



**Western Australia Future Health Research and Innovation Fund**

**Cystic Fibrosis Western Australia**

**Conquer Cystic Fibrosis**

# **WA Cystic Fibrosis Research Collaborative Program 2025**

## **Program and Grant Information**

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# 1. Introduction

The Western Australia (WA) Cystic Fibrosis Research Collaborative Program (the Program) is a funding program of the Western Australia Government Future Health Research and Innovation (FHRI) Fund and Cystic Fibrosis Western Australia (CFWA).

The FHRI Fund provides a secure source of funding to drive health and medical research, innovation and commercialisation and through these activities, improve the health and prosperity of all Western Australians. It also provides an opportunity to diversify the economy, create jobs, improve the sustainability of the health system and position WA as a leader in research and innovation.

The Program contributes to the [FHRI Fund Priority Goals](#):

- support the development of early- and mid-career researchers, helping them to achieve an independent and self-sustaining career.
- target high-performing researchers in WA to maintain and/or advance the State's position as a leader in health and medical research.

Founded by parents in 1975, CFWA has become a leading not-for-profit organization offering extensive services and support for children and adults with cystic fibrosis (CF), their families and carers. From 2010 to 2023, CFWA invested \$1 million in CF research through grants, in addition to raising well over \$1 million for the “Little Lungs, Big Futures” campaign from 2016 to 2019.

Conquer Fibrosis (CCF) is collaboratively investing in the Program with CFWA. CCF is a volunteer run organisation founded by a group of parents of children with CF. Since 2002, CCF has raised more than \$5.6M for CF research through flagship fundraising events, supported by volunteers, sponsors and a generous donor community.

## 2. The Program

The Australian Cystic Fibrosis Data Registry 2022 (ACFDR)<sup>1</sup> shows there are over 430 West Australians, and 3700 Australians, living with cystic fibrosis, with approximately 50% children. The Program aims to fund new research projects and innovative solutions that help improve the lives of people affected by CF.

- **Improve life expectancy and quality for all people with CF.**

Advances in research and clinical management over decades have led to new therapies (including modulator treatments like Trikafta) and improved life expectancy and quality. However as per the ACFDR, the median age of death remains at 44 years and quality of life is adversely impacted by significant clinical, psychological, psychosocial, and economic burdens. A recent study of patient-

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Cystic Fibrosis Data Registry. (2022). *Annual report*. Monash University. <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/sphpm/registries/acfdr>

reported outcome measures (PROMs) identified statistically significant burdens including treatment load, CF comorbidities, high healthcare presentations and chronic acute pain<sup>2</sup>.

- **Provide effective options for individuals for whom no treatment is currently available.**

There are over 2000 known CF gene mutations<sup>3</sup>. Some do not respond to current modulator therapy treatments, others respond ineffectively. There are individuals that are not eligible or cannot tolerate modulator therapies; or who have existing long term lung damage and co-morbidities. These individuals face a higher disease burden and poorer life outlook.

- **Address the significant risk of anti-microbial resistance (AMR) to the CF community, as well as the broader community.**

People with CF have increased rates of bacterial and fungal infection and AMR can develop from a young age. ACFDR data identifies 12 % of children under 7 years old had pseudomonas in 2022; for the adults over 25, this number is 50%. Non-Tuberculous Mycobacterium, *Burkholderia Cepacia* and Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) also appear in childhood through adulthood. Without alternate therapies for resistant infections, people with CF can exhaust treatment options leading to acute health crisis. Innovative treatment modalities have broad application for this area of public-health concern.

- **Address the broad spectrum of clinical aspects of CF beyond respiratory health.**

Historical CF research has been predominantly respiratory related (given lung failure being the primary cause of death). As a result, there are significant knowledge gaps regarding other clinical aspects of CF such as CF related diabetes and CF liver disease which are impacting young adults with CF.

### 3. Funding

The total funding available for this program is \$2,000,000. Grant amounts offered to recipients aligned to each stream are at the discretion of CFWA.

