



Research Fellowships Guidelines 2025

RMH Research Funding Program

Date guidelines released: February 2025



The Royal
Melbourne
Hospital

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RMH Research Fellowship schemes

Introduction

This document serves to outline the overarching funding rules of the following Research Fellowship schemes offered within the **Royal Melbourne Hospital Health Research Funding Program** (RFP) administered by the Office for Research (OFR):

- » RMH DW Keir Medical Research Fellowship
- » RMH Allan Watt and Chris Geyer Fellowship in Cancer Research
- » RMH Jean Low Women in Research Fellowship

Applicants are encouraged to read these guidelines carefully before completing an application.

Background

The RMH is one of Australia's leading health care providers and a key player in hospital-based research. Our commitment to research has been demonstrated by providing RMH staff with access to research funding support through an internal contestable research funding scheme.

The RFP is financially supported by philanthropic trusts, bequests and funds raised by RMH.

About the Research Fellowship schemes

At the RMH we're inspired by our purpose – *Advancing health for everyone, every day.*

Health and medical research is integral to patient care, giving our patients access to cutting-edge treatments—investigational drugs, vaccines, medical devices—and the latest in health service improvements, preventative care, and breakthrough innovations.

The objective of the Research Fellowship schemes (RFS) are to:

- » support investigators with their research project
- » allow investigators to establish their research programs;
- » foster health and medical research for the benefit of our community;
- » invest in the highest quality researchers and projects.

The fellowships provide a vehicle for advanced training in health and medical research at the RMH.

Research Fellowship schemes on offer in 2025

The RMH DW Keir Fellowship in Medical Research

The aim of this prestigious fellowship is to provide an outstanding researcher with the opportunity to undertake research within the RMH.

The two-year fellowship offers up to \$175,000 in funding toward a research project.

One RMH DW Keir Fellowship will be awarded in the 2025 grant round.

The RMH Allan Watt and Chris Geyer Fellowship in Cancer Research

The purpose of the RMH Allan Watt and Chris Geyer Fellowship is to provide funding support to mid-career investigators conducting liver, colorectal, and brain cancer research.

This two-year fellowship, valued at up to \$100,000, covers salary and/or direct research costs toward a research project.

One (1) RMH Allan Watt and Chris Geyer Oncology Fellowship will be awarded in the 2025 grant round.

The RMH Jean Low Women in Research Fellowship

The RMH Jean Low Women in Research Fellowship is dedicated to fostering the development of women in research.

This fellowship supports excellence in clinical care for patients at the RMH by providing funding to mid-career women researchers. Applications will be accepted from the medical, nursing, allied health and scientist professions.

The two-year fellowship, valued at up to \$100,000, covers salary and/or direct research costs toward a research project.

One (1) RMH Jean Low Women in Research Fellowship will be awarded in the 2025 round in support of a project

Funding Rules and Guidelines

1. Enquiries and correspondence

All grants are administered by the Office for Research (OFR). Any enquiries regarding the administration of grants, or about the content of guidelines should be addressed to:

Title: Manager Research Endeavours
Email: ResEndeavours@mh.org.au
Phone: +61 3 9342 7950

2. Application process

All applications must be submitted electronically using SmartyGrants, an online grant management system. Applicants who are not yet registered must do so before they commence their application.

Applications must be certified and submitted by the closing date of the funding scheme. Late submissions will not be considered.

The application should contain all information necessary for assessment without the need for further written or oral explanation, or reference to additional documentation. All details included must be current at the time of application.

Help on how to complete the online application form can be found on the SmartyGrants website at: <https://applicanthelp.smartygrants.com.au/help-guide-for-applicants/>

3. Opening date

Applications open 09:00 AEST Monday, 17 February 2025.

4. Closing date and time

Applications close 23:59 AEST, Friday 4 April 2025.

5. Outcome of applications

The Office for Research will advise applicants of the outcome by July 2025.

6. Eligibility

Applications to the RFP are subject to meeting all the following eligibility requirements.

» Unless otherwise specified in the relevant

schemes, applicants must be RMH employees with a current appointment.

