

Kindlab

Application Guidelines

September 2025

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1 Call for Applications

NSW Ministry of Health invites local health districts (LHDs), specialty health networks (SHNs), pillars and support organisations to apply for innovation funding under the Kindlab program. These guidelines outline the Kindlab's application process, selection criteria and reporting requirements.

2 Program Outline

NSW Health is dedicated to achieving the strategic outcomes outlined in the Future Health Strategic Framework 2022-2032, particularly that *patients and carers have positive experiences and outcomes that matter*. Objective 1.2 of this framework focuses on integrating kindness and compassion into personalised and culturally safe care, which is also a priority within Elevating the Human Experience – Our Guide to Action.

The NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework further underscores the significance of cultivating a positive workplace culture that values kindness and compassion. This framework provides a roadmap for fostering an environment where staff wellbeing is prioritised.

The importance of kindness and compassion in healthcare

Kindness and compassion are the cornerstone of providing personalised, high quality care. Demonstrating small acts of kindness can transform healthcare from a transactional process to one that is more human and healing. Extending this to our colleagues not only enhances patient care but also fosters a more positive and resilient workplace culture, significantly improving staff experience.

NSW patients and general public consistently rate the following aspects of their care as most important:

- Being treated with respect and kindness
- Having their questions are answered
- Knowing what is going on and what to expect for themselves, their families, and carers.

Compassion is not just a nice to have but a vital component of quality healthcare. There are measurable benefits of compassion – psychological, physiological, enhanced patient care, and increased quality of care. Research indicates that experiencing kindness can lead to better patient outcomes, produce financial benefits and enhance staff satisfaction¹. Caregiving is best achieved through kindness and compassion.

Organisations that value and demonstrate kindness and compassion build workplaces that embed well-being. The NSW Health Culture and Staff Experience Framework highlights that a positive workplace culture is fundamental to staff well-being and engagement. Acts of kindness, both small and large, create an environment where staff feel understood and that they belong.

Compassion enables us to connect with people more deeply. At an individual level, we can all take responsibility to act and lead with empathy, demonstrating support for our colleagues. We can show compassion by seeking to understand other people's situations through openness and having conversations to share thoughts, emotions, and concerns.

A kind and compassionate workplace improves culture and morale and reduces negative influences or external impacts. In kind and compassionate teams, there is increased motivation to contribute, and we are set up to perform at our best.

¹ Greco, A., González-Ortiz, L. G., Gabutti, L., & Lumera, D. (2025). What's the role of kindness in the healthcare context? A scoping review. *BMC Health Services Research*, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-025-12328-1>

Introducing Kindlab

This initiative is not just about individual acts of kindness and compassion; it's about how the system can support the conditions for kindness and connection that enhance both staff and patient experiences. How do we nurture kindness in the NSW Health system? How do we bring about the transformative potential of kindness?

To advance these goals, NSW Health has established Kindlab, a kindness-driven innovation platform. Kindlab promotes initiatives that foster a compassionate environment for both patients and staff. It invites NSW Health staff, consumer representatives and volunteers to pitch their ideas aimed at creating a kinder, more compassionate healthcare system for everyone involved.

What Kindlab offers

- **Innovation Funding** - NSW Health is offering funding ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000 to support high-impact innovation projects. This funding is designed to "kick-start" initiatives that can make a significant difference in promoting kindness and compassion within the healthcare system, benefiting both staff and patients.
- **Statewide Platform** - Successful applicants will be invited to share their ideas and test kindness-driven solutions with colleagues across the state during the annual Gathering of Kindness event. This platform encourages collaboration and knowledge-sharing to enhance experiences for staff and patients alike.
- **Support for Implementation** - Successful applicants will also be invited to a one-on-one coaching session with the NSW Health Chief Experience Officer. This support aids in networking and connecting project leads with potential stakeholders across the system. Additionally, successful projects will be promoted through the Elevating the Human Experience Newsletter, highlighting initiatives that positively impact both staff and patient experiences.

3 Priority areas for Kindlab

NSW Ministry of Health seeks applications for innovative programs or initiatives to spread kindness and compassion through seven enabler priority areas, as outlined in Elevating the Human Experience – Our Guide to Action.

