



## Research Grant Funding Policy

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| <b>Policy Number</b>      | ATMS-POL-037                                   |
| <b>Version</b>            | 1.0                                            |
| <b>Approved By</b>        | ATMS Board                                     |
| <b>Date Last Approved</b> | 19 June 2026                                   |
| <b>Review Date</b>        | 2028                                           |
| <b>Related Documents</b>  | ATMS Constitution, Conflict of Interest Policy |

### 1. Purpose

The mission of the Australian Traditional Medicine Society (ATMS) is to promote, represent and support professional practitioners of natural medicine who pursue the highest ideals of professionalism. The ATMS Research Grant Funding Scheme (“the Scheme”) is established to:

1. Support high-quality research that advances natural medicine practice, education, professional standards, and the evidence base; and
2. Build research literacy and research capacity among ATMS members, public health sector, and the broader natural medicine industry.

### 2. Scope

This Policy applies to all applicants, recipients, reviewers, and ATMS personnel involved in administering or assessing funding under the Research Grants (project funding) Scheme.

### 3. Definitions

- **Applicant:** The individual and/or organisation submitting an application.
- **Lead Investigator / Chief Investigator:** The primary person responsible for the delivery and reporting of the funded activity.
- **Co-Investigator:** Senior researchers on the project who make significant contributions to the methodology, data interpretation, and publication, sharing responsibility with the Lead Investigator/Chief Investigator.
- **Associate Investigator:** Researchers, often subject-matter experts, who assist throughout the project.
- **Research Assistant / Research Associate:** Researchers who perform standardised testing, data entry, and routine laboratory or clinical experiments.
- **Grant:** Funding for an independent research project with defined outcomes and deliverables.
- **Funding Agreement:** The legally binding agreement between ATMS and the Recipient governing payment, reporting, and conditions.



- **Recipient:** The successful applicant entity/individual named in the Funding Agreement.
- **Independent blind review:** Assessment by reviewers who do not receive identifying information as far as practicable, and who have no conflicts of interest.
- **Conflict of interest (COI):** A situation where personal, professional, or financial interests could improperly influence, or appear to influence, decision-making.

#### 4. Program Principles

The Scheme is administered in accordance with the following principles:

- **Merit-based:** Funding decisions are made on merit against published criteria.
- **Fair and transparent:** Clear processes, criteria, and timelines are published and applied consistently.
- **Independent assessment:** Applications are assessed by independent reviewers with relevant expertise.
- **Ethical conduct:** Research must comply with applicable ethical standards and approvals.
- **Accountable use of funds:** Funds are used only for approved direct research costs and are subject to reporting and audit.

#### 5. Research Priorities and Eligible Activities

Funding is intended for independent research that aligns with ATMS research priorities as set out in the ATMS Strategic Plan (as updated from time to time). Each funding round may also include a Board-endorsed priority theme.

**Eligible activities** will be specified in the round guidelines and may include (examples):

- Practice-based research, clinical and observational studies, health services research
- Education research related to natural medicine practitioner training
- Evidence syntheses (systematic reviews)
- Research capacity-building and proposal development under research streams

**Ineligible activities** (unless explicitly permitted in round guidelines):

- Marketing, sales, product promotion, or commercial advertising
- Routine business operations unrelated to research
- Retrospective reimbursement of costs incurred prior to Funding Agreement execution

#### 6. Funding Availability and Rounds

1. Funding rounds will typically occur annually (or as determined by the ATMS Board).
2. Advertising:

- At least 30 days before the submission deadline for grant applications

Promotion may occur via the ATMS journal, website, member communications, and social media.



3. Budget: The ATMS A&RC annually recommends indicative funding allocations to the Board. The Board determines final allocations.
4. Non-accrual: If approved applications in a round do not use the total annual research budget, any surplus does not automatically carry forward to the next financial year (unless the Board approves otherwise).

