

Victorian Cancer Agency
**Supportive Care in Cancer
Research Program**

Guidelines for Applications
2008-09





2008-09 Victorian Cancer Agency Supportive Care in Cancer Research Funding Program

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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 and promoting innovation and excellence in cancer research to achieve this aim.

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 achieve this 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 statewide initiatives and programs
- providing high level, strategic advice to stakeholders and Government on all aspects of cancer research.

Translational Cancer Research Strategy

The Victorian Cancer Agency is currently developing the *Translational Cancer Research Strategy for Victoria 2020*. This strategy will guide the future work of the Agency and other organisations working in this arena. Priorities outlined in this strategy will also inform the selection criteria for all Victorian Cancer Agency grants.

What is Translational Research?

Translational research is defined by the National Cancer Institute as research that ***“transforms scientific discoveries arising from laboratory, clinical, or population studies into clinical applications”***, a bi-directional approach in which results from the clinic often inform further basic research.

1.1 Victoria’s Cancer Reform Agenda

The Victorian Government has developed an ambitious cancer reform agenda that seeks to improve the planning and delivery of treatment and care to patients across the State. The agenda is supported by the development and implementation of:

- Integrated Cancer Services
- Patient Management Frameworks
- A model for safety and quality in cancer care
- Priority service improvement areas
- The Victorian Cancer Agency.

The cancer reforms in Victoria represent a new approach to cancer services planning and the alignment of cancer research and services.

1.2 Funding Programs 2008-09

The Victorian Cancer Agency funding programs are designed to be complementary to the funding schemes available through the National Health Medical Research Centre (NHMRC) and the Australian Research Council (ARC). These funding programs will be provided to applicants who have not received funding from other sources for the proposal and/or where the proposal is a new research project or concept.

In 2008-09, the Victorian Cancer Agency has a range of funding programs available:

Workforce Development

- Clinical Research Fellowships
- Supportive Care Scholarship & Clinical Research Fellowship
- Link & Learn Grants
- Early Career Seed Grants

Capacity Building

- Supportive Care Capacity Building Grants
- Regional Research Capacity Building Grants
- Clinical Trials Pilot Study Grants and Capacity Building Grants
- Platform Technology Capacity Building Grants

Consumer Initiatives

- Consumer Research Grants

A second funding round for larger translational research 'tumour stream' projects and programs will be announced in late 2008 or early 2009.

For further information on these other funding program areas, please visit our website on www.victoriancanceragency.org.au

2. The 2008-09 Victorian Cancer Agency Supportive Care in Cancer Research Funding Program

One of the priority areas for the Victorian Cancer Agency is building cancer research capacity and capability in the field of supportive care, palliative care and survivorship in cancer. To address this priority, the Agency is offering Supportive Care Scholarships, Clinical Research Fellowships, and Capacity Building Grants.

Victorian Cancer Agency Supportive Care Clinical Research fellowships and scholarships are aimed at increasing the pool of experienced researchers that are able to conduct high quality research into supportive care, palliative care and survivorship – leading to immediate patient benefit.

Scholarships - Postgraduate research scholarships are available to individuals working in supportive care, palliative care and survivorship in the cancer field, wishing to undertake a full-time PhD or 'Masters by research' project in supportive care.

Applications should have a defined research project, evidence of organisational support for the project, and if appropriate evidence of release from clinical commitments to undertake research. Applications will also be considered from candidates who have already commenced their PhD or Masters.

Who can apply? Post graduate students already undertaking or wishing to undertake a full or part-time PhD or 'Masters by research' project in supportive care. It is an expectation that applicants will be mentored and supervised at the administering organisation by a supportive care practitioner with research experience.

Value range: In line with NHMRC allowance rates (refer to Appendix 1) + \$5,000 per annum available for the purchase of consumables and research costs related to the project and/or for conference travel costs. This may be paid as full-time or pro-rata for part-time recipients.

Duration: period of the research project (full-time: up to a maximum of 3 years for PhD projects and up to a maximum of 2 years for Masters by research projects, or part-time equivalent).

Clinical Research Fellowships - Supportive Care Clinical Research Fellowships are available to individuals working in supportive care, palliative care and survivorship in the cancer field, wishing to undertake research. This includes clinical and allied health practitioners.

Applications should have a defined research project and evidence of organisational support for the project. Applications may be for up to 75% full time equivalent in research (but slight variations will be considered, particularly for regional applicants) and must provide evidence of release from clinical commitments to undertake that research. The funding provided will consist of two components:

- Salary for the fellow: funding to cover either the research component of the fellowship or both the research component and the public clinical practice component. The time spent in clinical practice must be specified.
- Additional funds: to support the research project.

(In the first year, a proportion of the fellowship funding may be used for relocation expenses if applicants are relocating from overseas or interstate. For clinician-researchers based in regional Victoria a component of these fellowships may be used to support the formation of links between the regional clinician-researchers/investigators and cancer researchers with appropriate research experience, for collaboration and mentoring purposes.)

Who can apply?

- Clinical or allied health supportive care practitioners with a demonstrated capacity to undertake research (an Honours Degree as a minimum).
- Qualified supportive care researchers (with an Honours Degree as a minimum) wishing to undertake cancer related research with a strong clinical focus

It is an expectation that applicants will be mentored and supervised at the administering organisation by a supportive care practitioner and / or researcher.

Value range:

- Medical graduates: Up to \$150,000 per annum.
- Non-medical allied health graduates: Up to \$100,000 per annum.
- Applications will be considered up to 75% of salary costs (and on-costs). The salary provided will be commensurate with current public practice salary and will be based on the equivalent rate/level of the appropriate award (eg Staff Specialist Award).
- Requests for part-time fellowship support and on-costs will also be considered.
- A further \$12,500 per annum will also be available for direct research costs including patient participation costs and necessary travel to permit collaborations.

Duration: Up to 4 years

Capacity Building Grant - One-off seed funding requests will be considered for infrastructure, which may include:

- Physical infrastructure (such as software, office space, office equipment or small pieces of research equipment to enable research).
- Salary support to enable time to be dedicated to research for example, funding of a full-time equivalent position for one year
- Staffing requirements (such as part-time or full-time data managers, research assistants or pharmacists etc. It is expected that these roles would work alongside a qualified practitioner and be suitably mentored in their role).
- Training and education of staff (for example attendance at a training course, relevant conferences or workshops)

- 'Other' areas as identified by applicants that directly relate to research in supportive care, palliative care and survivorship that meet the generic and criteria of the Victorian Cancer Agency.

Value range: Up to \$75,000 (equipment can be included up to \$20,000)

Duration: 1 year

Supportive care is an umbrella term for all services, both generalist and specialist, that may be required to support people with cancer and their carers. It includes:

- self-help and support
- user involvement
- information giving
- psychological support
- pain and symptom control
- social support
- rehabilitation
- complementary therapies
- spiritual support
- palliative care and
- end of life and bereavement care

National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE). Guidance on Cancer Services: Improving Supportive and Palliative Care for Adults with Cancer. NICE: London, 2004.

<http://www.nice.org.uk/pdf/csgspmanual.pdf>

Supportive care practitioners include all members of a multidisciplinary team that have a role in the provision of supportive care. Supportive care practitioners may include: general practitioners, surgeons, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, nurses, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and a range of allied health staff that have a role in the provision of supportive care in cancer across the care continuum.

3. Victorian Cancer Agency Application Process

3.1 How to apply

Applicants for these grants must complete the 2008-09 Victorian Cancer Agency Supportive Care Clinical Research Fellowship, Scholarship or Capacity Building Grant application form (as applicable), available from:

- www.victorianscanceragency.org.au
- by calling +61 3 9635 5481
- by emailing victorian.canceragency@dhs.vic.gov.au

It is the responsibility of the lead applicant/chief investigator 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; **or**
- in hard copy to:

Victorian Cancer Agency
12 Victoria Street
Carlton VIC 3053
Fax: +61 3 9635 5320

** electronic or scanned signatures will be accepted, alternatively signature pages may be faxed or posted separately.*

Submissions MUST be received by 2pm on 30th October 2008.

Please note incomplete or late applications cannot 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 (or equivalent).
- 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:
 - o certify in the application form for a grant that they meet the outlined 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.victorianscanceragency.org.au

- o have in place policies and procedures for the management of public funds
 - o have in place policies for the proper conduct of research in relation to ethics and good scientific conduct
 - o provide adequate infrastructure to allow the research to be completed
 - o 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 gain the approval and endorsement of the head of department to carry out the proposed research within their organisation.
 - Applicants must propose projects with specific aims and outputs that are achievable in the designated timeframe, if relevant to the submission.
 - Applicants must forward a copy of their submission, or a summary of their submission, to the relevant Integrated Cancer Service (ICS) within which they will be working for their approval-in-principle. For more information on the ICS, please visit <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/cancer/integratedcancerservices.htm>

3.3 Assessment process

Upon receipt of submissions, Victorian Cancer Agency personnel will screen applications to ensure that selection and eligibility criteria have been met.

An independent selection panel will assess all submissions against the selection criteria, and will rank applications based on an assessment of merit. The panel will then make recommendation to the Victorian Cancer Agency Consultative Council, who will determine the successful applicants.

The Victorian Cancer Agency may enter into direct negotiations with the applicants to seek further information or detail in relation to specific applications. Additionally, eligible applicants may be invited to discuss their application with the selection panel. The lodging of an application does not confer any entitlement upon the applicant. The making of a recommendation is totally within the discretion of the selection panel.

3.31 Selection criteria

The Victorian Cancer Agency will provide greater consideration to projects that are innovative and non-duplicative of other efforts, have a focus on collaboration, for example between researchers and clinicians and that can show consumer involvement in the design or implementation of the project.

All applications will be evaluated against the specific aims of the funding initiative, and in addition, the criteria detailed and weighted below.

