

# Children and Families Research Fund Deliverables Guidelines

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# Overview

This document sets out the expectations for deliverables and other documentation required to be submitted to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) for research projects contracted under the Children and Families Research Fund.

## Overall Guidelines

### Quality measures

Deliverables must be submitted according to the provided templates and to the quality measures outlined in these guidelines. These guidelines are subject to change by MSD at any time. Researchers must use the most recent version of the guidelines provided to them by MSD. Submitted deliverables that do not adhere to these guidelines will be deemed unsatisfactory and deductions of the payable amount as above will apply.

All deliverables intended for publication must adhere to the MSD Style Guide (Appendix A), be written in clear and plain English, and convey any technical information clearly. Visual elements (e.g. graphs) must be presented clearly at a high resolution. Any photographic, artistic or original images used must have copyright transferred to MSD for publishing purposes.

The Principal Investigator as stated in the contract is responsible for ensuring that Deliverables meet the required standards in these guidelines, and for coordinating any necessary review and sign-off procedures (including any necessary approvals by the Data Access Committee) of the deliverables prior to their submission to MSD.

### Submissions

***All deliverables should be submitted to [researchfund@msd.govt.nz](mailto:researchfund@msd.govt.nz) by 5pm on the due date specified in the research contract.***

Where deliverables are not submitted on time (without prior arrangements agreed with MSD), the amount payable for that deliverable will be reduced by two percent of the total amount of the contract, per week that it is not submitted satisfactorily.

### Invoicing and payment

Once MSD confirms that the deliverables meet the required standard, the Supplier's Contract Manager should submit an invoice for the relevant amount as stated in the Contract, less any reductions.

# Specific Deliverables Guidelines

## Progress report

### Purpose

Progress reports provide MSD with an update on your research project and how it is tracking against the intended timeline. They also provide an early indication of actual, potential or perceived risks and changes to the project so that MSD can assist in managing these where appropriate. Progress reports are not intended for publication.

### Content

Progress reports must include:

- the intended timeline as stated in the Research Proposal
- a description of what tasks have been completed to date
- an assessment of whether work completed to date is consistent with the intended timeline. If these are not consistent, include a full description of why and a management plan for ensuring that the project will be completed on time. Note this is not the place to suggest contract variations in order to manage risks – such risks should have been discussed with MSD at the time they arose, and should only be requested for situations outside of the researchers' control.
- contact details and role descriptions of the identified and confirmed reviewers for the project's analysis plan (see below) and final deliverables.
- a description of any other actual, potential and perceived risks to the project, and identified mitigation/management strategies.

Progress reports must also include an **analysis plan** that outlines clearly and in detail:

- the research questions
- the variables in the datasets that you will use to answer the research question
- informed by relevant literature, set out a proposed theoretical framework explaining the relationships between key variables that you intend to model. Include a diagram to illustrate these relationships, clearly showing predictor and outcome variables as well as potential confounds, and any mediating or moderating variables. If your analysis includes variables collected at different data collection waves, be sure to make clear from which wave each variable relates to.
- the statistical methods to be used to analyse these relationships and their underpinning assumptions. Explain how your analysis approach will help to rule out alternative explanations for the relationships set out in your proposed model.

### Format and structure

A template for progress report is provided at Appendix B. They are generally expected to be between 500 and 2000 words (excluding appendices) depending on the size of the project and complexity of any issues being discussed. Tables, diagrams and supporting documentation can be included as appropriate.

## **Reviewing and submission procedures**

The progress report must be submitted during the contract, at 4 months through the total contract period. The progress report should have been reviewed and signed by all named researchers and the policy collaborator before being submitted to MSD by the date stated in the contract.

The analysis plan must also be reviewed by subject matter and research methods experts independent of the research team (as in the requirements for the final research report below). It should be submitted along with the final version of the analysis plan, and the completed Reviewer's feedback template (Appendix C).

MSD will review the progress report and once they are to the satisfaction of MSD, an invoice for payment can be submitted.