- » Staff who only hold honorary appointments with RMH are not eligible to apply except if otherwise specified in the scheme-specific eligibility criteria.
- » Applicants will not be considered if they have achieved the academic level of professor.
- » The applicant must be the lead author of the research proposal.
- » The project must be an RMH-led project and RMH must be sole or equal author of the protocol.

If an applicant is awarded a fellowship and the proposal is found to be contrary to this eligibility criterion, the OFR will terminate the award and all funding must be repaid.

- » Applicants must be Australian Citizens or Permanent Residents or hold an appropriate working Visa that allows the applicant time and opportunity to complete the study.
- » The majority of the research must be completed within the RMH.
- » Co-investigators may work at other institutions.
- » A research project can be submitted to either the Grants or Fellowship schemes – but not to both.
- » Applicants cannot hold concurrent RMH RFP fellowships (as distinct from grants) as the lead investigator (i.e., CIA). Current recipients may apply so long as the existing fellowship is concluded by July 2025.

Multiple applications to fellowship schemes

- » Applicants may submit only one application per round as the lead applicant (CIA).
- » Applicants can nominate to be considered for any of the different fellowship schemes in the one application so long as they meet each of the scheme specific eligibility criteria.
- » An application to any or all the fellowship schemes will be counted as one application.

Previous recipients of RFP awards

Previous recipients of RFP grants and fellowships who have not submitted progress reports and/or final reports or who have not submitted adequately detailed progress and final reports may be deemed ineligible. If you are unsure, contact the OFR to check your eligibility.

SCHEME SPECIFIC CRITERIA

In addition to the already prescribed criteria, further eligibility requirements and conditions apply to the respective schemes as described below:

DW Keir Fellowship in Medical Research

- » RMH employees
- » For mid-career researchers at 5 to 15 years post PhD or equivalent.
- » Previous recipients of the DW Keir Fellowship are not eligible to apply.

The Allan Watt and Chris Geyer Oncology Research Fellowship

- » RMH employees
- » mid-career clinicians to undertake research in the areas of liver or colorectal oncology and brain oncology
- » 5 to 15 years post PhD or equivalent
- » Priority will be given to colorectal and/or liver cancer research projects in the 2025 round.
- » Previous recipients of the Alan Watt and Chris Geyer Oncology Research Fellowship are not eligible to apply.

RMH Jean Low Women in Research Fellowship

- » RMH staff, identifying as female, employed in the Allied Health, Nursing, Medicine or Science professions.
- » 5 to 15 years post PhD or equivalent

Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements may be removed from the assessment process.

7. Consumer and community participation

Researchers are advised to consider the benefits of actively engaging consumers in their proposed research. Applicants can refer to the NHMRC and Consumer Health Forum of Australia Ltd *Statement on Consumer and Community Involvement in Health and Medical Research* which can be found on the NHMRC website at:

<https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/consumer-and-community-engagement>.

8. Acceptance of award

Successful applicants must accept an offer of award within one month upon receipt of the offer. Receipt meaning date offer was emailed to the applicant.

To accept an offer of award, grant recipients need to sign the *RMH Grant Recipient Agreement*.

9. Conditions of award

All awards are offered in accordance with the conditions specified in the *RMH Grant Recipient Agreement*.

In signing an *RMH Grant Recipient Agreement*, the applicant is agreeing to abide by all the conditions including but not limited to abidance to the following policies of RMH:

- » Research (MH18); and
- » Financial Management Policy (MH08); and
- » People and Culture Policy (MH09).

10. Intellectual property

The RMH will manage Project Intellectual Property (IP) generated as a result of the funded project in accordance with RMH's IP policy (MH12).

Project IP excludes copyright in any student thesis.

11. Use of funds

Funding provided by the OFR for a grant activity must be spent on costs directly incurred for that project. An accurate budget must be provided in the application detailing the anticipated expenses to cover the cost of the project.

SALARY SUPPORT

Applicants can request salary support. The amount awarded must cover all staff costs referred to as Total Employment Costs (TEC).

