## About the scoring matrix

The matrix helps reviewers score applications based on the first 4 assessment criteria in the Grant Guidelines. Reviewers use the matrix to support fair and clear scoring.

The NDRP’s Independent Review Panels are small groups of people (reviewers) with different expertise and backgrounds. For example, people who are researchers, people with disability, people from disability representative organisations and policymakers will be reviewers.

## Scoring scale

Reviewers will read applications and give the responses to each assessment criteria a score. The scoring scale goes from 5 ‘outstanding’ to 1 ‘weak’.



The matrix (attached) includes statements, as dot points, that describe the qualities of outstanding responses to each assessment criteria. This will help reviewers as a ‘benchmark’; not every dot point must be ‘ticked off’ to score a 5/outstanding, but most of them must be. Outstanding applications will be very hard to fault. Reviewers will be very sure the projects will achieve what they set out to do. Under the series of dot points, there is a description of factors that would ‘lose’ points for applicants. For example, excellent applications will still tick off most dot points, but reviewers may have very minor concerns about how well these points are covered.

## Calculating the final score

The average of all reviewers scores is taken as the score out of 5 for each criterion.

Some criteria are more important than others, so, weightings are assigned to each. For instance, Criterion 1 Impact on policy, practice or programs is worth 25% of the total score, while Criterion 3 Project methods is worth 30%. The final score, out of 5, is the sum of the average scores for each criterion multiplied by their weightings.

The [Grant Guidelines](https://www.ndrp.org.au/research/2025-research-funding) go through the kind of information applicants need to include in their application form to respond to the assessment criteria. There is more information about how we choose projects to fund and support in our [Research Funding Policy](https://www.ndrp.org.au/research/research-policy).

**The scoring matrix starts on the next page**

## Assessment criterion 1 – Impact on policy, practice or programs (25% weighting)

**To give a score of 5 (outstanding), responses clearly show:**

* how the project could lead to changes in policy, practice or programs to significantly improve the safety and advance the human rights of people with disability
* howpeople with disability most impacted by the topic were involved in deciding the project is needed
* the reason for choosing to focus on either the creation of new knowledge by co-designing research proposals (stream 1) or to bring together what is already known about a topic (stream 2)
* differences in how the issue is experienced by different people and communities based on sex, gender and other intersecting forms of discrimination
* how the project strengthens existing knowledge and ongoing work on the issue without duplication, considering research evidence, practice-based knowledge, cultural knowledge and/or direct lived/living experience
* how the project will address ableism and improve attitudes towards people with disability.

**4 - Excellent responses**

also address most of the points above but with some very minor concerns. They may lack some clarity or fail to consider a very minor part of the context they are working in.

**3 - Very good responses**

do the abovebut withsome minor concerns. They may miss some of the context they are working in, for example. They may make believable claims about potential impact on policies, practices or programs but these may feel generic (lacking nuance), or exaggerated.

**2- Good responses**

do not convincingly address all the objectives of the grant round but do make it clear the project is important and may have positive outcomes. The knowledge, views or values of the people with disability directly impacted by the project do not appear to be prioritised over the those of others, for example service provider need is prioritised. Or the project is important, but the policy, practice or program impact is unclear or weak. It may not be clear how the project builds on what is already known or duplicates other work.

**1 - Weak responses**

do not show clearly that the knowledge of people with disability is valued, and/or the views, values and priorities presented are not directly relevant to the project described. They may propose projects that do not advance the human rights of people with disability, or that are likely to maintain a status quo that restricts the rights and freedoms of people with disability, or unlikely to have any impact on policy or practice.

## Assessment Criterion 2 – Impact of the project’s process (15% weighting)

**5 - Outstanding responses**

* **Outcomes:** makeitveryclear how the project’s process will improve the safety of people with disability and advance the NDRP’s principles, including building Australia’s capacity for future collaborative disability research.
* **Partnerships:** show clearly how partnerships formed or strengthened during this project will support the co-production of future inclusive research, or support the future use of evidence for action
* **Learning together:** show how individuals, groups, communities, organisations and/or institutions will learn together and/or from each other, share power, and upskill in ways they would not have had the opportunity to without this project
* **Strengthening capacity:** show how the project supports people or organisations newer to research and/or builds career pathways for researcher(s) with disability – being specific about which experiences, skills or opportunities they are talking about
* **Risk management:** show they are aware of, and plan to respond to, risks of negative impact or harm if research is done without authority of the people with disability or communities directly impacted or without understanding intersectionality.

**4 - Excellent responses**

address most of the points above, with a few uncertainties. They may lack some clarity or specificity, or fail to consider a very minor part of the context they are working in.