## 7. Governance and Roles

### 7.1 ATMS Board of Directors

The ATMS Board of Directors has ultimate responsibility for governance and oversight of the Research Grant Funding Scheme. The Board's responsibilities include:

- approving this Policy and any material amendments;
- approving the annual funding envelope for research grants and scholarships (including the number and value of awards);
- approving any priority research themes to be applied to a funding round;
- approving funding outcomes, either at a duly convened meeting or out-of-session in accordance with Board governance arrangements;
- providing oversight of financial, legal, ethical, and reputational risks associated with the Scheme; and
- acting as the final authority in relation to appeals, suspension, termination, and recovery of funds, where applicable.

The Board does not assess the scientific or technical merit of applications.

### 7.2 ATMS A&RC

The Academic & Research Committee (A&RC) is responsible for operational oversight of the Research Grant Funding Scheme and reports to the Board. The Committee's responsibilities include:

- overseeing the administration of funding rounds in accordance with this Policy and approved guidelines;
- ensuring eligibility and compliance screening is undertaken;
- appointing appropriately qualified independent reviewers and overseeing the independent blind review process;
- managing conflicts of interest, including maintaining a conflict-of-interest register and ensuring appropriate recusals;
- considering reviewer assessments, ranking applications, and formulating funding recommendations for submission to the Board; and
- monitoring funded projects, including progress reporting, variations, ethics compliance, and financial acquittals.

The A&RC has no authority to approve funding outcomes unless expressly delegated by the Board.



### 7.3 Approval of Funding Outcomes (Accelerated Process)

Following the Academic & Research Committee (A&RC) meeting at which the Committee resolves its recommendation on successful and unsuccessful applicants, the Chair of the A&RC will provide the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) with a formal written recommendation (including the recommended successful and unsuccessful applicants and any conditions).

The CEO will seek approval of the recommended funding outcomes by Board Circular Resolution as soon as practicable after receipt of the Chair's recommendation.

Approval of funding outcomes by Circular Resolution must:

- comply with the approval requirements for out-of-session resolutions under the ATMS Constitution/By-laws; and
- include the endorsement of the Directors who are not members of the A&RC.

A Circular Resolution approving funding outcomes takes effect immediately upon confirmation and does not require the confirmation of A&RC minutes or Board minutes prior to implementation.

Once Board approval is confirmed, the CEO is authorised to:

- notify successful and unsuccessful applicants without delay; and
- progress Funding Agreements with successful recipients, subject to any conditions precedent (including ethics approval where required).

All Circular Resolutions and funding outcomes must be formally noted or ratified at the next scheduled Board meeting for record-keeping purposes.

### 7.4 Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for implementing Board-approved funding outcomes and providing administrative support to the Scheme. The CEO's responsibilities include:

- issuing notifications to successful and unsuccessful applicants following approval of funding outcomes;
- executing Funding Agreements on behalf of the Chair, Academic & Research Committee;
- ensuring conditions precedent (including ethics approval and insurance, where required) are satisfied prior to release of funds;
- authorising payments in accordance with the Funding Agreement; and
- maintaining records and supporting reporting, acquittal, and audit processes.

### 7.5 Independent Reviewers

Independent reviewers are engaged to assess eligible applications on merit. Their responsibilities include:

- conducting objective, independent, and confidential assessments against the published selection criteria;
- declaring any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest prior to and during assessment; and



- providing scores and qualitative comments in accordance with the approved assessment framework.

Independent reviewers have no role in funding decisions.

## 7.6 Role Separation and Integrity

ATMS maintains clear separation between:

- assessment (independent reviewers),
- recommendation (Academic & Research Committee), and
- approval (Board).

This separation supports transparency, procedural fairness, and confidence in the integrity of funding decisions.

## 8. Eligibility (Baseline Requirements)

Unless otherwise stated in round guidelines:

1. Only one proposal per applicant (or applicant team) may be submitted per application cycle.
2. An applicant may not hold more than one current ATMS-funded grant as Lead Investigator at any time (unless expressly permitted).
3. The Lead Investigator must be a current financial, accredited ATMS member at the time of application and remain so for the term of the award, an Australian citizen or a permanent resident, currently reside in Australia, and cannot be an A&RC or Board member. The research team may include Co-Investigators or collaborators who are not ATMS members, provided the Lead Investigator retains overall responsibility for the project.
4. All investigators and contributors must be listed in the application.
5. Where required, the project must obtain ethics approval from an appropriate Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) or equivalent.
6. Applicants must hold appropriate insurance as set out in the compliance requirements and/or Funding Agreement.

