



The Hospital Research
Foundation Group

TOGETHER. FIGHT.

Competitive Research Project Grant Round

Living Well after Bowel Cancer

Guidelines v0.1

Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)

Stage 1 Open: Tuesday 16 October at 12:00pm (ACDT)

Stage 1 Close: Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 4:00pm (ACDT)

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1. About The Hospital Research Foundation Group

The Hospital Research Foundation (THRF) Group exists to improve the health and wellbeing of our community. Our purpose is simple:

“Together, fight for better health and wellbeing for our community through life-changing medical research and improved healthcare.”

THRF Group is a profit-for-purpose organisation which raises funds through community donations, corporate support and proceeds from The Hospital Research Foundation Home Lottery program. These proceeds enable us to fund and facilitate medical research and patient care services across more than 50 areas of disease and illness, from birth to end of life.

THRF Group consists of 11 charities which work together to maximise health and wellbeing, and allow supporters to choose an area of healthcare that matters most to them. Through our Group structure, we are committed to delivering a progressive research and grants program that is sustainable, promotes collaboration and delivers impact for the community.

2. About the Round

2.1 Round Background

Bowel cancer (also known as colorectal cancer) is the third most common type of newly diagnosed cancer in Australia, impacting 15,610 people each year (300 per week). Bowel cancer claims the lives of 5,354 Australians every year (103 per week) and, with respect to cancer mortality, is second only to lung cancer.

With the advent of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program in 2006, early detection of bowel cancer in Australia has improved. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has reported that the screening program is contributing to more timely treatment and decreasing morbidity and mortality. However, there can be negative impacts on ongoing quality of life for survivors after treatment, including physical, social, and psychological issues. Physical impacts such as bowel, defecation and urinary problems, social impacts such as withdrawal and inactivity, and psychological impacts such as anxiety and depression can occur singly or in combination, and may negatively reinforce each other.

2.2 Round Objectives

In this round, THRF Group seeks research proposals that aim to develop and evaluate innovative approaches to improving people’s ongoing quality of life after treatment for bowel cancer. Proposals must have a primary focus on addressing the physical, social, and/or psychological issues affecting ongoing quality of life for survivors of bowel cancer treatment.

Proposals are also expected to describe the “next steps” whereby the anticipated outcomes from the research could be progressed and sustainably implemented to deliver beneficial health and wellbeing impacts for survivors of bowel cancer treatment, as well as the community more broadly.

THRF Group particularly encourages proposals incorporating:

- Research teams combining suitably experienced research and clinical personnel
- Transdisciplinary research approaches combining ideas and techniques from different fields. This could be via the involvement of personnel or technologies from engineering, computer science, or other suitable “non-medical” disciplines, and/or suitable industry organisations
- Early career researchers
- Effective and meaningful consumer participation and engagement in the research design, conduct, and/or translation pathway

- Collaborative research across organisations.

2.3 Round Exclusions

Proposals considered out of scope for this round include research approaches that primarily focus on:

- advancing mechanistic, diagnostic or treatment insights into bowel cancer;
- addressing quality of life during the treatment phase for bowel cancer or interventions during treatment addressing direct treatment side-effects;
- monitoring of disease progression; &
- consumer awareness / education.

In addition, proposals **must not duplicate or substantially overlap with** existing projects or pending proposals.

3. Requirements

As an aid for applicants when reading these Guidelines, THRF Group has developed a set of general FAQs. These are available at www.hospitalresearch.org.au/research-and-services/grants/information-for-researchers/.

However, please note that in the event of inconsistency between these Guidelines and the FAQs, these Guidelines will prevail.

3.1 Administering Institution

Applications must be submitted via one of the following Administering Institutions:

- Central Adelaide Local Health Network (CALHN) – includes SA Pathology
- Flinders University
- Northern Adelaide Local Health Network (NALHN)
- SA Regional Local Health Networks (RLHNs) / Rural Support Service (RSS)
- South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI)
- Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN)
- The University of Adelaide
- Torrens University
- University of South Australia
- Women’s and Children’s Health Network (WCHN)

The Administering Institution (AI) is responsible for ensuring the provision of the general facilities and supporting resources necessary for the project’s conduct. If an application is approved for funding, THRF Group will enter into a funding agreement with the nominated AI detailing appropriate management and administration requirements for the approved project. The AI must also be able to commit and manage the time contribution of the Chief Investigator A (CIA) to the project.