Oncosts are direct costs associated with salary, including superannuation, sick leave, payroll tax etc. and must be included your budget. When calculating employment costs at RMH, ensure you include base salary plus 33% oncosts.

When budgeting, applicants must factor in annual salary increases for the duration of the award.

Detailed information is provided in [Section 4. Budget](#) in *Advice & Instructions to Applicants*.

12. Relative to opportunity

All applications submitted to the RFP are assessed “relative to opportunity”. This reflects our position that assessments should accurately assess an applicant’s track record and associate productivity relative to stage of career.

Circumstances considered under relative to opportunity include, but are not limited to:

- » Amount of time spent as an active researcher
- » Career Disruptions. For further details see [13. Career disruption](#)
- » Clinical, administrative or teaching workload
- » Relocation of an applicant and their research laboratory or clinical practice
- » Research output and productivity commensurate with time spent employed in other sectors

13. Career disruption

A career disruption involves a prolonged interruption to an applicant’s capacity to work due to:

- » Parental Leave
- » Major illness/injury
- » Carer Responsibilities

Interruptions must involve either a continuous absence from work for periods of 28 calendar days or more and/or long-term partial return to work that has been formalised with the applicant’s manager.

The period of career disruption may be used:

- » to determine an applicant’s eligibility for a scheme
- » to allow for the inclusion of additional track record information for an assessment of an application
- » for consideration by the panel during their deliberations.

14. Duration of award

All 2025 fellowships are 24-month awards and it is intended that funds are expended within this period.

15. Approvals to be obtained prior to funding commencing

Funding will not commence until all relevant approvals, particularly in relation to ethics and governance, have been received and lodged with

the OFR prior to the commencement of the research.

16. Varying a Grant

Variations occur when a grant needs modification from the original proposal submitted. This may include changes in personnel or an amendment to the budget.

Extensions to a project end date will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, with a maximum extension of 12 months. Amendments due to Parental Leave requests may differ (see [18. Parental Leave](#)).

Requests to amend the terms and conditions of award must be made by email to the OFR requesting a Grant Variation Form.

17. Reporting

Annual progress and financial reports will be required. All information provided to the OFR in progress and final reports may be used for internal reporting and any RMH publications including the organisation’s Annual Report.

Where an applicant fails to submit satisfactory reports as required, the OFR may terminate funding and determine that all or part of the funding must be repaid. Alternatively, the OFR may withhold the remainder of the applicant’s funding under the scheme.

In addition, an applicant who fails to submit satisfactory reports may not be eligible to apply for any future funding rounds of the RFP.

18. Parental leave

Recipients of fellowships who wish to apply for Parental Leave should contact their departmental managers. Once Parental Leave has been approved, inform the OFR in writing requesting a Grant Variation form.

The variation may include a request to extend the duration of the project for up to 12 months.

19. Review process

The OFR oversees the RFP and employs a grant review process with external representation. Applications are required to meet eligibility requirements as set out in these guidelines and are assessed against the assessment criteria.

Applications will be reviewed and scored by Peer Reviewers. High scoring applications will then be

ranked by the Grant Review Panel. The Grant Review Panel will comprise of:

- » An external clinician-researcher who will Chair the panel
- » A consumer representative
- » Up to four RMH clinician-researchers from various disciplines

Funding will be awarded to the highest-ranking applications in each scheme.

The sequence of events in the peer review process is as follows:

1. Applications received
2. Reviewed for compliance
3. Applications are assessed and adjudicated by a Grant Review Panel with internal and external representation.
4. Applicants advised of outcome

20. Conflict of interest

The OFR requires Peer Review participants to disclose interests, perceived or actual. Peer Reviewers determined to have a high level of conflict of interest will not participate in the review of that application.

The OFR seeks to ensure that objectivity, impartiality and integrity are maintained throughout the assessment process.

21. The Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed by Peer Reviewers who will assess applications to the extent to which they address the assessment criteria below and the [Scoring Matrix](#) in Appendix A.

- » Track Record relative to opportunity (30%)
- » Quality of the Research Proposal (30%)
- » Significance and innovation to health (15%)
- » Feasibility (15%)
- » Consumer and Community Involvement (10%)

How to apply

Advice and instructions to applicants

General information

The application should contain all information necessary for assessment without further written or oral explanation or reference to additional documents.