## 9. Compliance Requirements (Application Completeness Check)

Applications must meet compliance requirements before proceeding to independent review. Required documents typically include:

- Completed application form
- CVs (max 2 pages each) for all key personnel
- Letters of support (where partner organisations are involved)
- Evidence of applicant legal entity status (e.g., incorporation documentation) where applicable
- Evidence of current Public Liability Insurance (Certificate of Currency)
- Supporting evidence of need and/or feasibility where available



- Proposed project duration:
  - Grants: typically, 12 months (unless a longer term is approved)
- Budget and Budget justification

ATMS may request additional information to assess eligibility and compliance.

## **10. Assessment Process**

### **10.1 Assessment Method**

1. Eligible applications proceed to independent blind review.
2. Each application is assessed by two independent reviewers (or more if needed) with topic and/or methodological expertise.
3. Reviewers use a predetermined scoring rubric and selection criteria published for the round.
4. The A&RC considers reviewer scores and comments, ranks applications, and recommends outcomes to the Board.
5. The Board makes the final determination.

### **10.2 Selection Criteria**

Independent review will assess:

- Executive summary and clarity of the proposal
- Alignment with ATMS priorities and any round theme
- Significance, innovation, and potential impact
- Research design and methodology (feasibility, rigour, analysis plan)
- Ethical considerations and participant protections
- Project timeline and milestones
- Budget detail, justification, and value for money
- Dissemination plan and practice relevance
- Team capability and capacity to deliver

### **10.3 Conflicts of Interest (COI)**

- Any Research Committee member, Board member, staff member, or reviewer with a COI must declare it as soon as it arises.
- Reviewers must not assess applications where they have an actual, potential, or perceived conflict.
- COI declarations will be recorded and retained in Scheme records.



## 11. Notification, Feedback, and Publicity

### 11.1 Notification

- All applicants (successful and unsuccessful) will be notified within 60 days of the submission deadline and following Board approval of funding outcomes (including via Circular Resolution)
- Notifications will be issued by the CEO (or delegate) as soon as practicable after approval is confirmed
- Successful applicants receive a conditional offer subject to execution of a Funding Agreement and any required ethics approval.

### 11.2 Feedback

- Brief written feedback may be provided to unsuccessful applicants at ATMS's discretion, based on reviewer comments and subject to confidentiality and time constraints.
- ATMS does not provide reviewer identities or raw scoring sheets unless required by law.

### 11.3 Publicity

ATMS may issue a press release and publicise awards in print and electronically. Information from the application and reports (recipient name, institution, project title, lay summary/abstract) may be used to promote the Scheme and the funded work.

Recipients may also seek external promotional opportunities at their discretion, provided they comply with Funding Agreement terms and do not imply ATMS endorsement of products/services.

## 12. Funding Agreement and Legal Status

1. Submission of an application does not create a legal or binding commitment between ATMS and the Applicant.
2. All funding is subject to:
  - ATMS Board approval
  - Execution of a Funding Agreement
  - Satisfaction of any conditions precedent (e.g., ethics approval, insurance, bank details)
3. The Funding Agreement will include project-specific conditions, milestones, reporting dates, approved budget, payment schedule, and any special conditions.

## 13. Funding Amounts and Payments

1. The maximum and/or typical funding amounts will be published in each round guidelines (e.g., up to \$10,000 per grant).
2. Funding may be approved at a level lower than requested.
3. Payments:
  - Funds are paid to the Recipient (individual or organisation) nominated in the Funding Agreement.



- Funds will be paid within 45 days of the later of:
  - a) execution of the Funding Agreement; or
  - b) receipt of ethics approval where required.
- Projects of ≤12 months are paid in one instalment (unless otherwise specified).

