



Research Evaluation Panel- Terms of Reference

November 2023

The Terms of Reference governs the operations of the Research Evaluation Panel (REP). The Emergency Medicine Foundation (EMF) Board in consultation with the Research Committee and Research Manager will review and endorse the Terms of Reference annually.

1 Purpose

The purpose of the REP is to carry out, on behalf of the Emergency Medicine Foundation (EMF), a peer review process for grant applications.

2 Term

This Terms of Reference is effective from 29 November 2023 and will be ongoing until terminated or modified by the EMF Board.

3 Membership

The REP is comprised of:

- One (1) Chair
- One (1) Co-Chair; and
- A number of external expert reviewers selected bi-annually to provide a detailed assessment on the subject matter of the assigned application/s.

The REP membership will include a diversity of expertise, gender, geographic location and institute affiliation to ensure a balanced representation. The position of Chair and Co-Chair is decided by the EMF Board based on recommendations by the Research Committee, if required. Membership to the REP is by invitation only.

4 Terms of Membership

The term of the REP Chair and Co-Chair is three (3) years. There is no limit to the number of times the REP Chair and Co-Chair can be re-elected. Members of the Research Evaluation Panel have no fixed term.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

The REP is accountable for:

- Reviewing grant applications against set criteria
- Enabling the provision of constructive feedback to applicants
- Making recommendations for fundable projects, with conditions, where applicable

- Ranking fundable grant applications by score in order of quality based on the scoring matrix
- Recommending grant applications for funding to the Research Committee and the EMF Board.

The members of the REP will commit to:

- Attending scheduled meetings
- Communicating and informing EMF of anything relevant to the successful grant administration process
- Making timely decisions and taking action so as to expedite any EMF processes
- Notifying EMF as soon as practical of any matter that may be deemed to affect the work of the REP
- Abiding by the eight NHMRC principles of peer review: fairness, transparency, independence, appropriateness and balance, research community participation, confidentiality, impartiality, and quality and excellence (<https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/principles-peer-review>)
- Not permitting personal prejudice to influence the peer review process, and not to introduce considerations that are irrelevant to scoring criteria.
- Not taking undue or calculated advantage of knowledge obtained during the peer review process
- Giving proper consideration to research and investigators that challenge or change accepted ways of thinking.

Members of the REP will expect:

- To be given clear reviewer guidelines to follow
- That each member will be provided with the assigned grant applications and supporting documentation in a timely manner
- To be given reasonable time to make key decisions on review
- To be alerted to potential risks and issues that could impact the REP responsibilities both before and as they arise
- Open and honest discussions
- Ongoing 'health checks' to verify the overall status and 'health' of the panel
- Due respect for their expertise and willingness to contribute to the work of the REP.

The REP Chair is accountable for:

- Transparent discussion
- Utilising the REP scoring matrix as a guide
- Encouraging comments but ensuring the focus of the discussion is on the score matrix
- Approving feedback to reviewers
- Providing a report to Research Committee as required
- Maintaining consistency across the peer review of applications
- Serving as a moderator for the discussion of scientific and technical merit of the applications under review

The REP Co-Chair is accountable for:

- Serving in the absence of the Chair
- Assisting the Chair with the responsibilities of the role.

6 Meetings

- All meetings will be chaired by the Board-appointed Chair
- Meeting agendas and minutes will be managed by EMF, this includes:
 - Preparing agendas and supporting papers
 - Preparing meeting notes and information
 - Providing feedback to applicants, where applicable
- Meetings will be convened for each grant round at a venue to be advised. REP members will be encouraged to attend in person or participate via video or teleconference.

7 Amendment, Modification or Variation

These Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified only with the written approval of the EMF Board and General Manager.

8 Deliverables

The REP will provide recommendations for grant application outcomes based on agreed criteria to the EMF Board. If the number of fundable applications exceeds the allocated grant budget or recommended adjustments to the application(s) budget then the REP will provide recommendations based on agreed criteria to the Research Committee for recommendation to the EMF Board.

9 Jurisdiction

The REP is not constituted as an ethics committee, nor is it held to be qualified in these matters. The REP may not reject a grant on ethical grounds. The REP will assess on the scientific merit of an application.

10 Governance

The REP will report its findings to EMF and the Research Committee.

11 Operations of the REP

Members of the REP may communicate by phone, meetings, email, mailing lists etc. Discussions about EMF matters may be reported back to EMF. If a member wishes to add an item to the agenda of the meeting, the member must contact EMF at least five (5) working days prior to a scheduled REP meeting.

Decisions on merit for funding are made by the majority. Scores will then be used to rank the applicants that are deemed worthy of funding in order of quality of applications based on the scoring matrix.

Recommendations from the REP and communication to the REP from the EMF Board and Research Committee may be taken by the EMF representative nominated by the GM or the REP Chair.

12 Disclosure of personal details

For transparency, the REP members' name and qualifications will be listed on the EMF website and in the Annual Report. A copy of each member's CV will be retained by EMF and available to the EMF Board and staff upon request.

13 Confidentiality

REP members must agree not to disclose confidential information acquired in the course of their activity as a member of the REP. REP members must not use such confidential information other than for the purpose of undertaking their role as a member of the REP. REP members agree to take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure the confidentiality of all information, including storage and management of confidential information and maintaining database security when accessing EMF's grant management platform.

REP members are encouraged to provide honest and frank feedback during the assessment process. Views expressed by REP members during the assessment process and funding deliberation must be held in the strictest confidence. Outcomes of applications may only be discussed with a named investigator or parties related to that investigator or EMF. Funding outcomes must remain confidential until approved by the EMF Board and applicants are notified. While the membership of the REP may be publicly disclosed, the identity of any assessor providing an external assessment to the REP must not be disclosed.

14 Conflict of Interest

'Conflict of interest' is inevitable, particularly in a focused area of research. The key principle of Conflict of Interest is that any potential Conflict of Interest at any level (direct or indirect) or perceived must be disclosed and the ensuing action to address that (agreed upon by the REP) will also be documented and kept on file. Principal areas where conflicts may exist include (but not limited to):

- direct involvement in the application as Principal Investigator, Chief Investigator, Associate Investigator, or Support Personnel;
- direct or potential involvement due to a personal financial interest;
- potential involvement as a departmental/institutional colleague;
- close collaboration with the applicant either through co-publishing or as co-investigators on another grant.
- perceived involvement due to a family/personal relationship; and/or
- any other perceived conflicts.

A panel member who is directly or indirectly conflicted in the consideration of an application should not score or rank that application and should be absent from any discussion or decision regarding that application.

15 Payment terms

There are no payments for performance of REP duties; however, pre-agreed reasonable travel expenses may be reimbursed upon submission of receipts to the EMF secretariat.