3.2 Eligibility Requirements for Chief Investigators

The first-named investigator on an application – Chief Investigator A (CIA) – will be considered the Project Leader, who has the primary responsibility to run and report on the project (if approved). The CIA must be a salaried staff member of the nominated Administering Institution. A CIA with more than one formal appointment can only nominate one of the above organisations to be the Administering Institution (AI) for the purposes of this round.

The CIA must hold either:

- a) a Higher Degree by Research (HDR) (either a Masters by Research or a PhD) in line with

Australian Qualifications Framework Levels 9 or 10 (see www.aqf.edu.au/framework/aqf-levels) from a recognised institution; or

- b) an equivalent combination of relevant skills, training, and/or experience. Evidence for claims of equivalence is to be provided in the CIA biosketch.

For this round:

- An applicant may only submit a maximum of one (1) application as CIA.
- Up to three (3) additional Chief Investigators (*i.e.* CIB – CID) may be included on each application.
- CIs can be involved in no more than two (2) applications (including involvement as CIA).

THRF Group reserves the right at its sole discretion to exclude from further consideration any application(s) contravening these limits.

All CIs must:

- be able to demonstrate a track record relevant to the field of this round;
- provide a meaningful contribution and time commitment to the proposed project over its duration;
- not be a currently enrolled HDR candidate; &
- have met their obligations regarding previous THRF Group-funded projects, including submission of satisfactory reporting as per the relevant funding agreement/s.

Investigators playing a minor role in the project and/or with an intermittent/low time commitment should be indicated as Collaborators/Associate Investigators. Currently enrolled HDR candidates contributing to the project should also be similarly listed.

Researchers (i) located outside South Australia, and/or (ii) whose **only** appointment with the organisations listed under section 3.1 is by a non-salaried honorary, visiting or affiliate appointment, cannot be CIA, but may be listed as an additional Chief Investigator (CIB – CID) or included as a member of the broader project team.

3.3 *Incomplete, False or Misleading Information*

All information submitted to THRF Group (including EOIs, full applications and reports) must be complete, current and accurate at the time of submission, and free of false or misleading information.

Examples of false or misleading information include, but are not limited to, providing:

- dishonest statements regarding time commitments to the research for which support is being sought;
- incomplete or inaccurate facts regarding other sources of funding;
- inaccurate claims in publication records; or
- incomplete or misleading information of ethics and governance requirements or other factors that may impact the researcher's ability to commence the research program in a timely manner.

If THRF Group becomes aware of omissions or inclusion of misleading information in an application, it may choose to exclude an application from assessment, withdraw funding, and/or refer the matter to the AI.

3.4 *Terms and Conditions for Funding*

If a project is selected for funding, THRF Group and the AI will enter into a formal funding agreement detailing funding terms and conditions. Unless otherwise agreed, the project must commence within six (6) months of receiving notification of the award, but not before the funding agreement is fully

executed and all relevant ethics approvals and collaborative agreements are in place.

The funding agreement between THRF Group and the AI will include provisions that Chief Investigators must:

- provide regular reports on the progress of the research through SmartyGrants as requested. Progress will be monitored against agreed milestones, and evidence of outputs and outcomes will be required;
- report any unexpected delays or changes to the research plan to THRF Group in a timely manner;
- acknowledge THRF Group funding support in all presentations of the work;
- provide updates upon request to THRF Group Communications and Marketing teams;
- participate in media opportunities coordinated by THRF Group where necessary, including local radio and local and national media announcements. Relevant media advice and preparation will be available via THRF Group's Communications team;
- seek in advance THRF Group's approval regarding the content, timing and release of public announcements, media releases, and/or online information relating to the project;
- assist in future grant reviews if requested by THRF Group (where reasonably practicable); &
- (if a first-time awardee of THRF Group funding and where reasonably practicable) attend one of THRF Group's regular grantee information meetings within the first year of funding.

4. Funding

4.1 *Funding Amount*

The maximum funding that can be requested is up to \$125,000 (total) over (up to) two (2) years.

Funding can be requested to support salaries and direct research costs as further described below. A detailed budget will only be required if a proposal progresses to Stage 2: Full application (by invitation).

Funding cannot be requested to support organisational indirect costs, infrastructure levies, or administrative costs. Further exclusions are indicated below.

THRF Group reserves the right to vary the available funding in this round at its sole discretion.

4.2 *Salary Support*

Salary support may be requested for CIs and/or other personnel needed for the project. The need for any such salary support must be well-justified. For the avoidance of doubt, salary support may be requested for Collaborators/Associate Investigators, but such requests must be very well-justified.