**3 - Very good responses**

addressmany of the points above. They may make believable claims about potential impact, but these feel generic, rather than clearly linked to this project, team and/or partners. May focus on the value research professionals bring to communities, without recognising the capacity of communities or disabled people’s organisations and what they offer researchers and institutions.

**2 - Good responses**

consider some of the points above. They makeclaimsthat are not specific or convincing. For example, ‘the project will build the capacity of Researcher A’, without saying what type of skills or experience Researcher A will be gaining, from whom, what or how. May not have a plan to respond to the risks of negative impact or harm if research isn't done with authority of people with disability.

**1 - Weak responses**

are not specific or convincing. They do not make it clear how the project’s process will support knowledge or power sharing between people with disability or communities and others involved. They do not show how the project’s process will have a positive, tangible and lasting impact.

## Assessment Criterion 3 – Project methods (30% weighting)

**5 - Outstanding responses**

* **Explain clearly:** use plain language, and/or explain jargon used to describe co-design and co-production processes, engagement or research methods, cultural protocols and/or other approaches. Explain why they intend to use good-practice co-production throughout or, to instead use a mix of engagement, consultation, user-centered design, or other approaches
* **Build the conditions:** explain how they will build and nurture the conditions for knowledge mobilisation, safety and power sharing, to enable the ‘co’-work they plan to do
* **Co-design as a process:** show they understand co-design as a process, rather than an event
* **Work safely, with care:** take trauma-informed, culturally responsive, inclusive and accessible approaches, with consideration of all members of the project team and partners
* **Make it clear how they will refine and decide on their research and/or review question(s)**
* **Project design:** will be difficult to fault, with methods and approaches appropriate to their objectives and the context they are working in
* **Governance:** outline the proposed project governance structure or plan to develop one
* **Leadership:** show there is leadership by and with people with disability, their communities and organisations in all phases of the project
* **Feasibility:** propose highly feasible and realistic projects considering time, expertise, tools, project management, budget and in-kind contributions and the context they are working in

**4 - Excellent responses**

address most of the above with only very minor concerns**.**

**3 - Very good responses**

include a good project design appropriate to its objectives, with minor concerns. Governance arrangements may be sound, but reviewers may be uncertain about inclusiveness or how leadership of people with disability and communities will be supported. Clear project feasibility.

**2 - Good responses**

outlinea good project design. ‘Co’**-**words or statements about engagement or involvement of people with disability and other co-designers may feature, but reviewers may not be convinced the team will work in collaborative ways. The power dynamics common in research that marginalise or exclude people with disability may not be accounted for. Some concerns about feasibility.

**1 - Weak responses** describeresearch for, or to people with disability. They may not have considered cultural safety or trauma-informed practices. The project is unlikely to be completed, or the research plan is not appropriate to the project’s objectives, topic area or the context.

## Assessment Criterion 4 – Capacity and resources to deliver the project (30% weighting)

**5 – Outstanding responses**

* **Capacity:** very clearly show which members of the team and partner organisations have the skills, knowledge, experience, networks and resources needed to make this specific project on this topic area a success, using the methods they have described
* **Value different types of skills and expertise:** show the team has academic expertise, community and cultural knowledge(s), practice-based expertise, relational skills, skills in providing accessibility, inclusion and safety, design/making expertise, project management and governance experience
* **Leadership:** there is evidence people with disability will be involved as leaders and sharing power
* **Trust:** show the Lead Organisation and Project Lead will be trusted to lead this project by the team and by relevant communities
* **Support new and emerging talent:** include and support co-designers with disability new(er) to research and early/mid-career researchers with disability
* **Responsible support:** show people assigned mentor, supervisor, coach or supporter roles have experience, training and/or qualifications to responsibly and ethically do this work
* **Sufficient resourcing:** include a plan and appropriate budget to cover gaps in capacity (from matched funding or in-kind support)

**4 - Excellent responses**

addressthe above points with only very minor concerns or gaps**.**

**3 - Very good responses**

address most of the above. They show ‘enough’ capacity to safely and feasibly deliver, with minor concerns or gaps. The team may lack a track record in a few areas but be strong in others.

**2 - Good responses**

show sound experience in the relevant methods and capacity to deliver the project safely. People with disability are involved in meaningful ways, however, clarity around the involvement or leadership of the specific group of people with disability directly impacted is lacking. The team may lack experience in providing access or in inclusive, collaborative ways of working.

**1 – Weak responses**

showlarge gaps in capacity, including insufficient experience in using the methods and approaches described in the application. The capacity of team members with disability may not be presented as crucial to the project. No, or very few team members or organisations have been involved in similar projects before.