

ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Overview and introduction

1.1 Objectives

The *Spinal Cord Injury and Related Neurological Conditions Research Grant Program* is intended to promote research into spinal cord injury and other neurological conditions. The key objectives of the Program are:

- To establish a critical mass of relevant research to spinal cord injury and other neurological conditions in NSW;
- To develop, attract or retain relevant research talent to NSW; and
- To make significant scientific discoveries that have a positive impact on the lives of those with spinal cord injuries and neurological conditions in NSW.

1.2 Description of the Program

The *Spinal Cord Injury and Related Neurological Conditions Research Grant Program* has provided three tiers of funding:

Research Program Grants to support research programs led by established senior researchers. An individual Program Grant will not exceed \$2.5 million over four years and must be substantially expended within NSW.

Research Project Grants to support research undertaken by post-doctoral researchers within eight (8) years of award of a PhD; to be expended over two years.

Travel Scholarships: Scholarships of up to \$10,000 to enable advanced PhD students to present research at international conferences and/ or institutions. It is expected that successful applicants will also visit overseas laboratories or centres of excellence and that a report on the travel will be provided to the Grants Assessment Committee.

1.3 Application and Assessment Process

The *Spinal Cord Injury and Other Neurological Conditions Research Grant Program* Grants Assessment Committee assesses applications for funding against the eligibility criteria. Applications that the Committee considers to be ineligible do not proceed further.

Some eligible applications may be sent for review by appropriate independent assessors nominated by the Grants Assessment Committee members.

¹ Post doctoral researchers with more than 8 years post doctoral experience may be considered

The Grants Assessment Committee scores and ranks applications based on:

- The extent to which the study will make an original and important contribution to and/or the potential to impact upon spinal cord injury and other neurological research;
- The extent to which the conceptual framework, design, methods and analyses are developed, well integrated and relevant to the study objectives;
- The likelihood that the research will be accomplished by the proposed researcher – given their experience and expertise, past achievements, requested and available resources and institutional support where appropriate;
- Consideration of the independent assessor's reports; and
- An assessment of merit against the stated selection criteria, where appropriate.

The Grants Assessment Committee then makes recommendations for Grants and Scholarships for approval for funding by the Minister for Science and Medical Research.

NOTE: The applicant may be interviewed by the Grants Assessment Committee where Committee members wish to clarify or explore aspects of the application, or where the Committee wish to choose between two equally ranked applications.

If none of the applications meet the standard of excellence required, the Committee reserves the right not to recommend Grants/ Scholarships, and the NSW Government reserves the right not to offer Grants/ Scholarships.

The Grants Assessment Committee requires its members to declare conflicts of interest and to withdraw from considering applications where such conflict exists.

2. Administration of the Grants

2.1 Reporting Requirements

Research Program Grants and Research Project Grants

Recipients are required to submit a progress report to the Grants Assessment Committee at the end of the calendar year that includes:

- progress made in the Research Program/ Project; and
- how Grant funds were used.

Recipients are required to participate in and present at an annual forum for Spinal Cord Injury and Other Neurological Conditions Research Grant recipients.

The Grants Assessment Committee reserves the right to recommend the suspension of a Grant/ Scholarship if progress is unsatisfactory.

Where a Grant recipient fails to submit a satisfactory report, as required, the Minister may determine that funds have not been used in accordance with conditions applicable to the Grant, and that all or part of the Grant must be repaid. In this case, the Grants Assessment Committee may withhold the remainder of the Grant payments under the *Spinal Cord Injury and Other Neurological Conditions Research Grant Program* for the current year or initiate recovery of Grant money.

Research organisations are also be asked to collaborate in the evaluation of the *Spinal Cord Injury and Other Neurological Conditions Research Grant Program* at the end of four years.

Travel Scholarships

Recipients will be required to give a research presentation to the *Spinal Cord Injury and Related Neurological Conditions Research Grant Program* Grant Assessment Committee upon return to NSW. Scholarship recipients are also be required to share the knowledge gained with a wider audience, for example:

- Publication in journals;
- Publication on the *Spinal Cord Injury and Related Neurological Conditions* Forum Legacy Website; and
- Presentation to peers and the broader research community.

3 Research Program Grants

Description

The Research Program Grants are directed to (high quality) research programs led by a Director or senior researcher/s with a significant track record in biomedical research that has relevance to or an impact on spinal cord injury and other neurological conditions.

The Grants Assessment Committee considers applications for Program Grants which include the recruitment of senior researcher/s from interstate or overseas to lead a research program in New South Wales.

The Research Program Grants are **not intended** to support research on primary injury prevention.

The purpose of the Research Program Grants is to initiate new research or extend existing research. Research Program Grant monies must be primarily expended in New South Wales, and may be used for the following purposes:

- Researchers' salaries;

- Equipment purchase (up to \$20,000 per annum);
- Necessary travel (for example, for collaborations, attendance at conferences, etc.);
- Consumables; and
- A percentage of additional necessary infrastructure (the need for these costs should be outlined in the Research Program Grant proposal).

While a Program Grant specifies funding support for individual researcher/s' work on a specified topic, the institution is responsible for administration of the award and accepts financial responsibility for the Program Grant. The institution is also responsible for providing basic infrastructure support to those involved in the research program.

Eligibility Criteria for the Principal Researcher/s

To be eligible for a Research Program Grant, the Principal Researcher/s must be able to satisfy each of the following eligibility criteria:

- Location and institutional base in New South Wales.
The Principal Researcher/s must reside predominantly in New South Wales for the full term of the grant. Applications which include the recruitment of senior researcher/s from interstate or overseas to lead the research program in New South Wales are considered.
- A significant capacity to attract major research funding.
- A significant publication record.
- Established, or have the potential to establish, national and international collaborations.
- A demonstrated capacity to provide mentorship to junior researchers within the program, thereby maintaining and/ or adding to the pool of research skills in NSW.
- Demonstrated capacity in leadership of research teams.