Applications must comply with all content and formatting requirements.

Incomplete or non-compliant applications may be assessed as ineligible.

Starting a new application

To start your application, visit the [RMH Research Fellowships](#) page on the RMH website, read the essential documentation, and then click the “Apply Now” button.

Each application will be assigned a unique application identification number. Use this ID number to identify your application in any correspondence when referring to your application.

There are six sections to be completed in the application:

- 1: Project Title and Investigator Details
- 2: Project Details
- 3: Internal Support and Timeline
- 4: Budget
- 5: Clearances
- 6: Certification

Section 1: Project title & investigator details

Scientific title

The scientific title will be used to identify the application at all times during the assessment process and should accurately describe the nature of the project.

Simplified title

The simplified application title is usually used in media releases. It should be easily understood by the general public while still conveying the general nature of the project.

Scheme selection

Select the schemes to which you are seeking to apply. You may apply to all fellowships on the one form so long as you meet the eligibility criteria for each scheme.

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR DETAILS (CIA) AND TRACK RECORD

Provide the lead applicant's name (CIA), contact details and profile data. An RMH Employee ID number is required to be eligible to apply for most schemes. Refer to the scheme's eligibility criteria.

Provide details of **all your current appointments**, and relevant past appointments (2020 onwards).

Indicate if you are claiming Relative to Opportunity and/or Career Disruption. Provide details if applicable.

Provide details of your qualifications, grants and awards.

Publications

Upload a PDF listing your publications which have been published in refereed journals. Sort the publications under the following headings:

- » Journal Articles
- » Chapters
- » Books

Only include articles which have been published or accepted for publication. The date of acceptance should be provided for papers not yet published.

Do not include:

- » papers submitted for publication but not yet accepted; or
- » abstracts

Achievements

Comment on your most significant achievements over the course of your research career. Outline activities that demonstrate your leadership qualities.

Funding support

Provide details of any grants held within the last five years (2020 onwards).

REFEREES

Provide contact details for two (2) referees and append their referee reports in support of your application considering the following:

- » Research success
- » Leadership and mentoring
- » Benefit to health outcomes
- » Benefit to the Royal Melbourne Hospital

It is preferable that at one referee is internal and one referee is external to the RMH. Both letters must be provided on official letterhead and uploaded to your application as a single PDF file.

Section 2: Project details

RESEARCH TEAM

Provide name, current appointment, and affiliated institution of each member of the research team.

GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

Describe how your research will translate into clinical practice

Provide an action plan detailing how you intend to translate the research findings into practice.

Grant Proposal

All applicants are required to use the updated [Grant Proposal Template](https://www.thermh.org.au/files/documents/Research/grant-proposal-template.docx). Download the latest template from the OFR website at: <https://www.thermh.org.au/files/documents/Research/grant-proposal-template.docx>

The Grant Proposal must be uploaded to the online application form in PDF format and must not exceed 2 Mb in size.

Components	Limit
Lay Summary	250 words
Research Proposal	4 pages
References	2 pages
Team quality & capability relevant to proposal	1 page
Consumer and community engagement	½ page

Each component of the Grant Proposal described below should start at the top of a new page, as formatted in the template.

Lay summary (250 words)

Provide a description of your study using lay terms. Include the following information as a guide:

- » Brief background/context
- » Aim of study
- » How you will go about the research
- » The information the research will provide

Research proposal (4 pages max.)

All scientific information relating to your proposal must be contained in this section.

Your Research Proposal should provide enough information so that the research approach can be assessed by the reviewers by including the essential components that may include the following, depending on the type of research:

Where relevant, clinical trial and cohort studies should consider the following items in their Research Proposal:

- » Is the design of the study is appropriate?
- » Justify the need for the clinical trial
- » Explain the appropriateness of participants
- » Has the study design been informed by a systematic review?
- » Controlled studies should demonstrate the appropriateness of the assignment of interventions.
- » Does it include an adequate (defensible) sample size?

