

CHF Grants Variation Guidelines

Version November 2022

1. Introduction

The Children's Hospital Foundation (CHF) grant funds may only be used to conduct agreed activities as specified in the respective funding agreement and must not be used for any other purposes without prior written approval. A grant variation is required when there are or will be changes to a funding agreement. This may include changes to the funding period, the project team, project activity, budget, equipment needs, or administering institution. There are specific circumstances where it is appropriate for a grant to be varied. These guidelines provide an overview of the types of variations that can be requested and the circumstances in which they may apply.

2. Purpose

All proposed grant variations, including changes to the grant activity or funding period, need to be reviewed and approved by CHF. The purpose of these guidelines is to establish clear parameters and a consistent process for how variations to CHF grants are requested and approved.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all existing and future CHF grant funding, whether through a Research Award Funding Agreement, Award Funding Agreement, or another version of funding agreement. It applies to all research, non-research, and equipment grants.

4. Grant Variations

CHF may at its discretion approve or reject a request to vary a grant. In making its decision, CHF will consider each request to vary a grant relative to the following:

- the individual circumstances outlined in the variation request, including adequate justification for the variation, the impact the requested variation will have on completion of the grant in accordance with its objectives and intended outcomes
- the impact that the requested variation will have on expenditure for the current and any future financial years
- the grant round guidelines under which the grant was applied for
- the fundamentals of the grant that were approved in the original peer review
- the best outcomes for the grant against its objectives
- whether the grant will continue to align with the purpose of the grant round
- whether the grant will continue to achieve value with existing funding
- significance and impact of the change
- progress to date – have adequate progress reports been submitted?
- track record – does the awardee have a positive track record of delivering projects/activities?
- external funding – does the grant have external funding attached to it that needs acquitting (e.g. from an external trust or foundation)?
- scope – will the variation cause a substantial change to the project's original scope/plan?

In addition to the above, CHF advises the following:

- All variation requests must be formally submitted via a Variation Request Form in SmartyGrants.
- All variation requests must be submitted within three months prior to the end date of the grant, or the proposed date of effect, to allow adequate time for review (requests for variations with retrospective effect will only be approved in exceptional circumstances).
- **Extra deliberation will be given to variation requests that involve the rollover of funds into subsequent financial years.**

The Administering Institution must ensure that the grant activity is conducted in accordance with the CHF Research Award Funding Agreement/Award Funding Agreement/other agreement. Variations can neither be used to request an increase of grant funds nor to request changes that do not align with the purpose of the grant outlined in the respective grant round guidelines.

5. Types of Variations

Extension

This type of variation can be used to request an extension to the end date of a grant when it is anticipated that the grant will not be completed by the agreed end date.

Additional funds will not be provided, but an updated estimate of expenditure, per financial year, will be required in the variation request. Funds must continue to be spent on approved expenditure items only.

The end date of a grant can only be extended up to 12 months in total. Variation requests exceeding 12 months total will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

This type of variation request will require the following:

- the proposed new end date
- justification of the extension, noting that COVID-related delays alone may not be sufficient
- updated estimated dates of completion for the remaining key milestones
- updated estimated expenditure of remaining funds per financial year.

An approved extension will be formalised by a Letter of Amendment, signed by all parties.

Change/Expansion of Scope

This type of variation can be used to request a change to the objectives of the grant activity as specified in the funding application and as approved during the assessment process. The revised activity must align with the purpose of the grant outlined in the respective grant round guidelines. Improvements to the techniques used to conduct research or deliver the program – for example, new, cheaper, or more accurate techniques or technologies – do not require a variation.

A change to the objectives of the grant activity as specified in the funding application and as approved during the assessment process for a research grant activity will require additional assessment and approval by the CHF Research Advisory Committee.

This type of variation request will require the following:

- details of the change/expansion of scope, including how the scope remains in alignment with the approved project plan
- updated estimated dates of completion for the remaining key milestones
- updated estimated expenditure of remaining funds per financial year.

An approved change/expansion of scope will be formalised by a Letter of Amendment, signed by all parties.

Budget reallocation

This type of variation can be used to reallocate expenditure items within an approved budget – for example, to divert funds for equipment to a research assistant salary, or from travel to consumables. A variation is not required if the reallocation is less than 10% of the approved budget.

This type of variation request will require the following:

- an updated budget (uploaded as an Excel or PDF file)
- justification of the requested budget variation, including how the budget remains in alignment with the approved project plan
- updated estimated dates of completion for the remaining key milestones
- updated estimated expenditure of remaining funds per financial year.

An approved budget reallocation will be formalised by a Letter of Amendment, signed by all parties.

Change of Equipment

This type of variation can be used to request a change to a piece of funded equipment (applicable to equipment grants only).

This type of variation request will require the following:

- details of the proposed new equipment, including an explanation of the requirement for the variation
- a current quote for the new equipment
- the updated funding amount requested (GST exclusive).

An approved change of equipment will be formalised by a Letter of Amendment, signed by all parties.

Change in Team Structure

This type of variation can be used to request a change to a named member of the research or project team. A variation is only required when requesting changes to the Specified Personnel listed in the Award Plan of the Research Award Funding Agreement/Award Funding Agreement – for example, Awardee, Clinical Collaborator (if applicable), Supervisor (for PhD scholarships/top-ups).

This type of variation request will require the following:

- details of the proposed personnel change, including justification that the progress of the project will not be adversely affected
- a 2-page CV, if the variation includes a replacement primary investigator/awardee or Clinical Collaborator for a research grant.

An approved change in team structure will be formalised by a Letter of Amendment, signed by all parties.

Change in Administering Institution

This type of variation can be used to request a change to the Administering Institution of a grant – for example, when the lead investigator/awardee relocates to another institution.

This type of variation request will require the following:

- the effective date for the transfer
- written approval from the research offices of both the current Administering Institution and the new Administering Institution. E-mail approval is acceptable.

Note that CHF research grants can only be administered by [NHMRC Administering Institutions](#) located in Queensland.

An approved change in Administering Institution will be formalised by a Deed of Novation and Variation, signed by all parties.

Grant Relinquishment

A request to relinquish a grant can be used when the agreed grant activities are not able to be completed.

This type of variation request will require the following:

- the effective date for the relinquishment
- a justification for the relinquishment
- confirmation by the awardee that all named investigators and collaborators support the request.

Reporting milestones, including submission of a final report and financial acquittal, must be met following relinquishment of a grant that has incurred expenditure.

An approved grant relinquishment will be formalised by a Deed of Termination, signed by all parties.

6. Submitting a Variation Request

Awardees are requested to contact the CHF Grants Office (grants@childrens.org.au) in the first instance to advise their intent to submit a variation request. The CHF Grants Office will add a Variation Request Form in SmartyGrants for the awardee to complete and submit.

Grant recipients are encouraged to review the grant round guidelines under which a grant was awarded to determine eligibility and variation requirements. The information and required evidence will be dependent on the type of variation – please refer to section 5 above.

Variation requests must be submitted at least three months before the proposed date of effect.

Requests for variations with retrospective effect will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

A variation request may include multiple variation types.

The CHF Grants Office may seek additional information to inform the decision to approve a grant variation.