

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ACCELERATOR GRANT SCHEME

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – Updated 10 May 2024

Please refer to this list of frequently asked questions for the National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF) *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* and *Collaborative Research Accelerator* grant scheme. This is a living document and will be updated regularly.

PINK HORIZON RESEARCH STRATEGY <https://nbcf.org.au/research-strategy/>

1. How was the *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* developed?

The NBCF's new *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* was developed in consultation with researchers, clinicians, other funders of research, other breast cancer organisations, and people with a lived experience of breast cancer. The process was overseen by our multidisciplinary Research Advisory Committee with input from our Consumer Advisory Panel and final approval by the NBCF Board of Directors.

2. What are the key objectives of the *Pink Horizon Research Strategy*?

The *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* focuses on accelerating research to drive us closer to achieving our vision of *Zero Deaths from breast cancer*.

Research applications and projects supported under the *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* must demonstrate the potential to make tangible progress towards this vision and relate to one or more of the four core objectives:

1. **Prevent** breast cancer through precision prevention
2. **Detect** breast cancer as early as possible and before it progresses
3. **Stop** the progression and recurrence of breast cancer
4. **Treat** hard to treat and metastatic breast cancers.

Each of these objectives is underpinned by the need to **minimise harm** and **maximise impact**. This means that progress towards our vision should not be made without due consideration of the impact on quality of life. It also means that to make real and lasting progress we need to consider equity of access to research and research outcomes.

3. Why does the *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* not include quality of life research as a priority area?

The *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* is singularly focused on encouraging and funding research that will accelerate progress towards achieving our vision of *Zero Deaths from breast cancer*.

While Survivorship, Supportive Care and/or Quality of Life research are not specifically defined as key objectives for the Strategy, NBCF welcomes consideration of these research areas. It is up to the researcher to clearly justify how the proposed research will help reduce deaths from breast cancer.

We acknowledge that not all research endeavours will be funded through the *Pink Horizon Research Strategy*. However, our 5-year strategy has been purposefully and collaboratively designed to bring us closer to our vision and meet the funding expectations of our donors.

4. Is the NBCF vision of *Zero Deaths from breast cancer* focused on all deaths in people with breast cancer or only deaths caused by breast cancer?

The NBCF vision of *Zero Deaths from breast cancer* reflects an ambition to stop people dying as a direct result of their breast cancer diagnosis. We acknowledge that there are primary and contributory causes to breast cancer mortality, and researchers must clearly justify in their proposals how their research will drive progress to help end mortality from this disease.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ACCELERATORS

APPLICATIONS

5. Are Collaborative Research Accelerators separate to project grants?

Yes, the Collaborative Research Accelerator grant scheme is a standalone grant scheme. NBCF will continue to run an annual Research Project Grant Scheme.

6. Is there a limit on the number of applications that can be received from a single organisation?

There is no upper limit on the number of Collaborative Research Accelerator applications that an organisation can submit.

Related question:

6a. What is the eligibility for being the Lead Institution?

If your institution can provide an Australian Business Number (ABN) and fulfil the governance requirements, they are eligible to apply as the Lead Institution.

7. Can a Collaborative Research Accelerator target more than one of the four *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* objectives?

Yes. However, the research proposed must be of sufficient depth to enable tangible progress to be made.

Related questions:

7a. Is a grant application that covers more than one domain likely to be preferred to an application that covers a single domain?

The Collaborative Research Accelerator grant scheme is intended to fund research to address intractable questions that will enable progress to be made towards the vision of *Zero Deaths from breast cancer*. Bold applications are encouraged, whether these tackle one or more domains.

7b. Relating to the core objective; prevent breast cancer through precision prevention, would projects with a non-biomedical focus be considered? For example: a program of research focused on consumer co-designed personalised risk assessment and intervention regarding modifiable lifestyle risk factors?

NBCF is calling for research teams to develop compelling grant applications incorporating any type(s) of research that are appropriate to accelerating progress towards our vision of *Zero Deaths from breast cancer*. Applicants must be able to relate their research to one or more of the four objectives under the *Pink Horizon Strategy* and researchers will need to be able to demonstrate that the research has a direct line of sight to our vision.

8. Given the number of applicants on a Collaborative Research Accelerator grant, is NBCF considering ways to streamline the administrative requirements of the application?