Refer to [Appendix 2: Research Proposal Components](#) for a description of elements to be included in the Research Proposal

References (2 pages max.)

Provide a list of all references cited in the application using a standard journal format

Include only references to cited work.

Team quality and capability (1 page max.)

Provide a summary of quality and capability of the team relevant to this proposal by providing details of the following:

- » Team's expertise and roles relevant to the proposed project
- » Team's influence in this specific field of research
- » How the team will work together to achieve the project aims

Consumer and Community Engagement (½ page max.)

Describe the involvement of consumers in your research project. What model of engagement has been/will be adopted?

Applicants are asked to reference Appendices 2 and/or 3 in the [Statement on Consumer and Community Involvement in Health and Medical Research](#) to describe the involvement of consumers and community.

Diagrams and Images

Diagrams and images may be included in the Research Proposal and must be within the 4-page limit.

Other Funding Opportunities

Indicate whether you give permission for the OFR to pass your application to the RMH Foundation for alternate funding opportunities.

Broad Research Area

Select the area of research most relevant to this project.

Broad Health Area

Select the area of health most relevant to this project.

Section 3 : Internal Support and Timeline

INFRASTRUCTURE

Host Department

Select from the list the RMH department where the research will be carried out. If the department is not listed in the drop down list, please contact the OFR.

Feasibility

Provide evidence that there is infrastructure support to carry out the research project within the host department at no further cost to RMH. Advise in detail of the departmental and organisational support and facilities available that will enable you to conduct and complete your project.

TIMELINE

Commencement Date

Enter the proposed start date of the project. Note that the final date by which the project must commence is **1 January 2026**. The end date of your award will be 24 months from the start date.

Project Milestones

Provide information on the project milestones per each quarter over the duration of the project. Outline the activities or targets that will have been achieved per each quarter.

Section 4: Budget

PROPOSED BUDGET

Separate budgets must be supplied for each scheme with different dollar values.

Provide details of the direct research costs (DRC) in the table for the scheme(s) to which you have applied.

DRC are costs integral to achieving the approved research objectives of a grant. Costs must directly address the research objectives and relate to the plan.

If assistance is required then clarification should be sought from the OFR.

The following are examples of items that can be included in the budget:

- » Protected time (salary)*
- » Personnel costs*
- » Equipment that is essential for the project to proceed
- » Patient reimbursements
- » Laboratory consumables
- » Printed materials
- » Survey or Field expenses
- » Purchase and housing costs for animals

*When outlining salary in your budget, you must include the classification, full-time equivalent/hours per week, duration of employment, salary plus 33% oncosts. Salaries should also take into consideration annual increments for the duration of the project.

Items that **cannot** be included in the budget are:

- » Institutional overheads and administrative charges; and
- » Indirect costs of research.

Justification of Budget

Explain the necessity of all the items in the budget. If the budget is more than the award amount, explain how the project will be completed with the limited funding.

Provide details of other sources of funding if applicable.

Section 5: Clearances

Indicate which ethics clearances are required for your project and whether you currently hold those clearances. If so, please scan the approval certificates into one PDF file and upload to your application.

If ethics clearances are required but have not yet been obtained, you need to confirm that you will gain approval.

Applicants are expected to have obtained ethics and governance approval by 1 January 2026.

Section 6: Certification

Applicant Certification

Complete the Applicant Certification section confirming you agree to all conditions outlined in by ticking each box. If you cannot meet any one or more of the conditions, you will not be able to be considered for funding.

Instructions for obtaining Head of Department or Division certification

IMPORTANT: Submit your application only after all required certifications have been obtained.

1. Complete all sections of the application, including the Applicant certification
2. Download a PDF of the Application and the Research Proposal.
3. Download the Certification Form and enter the Application details (Application ID, CIA, Project title, etc).
4. Provide all the documents to the appropriate approver to review the application and sign the Certification Form.
5. Once the certification has been signed by the required parties, scan and attach to your application.

Certification by Head of Host Department need only be completed where the department in which the research is being carried out differs to the Applicant's own department.

Submission Details

When you are confident that all the information is correct and you have uploaded all necessary attachments, submit your form.