Applicants must demonstrate that the initiative aligns to at least one of the seven enablers for experience:

1. **Leadership, accountability and governance:** Initiatives under this enabler should focus on strengthening leadership practices that foster a culture of kindness and compassion.
2. **Culture and Staff Experience:** Projects should aim to enhance the workplace culture by creating environments where staff feel valued, supported, and empowered to deliver compassionate care.
3. **Collaborative Partnerships:** Initiatives should build and strengthen partnerships between healthcare providers, patients, families, carers, and the community.
4. **Innovation and technology:** Projects should leverage innovative solutions and technology to promote kindness and compassion in healthcare delivery.
5. **Information and Communication:** Initiatives should improve the flow of information and enhance communication strategies to ensure that patients, families, and staff are well-informed and engaged.
6. **Measurement, feedback and response:** Projects should focus on making use of systems that measure experiences and collect feedback to respond effectively and improve kindness and compassion in care.
7. **Environment and hospitality:** Initiatives should enhance the physical and emotional environments of care settings to make them more welcoming, comfortable, and conducive to healing for both patients and staff.

Applicants must also demonstrate how their innovation aligns with a human-centred approach, is supported and sustained by the fundamental principle of partnership and is inclusive of the experiences of those receiving and delivering care, as well as those who support them (Figure 1).

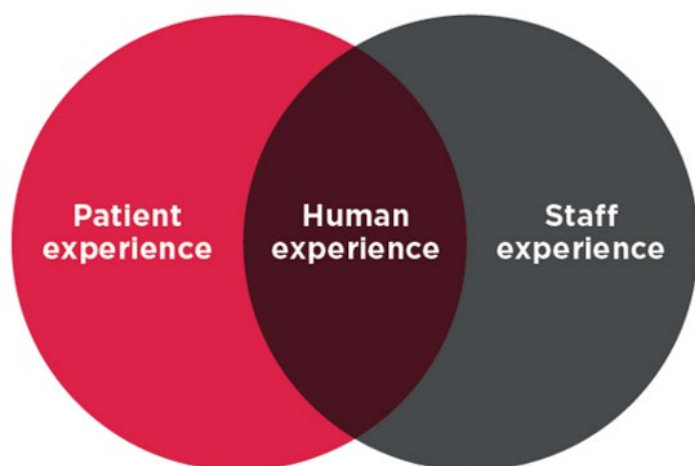


Figure 1 The Human Experience is supported and sustained by the fundamental principle of partnership and is therefore inclusive of the experiences of those receiving and delivering care as well as all who support them.

4 Innovations excluded from Kindlab

Kindlab is intended to support new and transformative projects that promote kindness and compassion in the NSW Health system. As such, the following are excluded from funding:

- Innovations or initiatives that are part of routine operations or business as usual (for example functions as part of the Gathering of Kindness or Human Experience Week; standard maintenance such as repair and refurbishment) are out of scope and funding should be sought through regular channels.
- Existing programs that are already funded, underway or have been previously implemented in NSW Health are not eligible for additional funding.

5 Program Objectives

Kindlab is an initiative of NSW Health designed to foster kindness and compassion within the healthcare system through innovative projects and ideas. We celebrate the great ideas of our staff and the community. The objectives of Kindlab are:

1. Position NSW Health as a leader in promoting kind and compassionate care
2. Leverage kindness to deliver positive experiences and outcomes that matter for patients, their families and carers
3. Foster a positive workplace culture where staff feel valued, supported and engaged
4. Stimulate innovation and support creative solutions that integrate kindness into patient care and staff interactions.

6 Timelines

The timeline for Kindlab is below.

Dates are subject to change.

Date	Stage
13 November 2025	Applications open
19 December 2025	Submission deadline
27 Jan – 10 Feb 2026	Application review by review panel
May 2026	Application outcomes confirmed
July 2026	Funding provided
November 2026	Showcase a selection of Kindlab projects currently underway

All applications must be submitted via email to the Experience Team at the NSW Ministry of Health at MOH-PatientExperience@health.nsw.gov.au

Queries regarding Kindlab should be directed through the Experience Team to Karen Wales, Project Lead.

