



Victorian Cancer Agency  
Expressions of Interest for  
**Translational Cancer  
Research Funding**

Guidelines for EOI Proposals  
2008-09



## 2008-09 Victorian Cancer Agency

## Expressions of Interest for Translational Cancer Research Funding

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## 1. The Victorian Cancer Agency

The Victorian Cancer Agency is a Victorian Government funded organisation, established in 2006 as a Consultative Council to the Minister for Health to link cancer research with patient care for improved patient outcomes. The Agency is committed to supporting innovation and excellence in Victorian cancer research.

**Aspiration:** cancer patient care, outcomes and survival rates in Victoria will be amongst the best in the world through the rapid translation of cancer research into clinical care.

**Mission:** promote, enhance and facilitate cancer research that enables the delivery of evidence based, research-driven cancer services.

The Agency will pursue these through:

- setting strategic priorities for cancer research across Victoria, based on identified areas of need
- building cancer research capacity and capability in Victoria
- fostering collaborative relationships between key stakeholders
- adding value to existing state-wide initiatives and programs
- providing high level, strategic advice to stakeholders and Government on all aspects of cancer research.

### Victorian Cancer Plan

The Victorian Cancer Agency has a central role in the delivery of the government's cancer strategy. The Agency has responsibility for investing in translational research, building research capacity, and developing a collaborative cancer research environment in Victoria.

#### 1.1 What is Translational Research?

Translational research is a general term encompassing research which focuses on clinical outcomes, quality research principles, multi and cross-disciplinary teams that explicitly address how knowledge created from research will be used to drive advances in an area of patient clinical need. The core elements that distinguish translational cancer research from more traditional bench-top research are patient clinical need and collaboration between research and clinical disciplines. The translational research collaborative approach also differs from traditional research collaborative approaches in which teams are typically assembled around similar scientific or medical fields, to one where the focus of collaboration may be between a range of disciplines, including researchers, clinicians, health service managers, clinician-managers and consumers.

Further information about Translational Cancer Research may be found:

National Cancer Institute (USA): <http://www.cancer.gov/>

Cancer Institute of NSW (Aust): [http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer\\_inst/](http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/cancer_inst/)

Papers that are informative are:

Woolf, S.H. (2008) The Meaning of Translational Research and Why It Matters. *JAMA* 229 (2): 211-213. Available from: <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/299/2/211>

Lehmann, F., Lacombe, D., Therasse, P., Eggermont, A.M.M. (2003) Integration of Translational Research in the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer Research (EORTC) Clinical Trial Cooperative Group Mechanisms. *Journal of Translational Medicine* 1:2. Available from: <http://www.translational-medicine.com/content/1/1/2>

Best, A., Hiatt, R.A., Norman, C.D. (2008) Knowledge integration: Conceptualizing communications in cancer control systems. *Patient Education & Counselling* 71:319-327

## **1.2 Victorian Cancer Agency Funding Programs**

The Victorian Cancer Agency exists to support translational cancer research. The Agency has a unique funding orientation and clear objectives in a particular area of scientific and clinical research. While this EOI is very general in the scope of proposals sought, the Agency is seeking research proposals with a focus on clinical translation.

Previous applicants and recipients of Victorian Cancer Agency funding programs are eligible to apply under this EOI.

For further information on other Victorian Cancer Agency funding program areas, please visit our website on [www.victoriancanceragency.org.au](http://www.victoriancanceragency.org.au)

## **1.3 Victorian Cancer Agency and Victorian Integrated Cancer Services**

In 2004, eight Integrated Cancer Services (ICS) were established in Victoria (3 metropolitan and 5 regional). They are partnerships between health services to link and coordinate cancer care within a geographic region. They are the platform through which improvements in cancer service delivery and patient care are being implemented.

ICS are ideally positioned to both support translational research being conducted within their respective health services and research organisations, and implement outcomes of research into clinical practice.

The Victorian Cancer Agency has identified that the ICS are an essential component in translating cancer research into clinical application across and between health services, because of their structure and function.

Further information regarding Victorian Integrated Cancer Services can be found at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/cancer/index.htm>

## **2. Details of the 2008-09 Victorian Cancer Agency Translational Cancer Research Funding Expression of Interest**

### **2.1 Objectives**

The overarching goal of translational cancer research is to improve patient outcomes. The funds invested by the Victorian Cancer Agency through the Translational Cancer Research funding program aim to achieve this by supporting:

- new and existing translational research
- multidisciplinary and collaborative research involving multiple research sites
- the creation of research teams comprised of scientific and clinical researchers
- the translation of existing research into clinical trial or practice.