After you have submitted the application form, you will receive an email confirming receipt. It is

recommended you save a copy of your application for your records.

Applications must be received by midnight AEST, Friday 4 April 2025.

Frequently Asked Questions

I don't know how to use the SmartyGrants system. Where can I get help?

SmartyGrants, the new online grant application service is easy to use. If you need help, an online guide is available at: <http://help.smartygrants.com.au/display/help/Help+Guide+for+Applicants>.

Can I submit a late application?

No. The online application is automated and late applications will not be accepted.

I don't have an appointment at RMH, am I able to apply for any of the Fellowships?

Only current RMH employees can apply to the schemes subject to meeting all other eligibility criteria.

When will I be notified of the outcome of my application?

Applicants will be notified by email in July 2025.

I think my project will not start until January 2026, can I still submit an application for this funding round?

All successful applicants must be able to start their project on or before 1 January 2026.

My project requires ethics approval. Am I still able to submit an application without an approval?

Yes however as per policy and in accordance with the *National Statement*, research activities cannot commence until ethics and governance approvals have been obtained.

APPENDIX A: Scoring Matrix

CRITERIA	%
<p>CIA TRACK RECORD, RELATIVE TO OPPORTUNITY</p> <p>Does the applicant have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the expertise and experience to conduct the research? i.e. Does their track record confirm their capacity to conduct the research? » research output relative to opportunity? (Publications, presentations, etc.) <p>There is evidence that the applicant, relative to opportunity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » contributed to knowledge in their field that is recognised nationally or internationally; » developed or improved health or health systems, services, policy, programs or clinical practice that then had a significant impact on health and/or social well-being of the end-user or public. 	30%
<p>RESEARCH PROPOSAL</p> <p><i>Aims and hypothesis</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Has the method/framework/approach been partially tested? » What outcome is sought in the proposed study? » What exactly is the outcome measure? » Is it well integrated and adequately developed? <p><i>Background</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Is there sufficient information about the scope of the problem? » Does the background make a good case for the relevance of the experiments? <p><i>Research Plan: Study Design and Method</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What are the strengths and weaknesses of the study and its design? » Have any major pitfalls or problems been overlooked? » Have alternative approaches been considered? » Is the plan well informed by knowledge of the literature? » Is the design appropriate for the aims of the research? » Will the research plan successfully address the stated hypothesis or research objectives? 	30%
<p>REACH, SIGNIFICANCE AND INNOVATION TO HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Does the study address an important problem? » Will the work or research have an impact? » Does the research demonstrate Research Impact? » Is the proposed research new/novel or creative? » How will scientific knowledge be advanced? » What will be the effect of the study on the concepts or methods that drive this field? » Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches or methods? » Are the aims original / innovative? 	15%
<p>FEASIBILITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Are the goals concrete and achievable? » Is the infrastructure required to achieve the study available? <p><i>Team Quality</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Does the research team have the appropriate skills and expertise? » Is the team capable of achieving the goals? 	15%
<p>CONSUMER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (½ PAGE MAX)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Has there been engagement with consumers/community in the design of the project? » Is the model of engagement with consumers/community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partner; Expert; Adviser; Advocate; Personal Engagement 	10%

APPENDIX B: Research Proposal Components

Components	Properties
Aims	Describe the specific aims of the project, including a clear statement of the hypotheses to be tested
Background	Provide a rationale for the project
Research Plan – methods and techniques to be used	<p>Outline the research plan in detail, including the following where appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detailed description of the experiment design • techniques to be used • details and justification of controls • details for appropriate blinding • strategies for randomisation and/or stratification • justification of sample-size, including power calculation • justification of statistical methods • strategies to ensure that the experimental results will be robust, unbiased and reproducible • details to achieve gender balance of participants, and male and female cell and animal models, including justification where it is unwarranted • ethical implications the research may have • community involvement and/or plans to transfer knowledge to stakeholders or into practice • expected outcomes of the research project.
Outcomes and Significance	Describe the importance of the problem to be researched, the planned outcome of the research plan, and the potential significance of the research.



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