7 Eligibility Criteria

1. The initiative or project must be led by a NSW Health staff member. We welcome applications from community members, carers, consumer representatives and volunteers who are enthusiastic about making a difference. To apply, they must be collaborating with a NSW Health organisation that supports the application. Each project must be led by a NSW Health staff member, who will act as the primary contact and project lead. This partnership approach ensures that ideas are backed by organisational support necessary for implementation and lasting impact.
2. The initiative or project must be hosted by and conducted within a NSW Health Local Health District (LHD), Specialty Health Network (SHN), Ministry of Health (MOH), pillar or support organisation
3. A Chief Executive or Executive Director of the Host Organisation must approve the Application submission and certify that the initiative or project will be supported.
4. The Host Organisation agrees to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative and share information with the Ministry of Health for distribution.

8 Joint applications

If an innovation or initiative is being conducted in more than one site, the lead host organisation and partner organisation/s should be identified. The lead host organisation should be the LHD, SHN, pillar or support organisation that is driving the innovation project. Partner organisations are those that are enabling the project.

9 Details of funding

Innovation funding ranging from \$5,000 up to \$25,000 will be provided to successful Host Organisations for initiatives.

All allocated funds must be fully expended by 30 June 2027, in accordance with the conditions of funding.

10 Funding conditions and exclusions

Innovation funding may be used for costs associated with the initiative and/or project and implementation activities. Should the initiative or project cease for any reason, or reporting requirements are not met, remaining funds are required to be returned to the NSW Ministry of Health.

11 Selection Criteria

NSW Health staff may submit an application which will be assessed against the following criteria:

5. Kindness and Compassion Impact

- The initiative should meaningfully promote kindness, compassion, and emotional well-being. It must demonstrate clear benefits to the experiences of patients, carers, volunteers, or staff such as reducing stress, enhancing interpersonal interactions, and improving the overall healthcare environment.

6. Innovation and Creativity

- The initiative should introduce a new or creative approach that enhances healthcare experiences and fosters kindness. This may include novel technologies, virtual support models, educational tools, or unique processes.

7. Partnership and Collaboration

- The initiative should demonstrate strong and meaningful collaboration with those directly impacted, including consumers (patients, families, carers) and staff. Effective partnerships involve active participation in design, implementation, and evaluation, with shared decision-making, co-leadership roles, and representation on project teams. Ongoing engagement should reflect diverse perspectives and go beyond one-off consultation.

8. Feasibility and Scalability

- The initiative should be practical and achievable within the NSW Health system. It must demonstrate responsible use of resources, with clearly defined and realistic goals. The potential for scalability or adaptation across different settings should be evident.

9. Readiness for Implementation

- The initiative should demonstrate a clear level of readiness for implementation within NSW health. This includes presence of planning, preparation, defined steps for initiation and integration, an identified executive sponsorship, and appropriate allocation of funding and resources.

All criteria are of equal weighting.

A Chief Executive or Executive Director of the Host Organisation must approve all applications.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with their local Consumer and Community Partnerships Lead and senior Executive to inform the Expression of Interest. The application should clearly justify how the project under investigation is a key priority for the Host Organisation. The application should be succinct and written in plain English.

12 Review Process

Applications meeting the eligibility criteria will be reviewed against the selection criteria by a Review Panel with representation from the relevant NSW Ministry of Health branches, health organisations and consumer networks. The Patient Experience team will form the Review Panel through a nomination process. The panel may contact applicants to clarify or confirm information in the application.

All applicants informed as to whether they have been awarded funding. The Review Panel decision is final and may not be appealed. General feedback on applications will be made available upon request.

The NSW Ministry of Health will contact the Local Health District (LHD), specialty health network (SHN), pillar or support organisation for each successful applicant to establish funding allocations.

13 Reporting Requirements

Successful Kindlab applicants must submit a progress report on their project by October 2026 and a final report on their outcomes by mid 2027.

Successful applicants may be required to present to the NSW Health Future Health Steering Committee and other Ministry and/or state-wide agency forums.

NSW Health celebrates the Gathering of Kindness week, which coincides with World Kindness Day on 13 November. Successful applicants are likely to be invited to present or provide a written update on their initiative as part of this celebration.

14 Submitting your Application

Please return the Application form to the NSW Ministry of Health Experience Team.

If you have any questions, please direct them to: MOH-PatientExperience@health.nsw.gov.au.

Please submit your approved Application by COB, 19 December 2025.

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