1. **Background**

The Nurse-led Research Program is one of 19 programs being undertaken as part of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC) Strategic Research Plan 2017-20, supported by the Victorian Government.

The VCCC has invested $1 million to develop cancer nursing research capability across the clinical partner organisations.

The key element of growing research capability is centred around a Nurse-led Research Hub (the Hub). The Hub uses multiple strategies and activities to support nurses to engage in research, including

- Online information-sharing forum
- Free education sessions and workshops
- Supported research secondment opportunities
- Training and mentoring
- Access to seed funding for research projects
- Promotion and profiles of nurse-led research

2. **Scheme description**

The VCCC Nurse-led Research Hub Seed Funding Grants are designed to support nurses to gain nurse-led research experience and build collaborative networks.

The objectives of the Seed Funding Grants are to:

- support nurse-led research focused on improving the quality and safety of care for people affected by cancer
- provide seed funding to build research capability among nurses;
- enhance the competitiveness of nurse-led researchers to leverage funding from granting bodies; and
- facilitate collaboration amongst nurses who wish to undertake research.

The Seed Funding Grants are available to:

- Support nurse-led research at two or more VCCC clinical partner organisations
- Support research-associated salary costs of the nurse researcher
- Support direct research costs of undertaking the research project. For example, ethics costs, data collection costs, project meeting costs, time with a statistician and publication.

# Nurse-led research refers to a project or study where the lead investigator is a nurse; the question being addressed has been generated from nursing practice; and where the findings of the study will have direct relevance to the delivery of nursing care.
3. **Who can apply?**
The main applicant, can be any nurse who works with patients affected by cancer who:

- has **not** undertaken a two-years full-time equivalent research post-graduate degree (eg. MPhil or PhD)
- is employed at least 0.6 EFT by one of the seven VCCC clinical partners
- is an Australian citizen or has permanent residency

4. **Level of funding and duration**
The maximum amount that can be requested is $50,000 over 12 months. Funding components are:

- Salary support
- Direct research costs (not overheads)

Salary support will only cover salary costs for a nurse to conduct the project and will be capped at $85,000 per annum.

Direct research costs will be capped at 10%

5. **Project requirements and assessment**
The VCCC must be satisfied that proposed projects:

- have specific aims and outcomes that are achievable in the designated timeframe
- be initiated and completed in Victoria
- have active consumer involvement
- meets all the selection criteria
- have at least two VCCC clinical partner organisations included in the application, either investigators or recruiting sites.

a) **Selection criteria**
All applications will be assessed against the following selection criteria and weightings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Impact</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The research is designed to address an important problem or clinical need in cancer care. Specifically:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) The importance and significance of the clinical area or system need being addressed by the research</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) How the research findings will influence quality, safety or experience of care for people affected by cancer [^1](patient and/or health system impacts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) The potential for the project findings to be of relevance (in the future) to other health services beyond the study partners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Ability to leverage future research opportunities, including leveraging funding</td>
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| 2. **Research Proposal** | |
| a) Quality              | |
| i. Clear rationale, aims and objectives | |
| ii. Appropriate study design and outlined methodology to address the aims and objectives | |
| iii. Appropriate participant cohort is well defined in relation to | |
the aims, clear explanation of type of sampling strategy, number of participants and of sufficient size (if appropriate) 

iv. Relevant methods, data collection sources and outcomes measures 

v. Identification of how the findings will be disseminated to participants and key stakeholders.

b) Feasibility 

i. Realistic and attainable aims and objectives 

ii. Ability to conduct study in a timely manner. This includes timelines and milestones that are achievable and level of FTE of project staff 

iii. Ability to source and recruit participants 

iv. If the research includes testing of an intervention, the potential to integrate the intervention into the current health care system 

v. Budget clear and realistic. This includes salary costs that align with enterprise agreements

3. Research Environment and Collaboration 

a) More than one VCCC clinical organisation included in the application 

b) Evidence of multi-disciplinary approaches, but the project is led by a nurse 

c) Evidence of a Governance Group to guide the study and oversee progress. This includes evidence of meaningful consumer engagement as a member of the project team 

d) Evidence of organisation support (Executive Director of Nursing and Nurse Manager and/or Clinical Lead – as appropriate to ensure organisational support) 

e) Existing resources and infrastructure to conduct the research, for example, space, access to analytical software or database software if required.


a) Assessment process

A Review Panel made up of representation from across the VCCC Clinical Partners will assess all submissions against the selection criteria. The panel will adhere to the following guidelines:

• rank applications based on the specific selection criteria weighting (as above) 

• make recommendations to the VCCC on the applications that meet appropriate standards for funding 

• provide advice on applications where further collaboration may be sought.