# Final Research Report

## Purpose

The final research report is a high quality and comprehensive record of the work undertaken in your research project, its findings and their implications. The report is the primary means by which the research project will have enduring impact. It is also supported by a policy brief, and communications content. Final research reports are intended for publication on the MSD website following approval by MSD's Publications Committee.

**Important:** Please remember that your funding contract specifies that any other publications or announcements of your findings may **not** occur until after the final research report is published on MSD's website. This includes academic journal articles, conference presentations, and other similar material. This means that you should not submit journal articles for publication or abstracts for conferences until MSD has confirmed the publication date of your final research report. To do so would breach your contract.

## Content

While the structure of the final research report is similar to that of a long-form academic journal article, the content should be understandable by a general rather than academic audience. Use a plain English writing standard to communicate the research to a broad, non-expert audience. This means using cohesive, coherent paragraphs, compelling sentences and clear and concise language.

The report must convey technical information clearly. It should describe the research questions and background to the research, methods used, results and conclusions.

## Format and structure

No template is provided for final research reports because they should be presented as a product of the research team's organisation(s), including appropriate branding. However, the following sections in the final research report must include:

- **Title page:** Must include the title of the report, subtitle (as required), authors' organisational logos and the Ministry of Social Development logo.
- **Inside front cover:** must include a provided disclaimer and acknowledgement of funding. Please email [researchfund@msd.govt.nz](mailto:researchfund@msd.govt.nz) for the most up-to-date version of this text. Other acknowledgments can also be included, such as a list of people who contributed to the report and an explanation of policy agency collaboration.
- **Executive summary** which will facilitate easy access to the research findings for those who may not have time to read the full report. The executive summary will be proportionate to the length of the main report, but, typically no more than three-pages. The executive summary will include the context, trigger, question (background) and answer, and the first tier of ideas / evidence reasons for answer (main headings in paper)

## Reviewing and submission procedures

Researchers must ensure that final research reports undergo review in the following areas:

- subject matter expertise
- research design, methods, analysis and interpretation
- policy context and relevance/applicability

These reviews must be completed by more than one person (e.g. one policy reviewer and one subject matter and research methods expert) and before the final research support is submitted to MSD. The subject matter and research expertise reviews should be completed by someone **independent** of the research team. The policy review must be completed by a policy agency collaborator included in the research team. Each reviewer should complete the Reviewer's Feedback Template (Appendix C).

