# Funding guidelines for applicants

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# 1 What is the purpose of this document?

1.1 This document describes how the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute funds and coordinates research and dissemination activities through its National Housing Research Program.

1.2 Research funding applications are only invited for research that is to be conducted within AHURI Research Centres.

# 2 What is the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute?

2.1 AHURI is a not-for-profit independent national research organisation. AHURI's mission is to 'deliver high quality, policy relevant evidence for better housing and urban outcomes'. AHURI is comprised of a National Office that works in collaboration with a diverse network of universities in delivering timely, high quality, policy relevant research on housing, cities and homelessness.

2.2 AHURI aims to:

- Strengthen policy relevance
- Ensure high quality research
- Improve research accessibility
- Foster dynamic collaboration
- Support and strengthen research capability

For more information, see the AHURI Strategic Plan 2009-2018.

# 3 What type of research does AHURI fund?

3.1 In the context of promoting research-informed change, AHURI is seeking to fund a variety of different kinds of research using a range of methods, including broad exploratory analysis of emerging issues through to more evaluative research around current policy. AHURI funds research that:

- Draws on different disciplines, including economic, geographic, sociological, anthropological and architectural perspectives.
- Utilises a range of data sources, from government administrative data, secondary survey data, investigator initiated surveys, focus groups, informant interviews and stakeholder workshops.
- Uses innovative analytical methods from statistical modelling, qualitative analysis and natural experiments.

3.2 Researchers are encouraged to make use of existing data sets when appropriate, including data collected by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A list of suggested data sources is available on the Members Extranet of the AHURI web site.

3.3 The capacity of AHURI research to inform policy development (i.e. its policy relevance) is a key assessment criterion. It is the applied and policy focussed nature of AHURI research funding that differentiates it from other sources of research funding. This has implications for the style and format of AHURI published outputs, as well as the conduct of research with a high level of engagement between researchers, policy makers and practitioners a key aspect of ensuring the relevance of the research.

3.4 The AHURI Research Catalogue provides a full summary of research funded by AHURI to date. Researchers are also encouraged to check previous AHURI research reports on the fully searchable AHURI web site to ensure that research builds upon the existing evidence base.

# 4 Investigative Panels

## 4.1 Overview

Investigative Panels are designed to bring about direct engagement between experts from the research and policy communities (and potentially practitioners from industry and community sectors) to interrogate a specific policy or practice question. The process will draw on the existing evidence base and the experience and expertise of the members of the Investigative Panel, who will meet to discuss the research question.

This research vehicle is designed to address single questions that are of immediate practical relevance to policy development. It is important that the research question posed is appropriate in scope. Researchers are encouraged to devise their own process for running Investigative Panels. A possible approach might involve the research team convening a series of meetings (say up to three or four) over the course of nine months. The research team might include a facilitator, someone to record the meetings, and an administrator responsible for managing the process. It is expected that an Investigative Panel includes senior policy-makers.

The Investigative Panel might comprise a self contained group that meets over the course of the investigation, or alternatively may involve a core panel that invites presentations or written contributions from specialist informants. The expert panel members might include representatives of the policy community, specialist academics, and potentially practitioners and community sector or industry representatives. The proposed composition of the panel should be outlined in the initial application. Budgets should include the necessary allocation for all costs associated with Investigative Panel meetings. AHURI can provide assistance in recruiting panel members.

The publishable outputs generated by this process could include an original discussion paper stating the question being explored, and report(s) that provide a synthesis of the panel's discussions. The report(s) could be authored by the facilitator and/or research team, and can be published in the AHURI peer reviewed Final Report series. The findings of an Investigative Panel may also be published in a Research and Policy Bulletin. Researchers are encouraged to be innovative in the form that reports take, and in proposing other outputs that may be generated by this process.

It is important that this report reflects the diversity of views articulated by the panel members. While panel members should be named in the reports, no comments or opinions need be directly attributed to individuals in the reports. It is the responsibility of the research team to ensure that all panel members endorse the representation of the findings of the panel process, prior to the publication of the report.

AHURI will be responsible for publishing the findings and may choose to be present at the meetings of the panel.