The VCCC may enter into direct negotiations with Applicants to seek further information or detail in relation to specific applications. Eligible Applicants may be invited to discuss their application with the Review Panel. In the event that the VCCC deems any research applications to be similar or complementary to other applications received, the VCCC may request that the Applicants consider
some or greater cooperation between the nurse researchers (where appropriate). There is no obligation imposed on Applicants under this condition. Any cooperation that might arise from such a suggestion by the VCCC would be voluntary. Once the review process is complete, feedback on applications will be available on request.

6. Administering organisation requirements

Applications must be made under the auspices of a Victorian hospital, health service, or university. A single organisation should be designated as the Administering Organisation, which must:

- have in place policies and procedures for the management of public funds
- have in place policies for the proper conduct of research in relation to ethics and good scientific conduct
- provide most of the facilities and infrastructure required to undertake, or coordinate, the proposed research. have in place policies for the appropriate management and exploitation of Intellectual Property
- ensure that there is effective mentoring of the nurse- researcher and/or research group and have a process for evaluating the effectiveness and suitability of any supervisory and/or mentoring arrangements
- provide evidence that there is a suitable environment in which to undertake the research
- in the case of research being undertaken with co-Investigators, obtain the consent of all those named in the application, and their organisations
- certify in the application that they approve of and endorse the proposed project.

7. How to submit

Website: https://www.viccompcancerctr.org/our-work/research-development/nurse-led-research/

Name: Natasha Moloczij (Nurse-led Research Program Manager)
Email: natasha.moloczij@unimelb.edu.au
Telephone: 8559-5903

Submission of applications: The VCCC will only accept electronic submission of applications through the online application system.

8. Funding timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applications close:</th>
<th>Time and date 2019</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please note incomplete or late applications will not be accepted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications open</td>
<td>15th April 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing date</td>
<td>13th May 2019 COB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice to applicants</td>
<td>29th May 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTERNAL INFORMATION

Process for Promoting Funding Applications

Directed communications for the promotion of Applications will include:

a. Nurse-led Research Steering Group (encouraged to circulate)

b. Within the Hub communication forum (Slack)

c. VCCC Alliance newsletter (monthly)

d. VCCC e-link (weekly)

e. VCCC webpage/opportunities

f. Alliance members Communications teams to promote

g. VCCC program staff and committee members

h. Word of mouth between colleagues

Review process

1) VCCC Program Manager is responsible for administrative triage process. Includes, seeing clarification on missing fields, further questions based on submission answers and adding comments adequate to area of expertise.

2) VCCC Nurse-led Research Review Panel –The panel members will consist of:

a. Consumer Representative

b. Steering Group member with no affiliation to any of the clinical partners (e.g. Cancer Council Victoria) but with grant reviewing experience

c. Clinical area expertise (Mei)

d. Research expertise

e. VCCC representative?

f. Others?

The VCCC requires its review panel members to act in an ethical manner, declare any perceived or actual conflicts of interest and withdraw from considering applications where such conflict does or may exist. Conflict of interest to be managed by VCCC program manager.

3) Ineligible submissions will be summarised and noted to the panel. Feedback as to ineligibility will be noted. All eligible submissions will be provided to the review panel.

a. Members will individual score all eligible submissions

b. Scores will be provided to the Program Manager to collate prior to the meeting

c. Panel members to meet face-to-face to discuss the projects and scoring. There will be an opportunity to adjust scoring and note feedback

d. Final scores presented with rankings followed by discussion and consensus over recommended funded projects.

e. Unsuccessful projects will be provided with feedback and suggestions of support to improve projects (e.g. training, mentorship, etc)

If an application is reviewed but requires revising based on Review Panel feedback (e.g. budget or and aspect of the research proposal), the applicant will have 5 working days to decide if they would like to revise their application.
Approval process
The VCCC Nurse-led Research Review Panel will recommend approval of the projects to the VCCC Executive Director who will formally approve the funding of the recommended projects. When conflicts of interest arise in the allocation of funding of projects and the VCCC Executive Director cannot adjudicate, approval will be sought from the VCCC Board Chair.

Notification of outcome
For successful applications:
- The lead applicant will be notified of the outcome via phone call and letter noting recommendations by the VCCC Nurse-led Research Review Panel.
- Need to advise the administering organisation for both successful and unsuccessful applications
- Lead applicant is able to accept or decline the recommendations of the Review Panel without compromising future submissions.
For unsuccessful applications:
- Feedback (written or audio-recording) will be given as how to improve any of the criteria, where appropriate.