

## **Guidelines for 2025 Cure Cancer Early Career Research Grants**

### **About Cure Cancer**

For the past 57 years, Cure Cancer has been dedicated to funding novel research across all cancer types, giving talented early-career researchers the opportunity to explore their innovative ideas.

As the only Australian organisation dedicated to funding emerging researchers, we are proud to have kick-started over 567 researchers' careers, many that have led to global breakthroughs including brain cancer, breast cancer, immunotherapy, pancreatic cancer, and childhood leukaemia. To date, we have raised over \$99.6 million to ensure a future pipeline of cancer research success.

### **About Cure Cancer Research Grants**

The purpose of Cure Cancer Research Grants is to support early-career researchers and fund cancer research of the highest quality that will ultimately improve the health and wellbeing of Australians.

Cure Cancer offers two types of research grants; grants for researchers who have completed their PhD within 0-4 years valued at \$100,000 per annum and grants for researchers who have completed their PhD within 4-7 years and are valued at \$200,000 over two years. Funding may be used for costs directly related to the proposed project, such as salaries of personnel, scientific services, and laboratory consumables.

Recognising the time commitment of grant applications, Cure Cancer has implemented a two staged application process. The first stage is a highly streamlined Expression of Interest (EOI) application. This provides an overview of the proposed research project and the track record of the Chief Investigator.

After submission, all EOIs will be peer reviewed and ranked by an independent Grant Review Panel with a broad range of expertise. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application (stage 2). The Full Application will build on the information provided in the EOI and provide a more detailed research plan. All Stage 2 Full Applications will be independently peer reviewed by 2-3 researchers with appropriate expertise for the proposed project. These scores will be reviewed and ranked in the Grant Review Panel Meeting, undertaken by the Grant Review Panel from Stage 1. Cure Cancer will assign funding in rank order until the available budget is exhausted.

## General Information for Research Grant Expression of Interest

1. The opening date for 2025 Cure Cancer Research Grants EOIs is **February 26, 2024**, and the closing date for applications is **April 5, 2024 at 5pm AEST**. EOIs that do not meet the guidelines, are incomplete, or submitted after the deadline will not be forwarded to the Cure Cancer Grant Review Panel for assessment.
2. Applicants should complete the Cure Cancer 2025 EOI Application Form, located on our website.
3. Completed applications should be sent as both a PDF and a .docx, using the following naming format: a. Surname\_2025\_EOI.docx – e.g. Surname\_2025\_EOI.pdf
4. Applications must be submitted by email to the Research Program Coordinator at [research@curecancer.com.au](mailto:research@curecancer.com.au).
5. All applications will have receipt acknowledged via return email. Should you not receive an acknowledgement of receipt, please contact Cure Cancer to discuss.
6. Use of Cure Cancer Grant funding is for the sole purpose of the Chief Investigator conducting the project and not for any other purpose i.e. administration and overhead by the Administering Institution.
7. All project intellectual property will vest jointly with the Administering Institution and Cure Cancer Australia Foundation upon creation (except where a student owns copyright in their thesis.)
8. Grant funding decisions made by Cure Cancer are final.

## Eligibility

1. The Chief Investigator has a legal right to work in Australia and will perform the proposed work in Australia. The Chief Investigator is not required to be an Australian citizen or permanent resident to meet this eligibility requirement.
2. The Administering Institution is an NHMRC approved Administering Institution.
3. The Chief Investigator is an Early Career Researcher, between 0-and 7 years post PhD (in the absence of any career disruptions) on the opening of the 2025 application date. The number of years post PhD is calculated from the date the applicant's PhD thesis was completed (not the date of conferral). Refer to the application form for specific date ranges of eligible applicants.
4. The proposed project is undertaking cancer research, any type of cancer and at any translational level.

5. The Chief investigator does not currently hold funding that exceeds the allowances for the relevant funding stream.

## **Completing the EOI Application**

When completing their application, applicants should take into consideration that reviewers may not have expertise in the specific field of the proposed research. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide sufficient information and justification in their application for the 3 Grant Review Panel to make a competitive assessment against the EOI Scoring Rubric, available on our website.

All sections are compulsory, and the word limit provided for each response must be adhered to. Text which exceeds the word limit will not be reviewed by the Grant Review Panel and may constitute grounds for ineligibility.

Please note the following information and guidance about each section.

### **Section A: Chief Investigator**

This section contains essential contact information about the applicant. Gender identity is captured for statistical purposes only.

### **Section B: Eligibility**

This section aims to ensure that the applicant is eligible to apply for the grant and indicates which intended funding stream.

Previous / current grants are considered individually rather than cumulatively. For example, a 0-3 years post PhD stream applicant would be ineligible by holding a single \$110,000 grant, but could hold two \$60,000 grants. Furthermore, any salary-only fellowships are not assessed as part of this criteria, regardless of their value.

The Date of PhD Completion is the date that the applicant was formally notified that they had satisfied the requirements for completion of their PhD.

Career disruption is optional. It is an administrative process with the sole purpose of modifying the eligibility cutoff date for instances such as parental leave.

