

Clinician Researcher Fellowships in Cancer

Guidelines for Applicants

Background

The Victorian Government is offering a number of clinician researcher fellowships in cancer research for 2007.

These fellowships form part of the Victorian Government's commitment to cancer research and will be under the direction of the Victorian Cancer Agency once it is established in early 2007.

The Victorian Cancer Agency will be an independent organisation with responsibility for building cancer research capacity and capability across Victoria. The Victorian Cancer Agency will have a particular focus on developing a comprehensive translational research program in priority tumour streams. One of the Victorian Cancer Agency's main functions will be to align and support clinical, academic and research organisations involved in cancer research.

Purpose of the Fellowship

The clinician researcher fellowships in cancer aim to strengthen and support clinical research by providing opportunities for clinicians to develop and sustain a career in cancer research. These fellowships will increase the pool of clinician researchers who can facilitate the translation of research into improvements in clinical care. In addition, these fellowships will build local capacity in clinical cancer research and strengthen hospital/university partnerships to enhance the translation of research into practice.

Funding Entitlements

These clinician researcher fellowships will be valued at up to \$150,000 per annum. The salary provided in the fellowship will be commensurate with current public clinical practice salary and will be based on the equivalent rate/level of the appropriate award (eg: Staff Specialist Award).

The clinician researcher fellowships will commence in 2007. Each fellowship would be available for up to three years, which will allow sufficient time for research outcomes to be realised. Application should be for 75% full time equivalent in research (but slight variations will be considered, particularly for regional applicants).

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. Justification for the budget (both salary and the research project component) is required in the application submitted.

Submission and Assessment Process

Eligibility

- The Victorian Government Clinician Researcher Fellowships in Cancer are open to medical graduates interested in pursuing cancer research. Medical graduates should have a specialist qualification, a doctoral qualification (PhD, MD or equivalent) and research experience.
- The applicant should be an Australian citizen or have permanent residency status.
- The research must be undertaken within Victoria for the duration of the grant. Applicants must make their application under the auspices of a Victorian hospital, research organisation or university. Application for funding must be made as a joint application by the proposed fellow, the research organisation or university, and the clinical practice organisation. One organisation should be designated as the administering organisation.
- The administering research organisation must have in place; policies and procedures for the management of public funds, policies for the proper conduct of research in relation to ethics and good scientific conduct. The administering research organisation must also provide adequate infrastructure to allow the research to be completed.
- The organisation at which the fellow will undertake clinical practice must agree to ensure that time is made available for the agreed research component of the fellowship and that there is access to clinical practice.
- The applicant's supervisor and the head of department should approve of the applicant carrying out the proposed research within their organisation, and endorse the application.
- It is expected that all applicants will be forward a copy of their application to the relevant Integrated Cancer Service (ICS) within which they will be working. The application will be forwarded to the ICS for their information only. For more details on the Victorian Integrated Cancer Services, please see <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/cancer/integratedcancerservices.htm>

Holders of other grants

Applicants who are current holders of NHMRC and/or other research grants are eligible to apply for the Victorian Government Clinician Researcher Fellowship in Cancer. However, they must be able to demonstrate that the:

- proposed research project is new;
- proposed research project does not duplicate work funded from another source; and
- fellow is able to meet the agreed project deliverables and will have sufficient time available to commit to the project.

Application Process

Applicants must complete the application form addressing all the selection criteria below and ensuring a detailed account of the proposed research.

Selection Criteria

Fellowships will be awarded based on the following criteria:

- *Significance of the research proposal and relevance of the proposed project to cancer*

Demonstrated significance and value of the research proposal to cancer as well as the potential for the project to produce translational research outcomes. The value of the research to the fellow's current clinical practice should also be articulated.

- *Quality of the research proposal*

The quality of the research proposal, based on the project feasibility, rationale, design, methodology and timeframes.

- *Research potential of the applicant fellow*

The applicant must have a commitment to research and a well articulated career development plan. Research potential of the applicant will be judged relative to opportunity.

- *Research institution support*

A supportive environment for the research in terms of infrastructure and track record of international competitiveness 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 fellow, and have a process for evaluating the effectiveness and suitability of supervisory/mentoring arrangements.

Assessment Process

The Victorian Government Research Secretariat will review all applications for adherence to these guidelines and for application completeness.

A selection panel will assess applications for funding against eligibility requirements and selection criteria, and will score and rank applications based on:

- An assessment of merit against the stated selection criteria for both the researcher and the host research organisation.
- Consideration of three referee reports on the applicant (research potential of the applicant will be judged relative to opportunity).

Based on the information provided in the application form, eligible applicants may be invited to discuss their application with the selection panel. If required, the selection panel may also seek an independent assessment of the research proposal. Applications that the selection panel considers ineligible will not proceed further. 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.

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.

Fellowship Recipient Obligations

Reporting

Recipients will be required to submit an annual progress report at the end of each year that includes:

- Progress made on the proposed research (including details of the proposed and actual time spent on research).
- Details on how the funding was spent for that year.

The annual progress report should be approved by the supervisor/s and head of the host organisation where the research is being carried out.

The Research Secretariat may request additional reports and require the fellow and organisation/s to receive a site visit to assess their progress.

Reports must be submitted to the Victorian Government Cancer Research Secretariat within 45 days of the end of the funded year.

Where a fellowship recipient fails to submit a satisfactory report, the Victorian Government may determine that the funds were not used in accordance with the conditions applicable to the fellowship, and that all or part of the funds must be repaid. In this case, the Victorian Government may withhold the remainder of the payments for the current year/s. The Victorian Government reserves the right to recommend the suspension of an award if progress is unsatisfactory.

Recognition of support

The recipient should acknowledge the support of the Victorian Government in all publications and any public announcements pertaining to the research.

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 fellowship. Such disclosure includes but is not limited to; disclosure to members of the selection panel, independent readers/assessors requested by the selection panel to provide advice on the application, relevant employees of the Victorian Government involved with the fellowship process.

Applicants acknowledge that announcement of the fellowships will involve the dissemination of information to the public about the general nature of the research funded, the researchers involved in the project and the research organisations where the research is being carried out.

Application Form

The application form and supporting documentation should be sent to the Victorian Government Cancer Research Secretariat by 5pm on the 23 April 2007.

The Victorian Government Cancer Research Secretariat
Department of Human Services
Cancer and Palliative Care
Programs Branch, Level 19
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne 3001

Phone: + 61 3 9096 2136

Incomplete and Misleading Information

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that applications are complete and accurate. It is completely within the selection panel's discretion as to whether it will request the applicant to furnish further information after the closing date.

Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted