

Linking research and patient care



Victorian
Cancer
Agency

Victorian Cancer Agency

Tumour Stream Translational
Research Funding

Guidelines for Applicants July 2010

Due date: 9 September 2010

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Acronyms and Definitions

Administering Organisation	Organisation that will be responsible for administration of the project, and the receipt and distribution of grant funds. There can be only one Administering Organisation per grant.
Administering Officer/Grants Officer	Person responsible for receiving and administering funds from the Victorian Cancer Agency
The Agency	Victorian Cancer Agency
Applicant	<p>Researcher who is leading the research. Responsible for the overall direction of the project, and leading and supporting Associate/Co-Investigators. Responsible for completion and lodgement of the application, and gaining appropriate certification signatures. Responsible for progress and reporting on the project.</p> <p>This person must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident.</p>
Associate/Co-Investigator/s	Responsible for carrying out some aspect of the research under the guidance and leadership of the Lead/Chief Investigator/s.
Collaborator/Collaborative Partner/s	<p>Includes all people named as Investigators and their associated organisations. Also includes organisations or individuals that provide specific resources that contribute to the research, such as biobanking or biostatistics work.</p> <p>Collaboration may be between a combination of disciplines, departments and/or organisations.</p>
DH	The Victorian Department of Health
Goods & Services Tax	Goods and Services Tax imposed in accordance with the <i>A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999</i> , and related Acts and Regulations.
ICS	Integrated Cancer Services located in Victoria
Research Organisation	Organisation where the majority of the research will be based
VCAP	<i>Victoria's Cancer Action Plan 2008-2011</i>

1. OVERVIEW – VICTORIAN CANCER INITIATIVES

1.1. The Victorian Cancer Agency

The Victorian Cancer Agency is a Victorian Government funded organisation, led by a Consultative Council. It was established in 2006 to advise the Minister for Health on translational cancer research. The Agency is committed to supporting innovation and excellence in Victorian cancer research.

Mission

To reduce the impact in the community caused by cancer, by supporting the rapid translation of research findings into effective and equitable access, treatments and clinical care.

Vision

The translational research supported by the Victorian Cancer Agency will, through clinician and research collaboration, result in scientific progress of international significance and provide the Victorian community with equitable outcomes, independent of geography, culture or socio-economic factors.

Strategic elements

The Victorian Cancer Agency's strategic elements complement the milestones and targets outlined in Victoria's Cancer Action Plan.

Translational research

- Provide funding for Victorian translational research that will fill knowledge gaps relating to cancer conditions and reduce inequities in order to lead to improved population and cancer patient outcomes within Victoria.
- Work to increase the funding pool available to Victorian translational cancer researchers including access to non-government and philanthropic sources.

Clinical trials

- Act to increase patient participation in clinical trials and improve access to clinical trials throughout Victoria.
- Work to improve the infrastructure and workforce required to undertake and attract clinical trials to Victoria.

Knowledge transfer

- Facilitate partnerships between universities, research organisations and cancer clinicians in order to inform clinical decision making with the latest research evidence.
- Partner with Victoria's Integrated Cancer Services to use research findings to deliver better cancer patient outcomes.

Collaboration

- Establish collaboration as a priority in funded research programs and reinforce successful linkages and identify new opportunities, within Victoria, with other Australian states and internationally.

Infrastructure and workforce

- Work to ensure services such as data management, tissue banking, molecular pathology, genetic assessment and biomedical imaging are accessible to Victoria's cancer researchers.
- Increase the number and skills of Victoria's cancer research workforce in order to be able to conceive, plan and undertake high quality translational cancer research.

Supportive and palliative care

- Increase the funding available and establish a strong foundation for future supportive and palliative care research themes and research workforce.

Information on the Victorian Cancer Agency can be found at: www.victoriancanceragency.org.au

Victoria's Cancer Action Plan 2008-2011 (VCAP)¹

In 2008 Victoria released *Victoria's Cancer Action Plan 2008-2011 (VCAP)*. The plan builds on the progress and achievements of the Victorian Ministerial Taskforce for Cancer 2003-2007. It aims to achieve ambitious targets in cancer services across four Action Areas. These are:

Action Area 1: Prevention	Reducing the major cancer risk factors in the population and maximising effective screening
Action Area 2: Research	Ensuring rapid translation of research into effective treatments and clinical care
Action Area 3: Treatment	Investing in innovative treatments and technologies and sustainable integrated care systems
Action Area 4: Support	Supporting and empowering patients and their carers throughout their cancer journey

The Victorian Cancer Agency has primary responsibility to achieve the priorities outlined in **Action Area 2** of the plan. These priorities are:

Priority 1:	Sustain and strengthen Victoria's leadership role in linking cancer research to clinical outcomes within Australia
Priority 2:	Invest in translational research and develop partnerships with industry
Priority 3:	Further develop institutional structures, platforms and support systems to facilitate cancer research and its effective translation into clinical practice

Information on *Victoria's Cancer Action Plan 2008-11* is here: www.health.vic.gov.au/cancer

1.2. Victorian Integrated Cancer Services

Integrated Cancer Services (ICS) are formal partnerships between health services that have responsibility for coordinating the planning and improvement of cancer services. There are three metropolitan and five regional ICS based on specified geographic populations and one state-wide paediatric ICS. A key focus of this clinical network is to reduce inappropriate variation in access and delivery of patient care.

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.

Information on Victorian cancer initiatives can be found at: www.health.vic.gov.au/cancer

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF VICTORIAN CANCER AGENCY SUPPORTED RESEARCH

2.1. Translational Research

Translational research is a general term encompassing research that focuses on clinical outcomes and quality research principles, carried out by multi- and inter-disciplinary teams that explicitly address how knowledge created from the 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 collaboration approach also differs from traditional research collaborative approaches where 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.

A translational research collaborative team may be expected to comprise:

- basic researchers working on gaining an understanding of, and/or identifying targets in an area of identified patient clinical need
- clinical trials co-ordinators guiding clinical trials for research outcomes
- clinicians and practitioners who are involved with treating patients, assisting in the recruitment of patients into clinical trials, as well as advising on areas of patient-clinical need
- health care service provider managers and policy makers
- consumer representation.

2.2. Collaboration

As the Agency has a focus on translational research, collaboration between disciplines and organisations is encouraged to increase the quality, capacity and sustainability of cancer research in Victoria. The Agency appreciates that collaboration currently occurs in many instances in relation to cancer research between disciplines and organisations within Victoria, as well as interstate and overseas.

All people and organisations involved in the research project are considered to be collaborators. Associate/co-investigators represent a specific sub-set of collaborators who are directly involved in the conduct of the project, but not responsible for the direction and progress of the project. Other collaborators may only be providing support for a particular aspect of the research. For example, a collaborative partner may provide resource support (such as biobanking) that enables the research to be carried out or implemented into the clinical environment.

By encouraging collaborative arrangements, the Agency is asking researchers to consider looking beyond their discrete departments and organisations, and to seek out people who may be doing similar research. This may allow for stronger and higher quality research proposals, and reduce the possibility of research being duplicated.

3. STANDARD ELIGIBILITY FOR VICTORIAN CANCER AGENCY FUNDING

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.

Applicant requirements

- Applicants must be Australian citizens or have permanent residency status. Successful applicants will be asked for proof of citizenship or residency status as part of the funding agreement.

Project requirements

The Agency must be satisfied that:

- The majority of the research funded by the Agency is completed within Victoria (lead investigators and/or collaborators may work interstate or internationally).
- Proposed projects must have specific aims and outcomes that are achievable in the designated timeframe.

Administering Organisation requirements

- Applications must be made under the auspices of a Victorian hospital, research organisation or university. A single organisation should be designated as the Administering Organisation, which 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's website under funding rules and forms, at <http://www.victoriancanceragency.org.au/Funding/Fundingrulesandforms/>
 - 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

- have in place policies for the appropriate management and exploitation of Intellectual Property
 - in the case of research being undertaken with collaborative partners, obtain the consent of all Investigators named in the application, and their organisations
 - accept the Agency's contract as the basis for funding.
- The relevant delegate of the Administering Organisation must certify in the application that they approve of and endorse the proposed project.

Research Organisation requirements

- The application must provide evidence that there is a suitable environment in which to undertake the research. It is expected the Research 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 Research Organisation will provide the facilities and infrastructure required to undertake the proposed research.
- The relevant delegate of the Research Organisation must certify in the application that they approve of and endorse the proposed project.

4. TUMOUR STREAM SCHEME DESCRIPTION

The Tumour Stream Scheme seeks to fund projects focussing on translational research in cancer. The overriding rationale for funding will be potential for translation into patient care. Hence, long-term research needing support for late stage translation, applications that address the translation potential of proven research, applications with a strong clinical focus (including clinical trials), 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.

