

2023

HEALTH+MEDICAL RESEARCH

—
Early-Mid Career
Researcher Grants

Guidelines

Round 6

Advanced Therapeutics Impact



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Further copies of this document can be downloaded from the [EMC Grants Program webpage](#)

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Call for Applications

NSW Health invites eligible individuals to apply for an Early-Mid Career (EMC) Researcher Grant. Round 6 of the EMC Program is focused on advanced therapeutics impact.

NSW Health is seeking to identify and fund EMC researchers who are ready to take their career to the next level by building and leading a multidisciplinary team which brings together expert researchers and clinicians with other key stakeholders to maximise research impact.

The NSW Health EMC Grants Program is **highly competitive**. Under the current grant round, up to \$2.5 million is available to fund up to **five grants**. Host organisations may submit a maximum of four applications each.

Funding will be provided for three years from 2024. All eligible 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 5 December 2023 and has not reached full professorial level. PhD students who expect to have their PhD awarded by 15 June 2024 are eligible to apply.

Program 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.

Submission of applications

Application submission process

1. All applications should be submitted by email to MOH-OHMRGrants@health.nsw.gov.au by **3pm on Tuesday 5 of December 2023**.
2. Applicants must use the EMC Grant Program Advanced Therapeutics Impact Application Form (available on the NSW Health EMC Grant Program [webpage](#)) and attach any supporting evidence. Please submit both a word and PDF version of the application.
3. All applications will receive an email to acknowledge receipt within 72 business hours. It is the applicant's responsibility to follow up if no acknowledgement email is received.
4. The **maximum email size is 20MB**. Larger emails will be rejected by the NSW Health server and you may not be notified that the email has been rejected.

Answers to frequently asked questions and updates on the EMC Grants Program are also available on the program's [webpage](#).

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

Indicative Grant timeline

Stage	Date
Applications open	1 September 2023
Applications close	3PM Tuesday 5 December 2023
Outcomes notified	30 April 2024
Grants Paid	By 31 May 2024
Research commences	July 2024

Round 6 Priority Focus

Advanced Therapeutics Impact

Under Round 6 of the EMC Grant Program, funding will support EMC researchers to undertake innovative research in **advanced therapeutics**. Eligible areas of research include:

- **Nanomedicine**, including basic, translational and clinical research
- **Medicinal chemistry**, including discovery and design of molecular and/or macromolecular therapeutics
- **Personalised and precision medicine**, including pharmacogenetics and genomics
- **Immunotherapy**, including non-specific immunotherapy (interferons and interleukins), monoclonal antibodies, t-cell therapy and other immune effector cell therapy, oncolytic virus therapy and cancer vaccines
- **Therapeutic targeting**, including identification and study of key biological macromolecules that influence disease processes, or change in response to pathological conditions
- **Cellular mechanisms**, including transduction, senescence, cellular/organoid communication and molecular diagnostics
- **Combination therapy**, co-administration of multiple drugs through a single system

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

Multidisciplinary Team and Stakeholder Collaboration

NSW Health is seeking to fund EMC researchers who are ready to take their career in health and medical research to a new level.

Applicants must demonstrate that they have the capacity to build and lead a multidisciplinary and collaborative team that:

- brings together researchers, clinicians and others with complementary expertise, skills, and perspectives across disciplines necessary to address the major research question
- includes at least one basic scientist and one practising clinician

- engages both the 'next users' and 'end users' of their research, which may include researchers from other parts of the research translation continuum, as well as stakeholders from industry, clinicians, patients, consumers and health decision makers who can support research impact
- establishes sustainable partnerships and collaborations that are likely to extend beyond the life of the project.

More information about how the multidisciplinary team and broader collaboration will be assessed is contained in the selection criteria on pages 7-9.

Conditions of funding

Funding amounts

Under the current round, up to \$2.5 million is available to fund up to five EMC grants.

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

Funding conditions and exclusions

1. Research funded through the NSW Health EMC Grants Program must be conducted in the NSW health system or an affiliated organisation (university, medical research institute, industry partner). 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. Funding is conditional on the EMC researcher and the Chief Executive(s) of the host/administering organisation agreeing to the **required declarations** when submitting the application form. These declarations outline the obligations of each party.
3. Grants provided under this funding round are one-line grants, not fellowships. Grants are for research projects or programs and can cover a combination of salaries of the EMC researcher, research team (clinical and/or non-clinical), backfill for clinicians to quarantine research time, consumables and equipment.
4. Grant funds 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.

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. Successful applicants must apply for federal funding (NHMRC, MRFF, ARC etc) at least once during the funded period or within 12 months of the grant end date and provide evidence of the application, scores, feedback and outcome to NSW Health.
8. Applicants are required to declare the source, duration and level of 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 not duplicative.
9. Recipients of any previous NSW Health EMC Researcher Grant are not eligible to apply for funding under Round 6. Previous recipients of NSW Health PhD Scholarships (supervisors or students) that meet the eligibility criteria for the EMC Researcher are eligible to apply.
10. Applicants who have received a previous NSW Health grant such as a PhD Scholarship must justify further funding according to productivity and impact specifically related to the previous grant in their application, including:
 - publications arising from the grant
 - advances arising from the research, including any translation that has occurred
 - external funding applications and funding received
 - capacity building arising from the grant.

