

Deafblind International (DbI) Research Funding Policy

Policy Title: Research Funding Policy

Approved by: Deafblind International Board

Responsible Body: DbI Management Committee

Policy Owner: DbI Research Network **or specially established Research Initiative Body**

Effective Date: [Insert Date]

Review Date: [Insert Date – typically every three years]

Related Policies: DbI Project Funding Guidelines; DbI Research Brokerage Policy

1. Purpose

This Research Funding Policy establishes the principles, eligibility requirements, governance arrangements, and accountability mechanisms for research funding provided under the auspices of Deafblind International (DbI).

The purpose of this policy is to:

- support high-quality research that advances knowledge, policy, and practice in deafblindness;
- ensure equitable and transparent access to DbI research funding opportunities;
- promote ethical and evidence-based research practices;
- strengthen the global evidence base relating to persons with deafblindness; and
- ensure appropriate stewardship of DbI resources.

DbI recognises research as a strategic mechanism to improve inclusion, participation, rights, education, communication, health, and quality of life for persons with deafblindness globally.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all research funding opportunities administered, endorsed, or supported by DbI, including but not limited to:

- DbI Research Network Grants;
- Global Education Campaign Research Grants;
- commissioned research activities;
- collaborative or partnership research initiatives facilitated through DbI structures.

This policy applies to all Dbl members (individual and organisational) seeking access to Dbl-administered research funding.

3. Policy Principles

Dbl research funding will be guided by the following principles:

3.1 Relevance

Research must demonstrate clear relevance to deafblindness and align with Dbl's mission, strategic priorities, and global advocacy objectives.

3.2 Evidence-Based Practice

Research proposals must be grounded in existing evidence, demonstrate awareness of relevant literature, and contribute meaningfully to the evidence base.

3.3 Inclusion and Participation

Research should actively consider the inclusion and participation of persons with deafblindness, families, and communities where appropriate.

3.4 Ethical Integrity

All funded research must uphold recognised ethical standards and human rights principles.

3.5 Accountability

Recipients of Dbl research funding must demonstrate responsible financial and project management.

3.6 Knowledge Translation

Research should aim to produce practical knowledge that can inform policy, practice, advocacy, and service delivery.

4. Eligibility

To be eligible for Dbl research funding, applicants must:

- be a current member of Deafblind International (individual or organisational);
- be in good standing with Dbl;
- demonstrate capacity to undertake and complete the proposed research;

- submit a complete application within the required timeframe; and
- comply with all relevant Dbl policies and procedures.

Where organisational members apply, a nominated lead investigator must be identified.

Collaborative applications are encouraged.

5. Funding Limitations

5.1 One Active Research Grant Rule

A Dbl member may hold **only one active Dbl research grant at any one time**, regardless of the funding stream.

This includes applications made through different rounds or mechanisms, including but not limited to:

- Research Network grants;
- Global Education Campaign research grants; or
- other Dbl-funded research initiatives.

For the purpose of this policy, an active grant is defined as any funded project that has not been formally acquitted and closed.

5.2 Restriction on Multiple Applications

A member with an active Dbl research grant is not eligible to apply for additional Dbl research funding until all obligations under the existing grant have been fulfilled.

6. Final Reporting Requirement

A final report is mandatory for all Dbl-funded research projects.

The final report must include:

- project objectives and activities undertaken;
- methodology used;
- findings and outcomes;
- financial acquittal;
- dissemination activities;
- recommendations for policy and practice.

A member will not be eligible to submit a new Dbl research funding application until:

- the final report has been submitted; and
- the final report has been accepted by Dbl.

Failure to submit a final report may affect future eligibility.

7. Ethics Approval Requirements

Where a project involves human participants, personal data, or other activities requiring formal ethical oversight, applicants must provide evidence of ethics approval from a recognised ethics review body.

Where ethics approval is pending at the time of application:

- the application may be conditionally approved; however
- no funds will be released until ethics approval documentation is received.

Researchers must comply with all applicable legal, ethical, and institutional requirements.