# 5 Dissemination: AHURI published outputs

5.1 AHURI aims to publish high quality research that provides an accessible and relevant evidence base for the development of policy. AHURI publishes research on the AHURI website and it is publically available. There is no limitation on the types of written work being published. For example, in the past AHURI has published research findings, modelling results and practice guides, each within the Final Report series. Researchers are encouraged to be innovative. AHURI will publish outputs in three publication *series*:

- Positioning Papers
- Final Reports
- Research and Policy Bulletins

5.2 Reports published in the Positioning Paper and Final Report series are subject to a rigorous quality assurance process prior to publication. This includes double blind peer review by two peer reviewers, professional editing and formatting. The quality assurance process is managed by the Assistant Director of Research at AHURI. In addition to Final Reports and Positioning Papers, AHURI publishes Research and Policy Bulletins (non peer reviewed) which are otherwise subject to the same quality assurance processes. All reports must be submitted using the templates provided in the Toolkit on the extranet section of the AHURI website. Directions for access to the extranet should be sought through the relevant Research Centre Director or directly through the AHURI National Office.

5.3 There are some limitations on the length and content of reports in each of these publication series such that they meet the needs of a policy maker audience:

A. A Positioning Paper presents:

- A comprehensive review and analysis of the academic and policy literature to establish what is known about the issue.
- A discussion of conceptual issues involved in the research questions, and the theoretical framework that informs the research and research methodology.
- An identification of knowledge gaps and a methodological statement that details how the research aims to fill such knowledge gaps.
- A specification of how the new information will productively inform policy development.

B. A Final Report presents:

- A summary of the key policy, practice and research issues identified in the Positioning Paper.
- A comprehensive account of the conduct of the research.
- The findings from the investigation, specifically identifying the unique contribution of the work to housing, homelessness and urban studies rather than a descriptive account of what the research has done.
- The key implications for the development of housing, homelessness and urban policy.

C. A Research and Policy Bulletin must be less than 2000 words comprising:

- A succinct summary of the context, research approach and main findings from the research.
- A clear identification of the implications of the research (not recommendations) for the development of housing, homelessness and urban policy.

Typically the Final Report and the Research and Policy Bulletin will be delivered simultaneously. Research and Policy Bulletins are prepared by researchers, but ultimately authored by AHURI.

5.4 It is important to ensure that reports are tightly written and communicate well. AHURI reserves the right to require that a report be shortened where it is deemed necessary to enhance the quality of a report. The Toolkit indicates the house style for AHURI reports, and is available through the extranet.

5.5 Researchers retain Intellectual Property rights to their research. Researchers may also seek to make their work known through articles in peer review journals and papers delivered at academic conferences. AHURI welcomes this activity and recognises its value. AHURI retains the copyright on all AHURI published outputs.

5.6 The timely publication of research is essential in fulfilling AHURI's responsibility to its stakeholders to provide an evidence base for the reform of housing, homelessness and urban policy. Timeliness is increasingly important due to the rapid pace of policy change in Australia. The AHURI National Office is committed to ensuring research is delivered in timeframes that are relevant to policy makers, and to work with the research community to manage the delivery of published outputs in accordance with contracted timelines.

# 6 Dissemination: events and engagement processes

6.1 AHURI gives high priority to effective dissemination of research findings and works closely with the research teams to ensure that research is of value to policy makers and practitioners. In addition to the publication of reports, the AHURI National Office takes an active role in identifying possible ways of pursuing the topics and issues that emerge from research and discussing the policy implications. AHURI is committed to innovation in strategies for dissemination and engagement with the policy community, other stakeholders and the public.

6.2 Researchers are expected to take an active part in dissemination activities including presentation at conferences, roundtables and seminar papers. Researchers should give consideration to dissemination opportunities in the time-lines in the research proposal.

6.3 The AHURI National Office is responsible for facilitating engagement with the policy community, and is responsible for coordinating dissemination events. This currently occurs through a variety of strategies including AHURI Research Seminars, meetings facilitated by AHURI to discuss policy relevance throughout the research process and AHURI Policy Roundtables. These are described below:

A. AHURI Research Seminars:

- Are an open event hosted by AHURI and other stakeholders presenting completed AHURI research.
- Involve presentation of an overview of the research, policy (and or practice) context for the research.