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. 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.

PhD candidates

Applicants who are currently enrolled in a PhD may apply if the date of award is expected to be before 15 June 2024. Evidence of award of the PhD must be provided to NSW Health prior to the execution of a funding agreement. Note that evidence of submission of a PhD is not sufficient.

Eligibility criteria

Applications must meet all eligibility criteria.

EMC Researcher requirements

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

For the duration of the grant, the EMC researcher must reside in NSW and be employed by an eligible host/ administering organisation (see below).

Eligible research

The EMC researcher must satisfy the requirement that their proposed research is in the field of advanced therapeutics research (as defined on page 5).

Submit a complete application

The EMC researcher must complete the application form fully, attach required documentation, agree to the declaration on the form and receive authorisation 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.

Classified as an EMC researcher

EMC researchers must have worked less than 15 years post doctorate and not reached full professor level. Associate Professors are eligible to apply if less than 15 years post doctorate.

Team Requirements

Each research team must include at least one basic science researcher and one practising clinician. Other team members should be included as appropriate. More information is provided about the requirements of the team in the Selection Criteria below.

Host organisation requirements

The host organisation is where most of the research is conducted.

The host organisation must be in NSW, conduct health and medical research, and be one of the following:

- a university
- an independent medical research institute
- a not-for-profit organisation
- a local health district or other public health organisation.

The host organisation may submit up to four applications.

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

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.

Clinician researchers 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.

Host Organisation In-kind support

The host organisation is required to provide appropriate infrastructure support for the research project, including wet/dry lab space, computer equipment, and desk space.

The host organisation may also choose to provide additional in-kind and cash support to the project.

All support should be detailed in the application form and will be assessed against the selection criteria during the review process.

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 but may be partners on the grant.

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](#).

Note that as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted all researchers, it is not considered as a career disruption.

Selection criteria

All applications for funding that meet the eligibility criteria will be assessed against the following selection criteria.

Applications should be written in plain English to enable assessment by Review Panel members with expertise across the scope of advanced therapeutics.

Chief Investigator (35%)

Applicants will be assessed on:

- academic and relevant clinical qualifications
- research, clinical and/or industry experience
- capacity to build and lead multidisciplinary teams and stakeholder collaboration
- 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 (35%)

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 against 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
- feasibility of successfully delivering the research project within the proposed timeframe
- potential to achieve impact against one or more of the strategic outcomes of the [Future Health Strategic Framework](#)
- 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
- proposal describes a credible pathway for influencing clinical, health service and/or population health practice in NSW.
- the plan for research translation and impact, including consideration of data management and access, commercialisation and intellectual property where appropriate
- relationship to existing research undertaken by the host organisation and the research team

Budget

The budget should be detailed and well-justified and will be assessed as part of the project on:

- appropriateness and purpose of each line item
- other contributions and support for the project including from host organisation

- existing funding for the research, if any, and how this relates to the additional funding requested without duplication.

Multidisciplinary team and stakeholder collaboration(15%)

All applications will be assessed on the strength and appropriateness of the multidisciplinary team and broader stakeholder collaboration against the following criteria:

- the team includes a basic science researcher and a practising clinician
- the team integrates researchers with complementary expertise, skills, and perspectives across disciplines necessary to address the major research question
- diverse composition of the research team (e.g. gender, career stage and/or researchers from different cultures) that will:
 - provide expertise
 - build capacity in advanced therapeutics in NSW
 - provide vital skills and perspectives, without which the research question cannot be addressed.
- evidence of appropriate and sustainable engagement with key stakeholders including those who will likely use the research findings and/ or support implementation or translation, e.g. clinicians, patients, consumers and health decision makers, industry stakeholders, regulatory advisors.

Skill development, leadership and capacity building (15%)

All applicants will be assessed on skill development, leadership and capacity building both in terms of what has been achieved to date in their career, and what will be achieved using grant funds if the application is successful, noting the emphasis in this grant round on building and leading a multidisciplinary team and broader stakeholder collaboration.

Skill development, leadership and capacity building will be assessed **relative to opportunity**, with different expectations of EMCs who have completed their PhD within the last few years from those who are more advanced in their career.

Examples of activities that may be included are:

- leading or participation in clinical quality assurance activities

- attending training, for example in research skills or research leadership
- taking on leadership roles
- mentoring or supervising junior researchers
- leading or involvement in collaborations within NSW, Australia and internationally, for example with other research groups or policy agencies
- leading or active roles in relevant networks, advisory committees or governance groups
- collaboration with clinicians and others involved in translation of research findings
- building a program of research

Applicants are asked to provide a vision for leadership and capacity development in research, taking into consideration the examples of skills development and capacity building given above, including:

- development of leadership skills during the researcher's career to date, and the contributions and impacts of this leadership in NSW
- how these will be further developed during the period of funding, and what the outcomes of this will be
- how the grant and the applicant will help to build and maintain capacity in advanced therapeutics research in NSW.

