2022

HEALTH+MEDICAL RESEARCH

Early-Mid Career Researcher Grants Round 5

Microbiomics

Guidelines

NSW GOVERNMENT

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Further copies of this document can be downloaded from the NSW Health website at:
https://www.medicalresearch.nsw.gov.au/early-mid-career-fellowships/

SHPN (OHMR) 221053

Call for applications

NSW Health invites eligible individuals to apply for **Round 5 of the Early-Mid Career (EMC) Researcher Grants** focused on microbiomics. This priority research area builds on NSW leadership in genomics and proteomics and the grants will support the development of a pipeline of researchers ready to excel in the rapidly expanding field of microbiomics.

Funding for this grant will be provided for three years from 2023. All researchers are encouraged to apply, including clinician researchers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, researchers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and primary carers who have experienced career disruptions.

For the purpose of this Grant, an EMC researcher is defined as a researcher who is within 15 years of the conferral of their PhD (or equivalent) on 15 February 2023 and has not reached full professorial level. PhD students who expect to have their PhD awarded by 15 June 2023 are eligible to apply.

Objectives

EMC Researcher Grants aim to:

- fund research excellence among EMC researchers in NSW
- fund research that improves wellbeing and health outcomes for patients
- embed high-quality, innovative research in the NSW health system
- encourage collaboration, leadership and capacity building in the NSW research environment
- support EMC researchers to gain research grants and fellowships from bodies such as the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australian Research Council (ARC) and Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)
- bridge the gap between research, policy and practice to increase and document research impact and translation.

Eligible areas of research

Funding will support EMC researchers to undertake innovative research in microbiomics. Eligible areas of research include basic, clinical, computational and/or bioinformatics research in host-microbe interactions and their contribution to risk, prevention or treatment of disease in humans.

Only research projects that have potential to improve wellbeing and health outcomes for patients will be considered eligible.

Indicative Grant timeline

Stage	Date
Applications open	December 2022
Applications close	12PM (AEDT) 15 February 2023
Outcomes notified	May 2023
Grants Paid	June 2023
Research Commences	1 July 2023

Clinician researchers

Clinicians, including medical, nursing, and allied health professionals, are encouraged to apply.

Clinicians may use up to 50% of the grant to backfill their clinical role, with appropriate justification. If the grant is to be used for this purpose the application must be signed by the appropriate department head in the local health district or specialty health network. The salary limits are as follows:

- Clinician – medical: Salary limit – up to 0.6 FTE Staff Specialist or Visiting Medical Officers.
- Clinician – non-medical: Salary limit – up to 0.6 FTE as per Allied Health (including Pharmacist and radiographers) and Nursing awards.

Funding amounts

EMC Researcher grants have a 3-year duration. **A maximum total grant amount of $500,000 will be awarded.**

Grants are for research projects or programs and can cover a combination of salaries of the EMC researcher, the research team (clinical and/or non-clinical), backfill for clinicians to quarantine research time, consumables and equipment.

PhD candidates

Applicants who are currently enrolled in a PhD may apply if the date of award is expected to be before 15 June 2023. Evidence of award of the PhD must be provided to NSW Health prior to the announcement of funding. Note that evidence of submission of a PhD is not sufficient.

Funding conditions and exclusions

1. Research funded through an EMC Researcher Grant must be conducted in the NSW health system or affiliated organisation (university, medical research institute, industry partners).

The research may be part of a national or international collaboration but NSW Health grant funds may only be spent on the research conducted in NSW.

2. EMC Researcher Grants must not be spent on capital works, general maintenance costs, organisational infrastructure or overheads, telephone/communication systems, basic office equipment, such as desks and chairs, rent and the cost of utilities.
3. Applicants are required to declare the source, duration and level of any funding already held for research in the subject area of the application. Applications must clearly describe the purpose of the additional funding and justify that the additional research will be complementary but not duplicative.
4. Funding is conditional on the EMC researcher and the Chief Executive(s) of the host/administering organisation signing the declaration on the application form, which outlines the host/administering organisation's obligations to the EMC researcher.
5. Researchers may submit a maximum of one application as Chief Investigator. Researchers may be named on additional applications as Associate Investigators or team members but not as Chief Investigators.
6. Up to four applications will be accepted per host organisation.
7. Grants provided under this funding round are one-line grants, not fellowships.
8. Successful applicants must apply for federal funding (NHMRC, MRFF, ARC etc) at least once during the funded period and provide evidence of the application, scores, feedback and outcome to NSW Health.
9. Recipients of any previous OHMR EMC Researcher Grant are not eligible to apply for funding under this Round focused on Microbiomics. Previous OHMR PhD Scholarship supervisors or recipients that meet the definition of EMC Researcher are eligible to apply.
10. To maximise benefits arising from the public funding of research, all recipients of EMC Researcher Grants must comply with all elements of NHMRC's Open Access Policy and the *National Principles of Intellectual Property Management for Publicly Funded Research* as a condition of funding. In addition, intellectual property (IP) arrangements should be agreed between all research partners and organisations. IP arrangements must cover both background IP and IP that is developed during the project. IP arrangements should consider the contributions of all parties. The arrangements should be detailed in the application.