Funding will be available for a broad range of proposals - from smaller, more localised and short-term grants of up to \$1 million over a two year duration, through to large scale, multi-site and long-term grants up to \$5 million over a four year duration.

Proposals are sought in the following categories of translational cancer research:

- Tumour stream specific proposals that target one of the 10 tumour streams (*excluding* the breast tumour stream) as distinguished by the Department of Human Services. Breast cancer is excluded from this EOI as translational breast cancer research is funded separately by the Victorian Cancer Agency, through the Victorian Breast Cancer Research Consortium, until 2012.
- Multiple and cross tumour stream research proposals that have significant potential for clinical translation (e.g. clinical research, treatment, radiotherapy, supportive care)
- Translational research proposals into rare cancers
- Clinician-sponsored research proposals that address identified patient clinical needs.

## 2.2 Anticipated Outcomes

Proposals addressing areas of greatest clinical need will be looked at most favourably. Clinical need will be distinguished as addressing one or more of the elements of incidence, mortality, low research activity, high clinical interest, specific needs within the tumour stream, or low clinical uptake of previous research outcomes.

The overriding rationale for funding will be potential for translation into patient care. Hence long-term research needing support for late stage translation, proposals that address the translation potential of proven research, research proposals with a strong clinical focus, research proposals undertaken in conjunction with clinicians, and research proposals designed to extend, adapt or develop clinically tested basic research are all examples of the type of research activities the Victorian Cancer Agency anticipate will be proposed.

## 3. Victorian Cancer Agency Translational Cancer Research - EOI Proposal Process

### 3.1 How to apply

All proposers must complete the 2008-09 Victorian Cancer Agency Translational Cancer Research Expression of Interest form available from:

- [www.victoriacanceragency.org.au](http://www.victoriacanceragency.org.au)
- By calling +61 3 9635 5481
- By emailing [victorian.canceragency@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:victorian.canceragency@dhs.vic.gov.au)

It is the responsibility of the proposer to ensure that the submission is complete and accurate. A single submission with supporting documentation should be submitted:

Electronically\* to [victorian.canceragency@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:victorian.canceragency@dhs.vic.gov.au)

\* electronic or scanned signatures will be accepted

**Submissions MUST be received by 2:00pm Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2009**

**Please note incomplete or late proposals will not be accepted.**

### 3.2 Eligibility criteria

Any organisation or individual that is, or will be, involved in the conduct of cancer research in Victoria is eligible to apply for Victorian Cancer Agency funding. Specific eligibility criteria for Agency funding are detailed below:

- Applicants must be Australian citizens or have permanent residency status.
- Applicants must complete the research proposal or project within Victoria (collaborators may work interstate or internationally).
- Applicants must make their application under the auspices of a Victorian hospital, research organisation or university. A single organisation should be designated as the *administering organisation*, the *administering organisation* must:
  - certify in the application form that they meet the requirements for the receipt of government funding through the Victorian Cancer Agency. These requirements are detailed on the Agency website under funding rules and forms, at [www.victoriacanceragency.org.au](http://www.victoriacanceragency.org.au)
  - have in place policies and procedures for the management of public funds
  - have in place policies for the proper conduct of research in relation to ethics and good scientific conduct
  - provide adequate infrastructure to allow the research to be completed
  - in the case of collaborative grants, demonstrate the consent of all participating researchers listed in the application in relation to their involvement in the outlined research project
- Applicants must have the approval and endorsement of the head of the organisation where the proposed project will be carried out (host organisation).
- Applicants must demonstrate there is a suitable environment for the research to be undertaken. It is expected the host organisation will ensure that there is effective supervision and mentoring of the researcher and/or research group, and have a process for evaluating the effectiveness and suitability of any supervisory and/or mentoring arrangements. The host organisation will provide the facilities and infrastructure required to undertake the proposed research.
- Applicants must propose projects with specific aims and outputs that are achievable in the designated timeframe.
- Applicants are expected to forward a copy of their submission, or a summary of their submission, to the director of the Integrated Cancer Service (ICS) within which they will be working for approval-in-principle. For more information on the ICS, please visit <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/cancer/integratedcancerservices.htm>

### **3.3 EOI assessment process**

Upon receipt of proposals, these will initially be screened by Victorian Cancer Agency personnel to ensure that selection and eligibility criteria have been met. A receipt of submission will be sent to all proposers.