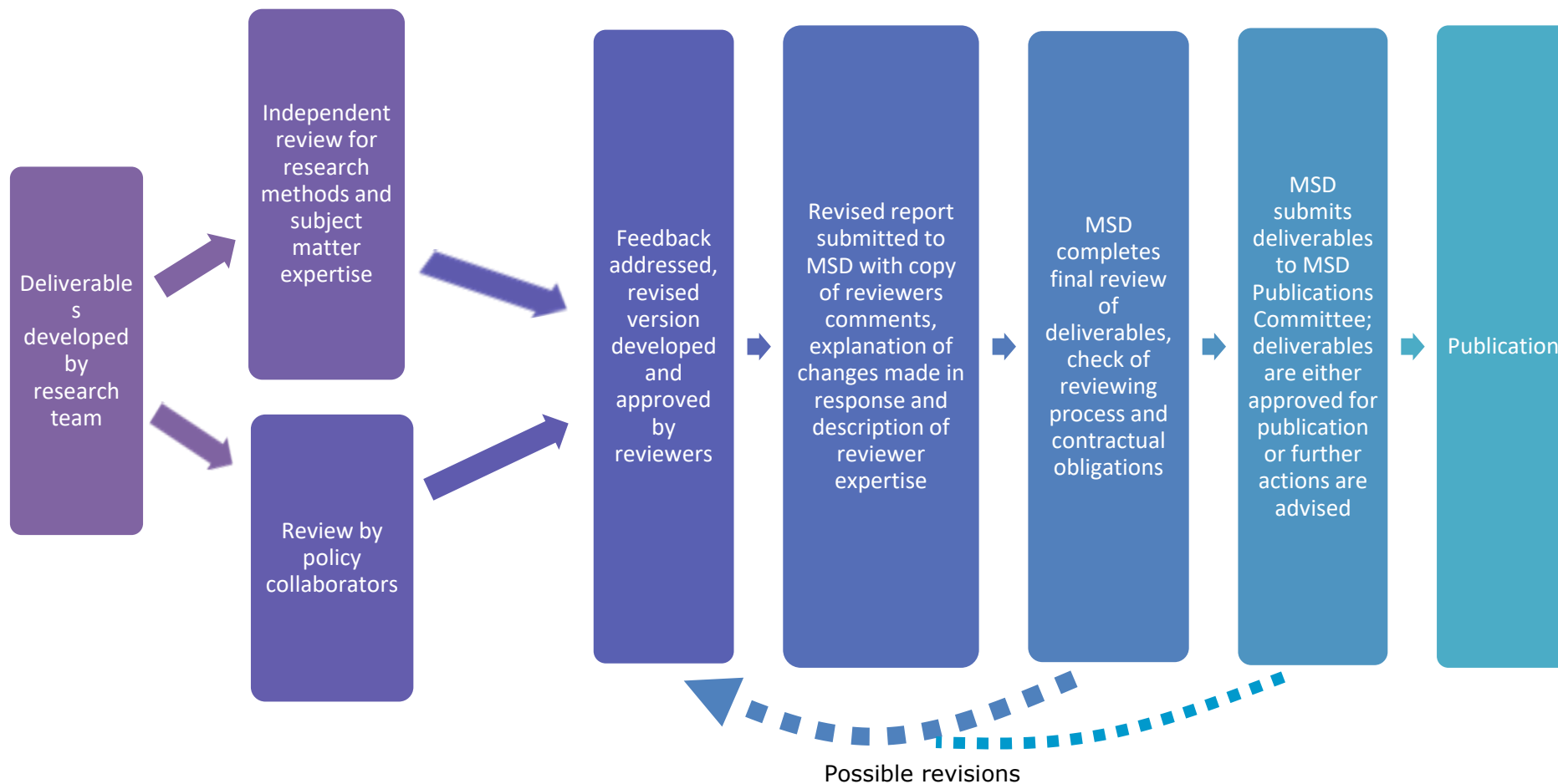
Once changes have been incorporated in response to the reviews, authors should then submit the final research report to MSD, along with the associated Policy Brief and content for communications about the research (these are described in the next sections). The original report, before review, should also be submitted to MSD. Thus by the final date stated in the contract, authors should submit:

- Final Research Report documents:
  - the original report (prior to revisions resulting from reviews)
  - the revised report (incorporating all changes resulting from reviews). *This represents the final version of the report that authors are submitting for publication approval.*
- Policy Brief documents:
  - original policy brief (prior to revisions resulting from reviews)
  - the revised policy brief (incorporating all changes resulting from reviews). *This represents the final version of the policy brief that authors are submitting for publication approval.*
- Communications content documents:
  - summary of research background and context
  - key findings
  - anticipated Q&As

MSD will complete a final internal review (allow up to 20 working days) of all documents and may provide further feedback for the authors to address. Once this feedback is satisfactorily addressed, the report will be submitted to MSD's Publications Committee for their assessment and, pending any final changes to meet publication standards, proceed to publication. Research findings may be published elsewhere only after the final report is published on MSD's website. Invoices for payment may be submitted after approval from the publication committee

Figure 1 illustrates the stages of the review and submission process.

**Figure 1:** Review process for Children and Families Research Fund final deliverables (final research report, policy brief and communications content)





# Policy brief

## Purpose

Policy briefs are intended to increase the impact of research findings on government policy and decision-making by providing an accessible and quick summary of the research findings and how they relate to current and potential policy initiatives. Policy briefs are intended for publication on MSD's website, alongside the final research report.

## Content

Policy briefs compel action through a clear, evidence-based argument about a specific issue, balancing depth and breadth of coverage (ie they are comprehensive but succinct). In some instances (eg where a research project tackles a multidisciplinary issue affecting more than one policy agency), it may be appropriate to create multiple policy briefs for different audiences.