- Outline the details of the research approach.
- Highlight the findings relevant to policy development.

Timing of the presentation will be negotiated with research team leaders and is dependent on AHURI's program of events for the year which is coordinated by the AHURI National Office.

B. Policy discussions facilitated by AHURI:

- Enable researchers to seek advice from policy makers about the policy focus of research and how the research might most productively inform policy development.
- Provide information to the research team about the progress of policy development.
- Involve a forum for discussion about the implications of the research findings for policy development.

Meetings will be established by the AHURI National Office. Participants will include research team leaders, representation from the policy and practice communities, and methodological or content experts if required. They will often be facilitated via teleconference but may also occur in person as required.

C. AHURI Policy Roundtables

- Are a closed door, Chatham House Rules event.
- Provides an overview of the research findings, policy and practice context of the research to a select group of policy makers.
- Are designed to draw out the policy implications of AHURI research through discussion of the research findings with a select number of senior policy makers.

AHURI Policy Roundtable events are coordinated by the AHURI National Office but will involve research team leaders.

6.4 AHURI must be informed of any other dissemination event that relates to AHURI funded research. While it is expected that meetings of Investigative Panels will be facilitated and administered by the research team, all other events are to be coordinated with the AHURI National Office which will provide advice and support where necessary.

# 7 Research ethics

7.1 All AHURI research will need to conform to the principles and protocols established and regulated by university ethics committees. All AHURI research will need to obtain ethics committee approval from the university at which the research team leader is based. The funding of research is conditional upon ethics committee approval.

7.2 With regard to the conduct of ethical research involving Indigenous people, AHURI embraces the research principles detailed in Recommendation 51 of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. These principles and their implications for the conduct of ethical research are detailed in a separate document Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Indigenous Research.

7.3 Researchers should note that all primary data sets both qualitative and quantitative, collected as part of AHURI research must be deposited in the Australian Social Science Data Archive (ASSDA). This is to ensure long term

security of the data, replicability of research, and access for use by other researchers. This requirement must be taken into account when seeking ethics committee approval. The onus is on the research team to ensure data management plans are in place, and informed consent from research participants is attained. The secure storage and future accessibility of data sets, as well as the privacy of research participants is assured through the storage of primary data with the ASSDA. The ASSDA undertakes most of the tasks of data cleaning and archival, and the costs faced by researchers in archival will be low or negligible. However, appropriate costs borne by the researcher in the process of archiving data, such as producing explanatory materials should be included in the budget of project proposals. The final 10% of funds will be paid once all data are deposited with the ASSDA and AHURI has received confirmation that this has occurred. This practice is in line with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/_files/r39.pdf>.

If researchers cannot provide their qualitative or quantitative data sets they must provide to AHURI, via their ethics committees, a clear and reasoned argument why ethical or methodological considerations have prevented their data sources being made available to ASSDA.

# 8 Quality assurance

8.1 AHURI is committed to undertaking high quality, policy relevant research. The AHURI National Office takes steps to ensure this occurs through facilitating peer review of funded research and reporting of quality outcomes to the AHURI Limited Board. The Assistant Director of Research at AHURI acts in an editorial role, managing the peer review and revision process and ensuring that AHURI reports conform to well-established quality standards.

8.2 The peer review process is a *double blind* review; AHURI has a panel of international peer reviewers specialising in a range of housing, homelessness and cities related subject areas. Each Positioning Paper or Final Report is allocated to two appropriate peer reviewers with relevant expertise. The peer review process typically takes less than 4 weeks from AHURI acceptance of the report to delivery back to the author for revisions.

8.3 While AHURI seeks to rely as much as possible on existing frameworks that promote quality assurance in universities, it has also put in place its own criteria for assessing the quality of research reports, which are used by AHURI peer reviewers. These criteria include that the:

- Purpose of the report and research questions are stated clearly.
- Report makes an important contribution to policy, practice and literature.
- Literature and policy/practice is relevant to research questions.
- Methods are explicit, sound and appropriate to the research questions.
- Findings are relevant to policy and practice and supported by the analysis.
- Writing is clear, direct and effective.