NBCF is continually looking for ways to minimise the administrative requirements for grant applications and reporting. The two-staged application process (EOI and Full Application) will mean that only the strongest applications will be required to provide in-depth information. The online application form includes all necessary detail to capture applicants' information needed for administrative purpose and for Impact Reporting on Research Outcomes.

9. Can you apply to the Collaborative Research Accelerator Grant Scheme if you have existing funding from the NBCF?

Researchers who hold other NBCF funding are eligible to apply for / be named on a Collaborative Research Accelerator application. However, an investigator cannot submit an application that is the same as or similar (in whole or in part) to a project submitted by the same investigator for NBCF funding or to work already published.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

10. What is the difference between the EOI and Full Application process?

The key difference between the EOI and Full Application is in the level of detail requested. Both applications will be reviewed initially for completeness and adherence to guidelines by the NBCF Research Office.

Applications that meet the criteria at both EOI and Full Application stages will be reviewed by a Peer Review Committee and will include scientific and consumer assessment. Recommendations from both the EOI and Full Application review process will be reviewed by the NBCF Research Advisory Committee.

Applicants at Full Application stage will be required to participate in a panel interview. The final recommendation for funding from the Full Application review process will be taken to the NBCF Board for ratification.

Related questions:

10a. Does the budget need to be included in the EOI?

Yes. The administrative information in the EOI should provide details of the total amount of Collaborative Research Accelerator funding requested as well as the amount of co-funding and total amount committed to Fellowship salaries must be detailed in the Collaborative Research Accelerator budget. A more detailed breakdown of the budget will be required in the Full application.

10b. Is the team locked in after the EOI?

Not necessarily. Applicants can change the team composition if short-listed to submit a Full Application.

10c. What is the difference between the EOI and Full Application forms?

The EOI Application is to be completed by the Principal Investigator only and describes the Collaborative Research Accelerator as a whole. The EOI Application is a high-level description of the Collaborative Research Accelerator.

The Full Grant Proposal Application is to be completed by Principal Investigator, Lead Chief Investigator and Chief Investigator for each respective Research Workstream participating in the Collaborative Research Accelerator.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ACCELERATOR RESEARCH TEAM

11. Can an investigator be named on multiple Collaborative Research Accelerator applications in a given funding round?

There is no upper limit on the number of Collaborative Research Accelerator applications that an individual investigator can be named on.

Related question:

11a. Is there a limit on the number of applications received from a single organisation?

There is no upper limit for numbers of applications for a single institution if the criteria outlined in the guidelines are met.

12. Is there a specific research grant stream for early to mid-career researchers?

Collaborative Research Accelerators are intended to fund a multidisciplinary, multistate, multi-institutional ecosystem of researchers and research activity. A diverse team (in terms of career stage, gender, and scientific disciplines) that provides synergistic expertise and builds capacity aligned to the research question is encouraged.

NBCF is committed to building capacity for breast cancer research in Australia. It is expected that Collaborative Research Accelerator applications will include financial support for Fellowships across all career categories of early- and mid-career and established researchers. The total amount committed to Fellowship salaries must be detailed in the Collaborative Research Accelerator budget.

13. Am I eligible to apply for this grant if I am holding a working visa?

The Principal Investigator / Lead Chief Investigator(s) / Chief Investigator(s) and at least half of the nominated Co-Investigators must:

- reside in Australia (or intend to reside in Australia) throughout the funding period¹
- be Australian citizens, have resident status or have an appropriate visa to work in Australia for the entire duration of the funding period.

14. Can an individual be a Co-investigator on an NBCF Research Project Grant and a Collaborative Research Accelerator grant?

A person can be named as a Co-Investigator on an NBCF Research Project Grant, and a Collaborative Research Investigator grant at the same time.

15. What is the eligibility for a Principal Investigator?

If you are employed by the proposed Lead Institution, you are eligible to be a Principal Investigator. NBCF will ask the Principal Investigator to provide either proof of employment by the Lead Institution or a letter providing documentation about the affiliation of the Principal Investigator with the Lead Institution.

¹ Not relevant for Chief Investigator(s) located at a non-Australian institution.

Related question

15a. What details on the researchers involved (Principal Investigator, Lead Chief Investigator(s), Chief Investigator(s), Co-Investigator(s) and Associate Investigator(s)) are required at EOI and Full Application stages?