To be eligible for this Program all the following criteria apply:

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<sup>2</sup> Ward, A., Mauleon, R., Arellano, J., Ooi, C. Y., & Rosic, N. (2023). Critical disease burdens of Australian adults with cystic fibrosis: Results from an online survey. *Pediatric pulmonology*, 58(7), 1931-1941. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ppul.26413>

<sup>3</sup> Fawcett, L. K., Waters, S. A., & Jaffe, A. (2024). The equitable challenges to quality use of modulators for cystic fibrosis in Australia. *The Medical Journal of Australia*, (1). <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52527>

The Responsible Entity (Administering Institution) must:

- have an active Australian Business Number (ABN)
- have a physical and operational presence in WA.
- be a WA university, WA research institution, WA public health service provider or a WA public-private partnership (PPP) provider.

Or

- be a WA NHMRC Approved Administering Institution

Applicants to all streams must:

- be an Australian or New Zealand citizen, a permanent resident of Australia, or have an appropriate work visa in place for the duration of the Activity.
- have no overdue reports for any grant funding program administered by the Office of Medical Research and Innovation (including FHRI Fund programs) from any year (excludes authorised extensions).
- physically reside in WA for a minimum of 80% of the period of the Activity.

Applicants are permitted to apply for multiple streams for which they are eligible.

## Stream 1: Postgraduate Top-up Scholarship

The Postgraduate Top-up Scholarship will provide up to \$15,000 (ex GST) per annum for up to 3 years to support the costs associated with their studies. Top-up Scholarships can be used towards areas such as living costs; tuition; study resources; relevant conference costs; equipment, consumables and resources required directly for the research project (Activity). The recipient must ensure they continue to meet the eligibility criteria and conditions for all [scholarships/stipends](#) they receive, including their Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship and manage their own financial and tax position.

The applicant must:

- be conducting or plan to conduct a higher degree by research (HDR) (PhD, MD or equivalent) project on CF.
- be enrolled, or meet the criteria to enrol, as a full-time student in an approved HDR course at an eligible institution in Western Australia; and
- be in receipt of a three-year competitive postgraduate scholarship, such as an RTP Scholarship (or equivalent). Individuals applying in late 2025 for study commencing in 2026 may apply concurrently with an RTP Scholarship application, however receipt of the Top-up Scholarship is contingent upon the receipt of an RTP Scholarship (or equivalent) by course commencement date.

Full terms and conditions will be available once applications open.

## Stream 2: Research Innovation Grant

The Research Innovation Grant provides up to \$180,000 (ex GST) over 2 years to support the salary costs (salary and oncosts) for the applicant (Activity Lead) and other personnel involved in the Activity, equipment and supplies, maintenance and other expenses directly related to the proposed Activity. The actual amount awarded will be subject to approval of the application budget.

The Activity Lead must:

- be affiliated with an Australian university.
- have completed a PhD in an area directly relevant to CF within the last 10 years.
- be a post-doctoral researcher currently working or will be working in WA in CF research for the life of the grant.
- be capable of undertaking high quality research, demonstrated by past performance.
- put forward a proposal for research in a relevant CF field, as a 'novel concept,' which is not currently funded from another source or where less than 50% of the research is funded.
- conduct at least 80% of the CF research in or through an established WA Host Institution (Universities, Medical Research institutes, Health Service Providers, Research Foundations).

Full terms and conditions will be available once applications open.

## Stream 3 Fellowship

The Fellowship provides up to \$450,000 (ex GST) over 3 years to support the applicant's (Activity Lead) salary costs (salary and oncosts).

The Activity Lead must ensure:

- they hold a primary appointment at an established WA Host Institution. Individuals who do not hold such an appointment may be considered but must reside in WA for the duration of the grant and meet all eligibility requirements.
- the Responsible Entity selected to administer the Fellowship is a [WA NHMRC Approved Administering Institution](#).
- they have completed significant research in an area directly relevant to CF within the last 10 years (time taken for career disruptions should be stated and will be considered) and be a post-doctoral researcher currently working or will work in CF research in WA.
- they demonstrate the nature of their proposed Activity and expected outcomes. The proposed Activity may include discrete project/s, a stream of research or a larger long-term research project.
- they conduct at least 80% of the Activity in or through an established WA Host Institution.