Salary support requests should include the base salary and direct on-costs, such as leave accruals and the superannuation guarantee contribution. Such on-costs are limited to a maximum 30% of the base salary request. Applicants must verify their AI's base salary scales and rate of on-costs before finalising budgets in the application form. Project staff are to be appointed at standard award conditions, commensurate with experience, as determined by the AI.

Due to the limited term of project funding, stipends for Higher Degree by Research students should not be included in proposal budget requests.

4.3 *Direct Research Costs*

Direct research costs are those directly related to the conduct of the project and may include research reagents, consumables, services, software, minor equipment (<\$10,000 unit cost), and

travel for the purposes of conducting the research program.

Conference attendance and associated travel, publication, open access fees, patenting and/or IP protection costs are not considered direct research costs and should not be included in proposal budget requests.

5. Application Stages and Assessment

This round will follow a three-stage process as outlined below. THRF Group reserves the right to modify or amend these stages at its sole discretion.

- Stage 1. Expression of Interest (EOI)
- Stage 2. Full Application (by invitation based on EOI assessment)
- Stage 3. Further Information / Interview

These stages are described in further detail below.

5.1 *Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)*

Applicants will submit a short EOI with a two-page CIA biosketch and AI endorsement through THRF Group's SmartyGrants platform.

EOIs submitted by the due date will be reviewed for eligibility, before evaluation by assessors. Top-ranked EOIs will then be shortlisted for invitation to submit a full application.

If two (2) or more submitted applications are, in THRF Group's opinion, substantially similar in scope or project team composition, THRF Group reserves the right to progress the assessment of only one (1), some, all or none of the applications through the round. In the case that no eligible EOI is considered of sufficient merit to progress to Stage 2, THRF Group may close the round without awarding funding.

Further details on the assessment scoring system are provided in Appendix A. All assessment criteria will be considered in the context of the Round Objectives, and THRF Group's Purpose more broadly. Please note that assessors will follow the NHMRC Relative to Opportunity policy (www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/policy-and-priorities#download), and will be required to deal with applications and assessment matters confidentially.

It is the CIA's responsibility to ensure that the nominated AI certifies the EOI in the specified format as part of the submission (refer Appendix B for details).

5.2 *Stage 2: Full Application (by invitation)*

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application in the specified format through THRF Group's SmartyGrants platform. Full applications must provide further detail on scientific merit, feasibility and budget considerations, and expand on how project outcomes can deliver beneficial impacts. Full applications will normally be expected within approx. 4 weeks of the notification of shortlisting, and must include endorsement by the AI in the specified format. THRF Group expects applicants to provide all necessary information to make evaluation possible on the SmartyGrants full application form, but reserves the right to request additional information if needed.

Changes to the composition of the CI team between Stage 1 and Stage 2 will not normally be accepted, unless exceptional circumstances apply, or if otherwise advised by THRF Group. Requests for changes to CI team composition must be provided by the AI for THRF Group's consideration at least 10 business days before the Stage 2 closing date.

Eligible full applications will be reviewed against the relevant assessment criteria. In the case that none of the invited submissions is deemed worthy of funding, THRF Group may close the round without awarding funding, or return to the EOI pool and issue further invitations. If THRF Group

reasonably considers any applications to be similar or complementary to other applications received, THRF Group may request that the applicants consider some or greater cooperation between the researchers (where appropriate). There is no obligation imposed on applicants under this condition. Any cooperation that might arise from such a suggestion by THRF Group would be voluntary.

Lay language components of the invited submissions may be used to engage consumers in aspects of the decision-making process.

It is the CIA's responsibility to ensure that the nominated AI certifies the full application in the specified format as part of the submission (refer Appendix B for details).

5.3 **Stage 3: Further Information / Interview**

Before the final decision is made, THRF Group may request further information or detail from applicants and/or the AI. Shortlisted applicants may also be interviewed by a panel convened by THRF Group.

5.4 **Funding Decision**

The final funding decision will be made by THRF Group, informed by assessor reviews, and determined by funding availability. THRF Group reserves the right not to fund any application for any reason, including where the relevant project personnel and/or Administering Institution have not fulfilled their obligations under previous THRF Group funding agreement/s, including but not limited to reporting, financial acquittal, and acknowledgement requirements. THRF Group's funding decision will be final and no further negotiations will be entered into.

If an application is awarded funding, THRF Group will enter into a funding agreement with the nominated AI.

