



NHMRC National Scientific Committees

hosted by Bellberry Limited

03

National Scientific Committees

Standard Operating Procedure: Conduct of Meetings

All enquiries and for further information about NHMRC National Scientific Committees, contact Bellberry Limited:

129 Glen Osmond Road, Eastwood, SA 5063

P 08 8361 3222 E nsc@bellberry.com.au



Australian Government

National Health and Medical Research Council



Bellberry Limited
supporting research and ethics

PURPOSE

To describe matters related to the conduct of Committee meetings in the National Scientific Committee Pilot (the Pilot).

1 MEETING FREQUENCY AND SCHEDULING

The National Scientific Committee Panel

- 1.1 The Panel is the pool of expert reviewers available for appointment to Committee reviews.
- 1.2 The National Scientific Committee Panel Members will meet with the Bellberry secretariat at least once during the Pilot to discuss the concept and operation of the Pilot and how the Committees will function.
- 1.3 Bellberry, on the recommendation of the members and in consultation with NHMRC, may call an extraordinary meeting of the Panel to discuss any urgent matter that concerns the conduct or viability of the Pilot.

The Committees

- 1.4 Bellberry will convene a Committee within three weeks of the submission of one or more applications for scientific review of an eligible research proposal.
- 1.5 A NSC Committee will comprise a Chair and a quorum of reviewers appointed from the Panel. Reviewers will be appointed according to the skills needed for the review, availability, and consideration.
- 1.6 Committee consideration of a research proposal will constitute a 'meeting of the Committee,' whatever the format of the meeting.
- 1.7 Projects may be added to a meeting agenda up until the closing date for the agenda (i.e. two week prior to the scheduled meeting).
- 1.8 In the event that a large number of submissions are received within a three week period, Bellberry may schedule a second meeting to take place within the same month.

2 QUORUM

- 2.1 A quorum of a Committee will be four, including the Chairperson.
- 2.2 Bellberry or NHMRC representatives may attend a Committee meeting as observers, and neither will be counted for the purposes of determining a quorum.

3 VIDEO AND TELECONFERENCING

- 3.1 Meetings of the Panel or Committee may take place via video or

- teleconference or face to face.
- 3.2 Where a meeting takes place by video or teleconferencing, quorum will be determined as if the members were physically present.
- 3.3 Where the Chairperson has determined that a member has a conflict of interest related to an item on the agenda, and that they must be absent from discussion of that item, the member must fully disconnect from the video or teleconference for the duration of the discussion of that item. Being placed on hold or mute is insufficient.
- 3.4 Where a meeting takes place by video or teleconference, members will take steps to ensure that confidential information is not overheard by non-members.

4 AGENDAS

The National Scientific Committee Panel

- 4.1 The agenda for a meeting of the Panel will not include the consideration of individual applications for scientific review. Agenda items for the Panel should relate to:
- (a) the operation of the Panel or Committees and related issues
 - (b) generic issues related to research proposals or applications for Committee review
 - (c) presentations of an educational or informative nature for the benefit of members
 - (d) the operation of the Pilot and the preparation of advice to NHMRC.
- 4.2 The agenda for a meeting of the Panel will be circulated to members by email not less than one week before the meeting.
- 4.3 Agendas should include a standing item for disclosures of interests.

The Committees

- 4.4 The agenda for a meeting of a Committee will be capped at a level to be determined by Bellberry. In this instance, Bellberry, may schedule additional Committee meetings to take place on the same or a different day, so long as no application that has been accepted for review remains unreviewed for more than three weeks.
- 4.5 The meeting agenda will be made available to individual members a minimum of one week prior to the meeting to enable members to be fully informed.

5 MINUTES AND REPORTS

The National Scientific Committee Panel

For any extra-ordinary Panel meetings:

- 5.1 All decisions and actions taken by the Panel will be recorded.
- 5.2 Minutes of each meeting of the Panel will be circulated to members for approval.
- 5.3 The approved minutes of each meeting will be circulated to members for information.
- 5.4 Approved minutes will be confirmed at any subsequent meeting of the Panel.
- 5.5 A summary of the minutes of a Panel meeting may be used by NHMRC in any internal and external reporting on the Pilot.

The Committees

- 5.6 All decisions and actions taken by the Committee will be recorded, including information related to disclosures and management of interests.
- 5.7 Minutes of each meeting of the Committee will be agreed by the members live during the meeting.
- 5.8 The Checklist will be completed during the meeting. Any post-meeting changes will be agreed by the Chair, and circulated to the Committee Members if needed.
- 5.9 Minutes and reports are to be considered confidential to the members of the relevant Committee, Bellberry staff and the applicant.

6 DECISION MAKING

The Committees

- 6.1 Determinations regarding the scientific merit and integrity of a research proposal will be recorded in the minutes and in the Checklist.
- 6.2 To the extent possible, decisions should be reached by consensus.
- 6.3 When a consensus cannot be reached, this will be reported in the checklist. Where there is a difference of opinion between Committee members regarding the scientific merit and integrity of the application, this will be articulated to the applicant. Explanation of the different views will be provided.
- 6.4 Dissenting opinions will be recorded in the minutes, but the identity of the member dissenting will be kept confidential.
- 6.5 Decisions may be made out-of-session, subject to the rules of quorum that apply at a meeting.

7 COMMUNICATING DECISIONS

- 7.1 Minutes of a Panel or Committee meeting are confidential and will not be published or distributed except as required by law except with reference to 5.5 above.
- 7.2 The final checklist on a research project submitted for review by the Committee will be provided by Bellberry to the applicant no later than two days post-meeting.