NOTE: Researchers whose primary work to date may not have been in spinal cord injury or neurological conditions, but whose research directly or indirectly has significant relevance or impact in that field (for example, inflammation, stem cell research), may be eligible for consideration for a Research Program Grant under the Program.

Eligibility and Selection Criteria for the Research Program

To be eligible for a Research Program Grant, the Research Program must be able to satisfy each of the following eligibility criteria:

- Clear relevance or potential impact on spinal cord injury and other neurological conditions.
- Established or demonstrated potential to achieve clinical outcomes or linkages.
- Potential to significantly add to scientific knowledge base.

Eligible applications are reviewed against the following criteria to evaluate the relative merit of Research Program Grant proposals for funding:

- The ability to demonstrate that the Research Program is using or developing new technologies.
- The ability to attract other funding and support for the research program.
- The arrangement of continued funding for the principal researcher/s and the research program following the expiration of the Grant after four years.

4 Research Project Grants

Description

Research Project Grants are intended to encourage new/ younger investigators, and therefore applications are sought from researchers within eight years receipt of their PhD. However, applications from researchers with more than eight years post-doctoral experience are not excluded from consideration.

NOTE: The Research Project Grants are **not intended** to support research on primary injury prevention.

The purpose of the Research Project Grants is to fund high quality research projects proposed by individual researchers and research teams. Research Project Grant monies may be used for the following purposes:

- Salaries for the Principal Researcher/s;
- Salaries, as necessary, for support staff (for example research assistants, technicians, etc.)
- Equipment necessary for the research project (up to \$10,000); and
- Consumables for use in the research project.

While a Project Grant specifies funding support for individual researcher's work on a specified topic, the institution is responsible for administration of the award and accepts financial responsibility for the Project Grant. The institution is also responsible for providing basic infrastructure support to those involved in a research project.

Research Project Grant monies must be primarily expended in New South Wales.

Eligibility Criteria for the Principal Researcher/s

To be eligible for a Research Project Grant, the Principal Researcher/s must be able to satisfy each of the following eligibility and selection criteria:

- Location and institutional base in New South Wales.
The Principal Researcher/s must reside predominantly in New South Wales for the full term of the grant. If the applicant does not have permanent resident status he/she must obtain temporary resident status from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs before taking up the grant.
- PhD awarded within the last eight years.
- A demonstrated significant research capacity and track record with respect to:

- Major research grant funding
- Peer-reviewed publications
- Potential to make a strong contribution to health and medical research in NSW.
- Established, or have the potential to establish, national and international collaborations.
- Work currently in an environment with existing strong research capacity.

NOTE: *Researchers whose primary work to date may not have been in spinal cord injury or neurological conditions, but whose research directly or indirectly has significant relevance or impact in that field (for example, inflammation, stem cell research), may be eligible for consideration for a Research Project Grant under the Program.*

Eligibility and Selection Criteria for the Research Projects

- Clear relevance or potential impact on spinal cord injury and other neurological conditions.
- Established or demonstrated potential to achieve clinical outcomes or linkages.
- Potential to significantly add to scientific knowledge base.

5. Travel Scholarships

Description

Travel Scholarships are intended for research students who are at the stage of submitting, or who have submitted their doctoral thesis within the last twelve months, and who are nominated by their University as eligible to receive such an Award.

The objectives of the Travel Scholarships are to:

- Increase the possibility of retaining talented young researchers in fields relevant to spinal cord injury and other neurological conditions;
- encourage collaborations; and
- encourage and enable students to present their work overseas by funding travel and associated expenses to international conferences and institutions

The Travel Scholarships are intended to provide support to advanced PhD students/ researchers who have submitted their PhD thesis within the last twelve months to present their research at prestigious international conferences and/ or international institutions, and to visit overseas laboratories or centres of excellence.

Scholarships of up to \$10,000 have been offered.

Travel Scholarship monies may be used for the following purposes:

- Fares, accommodation, and maintenance allowance for the Scholarship recipient;
- Conference registration and presentation materials; and
- Visits to laboratories of other centres of excellence to learn new techniques.

NOTE: Travel Scholarships awarded may attract personal income tax in some cases. Applicants are encouraged to seek advice from the Australian Taxation Office or their administering institution regarding the possible tax implications of a Travel Scholarship.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for a Travel Scholarship, the student must be able to satisfy each of the following eligibility criteria. The student must:

- Have completed the majority of research undertaken towards their doctoral thesis at a university or research institute in New South Wales.
- Possess an excellent academic record; as demonstrated by an attached recommendation from their university as being outstanding in their field.
- Demonstrate high level written and verbal communication skills.
- Have undertaken doctoral thesis research in a field relevant to or with potential to impact on spinal cord injury and other neurological conditions;
- Be recommended by the university at which the doctoral thesis was undertaken.

In addition, applicants must demonstrate the relevance of the international conference or international institution to research into spinal cord injury and other neurological conditions.

Selection Criteria

Eligible applications are reviewed against the following selection criteria to evaluate the relative merit of Travel scholarship applications for funding:

- Requirement to demonstrate the proposed benefit of attendance at the conference/ international institution to the student and research process.
- Demonstrated significant contribution of or the potential to impact on research and the wider body of knowledge on spinal cord injury and other neurological conditions.
- Demonstration of how conference attendance will support the dissemination plan for this research.