

MELBOURNE HIV CURE CONSORTIUM



Small Grants – Application Guidelines

September 2026

Summary

The Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity (Doherty Institute) received funding from the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to contribute to establishing a new Victorian initiative - The Melbourne HIV Cure Consortium.

The Melbourne HIV Cure Consortium (MHCC) is multi-disciplinary, works closely with affected communities and involves experts in virology, immunology, drug development, neuroscience, and social research working together to accelerate efforts to find a cure for HIV.

The MHCC consists of key Melbourne based academic institutions, hospitals, and independent institutes that are active in cure research and is an unincorporated initiative led by the Doherty Institute and administered through The University of Melbourne. Current members of the MHCC Steering Committee are the Burnet Institute, the Doherty Institute, Monash University and the Alfred Hospital, RMIT and Latrobe University. The MHCC's activities are also guided by a Committee Advisory Board (CAB).

MHCC Aims

The aims of the Consortium are to:

- Build scale in world-leading HIV cure research and training through innovative interventional clinical trials.
- Conduct fundamental, clinical and community-based research for an HIV cure
- Build capability in translational activities including drug and diagnostic discovery
- Strengthen partnerships between HIV cure researchers across Victoria and related key disciplines such as transplantation, vaccination, epigenetics and drug development
- Leverage competitive grant funding through the consortium
- Establish a Victorian HIV Cure Research Community Advisory Board

Small Grant Scheme

2 × \$20,000 grants are available to support HIV cure research projects beginning 2027. Research areas may include (but are not restricted to) clinical research, social sciences research, community engagement, community literacy, early discovery, and assay development. Projects may have a maximum duration of 2 years.

Eligibility

The applicant team must include at least two institutions, and at least one early-career researcher (<10 years post-PhD). Lead investigators must be based in Victoria; collaborating investigators may be from organisations outside of Victoria. Grant personnel can include students, academic and non-academic institutions, community-based researchers, hospital staff members, early career researchers and external collaborators. Members of the steering committee of MHCC can apply for grants, in which case the conflict of interest management strategy will be defined by an external chair as indicated in MHCC policies.

Selection Criteria

- Originality/innovation: addresses an unmet research need and/or original solutions to a research challenge (20%)
- Quality/investigator competencies: proposal demonstrates excellence (40%)
- Impact/significance: project is likely to have a substantial impact on HIV and HIV cure research (20%)
- Feasibility: project is likely to be delivered as proposed (20%)

Application Process

Applications close 5.00pm AEDT on Friday 30th October 2026. The completed application form including the research proposal, budget and investigator CVs must be submitted electronically via the SmartyGrants portal (<https://ricunimelb.smartygrants.com.au/MHCCSmallGrants2027>). The research proposal should use the template provided and be no more than 3 pages total, including budget and references (the approvals section does not count towards this limit). Investigator CVs should be a maximum of 2 pages each.

Application Format

- Font: Calibri, 12 point.
- CIA last name at top right hand corner of each page.
- Margins: 2 cm.
- Only PDFs

Review Process

- MHCC Project Officer will screen applications to ensure that eligibility requirements are met.
- The Project Officer will suggest grant reviewer allocations to the Steering Committee, who will confirm potential conflicts of interest.
- The Project Officer will distribute each application to 2-3 independent reviewers with scoring sheets and guidelines.
- Final decisions will be made based on reviewer scores and comments at a Steering Committee meeting/teleconference with a two-thirds quorum including the CAB chair, following which the Project Officer will notify grantees.
- The Steering Committee retains full discretion on whether to award the full amount requested by the applicant or part of it, or to reject the application. The decision of the Steering Committee will be final.
- Decisions will be communicated by email to applicants no later than 1st December 2026.

Funding Agreement

Upon acceptance of the offer, the Doherty Institute (through The University of Melbourne) will prepare and issue a Funding Agreement to the successful applicant institution(s) for review and signing. The Funding Agreement will include the following terms:

Expenses & reporting

- Grants can cover any kind of domestic expense (HR, materials, meeting costs, domestic travel costs, appropriate indirect costs).
- Funds should be spent within one year of allocation/reception.
- A final report will be required one month after the end of the grant period. It must include financial statements, reporting on activities and outcomes/impact assessment (3 pages maximum). A check list will be provided to grantees by the Project Officer.
- 80% will be transferred to successful applicants at the start of the funded project following execution of the Funding Agreement, then the balance of funds will be payable upon receipt of the final grant report.

Regulatory, Ethics and OTGR approval requirements

The successful applicant will be responsible for obtaining the appropriate ethics clearances and any other necessary approvals/licences for the conduct of the funded project. Work cannot commence until such approvals have been obtained and copies provided to the MHCC Project Officer. The successful applicant will be responsible for acting as Sponsor (or arranging another to act as Sponsor) in respect of the clinical trial aspects of the funded project (if any). If applicable, resources for discharging Sponsor obligations should be considered in the grant application.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual Property rights developed during the course of a funded project will be owned by the applicant.

Applicants will grant to the Doherty Institute (through The University of Melbourne) an irrevocable, free, world-wide, non-exclusive licence (with the right to sublicenses) to use, reproduce, adapt and exploit such intellectual property rights for the purposes of reporting on expenditure and use of MHCC funds to DHHS, and for any purpose other than commercial exploitation.

Acknowledgments

Successful applicants will be required to acknowledge the MHCC and DHHS in any publications, public announcements, scientific meeting presentations or discussion forums pertaining to research conducted with the assistance of funding and must use a form of acknowledgement reasonably requested by MHCC.

Privacy and confidentiality

All information contained in applications will be regarded as confidential (except information that is public). Personal information will only be used and disclosed by us in order to process grant applications or otherwise with the permission of the individual to whom it relates, or where privacy laws allows.

Applicants consent to the information supplied as part of their application being disclosed for the purposes of the evaluation and administration of the grant. Such disclosure includes but is not limited to members of the evaluation panel, independent readers/assessors, and relevant employees of the Victorian Government.

Applicants acknowledge that announcement of the funded grants will involve the dissemination of information to the public about the general nature of the funded grants.

Contact

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