and (4) post-project. The ‘getting started’ section of the document provides excellent guidance as well as several questions research teams can ask themselves as they plan and design their research.

**When do I need to get an ethics approval?**

The types of methods used in research and the context of the research will influence the type of ethics process that applies, and when ethical review is needed. Projects focussed on the ‘getting started’ phase of research, involving development and co-design with a team of people or organisations who are all part of the project team may not meet need an ethics review at all. These early-phase projects may be suitable for ethical review via a minimal risk pathway (like a ‘mini’ ethics review) or be eligible to apply to an ethics body for exemption from ethical review. You should consider what ethical review processes will be needed for your project and factor these into the timeframes and feasibility of your project.

## NDRP’s grant funding program for 2025

### The research topic: safety of people with disability

Research funded by the NDRP in 2025 will explore ways to transform safety for people with disability in Australia. Safety is more than just protection from harm—it is about ensuring that people with disability, of all ages, have their human rights upheld and the right to live free from violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation across all aspects of life, including in intimate partner relationships, the home, healthcare, education, employment and community participation.

The NDRP Board selected this theme when prioritising the Research Agenda because safety is fundamental to achieving all other aspects of inclusion and participation.

In prioritising the topic of safety, the Research Agenda’s underpinning themes are also important. These are

* Uphold the rights of people with disability
* Focus on safety
* Address ableism and improve attitudes
* Understand intersectionality
* Apply a gendered lens

This topic area is cross referenced with Outcome Area 3 in Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2023, Safety, rights and justice: “the rights of people with disability are promoted, upheld and protected, and people with disability feel safe and enjoy equality before the law”*.*

### What do we mean by ‘safety’?

By safety, we mean the ability to live free from harm, violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It also includes having the support, trust, and resources to confidently participate in society and live full, independent lives. A positive sense of safety is fostered by environments where people feel respected, valued, heard, and protected. This includes being surrounded by accessible systems, culturally responsive practices, and relationships built on trust.

Promoting a positive sense of safety means:

* Respectful relationships: Safety is built in environments where people are treated with dignity, their choices are respected, and their voices are central to decision-making.
* Accessible and inclusive systems: Policies, services, and spaces designed to eliminate barriers and promote safety.
* Culturally responsive practices: Cultural safety means environments that are spiritually, socially and emotionally safe for people where there is no challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need.
* Transparent and accountable structures: Safety is promoted when systems are transparent, accountable, and committed to eliminating harm.

## Definitions of key terms and what they mean for research funded by the NDRP

**Co-design**

Co-design means bringing people together to share what they know and share power whilst working together to make decisions about the questions their research should answer, and how it should be done. The ‘co’ is about being collaborative. The ‘design’ means making something. In the co-design of research, this means working together to come up with ideas, possible solutions, outcomes, approaches and methods that could be used in a future research project. Design usually means doing this over a few rounds of testing, and refining with each other, before final decisions are made. Co-design needs shared understanding, access and relationships to be established before the design can start.

**Co-production**

Co-design is one part of co-production. Co-production is, broadly, working collaboratively, in ways that respect different ways of being, as well as different sources of knowledge, to deliver an outcome. Other terms such as co-creation, or participatory ways of working are sometimes used interchangeably.

**Cultural competence**

Cultural competence means having the skills, knowledge and experience needed to participate ethically and effectively in situations where there is more than one culture at play[[5]](#footnote-6). It requires people to understand and respond to their own cultural values and world view, with an awareness that people have different needs because of their cultural and linguistic background. Cultural competence at the organisational level involves systems, policies and processes that ensure cultural diversity and difference are considered in all aspects of an organisations’ work.

**Cultural safety**

Cultural safety is about an experience for people and communities that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, free of racism, without challenges to or denial of their identities, priorities and needs. In Australia, the term is often associated with safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities and minoritised racial or ethnic groups. People and communities determine whether their experience is culturally safe; it cannot be assumed that cultural safety exists just because a generic set of practices have been followed.

**Person with disability**

The NDRP recognises the diversity of people with disability. Persons with disability include, but are not limited to, those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with structural barriers, which may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.[[6]](#footnote-7) Disability can also be an integral part of someone’s identity. Some communities, such as Autistic and Deaf communities, may not identify as being disabled.

We recognise ‘disability’ is a western concept that does not translate well into First Nations communities and languages. We acknowledge that requiring First Nations people to label themselves as a ‘person with disability’ or as ‘other’ conflicts with the First Nations cultural value of inclusion.

For the purposes of this grant opportunity the NDRP aims to be inclusive of the diversity of disability, regardless of whether a person identifies as a person with disability.

**Disability-inclusive research**

Research in which people with disability are involved, valued and respected through all stages of the research process, from coming up with the concept, through the design and conduct of the research and in sharing research findings in ways that are accessible, relevant and appropriate to everyone who needs the knowledge.