Program Logic and research impact

Applicants are required to submit a Program Logic diagram with their application, including project aim, inputs, activities, outputs, and expected outcomes and impacts.

Note that outcomes and impacts may not be realised during the funded period, and they may be projected to occur in the future. Particularly for basic science, the 'next users' who are responsible for taking the research findings to the next step for translation should be involved from the start of the project so they understand the research and can move the findings towards translation.

Research Impact Assessment

The Program Logic will be used to optimise the probability of research impact. If the research is funded, the Program Logic will guide the measurement of impact throughout the project and at its conclusion.

Research impact will be considered across five domains:

Domain 1: Advancing Knowledge

- New interventions, treatments, diagnostics or drug targets
- New clinical or medical prototypes
- Peer-reviewed publications and presentations at conferences
- Media coverage and other non-peer-reviewed publications.

Domain 2: Capacity and Capability Building

- New partnerships leveraged
- Training and professional development
- Research students supported.

Domain 3: Policy and Practice

- Instances where research findings are considered in policy development
- Instances of change in clinical practice
- Instances of new health technology or new treatments used in clinical care.

Domain 4: Health and Community

- Improved health outcomes, including:
    - Change in the time to develop an outcome
    - Change in the likelihood of an outcome occurring.

Domain 5: Economic

- Research jobs created and sustained
- Patents and commercialisation
- Value of leveraged research funding (external grants awarded due to NSW Health funding)
- Reduction in cost of delivering care
- Potential for return on investment.

Research Translation

All research projects should have the aspiration and potential to lead to changes in clinical practice or policy in the short and/or long term, even if not during the funded period. Applications must clearly describe:

- the long-term goal and clinical significance of the research
- the expected pathway for this to occur (note this may not be linear)
- how the researchers will engage with 'next users', i.e., research partners and other stakeholders who will take the research to the next step on the translation pathway.

An example translation pathway is at **Appendix A**. Applicants may use their preferred framework.

Priority populations

It is important that all research projects consider and respond to the distribution of the burden of disease within the population and the needs of higher risk and priority populations where appropriate. These may include women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, socio-economically disadvantaged groups and people living in regional and remote areas.

Relevant partners should be engaged early to ensure that the research design and conduct will be effective and appropriate for these population groups.

Research projects with a primary focus on Aboriginal health or involving Aboriginal people as participants should attach a completed Aboriginal Health Impact Statement to their application, available here.

Commercialisation Training

NSW Health has developed a training program in commercialisation, which grant recipients are required to complete during the funding period. The training will provide researchers with a high-level understanding of industry, its structure, corporate roles and the process of taking a product from a concept through to market. Specifically, researchers will understand the essential steps required to create successful therapeutics from a formulation, manufacturing, regulatory and reimbursement strategy point of view. At the completion of the course researchers will understand how to construct a target product profile and associated business case for a new therapeutic product.

Relative to opportunity policy

Applicants may present a declaration and/or evidence of circumstances that have affected the applicant's research productivity for consideration by the review panel. These circumstances might include career disruption due to pregnancy, illness/ injury and/ or carer responsibilities, as well as other relative to opportunity considerations. Please refer to the NHMRC relative to opportunity policy here.

Research collaborations and partnerships

Applicants are encouraged to identify and engage relevant stakeholders, partners and networks who will provide a meaningful contribution to delivery of the research project and implementation of outcomes.

Partners may include:

- NSW Health system partners including NSW Ministry of Health, Pillars, and statewide health services
- local health districts and specialty health networks
- Advanced Health Research Translation Centres and Centres for Innovation in Regional Health
- universities and medical research institutes
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services
- Primary Healthcare Networks
- research networks
- non-government organisations
- industry
- consumers and patients.

Partnerships may vary in type and intensity from informal arrangements such as the provision of occasional advice, to membership of the research team or project steering committee, to formal partnerships that are the subject of a written agreement between the parties.