Information on the investigators will need to be addressed in both the EOI and Full application. In the EOI application the required details under Team Capacity in the Grant Proposal are:

- expertise, experience, diversity, equity (e.g. researchers at all career stages), and qualifications of the Collaborative Research Accelerator team relevant to the Collaborative Research Accelerator objective(s)
- combined record of research achievements of the team commensurate with their field of research
- contribution of the team to achieving the aims of the Collaborative Research Accelerator.

Information required on the Full Application under Team Capacity are:

- expertise, experience, diversity, equity (including researchers at all career stages), and qualifications of the Research Workstream team
- combined record of research achievements of the Research Workstream team commensurate with their field of research
- international reputations and networks of the Research Workstream team
- contribution of the Research Workstream members to achieving the aims of the Collaborative Research Accelerator.

In addition to the assessable information, NBCF is asking for administrative information about investigators including name, position in department, Host Institution and Visa status.

COLLABORATION

16. Is there a cap on the number of institutions collaborating as part of a Collaborative Research Accelerator?

There is no limit on the number of institutions who can participate in a Collaborative Research Accelerator. However, Lead and Collaborating Institutions must have in place and maintain for the term of the funding agreement policies and procedures for the management of public funds, management of Intellectual Property and for good scientific conduct.

17. Are Collaborative Research Accelerators meant to include teams from different states?

Collaborative Research Accelerators are intended to fund a multidisciplinary, multistate, multi-institutional ecosystem of researchers and research activity. A diverse team (in terms of career stage, gender, and scientific disciplines) that provides synergistic expertise and builds capacity aligned to the research question is encouraged.

Related question:

17a. Will NBCF provide a forum to enable collaborators to come together?

Research teams are expected to form their own collaborations in line with the research question(s) they seek to address.

18. Can a Collaborative Research Accelerator include commercial / for profit organisations (e.g. pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies) as participating institutions and / or financial contributors?

Commercial / for profit organisations may participate as part of a Collaborative Research Accelerator where their contribution will strengthen the research. Commercial / for profit organisations will not be directly funded as a Lead or Collaborating Institution.

NBCF reserves the right to review individual requests for participation in a Collaborative Research Accelerator by a commercial / for profit organisation in line with its conflict of interest policy.

19. Are all Institutions expected to provide a letter of support at application stage?

By signing the Full Application, Lead Institution and Collaborating Institutions will be required to accept the terms of the Head Agreement (to be supplied when the Full Application opens). No letter of support needs to be provided at application stage.

20. Can funding be provided to International Institutions participating as part of a Collaborative Research Accelerator?

Up to 20% of the total budget can be used to support involvement of International Institutions in a Collaborative Research Accelerator, where this involvement will add value and where the science cannot be undertaken in Australia. However, the Research Workstream must be led by an Australian Institution.

21. Does the Lead Institution need to be an NHMRC approved administering institution?

If the institution can provide an Australian Business Number (ABN) and fulfil the governance requirements, it is eligible to apply as Lead Institution.

PEOPLE WITH A LIVED EXPERIENCE

22. Do you expect teams to include people with lived experience of metastatic breast cancer?

Bilateral engagement with people with a lived experience of any stage of breast cancer relevant to the research is mandated. Including people with a lived experience of metastatic breast cancer is encouraged.

FUNDING

23. What is the funding amount for Collaborative Research Accelerator grants?

Each Collaborative Research Accelerator is capped at a total value of AU\$25 million. The funding period is capped at a maximum of 5 years. While there is no minimum value, NBCF expects applications to reflect the scale of ambition underpinning these grants. A co-funding commitment from participating Institutions is expected at 20% of the total Collaborative Research Accelerator award value.

24. How many Collaborative Research Accelerator applications will be funded in this grant round?

NBCF aims to fund one Collaborative Research Accelerator grant, up to the value of AU\$25 million, to commence in 2025.

Related question:

24a. What proportion of applications does NBCF expect to fund in the first round?

There is no pre-subscribed quota of applications that will be funded. However, given the expected scale of the applications, it is anticipated that one Collaborative Research Accelerator will be awarded in the first round.

25. Will Collaborative Research Accelerators be offered in years ahead? / Will this funding opportunity be offered every year?