The Agency is seeking applications that:

- focus on clinical translation of research
- have a clinical trial element (where appropriate)
- seek to involve regional researchers, clinicians and patients (where appropriate)
- involve consumers at appropriate points in the research program

Applications are sought in the following categories:

- tumour stream specific research that has significant potential for clinical translation (*excluding* breast*)
- multiple and cross tumour stream research that has significant potential for clinical translation
- clinically-based research that addresses patient clinical needs

*Breast cancer is excluded from this funding round as translational breast cancer research is funded separately by the Victorian Cancer Agency, through the Victorian Breast Cancer Research Consortium, until 2012.

Applications addressing areas of greatest clinical need will be looked at most favourably. Clinical need will be distinguished as addressing one or more of the following elements:

- incidence
- mortality and morbidity
- low research activity
- high clinical interest
- specific needs within a tumour stream
- access to clinical research or clinical trials (particularly regional access)
- low clinical uptake of previous research outcomes

4.1. Who can apply?

All research disciplines may apply for a Victorian Cancer Agency Tumour Stream grant.

Individual applicants must meet standard eligibility requirements for Victorian Cancer Agency funding.

4.2. Level of Funding

The Agency is interested in funding large scale projects. To reinforce this, the *minimum* funding amount that can be requested is \$750,000, and the *maximum* amount that can be requested is \$1.5 million, over the life of the project. Applications seeking amounts outside this range will be ineligible.

The pool of funding available is \$3–4 million.

4.3. Duration

Projects must be of 2 years *minimum* duration, and 3 years *maximum* duration. Applications for projects outside this range will be ineligible.

4.4. Assessment process

Applicants will be informed via email of receipt of their application within five working days after the closing date for the funding round.

Victorian Cancer Agency personnel will initially screen applications to ensure that eligibility and selection criteria have been met.

Independent Evaluation Panels will assess all submissions against the selection criteria. The panels will, consistent with these guidelines:

- rank applications based on the specific selection criteria weighting
- make recommendations to the Victorian Cancer Agency on the applications which meet appropriate standards for funding
- provide advice on applications where further collaboration may be sought.

The recommendations from the Evaluation Panels will be considered by the Victorian Cancer Agency Consultative Council, who will determine the number of applications that the Agency is able to fund, given its available funding and its obligations under VCAP, and the overall strategic objectives of the Agency.

The Victorian Cancer Agency may enter into direct negotiations with applicants to seek further information or detail in relation to specific applications. Additionally, eligible applicants may be invited to discuss their application with the Evaluation Panel.

After the Victorian Cancer Agency has completed its evaluation process, feedback on applications will be available on request.

In the event that the Agency deems any research applications to be similar or complementary to other applications received, the Agency may request that the applicants consider some or greater cooperation between their researchers (where appropriate). There is no obligation imposed on applicants under this condition. Any cooperation that might arise from such a suggestion by the Agency would be voluntary.

4.5. Victorian Cancer Agency discretion

The lodging of an application does not confer any entitlement upon the applicant. The determination to fund is totally within the discretion of the Victorian Cancer Agency.

4.6. Privacy and confidentiality

All information contained in applications 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.

Applicants consent to the information supplied as part of their application being disclosed for the purposes of the evaluation and administration of the grant. Such disclosure includes but is not limited to members of Evaluation Panels, independent readers/assessors requested by Evaluation Panels to provide advice on the applications, the Victorian Cancer Agency Consultative Council, and relevant employees of the Victorian Government involved with the research grant process.

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.

4.7. Conflict of interest – Evaluation Panel members

The Victorian Government requires its Evaluation Panel members to act in an ethical manner, declare conflicts of interest and withdraw from considering applications where such conflict does or may exist.

5. APPLICATION PROCESS

5.1. Selection criteria

All applications will be assessed against the specific selection criteria and weightings.

	Criteria	Weighting (%)
1.	<p>Alignment with Victorian Cancer Agency mission The research meets the Victorian Cancer Agency mission and the objectives of the Research Fellowships scheme. In particular:</p> <p>Translation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the project meets the Agency's definition of translational cancer research • How the research will build translational cancer research capacity and skills in Victoria. • How clinical adoption of the research findings is anticipated to occur • Anticipated timeframe for clinical impact <p>Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of cross-disciplinary approaches with researchers, clinicians, consumers, clinician-managers, health care policy makers, industry • Collaborative arrangements, including governance of partners • How the project will involve regional clinicians, researchers and patients (where appropriate). <p>Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the results of the research will be communicated to other researchers, clinicians, students, consumers and health care decision-makers. 	25
2.	<p>Importance of project The research is designed to address an important problem or clinical need in patient care. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The significance of the clinical need being addressed in the research • How the research will result in improved patient outcomes. 	25
3.	<p>Elements of Research project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility • Rationale • Methodology • Clinical trial component (where appropriate) • Timeframes • Innovation 	20
4.	<p>Quality of Investigator/s Capacity to undertake the project, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track record of Investigator/s and research team • Support for conducting research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Existing infrastructure ○ Mentoring ○ Collaboration • Performance on previously funded Agency projects. 	30
	TOTAL	100%