Where an industry organisation proposes to host the EMC Researcher at their site, the following conditions apply and NSW Health reserves the right to cancel the funding agreement with the host/ administering organisation and recoup funds if they are not met:

- the host/administering organisation must enter into a legally binding agreement with the partnering industry organisation to ensure their obligations are met including the following conditions:
    - accommodate and support the EMC Researcher and ensure that the EMC Researcher has the support of the Industry Organisation's Chief Executive or Executive Director
    - meet all standard employer responsibilities and obligations in accordance with relevant regulations and value gender equity in practice
    - provide cash and/or in-kind contributions to support the project, and
    - detail intellectual property arrangements where appropriate (see page 4).

Submission of applications

Applicants must use the **2022 NSW Health EMC Microbiomics Grant Application Form** and attach any required supporting documentation. The form is available here.

Applications must be approved by an authorised senior representative (Research Director, Dean of Research etc.) and submitted by the host organisation or administering organisation.

Complete applications must be submitted by email to MOH-OHMRGrants@health.nsw.gov.au by 12PM AEDT on Wednesday 15 February 2023. All applications will receive an email acknowledging receipt within 48 hours. It is the applicant's responsibility to follow up if no acknowledgement is received. Please note that the maximum file size is 20MB. Larger files will be rejected by the NSW Health server.

The confirmation email should be retained as this may be required by NSW Health as evidence of submission. If an email confirming receipt of the application is not available, no further correspondence regarding the application will be entered into.

Please refer to www.medicalresearch.nsw.gov.au for relevant program dates and updates to the program.

Any queries regarding this Program may be directed by email to MOH-OHMRGrants@health.nsw.gov.au.

Eligibility criteria

Applications must meet all eligibility criteria.

EMC Researcher Requirements

Based in NSW and employed by an eligible host/administering organisation

The EMC researcher must reside in or plan to move to NSW and be employed by an eligible host/ administering organisation (see page 7) for the duration of the grant.

Submit a complete application

The EMC researcher must fully complete the application form, attach all relevant and required documentation, sign the declaration on the form and include certification from the host/administering organisation.

Australian citizen, permanent residency status or appropriate visa

The researcher must be an Australian citizen, a permanent resident of Australia or have an appropriate working visa for the full term of the Grant. Researchers who are neither Australian citizens nor permanent residents must provide evidence of residency status and the right to remain in Australia for the duration of the funding period, certified by a Justice of the Peace (JP) or equivalent. Note that for electronic documents, an official VEVO statement is sufficient; JP certification is not required. Australian Citizens and Permanent Residents are also required to provide evidence.

Classified as an EMC researcher

The EMC researcher must have worked less than 15 years postdoctoral and not reached full professorial level. Associate Professors are eligible to apply if less than 15 years post doctorate.

Host Organisation Requirements

The EMC researcher must by employed by the host organisation for the duration of the grant, as this is where most of the research is to be conducted. The host organisation must be based in NSW and must

conduct health and medical research. The host organisation must be one of the following:

- university
- independent medical research institute
- not-for-profit organisation that conducts health and medical research in NSW
- a local health district or other public health organisation.

The host organisation is limited to submitting a total of four applications.

If the host organisation is a NSW Health organisation, grant funds must be paid to an Administering Organisation that can manage funds across financial years as the full funding amount will be paid upfront. Please refer to Administering Organisation Requirements.

The EMC researcher's host organisation must provide appropriate infrastructure support for the research project, such as wet/dry lab space, computer equipment, and desk space.

An authorised representative of the host organisation is required to sign the application form indicating support for the application and to certify that the organisation complies with the requirements of the grant.

Clinician Scientists may undertake clinical work separately from where research is undertaken. If the grant is to be used to quarantine research time and backfill a clinical position, the application must also be endorsed by the Chief Executive/Executive Director of the organisation where clinical duties are undertaken.

Administering Organisation Requirements

An administering organisation is only required where the funds are held by a separate organisation to the host organisation.

In such cases, the administering organisation will enter into the funding agreement with NSW Health, manage the funds, submit financial reports and coordinate other reporting requirements as outlined in the funding agreement.

Grant funds must be paid to an administering organisation that can manage funds across financial years as the full funding amount will be paid upfront.

The administering organisation must be:

- a university
- a medical research institute, or
- a not-for-profit organisation that conducts health and medical research in NSW.

Note: For-profit industry organisations are not eligible to be host or administering organisations or to apply for funding.

