

National Disability Research Partnership Commissioned Research: Transition of young people with disability from education/training to employment

Appendix – Assessment Matrix



## Appendix – Assessment Matrix

### About the assessment matrix

The matrix helps reviewers score applications based on the 5 assessment criteria in the Funding Guidelines. Reviewers use the matrix to support fair and clear scoring.

The NDRP’s Independent Review Panels are small groups of people (reviewers) with different expertise and backgrounds. For example, people who are researchers, people with disability, people from disability representative organisations and policymakers will be reviewers.

### Scoring scale

The independent review panel will read applications and give the responses to each assessment criteria a score. The scoring scale goes from 5 ‘outstanding’ to 1 ‘weak’.

The matrix will include statements, as dot points, that describe the qualities of responses to each assessment criteria. This will help reviewers as a ‘benchmark’. Not every dot point must be ‘ticked off’ to score a 5/outstanding, but most of them must be. Outstanding applications will be very hard to fault. Reviewers will be very sure the projects will achieve what they set out to do. Under the series of dot points, there is a description of factors that would ‘lose’ points for applicants. For example, excellent applications will still tick off most dot points, but reviewers may have very minor concerns about how well these points are covered.

The reviewers will score each criterion, and then a weighting is applied to each of these, and a final score out of 100 for each application is calculated.

The [Grant Guidelines](https://www.ndrp.org.au/research/2025-research-funding) go through the kind of information applicants need to include in their application form to respond to the assessment criteria. There is more information about how we choose projects to fund and support in our [Research Funding Policy](https://www.ndrp.org.au/research/research-policy).

**The assessment matrix starts on the next page.**

### Criterion 1: Team Capacity and Capability (25%)

This criterion looks at whether the team has the right mix of people, skills, experience, and support to deliver the project successfully.

A strong team should include:

* People with direct, relevant lived experience hold leadership roles in the Research Team and Project Team. Teams that are led by members with lived experience relevant to the project are considered very strong. (e.g. young Autistic people or young people with disability / young NDIS participants for Opportunity 1; First Nations people with disability for Opportunity 2; people with complex support or communication needs for Opportunity 3).
* People and organisations who know how government works – they understand how government uses research to shape policy, and can show how their research or recommendations led to a change in legislation, regulation, or formal policy.
* People with relevant expertise in the topic – they have deep experience in research, advocacy, or practice related to helping young people with disability move into employment, and they know how to use inclusive research methods.
* People and organisations who work closely with the communities involved – they have strong experience working with people with disability, and for Opportunities 2 and 3, with First Nations people or people with complex support or communication needs, in ways that are inclusive and collaborative. This could also include people and organisations who have experience that relate to geographic and other relevant factors.

**What reviewers will be looking for:**

* Are roles clearly defined and matched to relevant skills and/or lived experience?
* Is there clear evidence that all team members and organisations are available and given the time, help, funding and resources they need to do their role? Are people with lived experience paid appropriately for their time?
* Does your team as a whole have the capability to deliver a high-quality, inclusive, disability-led project? Lived experience will be an important factor here.
* Does your team have experience developing and sharing research that directly influences and informs government policy? Are examples of impact on policy provided? Has at least one policy referee been listed?
* Are any gaps in skills or experience identified, with clear plans to address them?

### Criterion 2: Inclusive Governance and Engagement (15%)

This criterion looks at how the project will be led and managed to make sure everyone is included and heard.

This includes:

* How well you have planned for an inclusive leadership approach which allows all individual team members and organisations to take an active and equitable role (particularly in decision making, leadership and governance, project management, and IP ownership).
* Whether the plans to support safety and wellbeing are suitable.
* How your project supports the career development, confidence and capacity of team members.
* If there are clear processes that make sure all involved in your project can work well together.
* Whether people with lived experience are actively leading and involved in a wide range of important project activities.