Relative to Opportunity (Equity), is where the applicant can outline factors impacting productivity. Cure Cancer uses the definitions of Career Disruptions as outlined in the NHMRC Relative to Opportunity Policy. Sequential career disruptions with a common cause can be grouped to assess the 90-day disruption required (e.g. Maternity leave immediately followed by reduced FTE carers leave to look after a child can be considered as one career disruption, even if the carers leave by itself does not meet the 90 day cut off). In submitting the application, the applicant confirms that the Administering Institution holds supporting



information for any career disruption listed in this section. Cure Cancer may request supporting evidence as part of the review of the assessment of the Career Disruption.

If you have any questions about eligibility, please contact [research@curecancer.com.au](mailto:research@curecancer.com.au).

### **Section C: Institutional Information Administering Institution**

**Administering Institution:** The Administering Institution will enter into a Funding Agreement with Cure Cancer if the application is successful.

The Administering institution must be an NHMRC Approved Administering Institution.

The email address provided here will be notified of grant outcome information.

**Host Institution:** In some cases, much of the work will be undertaken outside of the Administering Institution (E.g. at affiliated medical research institutes or hospitals).

The email address provided here will be notified of grant outcome information.

Leave blank if the work will be completed at the Administering Institution.

### **Section D: Details to Determine Appropriate Peer Review**

This section is used for assigning the application for peer review. Information will be used to find reviewers with appropriate expertise to review the application, and to avoid conflicts of interest.

### **Section E: Research Project**

This section outlines the proposed project, including what will be done, why the project is needed, and the expected outcomes. Applicants should complete all sections and within word count maximums. There are no font style or size guidelines for either the text fields or the images / figures / tables, however applicants should ensure that their application is readable.

### **Section F: Applicant Track Record and Career Development**

This section is for applicants to describe their skills, career achievements, and research outputs.

Applicants should demonstrate their capacity to lead the proposed project, and their foundation for an upwards career trajectory. This is through a combination of the mentoring, professional development, and institutional support of the host lab, and through past experience and achievements.

Applicants are encouraged to include any relative to opportunity matters that should be considered by peer reviewers when assessing research achievements and productivity. Each publication in the publication table allows for 100 words split across significance and role. Full reference column does not count towards this word count.

### **Section G: Consumer Participation**

Consumers are defined as people who have been affected by cancer. They include patients, survivors, carers, or close family members or friends of someone diagnosed with cancer. Applications should include details of how you have considered or consulted with consumer/s in the design of your proposed project and the role they will play throughout the project.

The level and type of consumer involvement appropriate for each project will vary depending on the nature of the project.

### **Independent Review Process**

Cure Cancer is committed to implementing a rigorous peer review of all grant applications to ensure integrity, accountability and transparency when awarding grant funding. Cure Cancer supports and complies with the NHMRC's principles of peer review.

Each year, Cure Cancer assembles and onboards an independent Grant Review Panel (GRP), comprised of cancer researchers with a broad range of expertise from research organisations across Australia. However, given the breadth of cancer research undertaken in Australia, this means that the GRP members may not have the specific expertise required for every project. As such, EOIs should be written in a manner that a non-expert cancer researcher can appropriately review your application – be cautious of the overuse of field specific acronyms, jargon and assumed knowledge.

All GRP members are required to declare any conflict of interest and to withdraw from considering individual applications where such conflicts exist. All panel members are also required to sign a Confidentiality Statement to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of applications.

After round close, the GRP will independently review the applications received, using the scoring criteria (see below).

GRP scores will be normalised, then combined to form a final ranked list. Shortlisted applicants from this stage will then be invited to stage 2 to complete a full application. The remaining EOI applicants will be notified that their proposal will not be progressing further.

### **Assessment Criteria (EOI)**

All applications will be reviewed against the following criteria & weightings:

- **Feasibility of the proposed project (20% weight)**: Are the aims achievable and realistic within the available project timeframe and budget?
- **Scientific merit (35% weight)**: Is the scientific relevance clear in the project proposal, and the research methodology sound and clearly presented? Does the research proposal make a clear case for the need for further research?
- **Track Record Career development (35% weight)**: Has the applicant demonstrated that they are capable of successfully undertaking the proposed research? Note: the track record of the Chief Investigator will be assessed relative to opportunity.
- **Consumer involvement (10% weight)**: Have consumers been involved in developing the proposal and is it clear how they will be involved in the project if funded? Note: the level and type of consumer involvement appropriate for each project will vary depending on the nature of the project. A copy of the full scoring EOI Scoring Rubric that will be provided to the GRP can be found on our website.

### Key dates

- Expressions of Interest open: February 26, 2024
- Expressions of Interest close: April 5, 2024
- Shortlisted applicants advised: Late May 2024
- Unsuccessful EOI applicants advised: Late May 2024
- Full Applications by invitation open: May 20, 2024
- Full Applications close: June 28, 2024
- Successful applicants advised: Mid-September 2024
- Unsuccessful applicants advised: Mid-September 2024
- Funding commences: January 2025

### Contact and Enquiries

Please refer any enquiries to the Research Program Coordinator at [research@curecancer.com.au](mailto:research@curecancer.com.au).