Ethics and Regulation

The host organisation (and where appropriate the administering organisation) must certify that the project has received all appropriate research ethics and regulatory approvals and must ensure these are maintained as required for the duration of the grant. All organisations and personnel contributing to the project must:

- have familiarised themselves with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, the *National Statement of the Ethical Conduct of Human Research*, the *Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* (including but not limited to the application of the 3Rs 'replacement', 'reduction' and 'refinement' at all stages of animal care and use) or their replacements and other relevant National Health and Medical Research Council policies concerning the conduct of research and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with those policies;
- comply with any requirements of relevant Commonwealth or State or Territory laws; and
- comply with any requirements of regulatory bodies that have jurisdiction over the project. This includes, but is not limited to, the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator.

Selection criteria

All applications for funding that meet the eligibility criteria will be assessed against the following selection criteria. In addressing the selection criteria, applicants should specifically highlight the relevance to microbiomics research.

Applications should be written in plain English, as applications may be reviewed by a panel member with expertise in a different area to that of the application.

Chief Investigator (40%)

Applicants will be assessed on:

- academic and relevant clinical qualifications
- research, clinical and industry experience, including demonstrated capacity to work in multidisciplinary teams

- skills and experience directly related to the topic area(s) and methodology of the research project
- track record in research and research impact, relative to opportunity
- potential for the Chief Investigator to leverage this grant to gain research funding and fellowships from other funding bodies.

Research project (40%)

A clear and detailed description and justification for the project is required, including aims, methodology, and expected outputs and outcomes. The research project will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- evidence of a gap in knowledge, provided by prior systematic reviews and/or gap analyses, and a clearly articulated need for the research
- how the proposed project will advance existing knowledge and why this is important
- the extent to which the proposed research is innovative and novel
- clarity of the research aim(s) and research question(s)
- strength, rigour and appropriateness of the research methodology in achieving the aims of the project
- consideration of priority population groups if relevant
- program logic, with the potential outputs and outcomes of the research and how the research will improve clinical practice and/or patient outcomes in the short or long term
- feasibility of successfully delivering the research project within the proposed timeframe
- the plan for research translation and impact, including consideration of data management and access, commercialisation and intellectual property where appropriate
- engagement with appropriate partners to support translation where appropriate
- the skills of the proposed research team are relevant to the project, and each team member has the ability to contribute meaningfully to the research
- relationship to existing research undertaken by the host organisation and the research team
- strong project governance structure with evidence of appropriate and sustainable relationships with key stakeholders including those who will likely use the research findings

Budget

The budget should be detailed and well-justified and will be assessed on:

- appropriateness and purpose of each line item
- existing funding for the research, and how this relates to the additional funding requested
- other contributions and support for the project

Skill development and capacity building (20%)

All EMC applicants will be assessed on skill development activities undertaken to date, and proposed skill development during the period of the grant. Activities undertaken should align with the researcher's vision for their research career.

Examples of skill development activities that may be undertaken include:

- leading or participation in clinical quality assurance activities
- receiving regular formal mentoring
- attending training, for example in research skills or research leadership
- taking on leadership roles
- mentoring or supervising junior researchers
- involvement in collaborations, for example with other research groups or policy agencies
- active roles in relevant networks, advisory committees or governance groups
- collaboration with clinicians and others involved in translation of research findings

EMC researchers in the 8-15 years post-PhD category should also include reference to leadership potential and capacity development, including:

- recruitment and retention of research staff
- building a program of research
- leading collaborations within NSW, Australia and internationally
- leading applications for national grant funding
- lead roles in relevant networks, advisory committees or governance groups.

Selection process

Step 1: Eligibility check

Following the closing date for applications, NSW Health will determine if the application has satisfied all eligibility criteria.

Step 2: Review by independent expert panel

An independent panel of expert reviewers will assess each eligible application against the selection criteria.

Step 3: Funding recommendation

The independent selection panel will agree on the final ranking of all eligible applications and will make a recommendation for funding to NSW Health.

Step 4: Decision and notification

NSW Health will determine grant recipients and amounts. All applicants will be informed as to whether they have been awarded funding.

Step 5: Grant Agreements

NSW Health will contact host/ administering organisations for successful projects to execute a funding agreement. A standard, non-negotiable funding agreement will be used.

Post Award Requirements

A schedule for reporting will be outlined in the funding agreement and will include a requirement to provide:

- annual progress reports
- annual financial reports
- a final report following the conclusion of the term of the Grant
- post-grant reports related to research translation and research impact.

Program evaluation

The grants program will periodically be assessed to ensure it is meeting its objectives. This will be done in collaboration with the host and administering organisations and funding recipients.

Recipients and host/ administering organisations may be required to supply information and meet with NSW Health staff to support the evaluation of the program.