The total number of Collaborative Research Accelerators to be funded over the 5 years of the *Pink Horizon Research Strategy* will depend on fundraising efforts and the number of fundable applications.

26. Is there a minimum value for a Collaborative Research Accelerator grant?

There is no minimum value for a Collaborative Research Accelerator grant. NBCF is expecting that applications will be at a scale that will enable significant progress towards the vision of *Zero Deaths from breast cancer*. It is expected that applicants will consider the budget required to successfully execute the research objectives and expected outcomes.

Related questions:

26a. Can a Principal Investigator on a Research Project Grant be a Principal Investigator / Chief Investigator on a Collaborative Research Accelerator application?

Researchers who hold other NBCF funding are eligible to apply for / be named on a Collaborative Research Accelerator application.

26b. Can a NBCF Endowed Chair be named on a Collaborative Research Accelerator?

NBCF Endowed Chairs are eligible to apply for and / or be named on a Collaborative Research Accelerator application.

26c. Will collaboration with an established Collaborative Research Accelerator grant impact the funding cap for a Research Project Grant-holding Principal Investigator?

Holding an existing NBCF award does not affect the opportunity to be a Collaborative Research Accelerator Principal Investigator, Lead Chief Investigator, Chief Investigator or Co-Investigator. A researcher can be awarded or collaborate on a Collaborative Research Accelerator grant and be eligible to apply for a Research Project Grant with no impact to the Research Project Grant funding cap.

CO-FUNDING

27. What are the expectations for co-funding of a Collaborative Research Accelerator? Is this a cash or in-kind contribution?

A cash co-funding commitment from the Lead and Collaborating Institutions is expected to equal 20% of the total Collaborative Research Accelerator award value. For example, if a Collaborative Research Accelerator is submitted with a total budget of AU\$25 million, NBCF will fund AU\$20 million and a total combined cash co-contribution of AU\$5 million over 5 years is expected to be provided by the Lead and Collaborating Institutions. The contribution by each institution should be agreed by the Collaborative Research Accelerator applicants with due consideration of the size of each institution, their capacity to contribute co-funding and the proposed research involvement of each institution in the Collaborative Research Accelerator research.

If a Collaborative Research Accelerator includes an International Institution, a cash or in-kind co-funding contribution from the International Institution is encouraged.

Related questions:

27a. Is the co-funding additional to or part of the \$25m total grant allocation?

Co-funding is expected as part of the \$25m total Collaborative Research Accelerator budget. For example, if a team requests a total budget of \$25m, they will be required to provide \$5m of this total, with \$20m to be provided by NBCF.

27b. Is co-funding required from the beginning of the funding period?

The 20% co-funding contribution is an annual contribution and payment is to be provided yearly, as set out in the Head Agreement.

27c. Are institutions from all Collaborating Institutions expected to contribute 20%?

NBCF acknowledges that the capacity to contribute co-funding will vary by institutional size and type. The proportional contribution made by each Collaborating Institution should be agreed by the Collaborative Research Accelerator applicants with due consideration of the size of each institution, their capacity to contribute co-funding and the proposed involvement of each institution in the Collaborative Research Accelerator research.

27d. When and how do we have to show that we have institutional co-funding?

Applicants will be expected to indicate their intention to provide a 20% cash co-funding contribution as part of the EOI. As part of the Full application, applicants will be required to provide a letter of commitment to the provision of the 20% cash co-contribution.

27e. Can the co-funding contribution come from funds awarded through other governmental or philanthropic grants.

NBCF does not mandate where the 20% cash co-funding contribution comes from.

27f. Can salaries that are (already) paid by the lead or collaborating institutions be counted towards the 20% cash contribution requirement?

Salaries in-kind cannot be used for the 20% cash co-funding contribution – please refer to sections 5.1, 5.4, and 5.5 of the Collaborative Research Accelerator Guidelines.

28. Does NBCF have advice on how to raise the 20% cash co-funding contribution?

NBCF acknowledges that a 20% co-funding requirement is a substantial contribution. NBCF has received positive feedback from the research community for this model of funding, recognising that investment of this magnitude is necessary to support big and bold ideas. It is recommended that co-funding contributions are made by as many partners as possible.

