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Research project funding and
management: Guidance for anaesthesia
research departments and investigators

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Purpose of document:

This document provides practical guidance for anaesthesia research departments and investigators on securing and managing funding for clinical research. Based on insights from the 2025 ANZCA ASM CTN workshop, it outlines key steps from developing a research idea to building sustainable infrastructure, identifying funding sources, preparing grant applications, and managing project finances.

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Research project funding and management: Guidance for anaesthesia research departments and investigators

This guidance document is based on content presented by A/Prof Matt Doane at the “Getting started in multi-centre research and running a research department” at the CTN workshop at the 2025 ANZCA Annual Scientific Meeting.

1. Introduction

Research projects, especially in clinical and healthcare settings, require careful planning and resource allocation. Funding is a critical aspect, and securing it demands strategic thinking, sound project planning, and institutional support. This document provides guidance on identifying funding sources, preparing applications, managing financial resources, and building sustainable research infrastructure.

2. Starting with an idea

- Every research project begins with an idea—something that sparks curiosity or addresses a knowledge gap.
- It’s essential to clearly define the research question and outline the project’s scope early on.
- Engage key stakeholders and get buy-in from your institution before proceeding with resource allocation.

3. Identifying funding sources

Start by exploring internal funding options, as they often have shorter turnaround times.

Funding for research can come from many different sources, including:

- Personal investment:
 - Used only for small-scale projects where risks are minimal.
- ANZCA grants:
 - Pilot grants, annual project grants.
- Institutional funding:
 - Approach your hospital or affiliated research unit for internal grants or seed funding.
- National government grant programs:
 - Apply through national bodies like National Health and Medical Research Council ([NHMRC](#)), Medical Research Future Fund ([MRFF](#)) or Health Research Council ([HRC](#)) in New Zealand.
 - Understand the grant application process and associated timelines.
 - Success rates can vary significantly.
- Philanthropic donations:
 - Engage with local charitable organisations or foundations that align with your research focus.
- Industry partnerships:
 - May provide equipment or study drug to decrease overheads, or provide discounts to purchase equipment. Note these partnerships may need to be disclosed/acknowledged in publications.

4. Grant applications

Budgeting and spending

- Ensure your project has ethics and governance approval before applying for major grants.
- Be prepared for long timelines with larger grants, which can take up to two years from application to funding allocation.
- Clearly outline your budget in your funding application.
- Include costs for staff, consumables, data management, and any training required.
- Account for both fast money (quick turnaround grants) and slow money (large grants with longer timelines).

Tip: Check with your institution's finance team for assistance with budgets/templates.

5. Building and sustaining research infrastructure

Creating research capacity

- Engage with stakeholders early to build institutional support (see ANZCA Clinical Trials Network (CTN) guidance document: Stakeholder Engagement and Strategies for Clinical Trials).
- Document your research process and build a sustainable model that others can replicate.

Collaborating with other teams

- Multi-centre trials require structured communication.
- Use platforms like [Slack](#), [Asana](#), or [Basecamp](#) for efficient project management.
- Establish a single point of contact for each site to streamline information flow.

6. Leveraging human resources

Engaging junior medical officers

- Provide structured training and mentorship opportunities.
- Use research as a component of mandatory training programs when possible.

Utilising research co-ordinators

- Demonstrate the need for a coordinator by combining smaller projects to justify a part-time or full-time role.
- Seek multi-project funding to cover staffing costs.

7. Monitoring and reporting

- Maintain regular progress reports to keep stakeholders updated.
- Use Gantt charts to track project milestones and responsibilities.
- Keep financial records transparent to facilitate auditing and future funding opportunities.

Setting up a cost centre

- A cost centre is essentially a hospital bank account to manage research funds.
- Engage with your institution's finance department to establish a cost centre early on.

8. Conclusion

Successful research projects rely on a robust infrastructure, secured funding, and well-managed resources. By planning strategically and building institutional support, you can lay the groundwork for sustainable research activities that continue beyond individual projects.