An independent assessment panel will assess all proposals against the selection criteria, and will rank them accordingly.

Outcomes from the research proposal evaluation process will be:

1. The research proposal is assessed as being of high value by the assessment panel and a formal application will be requested.
2. The research proposal is assessed to be of potential interest but requires further development. The Victorian Cancer Agency may enter into direct negotiations with the proposer to seek further information in relation to specific aspects of their proposal. A formal application may be requested depending on the applicant's response to the issues raised.
3. The research proposal is assessed as having potential but is in need significant development before it could be considered for funding. In this case, the Victorian Cancer Agency may enter into discussions with the proposer. Assistance may be provided to support them to develop their proposal further for a potential future formal application.
4. The research proposal is assessed as not of interest and no application will be sought.

After the assessment process, feedback on proposals will be made available on request.

In the event that the Agency deems any research proposals to be similar or complementary to other research proposals received through this EOI, the Agency may request that the research proposers consider some or greater cooperation between their proposals (where appropriate).

There is no obligation imposed on the proposers under this condition. Any cooperation that might eventuate from such a suggestion by the Agency would be voluntary.

The lodging of an EOI Proposal does not confer any entitlement upon the proposer. The making of a recommendation is totally within the discretion of the assessment panel and the Victorian Cancer Agency.

### **3.4 Conflict of interest**

The Victorian Government requires its selection panel members to act in an ethical manner, declare conflicts of interest and withdraw from considering applications where such conflict exists.

### 3.5 Selection criteria

All proposals will be assessed against the selection criteria. The criteria, and their weighting in the evaluation process, are detailed below.

	Criteria and weightings	Weighting (%)
1.	<p>Demonstrate how the research proposal is designed to address an important problem or clinical need in patient care.</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the significance of the clinical need being addressed in the research proposal</li> <li>how, and how quickly the research proposal could have a clinical impact</li> <li>demonstration of how the proposal will result in improved patient outcomes, and;</li> </ul> <p>Relevance to the following areas of clinical activity (if more than one area is the focus of the research proposal, the links need to be identified):</p> <p>Prevention, Screening, Early detection, Diagnosis, Prognosis, Treatment, Palliation, Supportive Care, Survival</p>	35
2.	<p>Demonstrate (where appropriate) that the research proposal is collaborative in nature. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-disciplinary approaches with researchers, clinicians, consumers, clinician-managers, health care policy makers, industry and/or</li> <li>Multiple site collaboration</li> </ul> <p>If the research proposal is not collaborative, demonstrate how the clinical adoption of the research findings is expected to occur.</p> <p>Demonstrate how the results of the research proposal will be communicated to other researchers, clinicians, students, consumers and health care decision-makers.</p>	15
3.	<p>Demonstrate how the research proposal will build translational cancer research capacity and translational cancer research skills in Victoria.</p>	10
4.	<p>Quality of the research program. Address the proposal's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feasibility</li> <li>Rationale</li> <li>Methodology</li> <li>Timeframes</li> <li>Innovativeness</li> </ul>	40
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

### **3.6 Formal application requests**

The Victorian Cancer Agency will request a formal application for Translational Cancer Research Funding from successful proposals. These applications will require:

- a more detailed outline of the research proposal's goals, and the timeline for their completion
- details of the research proposal's expected outcomes, and what is required in order to achieve them
- a detailed budget
- a research program evaluation and reporting arrangement.

Formal applications may differ between research areas in response to the nature of the proposal. The Victorian Cancer Agency will work with each proposer to articulate the points to be addressed in the formal application.

### **3.7 Privacy and confidentiality**

All information contained in proposals will be regarded as confidential. Documents containing personal information will be handled and protected in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. Personal information will only be disclosed with the permission of the individual to whom it relates or where the Act allows.

Proposers and future applicants consent to the information supplied as part of their proposal being disclosed for the purposes of the assessment and administration of the grant. Such disclosure includes but is not limited to members of the selection panel, independent readers/assessors requested by the selection panel to provide advice on the proposal, the Victorian Cancer Agency Consultative Council and relevant employees of the Victorian Government involved with the research grant process.

Proposers and future applicants acknowledge that announcement of the funding grants will involve the dissemination of information to the public about the general nature of the funding grants.