	Percentage weighting
Alignment with Victorian Cancer Agency vision / mission	
Demonstrate that the research proposal or project will result in improved patient outcomes.	20
Demonstrate (where appropriate) that the proposal or project is collaborative in nature: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o across multiple disciplinary approaches and/or multiple sites o involvement of consumers where appropriate in the design and/or completion of proposal or project 	20
Demonstrate that the proposal or project is capacity and capability building in Victorian cancer research.	20
General Criteria	
<i>Significance of the research proposal or project to cancer:</i> relevance to prevention, screening, early detection, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment and / or palliation, supportive care or survivorship of cancer.	15
<i>Quality of the research proposal or project:</i> based on feasibility, rationale, design, methodology, timeframes and value for money.	15
<i>Communication:</i> ability to communicate the results of the research proposal or project to other clinicians, researchers, students, consumers and decision makers.	5
<i>Research institution support:</i> a supportive environment for the research in terms of infrastructure should be demonstrated by the host organisation. It is expected that the host organisation will ensure that there is effective supervision and mentoring of the researcher / research group, and have a process for evaluating the effectiveness and suitability of any supervisory / mentoring arrangements.	5
<i>Other funding sources:</i> funding will only be provided to applicants who are able to demonstrate that they have not received funding from other sources for the proposal or project and / or that the proposal or project is a new concept.	5
Total	100

3.32 Conflict of interest

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

3.4 Outcome of evaluation

3.41 Notification & administration of funding

Offers of funding will be made to the applicant as the initiator of the research. Acceptance of the grant must be approved by the Administering Organisation.

The lead applicant/Chief Investigator and the administering organisation will have different obligations and responsibilities under the Victorian Cancer Agency Funding Agreement

Applicant

The applicant will be responsible for guiding the research and managing the research project through to completion, including liaising with collaborators and co-ordinating reporting requirements of the grant.

Administering Organisation

The Administering Organisation will be responsible for the receipt and distribution of funding and must provide appropriate support for the lead applicant/Chief Investigator, including appropriate infrastructure, supervision and mentoring, and processes to evaluate the effectiveness of supervision and mentoring arrangements.

In the case of collaborative grants, a head Administering Organisation must be nominated, and consented to by all researchers. This Administering Organisation will assume overall responsibility for the completion of the research.

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

3.42 Obligations of successful applications: reporting

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the Department of Human Services, on behalf of the Victorian Cancer Agency. The funding agreement will set out the reporting requirements for each research grant and the level of reporting will depend on the value and type of proposal funded. Reports will include both financial elements and reporting against milestones/targets identified in the original funding application.

3.43 Obligations of successful applications: intellectual property

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

The Victorian Cancer Agency has been established to facilitate the rapid translation of research into clinical care. The IP approach of the Agency differs from that of other government funders whose focus is to solely facilitate research. As such, the Agency requires that funding recipients assist in the delivery of this mandate by setting minimum requirements for the translation of research, including commercialisation where appropriate. Successful applicants for research proposals will be requested to agree to this approach when signing the funding agreement.

An overview of the Victorian Cancer Agency approach to IP:

- All IP created in the project or proposal is owned by the individual or organisations that the Agency funds
- Organisations are requested to provide the Agency (via the Department of Human Services) with a non-exclusive, perpetual, irrevocable, world-wide, royalty free licence (including a right to sub-licence) over the IP created in the project or proposal funded by the Agency, for non-commercial use. This licence specifically *excludes* commercialisation by the Agency *unless* the funded organisation defaults on its minimum performance criteria requirements (see below).
- There is an expectation that organisations meet minimum performance criteria with regard to commercialisation, that is that they undertake to commercialise IP created in the project or program in a manner that ensures fair and reasonable access to products. Fair and reasonable access is defined by the Agency, acting reasonably, to ensure benefit to the Victorian public.

The complete outline of the Agency's IP and Commercialisation policy can be found at www.victoriancanceragency.org.au.

3.44 Obligations of successful applications: recognition of support

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the Department of Human Services, on behalf of the Victorian Cancer Agency. The funding agreement will request that the recipient assists in the promotion of the Agency by acknowledging the support of the Agency in all publications and any public announcements pertaining to the research, or funding program. Promotional materials and/or images will be supplied for this purpose.

3.5 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 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 application, 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.

Appendix 1

Victorian Government Postgraduate Cancer Research Scholarship and Allowance Rates for 2009

Stipends	Basic Rate	Including Allowances
Standard rate for biomedical and public health scholarships (non MBBS)	\$20,008	\$25,008
Medical and public health scholarships (with MBBS)	\$29,755	\$34,755

The scholarship will increase by 2% annually to reflect increases in the cost of living.

Allowances

All scholars will receive up to \$5000 per annum to be used for the purchase of consumables and research costs related to the project, and for conference travel costs.

In addition, the candidate will also receive reimbursement of their university amenities and services fees.

An allowance for costs associated with printing of theses is also payable to a maximum of \$860 for PhD theses and \$430 for Masters theses.