FUNDING – PREVIOUSLY FUNDED PROJECTS

29. Can Collaborative Research Accelerator grant funding be used to augment prior funding (by NBCF or another funder) to continue research that shows promising results?

Collaborative Research Accelerators can build on existing evidence and knowledge but should not duplicate existing or planned research. In building on previous research, it is important to note that Collaborative Research Accelerator grants aim to fund a collaborative ecosystem of researchers and research teams working together on a series of directly connected Research Workstreams to address

an intractable question/s with a clear line of sight to *Zero Deaths from breast cancer*. It will be important that any extension of existing research reflects this ambition.

In the event of similar funding being offered concomitantly to an applicant by NBCF and another research funder, NBCF reserves the right to withdraw the offer of funding wholly or in part. Where the value of the offer by the other research funder is at least equivalent to the value offered from NBCF, NBCF's offer will be automatically withdrawn to maximise the opportunity for breast cancer research in Australia.

BUDGET

30. Which budget items can be requested in a Collaborative Research Accelerator?

The elements that will be considered in the budget for a Collaborative Research Accelerator include:

- salary support for Principal Investigator, Lead Chief-Investigator, Chief-Investigator, and Co-Investigators
- research support staff deemed appropriate to ensure the successful completion of the research (e.g. research assistants / officers, junior postdoctoral fellows, and specialised personnel such as bio-informaticians, statisticians, project managers)
- PhD stipends
- Infrastructure, equipment, consumables, and other research related costs.

Related question:

30a. Will full salary costs be provided?

Salary support can be provided for the Principal Investigator, Lead Chief-Investigator(s), Chief-Investigator(s), and Co-Investigator(s) and for research support staff. Requested salaries must be justified, competitive and consistent with university / institute scales and will be reviewed as part of the application process.

REVIEWERS

31. Will grant scores and reviewers' comments be provided to applicants? / Will application feedback (against selection criteria) be provided to unsuccessful applicants?

NBCF is committed to providing feedback that will assist researchers in strengthening their applications. With this in mind, feedback will be provided at EOI and Full application stages to unsuccessful applicants about areas for improvement.

Feedback will also be provided to EOI applicants who are selected to progress to Full Application about any areas for improvement or questions for clarification identified by reviewers. This will enable applicants to consider and address areas for improvement in the Full Application.

32. Who will be on the review panel for the Collaborative Research Accelerators?

The Peer Review Committee will include national and international researchers, clinical researchers, and consumers. The panel will reflect the key areas needed to review applications against the assessment criteria.

Panel members will need to declare any conflicts of interest in relation to any of the applications under review in order to ensure a fair and transparent process. NBCF intends to use the same committee for review of EOI and full applications.

CONTRACTS AND GOVERNANCE

33. What are the governance requirements for a Collaborative Research Accelerator?

Collaborative Research Accelerators must be overseen by a self-formed Governance Committee. The Committee should have an agreed Governance Lead (most likely the Principal Investigator for the Collaborative Research Accelerator), representation from each Collaborating Institution and should include early career researchers and at least one consumer.

The Governance Committee will oversee the integrity, performance and collaborative nature of the research conducted under the Collaborative Research Accelerator.

The functions and processes of the Collaborative Research Accelerator Governance Committee must be transparent to the Lead Institution, all Collaborating Institutions, International Institutions and all Collaborative Research Accelerator researchers.

Research governance of individual Research Workstreams should occur in line with the policies of the institutions in which the research is being conducted.

34. Will NBCF manage the contractual agreement with partners?

NBCF will not manage the contractual agreements with partners. The Lead Institution will be managing the contractual arrangements, being in line with the Head Agreement, with collaborating partners.

35. Will the general NBCF funding agreement on the webpage be used for the Collaborative Research Accelerator grant?

For the Collaborative Research Accelerator grant scheme, NBCF will provide a template for the Head Agreement to be signed by NBCF and the Lead Institution. This Head Agreement template will be made available on NBCF webpage at the time of the Full Application.

NBCF will not mandate a template for the Institution Agreements to be made between the Lead Institution and all participating institutions. However, these Agreements will be expected to reference and reflect the terms of the Head Agreement.

WEBINAR RECORDING

For those who could not attend the webinar session, a recording is available on the NBCF webpage: <https://nbcf.org.au/research/grants-information/nbcf-grants-schemes/>