6. OUTCOME OF EVALUATION

6.1. Notification and administration of funding

Offers of funding will be made to the person listed as the Applicant, as the initiator of the research. Acceptance of the grant must be approved by the Administering Organisation.

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the Department of Health, on behalf of the Victorian Cancer Agency, through the nominated Administering Organisation.

All parties should familiarise themselves with the Victorian Cancer Agency funding rules and forms, available at: <http://www.victoriacanceragency.org.au/Funding/Fundingrulesandforms/>

The Applicant and the Administering Organisation will have different obligations and responsibilities under the Victorian Cancer Agency Funding Agreement.

6.2. Applicant

The Applicant will be responsible for guiding the research and managing the research program through to completion. This will include liaising with collaborators, and coordinating reporting requirements of the grant with the administering organisation.

Where the project involves multi-site research, the Applicant must obtain written commitment from all Heads of Departments of researchers and collaborative partners not within the Administering Organisation or Research Organisation, and must assume responsibility for undertaking and completing the research.

6.3. Administering Organisation

The Administering Organisation will be responsible for administration of the project and funding, in accordance with the Victorian Cancer Agency funding agreement.

Payment of funds will be made to the Administering Organisation as set out in the funding agreement schedule. Funds must only be used for the purposes set out in the agreement.

6.4. Goods and Services Tax

GST will be paid on top of grant amounts where appropriate. This will be determined by the administering organisation's GST status. This status must be identified by the financial delegate of the Administering Organisation.

6.5. Reporting

In accordance with the Agency's funding agreements, recipients will be required to submit reports on a regular basis.

The reporting schedule is outlined in the following table.

Report	Reporting frequency	Due
Progress against milestones and/or targets	6-monthly	Every 6 months from receipt of funds
Financial reports (to be included in progress report)	Annually	Every 12 months from receipt of funds
Final report	Once only	6 months post completion of funding
Ad hoc reports	As requested by the Agency	On request with a negotiable time frame not greater than six weeks

These reports will enable the Victorian Cancer Agency to assess whether the project is proceeding satisfactorily, and that funds are being acquitted in accordance with the original application goals, as well as to ascertain the ongoing value of the Agency's funding schemes.

The Agency reserves the right to consider suspending funding if progress is considered unsatisfactory, or funds have not been utilised in accordance with the funding agreement.

6.6. Intellectual property and Commercialisation

The Victorian Cancer Agency funding agreement will reflect the Victorian Government standard approach to the management of any intellectual property (IP) generated from research funded by the Agency.

Successful applicants will be required to comply with the Agency's approach to IP when signing the funding agreement.

The complete outline of the Agency's IP and Commercialisation Policy can be found in the 'Conditions of Funding' document on the Victorian Cancer Agency website:
<http://www.victoriacanceragency.org.au/Funding/Fundingrulesandforms/>

6.7. Acknowledgement of support

Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the Victorian Cancer Agency in any publications, public announcements, scientific meeting presentations, or discussion forums pertaining to research conducted with the assistance of funding from the Agency.

Victorian Cancer Agency materials and images can be supplied for this purpose.

7. HOW TO SUBMIT

All applicants must complete a Victorian Cancer Agency Research Fellowships Application Form.

Website: www.victoriacanceragency.org.au

Email: Victorian.canceragency@health.vic.gov.au

Telephone: 03 9635 5481

Submission of applications

The Victorian Cancer Agency will accept *only* electronic submission of applications.

The Agency will *not* accept hardcopy or faxed applications.

Signatures: Electronic signatures are accepted.

Applications will be accepted if they are emailed on or before the closing date.

Applications must be received by 2pm, Thursday 9 September 2010.

Please note incomplete or late applications will not be accepted.

END OF DOCUMENT

References

1. Department of Human Services, Victoria (2008) Victoria's Cancer Action Plan 2008-2011