**What reviewers will be looking for:**

* Is credit, IP ownership, decision making, leadership and governance, and project management shared fairly across the team? Does the plan consider how power imbalances can be addressed? This may include considering leadership/accessibility/inclusion for people with disability.
* Project activities: are people with (relevant) lived experience leading or involved in important parts of the project? Are their roles clearly explained?
* Are there clear and personalised plans to support the career goals and capacity of team members?
* Are there strong plans to protect the safety, wellbeing, and dignity of everyone involved (from team members through to participants)?
* Are there clear processes outlined for how engagement and partnership will occur across the life of the project? For example, are there appropriate communication pathways between individuals and between organisations? Are there clear processes to address and respond to any challenges within the partnership?

### Criterion 3: Project Methods (25%)

This criterion looks at whether the research methods are strong, inclusive, and a good fit for the project.

This includes:

* How safe and accessible the methods are for everyone, especially people with disability or lived experience.
* Whether the project has good ethical oversight.
* How realistic the plan is.
* Whether the methods show an understanding of how systems work and change over time.
* How well the methods fit with the research questions.
* Whether projects also consider geographical (e.g. remote) or other factors (e.g. school exclusion; youth within the justice system; low socioeconomic communities) that may uniquely shape participant transition to employment outcomes.
* How well the methods fit with information provided earlier (i.e. the team capability, inclusive engagement, and strategic impact).
* How inclusive and appropriate the methods are.

**What reviewers will be looking for:**

* Are the research methods strong and clearly linked to the research questions, team capability, and outlined strategic impact?
* Do the methods follow best practice in disability-led/First Nations-led research? Are the methods inclusive, safe and accessible (e.g. consider digital literacy and access) for all participants? Are geographical and other factors considered?
* Is there a strong ethical plan, including ways to keep people safe?
* Is the project realistic and manageable within the time and budget? Is there a good plan to manage the project?
* Do the methods show an understanding of how systems work and how change happens?

# Criterion 4: Strategic Alignment and Impact (25%) This criterion checks how well the project fits with the research questions, and whether it will help make real change in the relevant government systems and policies.

This includes:

* How well the team understands how systems like education, the NDIS or Disability Employment Services work in relation to the topic.
* Whether the proposal shows a strong understanding of what is already known on the topic.
* How well you will use existing research to build their project (to avoid duplicating existing work).
* Whether the project will lead to useful policy advice (i.e. the focus should be on creating policy and system change, not on creating resources).
* Whether the project is analysing systems and generating policy recommendations (i.e. not directly implementing best practice initiatives such as training or other interventions).
* Whether the findings will be shared in ways that are easy to understand and use by government, by services and by people with lived experience.
* Whether the team has a good plan to learn from the project and share these learnings.

**What reviewers will be looking for:**

* Does the team understand how the systems work (e.g. education, NDIS, DSS)? Is the project clearly connected to these systems and policies?
* Does the project build on existing research and avoid repeating what’s already been done? Is it doing something new or different?
* Does the project clearly show how it can lead to change in systems or policies? Does it focus on system change rather than on trialling direct interventions or developing resources? *Note: The production of resources that share the research findings are acceptable. The production of resources that explicitly aim to address mechanisms for change are not within the project scope.*
* Are the project findings (outputs) clearly aligned with the goal of informing policy? Do they reflect the needs of decision-makers and show how the project’s insights can be used to guide future policy or system-level decisions?
* Will the key findings be communicated in ways that are accessible and practical for the intended audience (particularly policy makers)? Will findings be shared in ways that also enable similar policy-focused projects to learn from or apply these? Is there a good plan to check what worked and what didn’t, and to learn from the project?

# **Criterion 5: Overall value and risk (10%)**

This criterion assesses whether the project offers good value for money and has a clear, realistic plan to manage risks that could affect successful delivery.

A strong response will:

* Identify key risks to delivering the project on time and achieving its goals.
* Provide a detailed, clear and practical plan to minimise or manage those risks.
* Include a detailed budget and justification, with clear links between funding and deliverables.
* Demonstrate that the requested funding is a good investment.

**What reviewers will be looking for:**

* Is the project a good investment for the NDRP and Government?
* Are risks clearly identified and managed?
* Are deliverables, timelines, and budget justification provided and realistic?