8.4 To mitigate potential problems emerging surrounding the chosen research methods, all research proposals should include short statements in the body of the application detailing:

- Potential threats to internal validity and ways of limiting the factors identified.
- Potential threats to external validity and ways of limiting the factors identified.

- The extent to which the findings will be generalisable to like populations (where relevant).
- The original and innovative nature of the research's contribution to the evidence base.

8.5 Research quality is monitored by the AHURI National Office at every stage of the research from the initial research proposal to the completion of the final deliverable, including peer review. All quality assessments will be discussed directly with the research team leader. Once a research proposal has been approved for funding, the research team leader is included in all aspects of quality assessment and reporting.

8.6 AHURI's Positioning Paper series and the Final Report series have been included on the 2010 Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) Ranked Journal List. Each of these published outputs is therefore stringently restricted to reports that have been subjected to the double-blind peer review process.

# 9 Timeliness

9.1 AHURI is committed to undertaking timely, high quality, policy relevant research. In line with this goal, the AHURI National Office reserves the right to take fair and reasonable action to ensure projects are completed in a timely manner. Accordingly, AHURI Limited undertakes a range of management actions to ensure the timeliness of projects.

9.2 The shared management of project delays relies on regular and clear communication between AHURI Limited and research team leaders. It is expected that any emerging delays with a project will be identified early in the project cycle and that the research team leader will work constructively with AHURI Limited to address the issue.

9.3 Research team leaders are strongly encouraged to estimate realistic timeframes in their applications to ensure both quality and on-time delivery. The time allocated for each project stage, however, needs to reflect a fair estimate of the actual time required and should not be excessive for purpose.

9.4 Contract variations are available when there is a legitimate delay to a research activity; however, contract variations are the exception rather than the norm in addressing project delays and will only occur when there are exogenous circumstances.

Exogenous issues are delays which the research team could not have reasonably predicted to have occurred, or are due to factors beyond their control. This may include matters of a personal nature such as significant illness or family situations. It may also include delays in fieldwork beyond the control of the research team including unanticipated problems getting access to data, stakeholders being uncooperative and political issues with governments, departments or other stakeholders.

It is expected that there are ongoing discussions between AHURI Limited and the research team leaders about likely project delays, the cause and remedy. This would form the basis of any subsequent negotiation about a contract variation. The final decision to grant a contract variation rests with AHURI Limited and will only be issued prior to the due date of a project deliverable.

9.5 AHURI Limited will review the viability of a project when a project deliverable is delayed by more than 20% of the contracted period. Where there are no exogenous circumstances, a contract variation is not warranted.

The total contracted period commences from the commencement date on the contract, and concludes with the due date of the final project deliverable. For example, a project is due to commence on 1st January, and the Final Report is due to be submitted to AHURI on the 30th May. The total contracted period is 150 days. If the Final Report is submitted 15 days late then it is overdue by 10% of the total contracted period.

## 10 Budgets

10.1 AHURI research budgets are expected to vary in accordance with the scale of the research and the research vehicles selected. The appropriate budget is to be calculated by the research team and detailed in the research proposal. The budget must reserve 20% of funds to be paid upon acceptance of the final deliverable, and 10% upon the delivery of data sets to the Australian Social Science Data Archive (ASSDA) where relevant.

10.2 Payment for reports is contingent upon the AHURI National Office accepting the document. There is typically a phase of review before reports are accepted which should be factored into the proposed timeline.

10.3 Standardised costs for researchers' time should be used. Two methods are available, either the 'salary costing formula' or the 'teaching replacement' method.

10.4 The salary costing formula is:

$$\text{SALARY PER DAY} = \frac{\text{GROSS ANNUAL SALARY X 1.26}}{210}$$

Where 210 is the number of complete working days in the year, and where 1.26 is a factor to cover 26 per cent on-costs.

10.5 The 'teaching replacement' method should be at the direct salary cost of the replacement teacher (e.g. Lecturer to replace an Associate Professor).