The style throughout should be professional but not academic – for a smart but busy reader – and free of jargon and unnecessary words or phrases.

For greater engagement with readers, we strongly recommend using full sentence headings which succinctly describe the main point of each paragraph or section (eg "75% of children received the recommended amount of XYZ" rather than "Guideline adherence").

Before you begin:

- Define your audience. This will usually be policy-makers and decision-makers, but of what disciplines and working in what areas? What pressures do they face? What do they already know and don't know? What do they currently think about the issue?
- Define the scope of your policy brief. In order to effectively balance depth and breadth on an issue, the issue itself needs to be focused on a particular problem.
- Summarise the findings from your (and previous) research that are most relevant for this issue.
- Consider the inclusion of visual elements (e.g. infographics, graphs, photographs, quotes, sidebars) which strengthen your argument and capture the attention of your target audience.

## Format and structure

As for final research reports, policy briefs should be presented according to the researchers' organisational branding, but including provided acknowledgement clauses of the Children and Families Research Fund and the Ministry of Social Development logo.

Suggested sections are provided below, although these may be changed where necessary depending on the policy context of the research and advice of the project's policy collaborators.

Policy briefs should be between two and four pages, and no more than 2000 words in total.

Suggested sections:

- **Summary:** provide a short summary of the policy brief, no more than half a page.
- **Context:** outline the background to the topic, explain why it is important or urgent to address, and how the research addresses existing policy knowledge gaps. Explain through links to policy examples how the research question is policy-relevant.
- **Findings:** describe the key research findings and conclusions.
- **Implications:** describe any possible courses of action suggested by both the current and related research (from your literature review). Describe what further policy-relevant research questions have now arisen and the next steps for continuing work in this area.
- **Appendices, Methods/Approach, Further Reading:** can be included as required but are often not necessary for this piece.

## **Reviewing and submission procedures**

High quality policy briefs take time to refine; MSD strongly recommends that researchers develop them in collaboration with the project's policy partners. The final policy brief should be reviewed and approved by the project's policy collaborators. Submit the policy brief together with the completed reviewer templates, the final research report and communications content.

## Communications content

### Purpose

Communications content is intended for use in public and other communications about the research project, such as:

- briefing relevant government Ministers
- public media releases from Ministers and/or MSD
- publication/release of the final research report and policy brief
- introductory content for the final research report's webpage on MSD's website
- answering media and public enquiries about the research
- promotion of seminar presentations about the research
- communications about the Children and Families Research Fund, and examples of research projects contracted through it.

### Content

Communications content is for a broad audience and should therefore be easily understandable to a lay reader, with no expert subject matter knowledge or research background.

Researchers need to provide:

- a plain English **summary of the research background and context** (approximately 250 words), describing:
  - the broad context and background to the research
  - why the research is important
  - what the researchers sought to do
  - how the research links to the work of policy agency partners.
- **key findings:** a bulleted list of the key findings from the research, in plain English (also approximately 250 words).
- a set of **anticipated questions and answers** about the research. This can include such questions as:
  - Why is this research important?
  - Why didn't the research [use the full cohort of children/look at variable X/assess some new policy initiative]?
  - Does this mean that [children shouldn't do X/these type of children are doing worse than others]?
  - What are the main findings?
  - What are the findings in relation to [ethnicity/age/socioeconomic status]?
  - What does this mean/what's next?

An example of this content can be found in the template at Appendix E.

Make sure to acknowledge the Children and Families Research Fund, the Ministry of Social Development, the *Growing Up in New Zealand* study, and any partner agencies in the plain English summary.

### **Format and structure**

Please use the communications release content template provided at Appendix E.

### **Reviewing and submission procedures**

All communications release content should be reviewed and approved by communications professionals at both your own institution and at your policy partner agencies.

# List of Appendices

- Appendix A: MSD Style Guide
- Appendix B: Progress report template
- Appendix C: Reviewer's feedback template
- Appendix D: Communications release content template
- Appendix E: Policy collaborator feedback template
- Appendix F: Policy Collaborator Expectations