6. How to Apply

EOIs must be completed and submitted online through THRF Group's SmartyGrants platform. Please note:

- **Only electronic submission through the SmartyGrants system will be accepted.**
- **Applicants must click on the "Submit" button when the application is finalised.**
- **Applicants will then receive a confirmation of application submission by email.**
- **If the email is not received (after checking junk/spam folders), applicants should assume that the submission has not occurred and re-attempt submission.**

Please also note:

- Due to incompatibility issues, **do not use Internet Explorer** with SmartyGrants.
- Unless otherwise specified in the application form, all uploaded files should be provided in PDF format. File names should include a short description of the item followed by the CIA's family name, for example "Transcript_Smith.pdf".

Apply at:

<https://hospitalresearch.smartygrants.com.au/2023-LWABC>

Stage 1: EOI Close Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 4:00pm (ACDT)

All queries should be directed to **grants@hospitalresearch.org.au**

Incomplete, late or incorrectly submitted applications will not be considered

7. Round Timetable

Stage 1 Opens	Monday 16 October 2023 at 12:00pm (ACDT)
Stage 1 Closes	Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 4:00pm (ACDT)
Stage 2: Invitation to Full Application for shortlisted EOIs	Indicatively 4 weeks after Stage 1 closes <i>EOIs not shortlisted will be notified at this stage</i>
Stage 2: Full Applications Close	Indicatively early February 2024
Final Outcomes	Indicatively 6 weeks after Stage 2 closes

Please note that THRF Group is unable to provide specific dates for stages noted as 'indicative' above.

APPENDIX A – Assessment Criteria

All Assessment Criteria will be considered in the context of the Round Objectives, and THRF Group’s Purpose to: “Together, fight for better health and wellbeing for our community through life-changing medical research and improved healthcare”.

Unmet Need (20%)

The proposal addresses an unmet need that is, particularly in the South Australian context, an issue of:		
Category	Band	Descriptor
4	Top 5%	<p>Critical importance</p> <p>The proposal compellingly articulates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the criticality of the unmet need; its significance to consumers; & describes how, if addressed and resolved, it would be extremely significant in improving clinical care and health outcomes.
3	Next 20%	<p>High importance</p> <p>The proposal provides a strong case for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the importance of the unmet need; its strong relevance to consumers; & describes how, if addressed and resolved, it would significantly improve clinical care and/or health outcomes.
2	Next 25%	<p>Importance</p> <p>The proposal provides reasonable justification for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an unmet need in the field; its relevance to consumers; & describes how, if addressed and resolved, it would have some significance in clinical/healthcare settings.
1	Bottom 50%	Not competitive

Approach, Innovation and Feasibility (30%)

The project’s approach to addressing the defined area of unmet need, relative to the field, is:		
Category	Band	Descriptor
4	Top 5%	<p>Outstanding</p> <p>The project’s approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> convincingly addresses the defined unmet need; is highly innovative, bringing together ideas, methodologies and technologies in ground-breaking new ways; clearly and effectively engages consumers across all project elements; is extremely cost-effective and of high value for money; & will almost certainly achieve its stated aims.
3	Next 20%	<p>Very Good</p> <p>The project’s approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clearly addresses the defined unmet need; displays very good methodological and/or technological innovation; engages consumers in key project elements; shows good cost-effectiveness or value for money; & is highly likely to achieve its stated aims.
2	Next 25%	<p>Good</p> <p>The project’s approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reasonably addresses the defined unmet need; displays elements of innovation; reasonably engages consumers in some project elements; is reasonably cost-effective; & should reasonably achieve the stated aims.
1	Bottom 50%	Not competitive

Impact (30%)

The project's ability to advance the field and deliver its stated outcomes, and the credibility of its pathway for translation to positive patient/healthcare impacts, particularly in South Australia, is:		
Category	Band	Descriptor
4	Top 5%	<p>Highly compelling</p> <p>The project will almost certainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> strongly advance the field (e.g. extremely substantial shift in the current paradigm or critical breakthrough); deliver highly significant outcomes; & the project has a highly credible and clearly articulated translation pathway to sustainably deliver strongly positive patient/healthcare impacts.
3	Next 20%	<p>Compelling</p> <p>The project has good potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> measurably advance the field (e.g. move the current paradigm or deliver an important breakthrough); deliver outcomes of significance; & the project describes a sound and achievable translation pathway towards positive, longer-term patient/healthcare impacts.
2	Next 25%	<p>Moderately compelling</p> <p>The project has reasonable potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> add to the field (e.g. expand the current paradigm or add important new knowledge); deliver outcomes of some significance; & the project has identified some reasonable steps to take towards positive patient/healthcare impacts beyond the funding period.
1	Bottom 50%	Not competitive

Project Team (20%)