10.6 **Budgets will need to take into account the Goods and Services Tax and budgets must separately identify the GST charge.** The infrastructure charge imposed by universities for each AHURI research endeavour is set at a maximum 20 per cent of total costs and should also be included in the budget. Where more than one Research Centre is involved in the proposed research, it is the responsibility of applicants to determine the distribution of the infrastructure charge.

10.7 All budgets must include the applicable line items to support the AHURI National Office costs associated with policy engagement, dissemination and editing/proofreading from the following table. The following standard costs have been developed by the AHURI National Office to meet expenditure:

| ***Research vehicle*** | ***Dissemination cost*** |
|---|---|
| Investigative Panel | $4800 |

The AHURI National Office will invoice for all of the above costs. These costs are therefore to be excluded from the 20% infrastructure calculation in the budget.

## 11 How do I apply for funding?

11.1 All applications must be submitted using the relevant AHURI Application Form <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research_agenda_funding/about_funding_other/>.

Researchers at Universities participating in the AHURI National Housing Research Program must submit applications through the local Research Centre Director who will complete a check-list and submission form for each application. Otherwise applications can be directly submitted to AHURI Limited. Applications should be submitted to both:

Kerry.Fewings@ahuri.edu.au and Andrew.Hollows@ahuri.edu.au

Each application must include:

- A succinct but clear research proposal (maximum of 3000 words).
- A separate summary (maximum of 600 words).
- A Curriculum Vita for each member of the research team (maximum of 500 words per CV).

11.2 Any application that does not include the required information will not be assessed. One electronic copy and one hard copy are required.

11.3 All applications must specify the current AHURI research in which each research team member is involved, and any outstanding deliverables associated with that research.

11.4 Proposals that involve research team leaders who have overdue deliverables (deliverables past their due date for which a contract variation has not been issued) in relation to current AHURI research, will be deemed ineligible to apply. Applications for which they are the research team leader will not be assessed. All overdue contracted research deliverables (Inc. Research and Policy Bulletins and any contracted data storage requirements, though not AHURI Research Seminars which are scheduled separately) must be acquitted prior to applying for AHURI funding.

11.5 Proposals that involve research team leaders who currently lead two or more AHURI projects are not eligible to be assessed for funding.

11.6 Where previous projects have nominated co-leaders, each co-leader will be treated as a leader for the purposes of assessment for eligibility to apply.

11.7 Any application longer than the maximum of 3000 words will not be assessed. Each application will receive a word count check that will include all words in the application document (excluding the summary, and the research team's curriculum vitae). The word count therefore includes, but is not limited to; headings, tables, figures, endnotes, footnotes, references and bibliographies.

11.8 Any application with a summary longer than the maximum of 600 words will not be assessed. Each summary will receive a word count check that will include all words in the application summary section.

11.9 Any application with curriculum vitae longer than 500 words for each research team member will not be assessed.

11.10 Where the conduct of research requires access to data or resources that rely upon the collaboration with other organisations, formal correspondence from such organisations, indicating their willingness to be a research collaborator, should be attached to the research funding application. Correspondence that offers general positive support for the research will be removed from applications and not taken into consideration as part of the assessment process.

## 12 The selection process

12.1 Selection of the research proposals to be funded will be part of a competitive process with applications requested by a particular date and choices made between them.

12.2 Each application is independently assessed by several assessors who bring a blend of policy and research expertise to the assessment process, including at least one independent academic. Please note that staff at AHURI Limited are not involved in the assessment of applications but will provide advice to the AHURI Limited Board about the capacity of proposed research teams and their track record with other AHURI research activities including timeliness.

12.3 The final decision to fund a research proposal rests with the AHURI Limited Board. The AHURI National Office will notify applicants of the outcomes of the AHURI Limited Board's decisions.

## 13 Criteria for assessing research proposals

13.1 Research proposals will be assessed comparatively and absolutely in terms of the following four criteria (policy relevance, research approach, research team and budget):

**Policy relevance** of research is critical and research proposals must demonstrate that the research will assist policy development. Research that demonstrates high relevance to policy agendas will be preferred. Quantitative findings should be generalisable to a population of policy relevance. Qualitative findings should be analytically generalisable to a population of policy relevance. The research team must demonstrate that they have an understanding of the policy issues and can relate them to the research proposed. In research proposals addressing Strategic Research Issues the onus is on the research team to devise the research question and clearly indicate the policy relevance of the research.