Where formal ethics approval is unavailable, organisations should consider alternative oversight mechanisms such as internal ethics review, advisory panels, or alignment with recognised ethical frameworks (e.g., World Medical Association principles or national human research ethics guidelines).

Ethical Considerations in the Absence of Formal Ethics Approval

1. **Informed Consent**
Ensure participants voluntarily agree to take part and understand the purpose, process, risks, and intended use of the information. Consent should be accessible and appropriate to participants' communication needs.
2. **Do No Harm (Non-maleficence)**
Identify and minimise any physical, emotional, social, legal, or reputational risks to participants, families, and communities.
3. **Beneficence**
The activity should have clear potential benefit for participants, the community, or the broader evidence base, and should not be undertaken solely for organisational gain.
4. **Privacy and Confidentiality**
Protect personal information through secure storage, de-identification where possible, and clear limits on who can access data.
5. **Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw**
Participation must be free from coercion, and participants should be able to withdraw at any stage without penalty.
6. **Equity and Inclusion**
Ensure fair and inclusive participation, particularly for people with disability, children, or other groups who may face barriers to participation.

7. Safeguarding Vulnerable Participants

Apply additional protections where participants may have increased vulnerability (e.g., children, people with complex communication needs, people in dependent relationships).

8. Cultural Safety and Respect

Respect cultural protocols, community values, and local knowledge systems, including consultation with community leaders where appropriate.

9. Transparency and Accountability

Clearly document the rationale for proceeding without formal ethics approval and maintain internal oversight (e.g., organisational review, peer review, governance committee).

10. Conflict of Interest Management

Identify and disclose any personal, financial, or organisational interests that may influence the work.

11. Data Use and Ownership

Be clear about how data will be used, shared, stored, and who owns it, especially in collaborative or community-led work. Ensure data relating to individuals with deafblindness is safeguarded.

12. Referral and Support Pathways

Have procedures in place if participation raises distress, safeguarding concerns, or unmet support needs.

DbI reserves the right to request additional ethical documentation.

8. Application Assessment

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- relevance to deafblindness;
- methodological quality;
- feasibility;
- potential impact;
- ethical considerations;
- alignment with DbI strategic priorities;
- plans for dissemination and knowledge translation.

Assessment may be undertaken by:

- the DbI Research Network;
- an appointed review panel; or
- external reviewers as determined by DbI governance structures.

Conflict of interest must be declared and managed.

9. Funding Conditions

Recipients of Dbl research funding agree to:

- use funds only for approved purposes;
- comply with approved timelines;
- notify Dbl of significant project changes;
- acknowledge Dbl support in publications and presentations;
- provide progress updates if requested;
- submit a final report and financial acquittal.

Unspent funds may be required to be returned unless otherwise approved.

10. Publication and Dissemination

Dbl encourages dissemination of funded research to strengthen global learning.

Recipients are expected to:

- share findings with the Dbl community;
- present findings at Dbl events where appropriate;
- publish findings where feasible;
- make findings accessible to stakeholders, including persons with deafblindness.

Dbl may request permission to publish summaries or reports through its communication channels.

11. Governance and Oversight

This policy operates under the governance framework of Deafblind International and is subject to Dbl constitutional and governance provisions.

Oversight responsibilities are as follows:

Dbl Board

- approves this policy;
- provides strategic oversight.

Dbl Management Committee

- ensures implementation and compliance.

DbI Research Network or a Specially Established Research Initiative Body

- administers funding rounds;
- coordinates assessment processes;
- monitors funded projects.

DbI reserves the right to amend funding decisions where compliance obligations are not met.

12. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in:

- suspension of funding;
 - repayment of funds;
 - ineligibility for future funding;
 - other actions as determined by DbI governance structures.
-

13. Related Documents

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- DbI Project Funding Guidelines
- DbI Research Brokerage Policy
- applicable grant guidelines for each funding round
- relevant ethical standards and legal requirements

Where there is inconsistency between documents, DbI governance decisions will prevail.

14. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if required by changes in governance, legal obligations, or strategic direction.

Document Control

Version: 1.0

Approval Date: [Insert Date]

Next Review Date: [Insert Date]

Approved by: DbI Board