## **14. Use of Funds, Budget Changes, and Other Funding**

### **14.1 Permitted Expenditure**

Only direct research costs will be funded, which can include Personnel, Equipment/materials, and Project activities. Indirect costs are not allowed and cannot be applied to the amount awarded.

### **14.2 Variations and Budget Reallocation**

- Any changes to project scope, design, key personnel, timelines, or budget allocations beyond those specified in the Funding Agreement must be pre-approved in writing by the ATMS A&RC.
- Unapproved changes may result in suspension, termination of funding, or request for reimbursement.

### **14.3 Co-funding and Other Grants**

Applicants may seek or hold other funding sources, provided:

- This is disclosed in the application (or promptly disclosed if obtained later), and
- Any overlap is justified to ATMS's satisfaction, and
- The combined funding does not duplicate costs.

## **15. Monitoring, Reporting, and Financial Acquittal**

### **15.1 Progress Reporting**

- Recipients must submit progress reports every 12 months from the notification of success (or as specified).
- For projects of 12 months duration, only a Final Report may be required.

### **15.2 Final Report**

- A Final Report must be submitted within 60 days of project completion.

### **15.3 Financial Acquittal**

- Recipients must provide a financial acquittal in a form acceptable to ATMS (e.g., statement of expenditure aligned to the approved budget), with the Final Report and/or at specified milestones.
- ATMS may request invoices/receipts or other supporting evidence for verification.

### **15.4 Audit Rights**



ATMS reserves the right to audit, or require an independent audit of, expenditure and records relating to Scheme funds, subject to reasonable notice and privacy/confidentiality requirements.

### 15.5 Non-compliance

Failure to meet reporting or acquittal requirements may result in:

- withholding of further payments
- requirement to return unspent or misused funds
- ineligibility for future ATMS funding
- termination under Section 19

Reports must be submitted to the Chair, ATMS Research Grants Committee in accordance with the Funding Agreement.

## 16. Ethics, Safety, and Research Integrity

1. Research must comply with all applicable ethical frameworks and approvals, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (as applicable).
2. Where required, evidence of HREC approval must be provided prior to release of funds.
3. The Recipient must promptly notify ATMS of:
  - ethics breaches or complaints
  - serious adverse events (where relevant)
  - allegations of research misconduct

Such matters must also be reported to the approving Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), where required. ATMS may require confirmation of the outcome and any corrective actions taken.

4. ATMS may suspend funding pending investigation and/or remediation.

## 17. Intellectual Property (IP) and Data Management

### 17.1 Intellectual Property

- Unless otherwise stated in the Funding Agreement, IP created by the Recipient through the funded project remains with the Recipient and/or their institution.
- The Recipient grants ATMS a royalty-free, perpetual, non-exclusive licence to use project outputs (e.g., abstracts, reports, practice summaries, non-identifiable findings) for ATMS purposes including reporting, education, and promotion of the Scheme, with appropriate attribution.

### 17.2 Data Ownership, Access, and Retention

- The Recipient is responsible for compliant data management, storage, and retention in accordance with ethical approvals and institutional requirements.
- ATMS may request access to de-identified aggregated results and materials needed to verify deliverables, subject to ethics and privacy constraints.



- Personal or sensitive participant data will not be provided to ATMS unless explicitly permitted by ethics approvals and law.

## **18. Privacy and Confidentiality**

1. ATMS will handle personal information in accordance with applicable privacy laws.
2. Applications, reviewer reports, and deliberations are confidential and will be used only for Scheme administration, assessment, governance, and audit.
3. ATMS may publish award information (recipient name, title, institution, summary) as described in Section 11.

## **19. Dissemination and Acknowledgement**

1. All posters, publications, and presentations arising from the funded work must acknowledge ATMS support using wording approved in the Funding Agreement (or ATMS website guidance).
2. Recipients are expected to:
  - publish in a peer-reviewed journal (where feasible), and copy of which should be provided to the ATMS, and
  - provide a practice-relevant summary for print in the Journal of the Australian Traditional Medicine Society,
  - present the final report's findings at the end of year ATMS conference, either in person or by pre-recorded video.
3. Use of grant funds for dissemination beyond what is permitted must be approved in advance.