The **research approach** (conceptual framework, methods, and timeline) must be realistic and appropriate. Methods must be suitable for the research vehicle chosen. Applications for Essays should outline the issue to be discussed and methods to address the issue. Applications for Investigative Panels should outline the processes for generating findings. Research Projects should outline research questions, and should detail (where appropriate) theoretical conceptualisations, research design, data sources, measurement models, analytical methods and any processes of consulting with informants. They must be ethical and preferably replicable. Threats to internal and external validity should be identified and strategies put in place to minimise or overcome such threats (e.g. triangulation, extension of sampling using other means etc). The timeline must be realistic and commensurate with achieving the methods outlined. AHURI suggests researchers consider the paper by Professor Susan Smith in developing the analytical framework that informs their research.

**Research teams** must demonstrate capability to do the research on time to a high standard and (where appropriate) to build future research capacity. The research team should be capable of undertaking the methods. Past track record on research for AHURI and other research in housing, homelessness and urban areas will be considered in making an assessment. Research teams that demonstrably contribute to the strategic capacity of the Research Centre (e.g. by including early career researchers as a member of the research team, or as research team leader) will be favourably considered. Research team leaders should allocate sufficient percentages of their time to lead, manage and

contribute to the research, according to a project's size and complexity. Cross-centre or cross-nodal collaborations that serve to build links between the housing research community in a strategic and logical manner will also be considered favourably.

**Budgets** must be realistic, justified, cost-effective and commensurate with achieving the methods outlined. Value for money needs to be demonstrated, and any in-kind support documented. Budgets must be sufficient for the purposes of meeting timelines and applying the approach provided in the research proposal. Timeliness is critical for policy makers: all research proposals should include a realistic timeline that will be met. Timelines should, where possible, also meet the needs of policy makers for timely results to feed into policy processes. Timeframes for all Essays and Investigative Panels should be consistent with the objectives of being policy relevant.

13.2 Judgements about research proposals are made on the basis of the information provided in the application.

# 14 Research contracts

14.1 A research contract letter will be offered for each research proposal that receives funding.

14.2 A research contract sets out the expected completion date, key milestones and associated payment schedule (inc. incentive and penalty payments), publishable outputs (including word limits) and the agreed overall budget. It is designed to clarify beyond doubt the obligations on both sides in order to ensure that worthwhile results emerge from research and the resources of AHURI are spent in the most productive way.

# 15 Checklist

15.1 Before submitting applications please ensure that you have:

- ✓ Completed the application on the pro forma, following precisely the written instructions.
- ✓ Named the research team leader and/or the person with primary responsibilities for carriage of the research (and ensured that these people are eligible to apply with no overdue deliverables and no more than two current Research Projects).
- ✓ Included a separate 600 word research summary.
- ✓ Checked that the body of the application consists of no more than 3000 clearly written and presented words. (Non-compliant applications will not be assessed).
- ✓ Incorporated a statement identifying the reasons for including or not including Indigenous housing issues as a focus of the research.
- ✓ Listed an item-by-item budget, prioritised the items and justified them.
- ✓ Ensure that the total cost of the project cited on the application pro forma cover page is consistent with the budget contained in the application (ex. GST). This amount includes the AHURI National Office costs associated with dissemination, policy engagement and editing/ proof-reading.
- ✓ Specified the dates for key milestones and the associated payment schedule.
- ✓ Included 500 word CVs and clearly listed contact addresses, e-mail addresses and phone numbers for all research team members.
- ✓ If already undertaking AHURI funded research, to list all outstanding AHURI deliverables, each research team members' involvement in current AHURI research, and current grants and applications with external funding bodies.

**Once you have completed these steps, please forward your application to your Research Centre Director (if applicable) for review and completion of an application submission form. Alternatively forward your application directly to the AHURI National Office to both:** Kerry.Fewings@ahuri.edu.au **and** Andrew.Hollows@ahuri.edu.au**.**