Important Considerations

NSW Future Health Strategy

Applicants are encouraged to consider the [strategic framework](#) that is guiding the next decade of health care in NSW 2022-2032. How does your proposed research question relate to NSW Health's vision for a sustainable health system that delivers outcomes that matter most to patients and the community, is personalised, invests in wellness and is digitally enabled? Please consider how the outcomes of your research complement or overlap with the six outcomes identified in the strategy. More information is available [here](#).

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.

Research Impact Assessment

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

Note that outcomes and impacts may not be realised during the funded period, and they may be projected to occur in the future. 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 contribute to and understand the research and help to move the findings towards translation.

Research impact will be considered across five domains. Examples of metrics to measure impact in each domain are included below.

Domain 1: Knowledge Advancement

- 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 benefit

- 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 potential to lead to changes in health outcomes, clinical practice or health 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 researcher will engage with appropriate stakeholders from all relevant parts of the research ecosystem including the 'next users' of their research and stakeholders who can support research translation. See *Research collaborations and partnerships* below for examples of potential partners.

Appendix A contains two examples of translation pathways. Applicants may use their preferred framework.

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
- not-for-profit 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 an 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:
 - accommodate and support the researcher and ensure that the researcher has the support of the industry organisation's Chief Executive Officer or equivalent position
 - 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 in line with the NSW Health Policy and national principles (see below).

Intellectual Property

To maximise benefits arising from the public funding of research, all recipients of EMC Researcher Grants must comply with 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.

NSW Health has recently updated its Policy Directive *Intellectual Property arising from Health Research* which provides a clear and consistent guide for public health organisations to protect their intellectual property arising from research. NSW Health has also released a *Commercialisation Framework*. Both documents are available [here](#).

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 *NHMRC Open Access Policy*, 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.

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 a non-English speaking background, socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and people living in regional and remote areas among others. 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 Program

NSW Health has developed a [training program in commercialisation](#), which grant recipients are required to complete during the funding period unless completed previously. 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. At the completion of the course, researchers will understand how to construct a target product profile and associated business case for a new product.

Selection process

Step 1: Eligibility check

Following the closing date for applications, NSW Health will determine if each application has satisfied the 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 panel will agree on the 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:

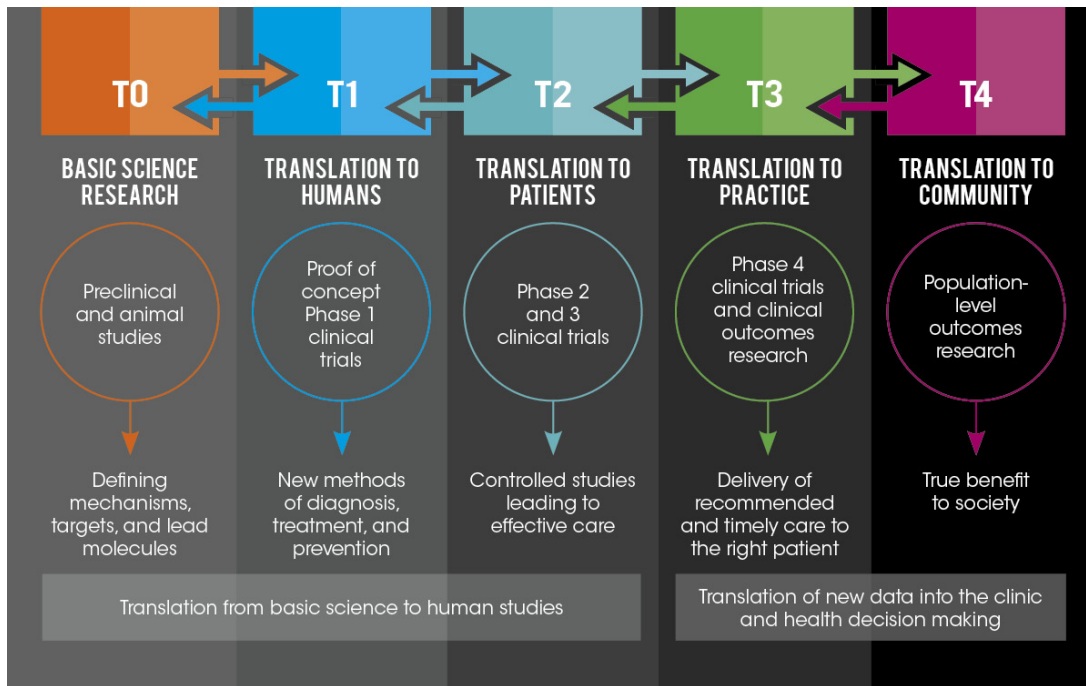
- annual progress reports and financial reports
- a final report and financial acquittal following the conclusion of the term of the grant
- post-grant reports related to research translation and research impact.

Program evaluation

The EMC Grant 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.

Appendix A: Examples of Research Translation Frameworks

Example 1: Biomedical Research Translation Framework



Source: University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Translational Research Institute

<https://tri.uams.edu/about-tri/what-is-translational-research>

Example 2: Health Services Research Translation Framework



Source: Developed by the Sax Institute for the Translational Research Grants Scheme