**Disability-led research**

This means that people with disability are authentically involved in decision-making roles and in other ways that truly influence the project. For example, leadership might look like a Disabled Persons Organisation and a person with disability in the formal ‘Lead’ positions. This is not the only way. Teams should describe how their project and governance structures support genuine power sharing and respond to the cultural needs of communities, groups and people, and their values and priorities, and the context they are working in.

**Ethical conduct**

Ethical conduct, according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2023)[[7]](#footnote-8) means ‘more than simply doing the right thing. It involves acting in the right spirit, out of an abiding respect and concern for one’s fellow creatures.’

**Human research ethics committee (HREC) and ethics approval**

In Australia, many research institutions like universities but also other organisations have a registered[[8]](#footnote-9) human ethics committee (HREC). These committees either give an approval to say that research can start, or they give directions on what must be improved to make sure the research is ethically acceptable, before approval will be given.

**Ethics review**

A review of planned research by a person or committee, that seeks to make sure that the rights and cultures of people and communities involved in the research are respected, that the aims and methods of the research are clear and have merit, and that there are clear plans to share the findings. Ethics reviews can be done by HRECs, or other community-based or controlled, or organisational ethics committees.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, it is a requirement to seek review with an HREC that has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership and experience in reviewing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research[[9]](#footnote-10).

**Evidence for action**

Evidence for action means research projects which contribute to the body of evidence on a particular topic. The research is designed from the beginning with an understanding of policy, practice and programs the research is trying to inform so it has real world application for people with disability.

**High quality research**

High quality research is ethical, rigorous and transparent. High quality research builds on what is already known and has a clear and important research questions. It uses methods that are sound and in which data collection is robust and ethical, the analysis is appropriate, and conclusions are generated. In the NDRP context, high quality research cannot be conducted without the leadership and involvement of people with disability.

**Intersectionality**

“We do not live single issue lives” – Audre Lorde[[10]](#footnote-11). Intersectionality is a way of understanding how social and political parts of identity such as race, gender, sexuality, religion, class and disability and their related systems of oppression, domination or discrimination combine and overlap. Intersectional discrimination and disadvantage disproportionately affect certain groups including First Nations people, people from culturally, racially or linguistically marginalised groups, people who live in rural and remote communities, and people who are LGBTQI+. Research under the NDRP must recognise the complex ways in which this can affect the safety of people with disability.

**Knowledge**

Knowledge includes:

* evidence from academic and community-based research,
* information, insights and story held by people and communities because of their lived, cultural, service and/or systems experience, and
* expertise from practice.

**Knowledge mobilisation**

Knowledge mobilisation refers to the process of making knowledge from different sources ready for action. Knowledge mobilisation means taking a collaborative, relational approach to exchanging and sense-making of knowledge in useful and accessible ways to co-design research.

**Knowledge synthesis**

Knowledge synthesis is using rigorous and transparent methods to bring together what is known about a topic, assess it, and make sense of it in a context. It is about generating a summary of the body of knowledge available and establishing better understanding about what is known about a particular topic or area.

**Research capacity**

To produce high quality, inclusive research takes skill, as well as investment in people, in research infrastructure and systems. It requires the creation of supportive conditions for leading and learning together, for mutual benefit. This requires a culture of care and respect. It requires researchers and research institutions to recognise, respect and commit to learning from people with disability, communities and organisations, whose knowledges, ways and cultures are critical to high quality research that will have a positive impact.

Research capacity is about individual people, teams, organisations and communities having the ability (expertise, knowledge and skills) to do research, to share research findings with everyone who needs access to them and to understand and use the findings of research. It is also about having the funding, resources, time, systems and incentives to conduct, engage with, share and use the research findings.

**Strengthening research capacity**

Research capacity strengthening means activities or approaches that improve the skills or performance of individuals and organisations, and/or the infrastructure and conditions that enable high-quality research to be done.

1. Australian Government. (2024). Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021 – 2031 <https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/document/11081> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. University of Melbourne (2022). National Disability Research Partnership, Learnings and Recommendations. <https://www.ndrp.org.au/post/a-step-closer-to-inclusive-disability-research> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. A Guide to applying: The AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (2020) <https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-02/aiatsis-guide-code-ethics-jan22.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia. (2019). Cultural Competence in Australia A Guide. <https://fecca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Cultural-Competence-in-Australia-A-Guide.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2023)](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/publications/National-Statement-Ethical-Conduct-Human-Research-2023.pdf). https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2023 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. The National Health and Medical Research Council administers a registration scheme for HRECs. A list of registered HRECS can be found on the NHMRC [website](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/ethics/human-research-ethics-committees) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2023)](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/publications/National-Statement-Ethical-Conduct-Human-Research-2023.pdf). https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2023 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Sins Invalid. (2015). 10 principles of disability justice. Sins Invalid. <https://sinsinvalid.org/10-principles-of-disability-justice/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)