Relative to opportunity, the demonstrated quality and relevance of the skills, experience and capability of the CIA and team to deliver the project is:		
Category	Band	Descriptor
4	Top 5%	<p>Outstanding</p> <p>Relative to opportunity, CIA and team demonstrate outstanding, highly relevant track records with outstanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> combined capability to execute the project and deliver outcomes; access to necessary resources, infrastructure and technologies; & balance of expertise and experience.
3	Next 20%	<p>Very good</p> <p>Relative to opportunity, CIA and team demonstrate strong, relevant track records with very good:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> combined capability to execute the project and deliver outcomes; access to necessary resources, infrastructure and technologies; & balance of expertise and experience.
2	Next 25%	<p>Good</p> <p>Relative to opportunity, CIA and team demonstrate relevant track records, with good:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> combined capability to execute the project and deliver outcomes; access to necessary resources, infrastructure and technologies; & balance of expertise and experience.
1	Bottom 50%	Not competitive

APPENDIX B – Administering Institution Endorsement Details

Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI) Endorsement

At EOI stage, the prescribed form (to be provided) will require sign-off by the CEO/DVCR of the Administering Institution (or their authorised delegate), to confirm that the signatory:

- Has read, understood and complied with the relevant THRF Group Grant Guidelines (the grant guidelines) and, to the best of their knowledge, all details provided in this application form and in any supporting documentation are true and complete in accordance with the grant guidelines.
- Consents, on behalf of all the parties, to this application being referred to third parties for confidential assessment purposes.
- Consents, on behalf of all the parties, to THRF Group copying, modifying and otherwise dealing with information contained in this application for the purpose of conducting the funding round.
- Certifies that the application is being submitted with the support of, and on behalf of, the Administering Institution, and acknowledges that if found to be in breach of any requirements the application may be excluded from consideration by THRF Group.

Stage 2: Invited Full Application Endorsement

At Full Application stage, the prescribed form (to be provided) will require sign-off by the CEO/DVCR of the Administering Institution (or their authorised delegate), to certify and confirm the following:

- They have read, understood and complied with the relevant THRF Group Grant Guidelines (the grant guidelines) and, to the best of their knowledge, all details provided in this application form and in any supporting documentation are true and complete in accordance with the grant guidelines.
- Proper enquiries have been made and they are satisfied that the participants and organisations listed in this application meet the requirements specified in the grant guidelines.
- The listed participants are responsible for the authorship and intellectual content of this application, and have appropriately cited sources and acknowledged significant contributions to this application.
- To the best of their knowledge, all personnel contributing to the project activity have familiarised themselves with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* and other relevant policies concerning the conduct of research, and have agreed to conduct themselves in accordance with those policies.
- To the best of their knowledge, all material personal and financial interests and Conflicts of Interest relating to parties involved in or associated with this application have been disclosed to the Administering Institution, and, if the application is successful, they agree to manage all Conflicts of Interest relating to this application in accordance with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, and any relevant successor documents.
- They have obtained sufficient written agreement of all the relevant persons and organisations necessary for this application to be submitted. This written evidence has been retained and will be provided to THRF Group if requested.
- They consent, on behalf of all the parties, to this application being referred to third parties for confidential assessment purposes.
- They consent, on behalf of all the parties, to THRF Group copying, modifying and otherwise dealing with information contained in this application for the purpose of conducting the funding round.
- The application is being submitted with the full authority of, and on behalf of, the Administering Institution, and they acknowledge that if found to be in breach of any requirements the application may be excluded from consideration by THRF Group.
- If this application is successful:
 - The project can be carried out as set out in this application and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant guidelines and the relevant funding agreement.
 - The project can be accommodated within the general facilities of this Institution and if applicable, within the facilities of other relevant organisations specified in this application, and sufficient working and office space is available for project personnel.
 - This Institution and relevant participating organisations will make the financial and/or in-kind contributions to the project as set out in this application.
 - Access to privileged data or resources, such as patient data or patient samples, or workspaces, such as clinics, can be accommodated by this Institution or by other relevant Institutions specified in this application.
 - Approval of the project activity by relevant institutional committees and approval bodies, particularly for ethics and biosafety, will be sought and obtained prior to the commencement of the research, or the parts of the research that require their approval.
 - Arrangements for the management of the project will be agreed in writing between all participating organisations associated with the application before the project can commence.
 - In carrying out the project, the Administering Institution will comply, and require the participating organisations to comply, with the provisions of any applicable legislation, regulations, by-laws, and requirements of any applicable Commonwealth, State, Territory or local authority.