## **20. Extensions**

1. Extension requests must be submitted in writing before the original end date, with a progress report.
2. Extensions may be granted up to 50% of the original approved duration, without additional funds.
3. The request must include:
  - reasons for delay
  - proposed revised timeline
  - remediation plan to address delays
4. During an extension period, progress reporting may be required every 6 months (or as specified).

## **21. Modification, Suspension, or Termination of Support**

The ATMS may modify, suspend, or terminate funding where:

- the project cannot proceed as approved
- the Recipient fails to meet reporting/acquittal requirements



- required ethics approval is not obtained or is withdrawn within agreed timeframes
- there is suspected or substantiated research misconduct, fraud, or serious non-compliance
- continuation would pose undue legal, ethical, financial, or reputational risk to the ATMS

Where issues are suspected but not yet substantiated, ATMS may suspend funding (including payments) while the matter is investigated by the approving Human Research Ethics Committee or other relevant body.

Following the outcome of any investigation, ATMS may reinstate funding (with or without conditions) or terminate the grant and recover funds, in whole or in part, as permitted under the Funding Agreement.

In circumstances where ATMS intends to modify support levels for reasons outside the Recipient's control, the ATMS will generally provide at least 90 days' written notice, and the Recipient may propose a revised research plan or elect to terminate.

### **Repayment:**

If a project is not completed as approved, or funds are misused, ATMS may require repayment of some or all funds, in accordance with the Funding Agreement.

## **22. Appeals and Complaints Process**

### **22.1 What can be appealed**

ATMS supports fairness and due process. Appeals are limited to administrative or procedural grounds only, such as:

- a material deviation from published assessment process
- a demonstrable conflict of interest not appropriately managed
- a documented administrative error that materially affected the outcome

**Appeals cannot be made** on the basis of:

- disagreement with reviewer judgement or scores
- comparative merit of applications
- funding availability decisions made by the Board

### **22.2 How to lodge an appeal**

- Appeals must be lodged in writing within 10 business days of the notification date.
- Appeals must include:
  - application reference number
  - clear statement of alleged procedural/administrative error
  - supporting evidence (where available)

Appeals should be sent to the Chair, ATMS Research Grants Committee.

### **22.3 Appeals review process**



1. Acknowledgement within 5 business days.
2. Preliminary assessment by an ATMS officer not involved in the original assessment (e.g., CEO/Company Secretary) to confirm eligibility of appeal grounds.
3. If accepted for review, an Appeals Panel will be convened comprising:
  - one Board member not involved in the original decision, and
  - one Research Committee member not involved in the application round, and
  - an independent external person (where practicable)
4. The Panel reviews process documentation, COI registers, and administrative records (not a re-review of scientific merit).
5. Outcome issued within 30 days of accepting the appeal (or advise if additional time is required).

#### **22.4 Possible outcomes**

- Confirm the original decision (most common)
- Correct an administrative error (e.g., misfiled document) and re-process affected step(s)
- In rare cases, recommend a procedural re-assessment (e.g., replacement reviewer)

The Board retains final authority. The appeal outcome is final.

#### **22.5 Complaints (non-appeal)**

Complaints about conduct, professionalism, or communications (not outcomes) may be lodged through the Lodge a Complaint process and handled under ATMS's complaints handling procedures.

### **23. Records Management**

ATMS will retain Scheme records (applications, COI registers, reviewer reports, decisions, agreements, and key correspondence) in accordance with its record-keeping practices and legal obligations.

### **24. Policy Review and Changes**

The ATMS Board may amend this Policy at any time. Material changes will be communicated via ATMS channels and will apply from the date specified by ATMS. The Policy will be reviewed at least every two years.



## **ATMS Research Grant Funding Guidelines (Annex)**

Each funding round will publish:

- Opening/closing dates
- Total funds available and indicative grant caps
- Priority themes (if any)
- Eligibility criteria and exclusions
- Assessment criteria and weightings
- Reporting schedule and milestone dates
- Required templates (budget, Gantt, ethics declaration, lay summary)