Full terms and conditions will be available once applications open.

## Stream 4 Collaborative Grant

The Collaborative Grant will provide up to \$200,000 (ex GST) over 2 years to support the salary costs for the applicant (Activity Lead) and other personnel involved in the Activity, equipment and supplies, maintenance and other expenses directly related to the proposed Activity. The actual amount awarded will be subject to approval of the application budget.

The Activity Lead must:

- ensure the research team includes at least one Chief Investigator (CI) from a minimum of three different organisations in WA, to encourage collaborative CF research networks. All CIs must be early-to mid-career researchers.
- nominate a Responsible Entity ([WA NHMRC Approved Administering Institution](#)) to administer the grant.
- put forward a proposal for research in a relevant CF field, which is not currently funded from another source or where less than 50% of the research is funded and demonstrate that collaboration is key to desired outcomes.
- ensure they conduct at least 80% of the research in or through an established WA Host Institution.

Full terms and conditions will be available once applications open.

## 4. Tobacco and related industries

CFWA will not award funding to an Activity where any member of the proposed team is an employee, applicant for, or is in receipt of funds from companies and entities that receive funds or revenues from the tobacco industry. This includes E-cigarette manufacturers, suppliers and non-tobacco related companies or entities which are fully or partially owned by the tobacco industry.

The Responsible Entity or other entities that are involved in the Activity must not be part of an industry that produces products or services that may contribute to poor physical health or mental wellbeing of the community.

## 5. Grant applications

Australian CF research trust (ACFRT) is an independent body that will administer the grant application, review, assessment and award/acquittal process to ensure an evidence-based competitive review and assessment process is undertaken, reflecting community needs and priorities, to select the highest quality applications for funding.

Program streams will open for applications according to the following schedule:

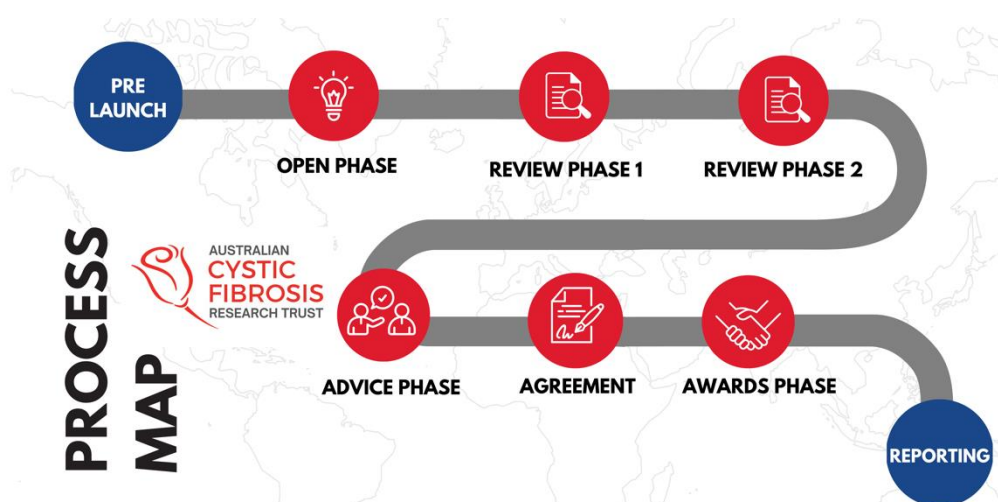
Mid-February 2025	Mid-April 2025	Mid-October 2025
Stream 1 (round 1) Stream 3	Stream 2 Stream 4	Stream 1 (round 2)

Application forms and full terms and conditions will be available on the ACFRT website <https://www.cysticfibrosis.org.au/current-grant-opportunities/>

## General assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed based on a range of criteria aligned to the intent of each stream including but not limited to the quality, feasibility and innovation of the proposed Activity, impact on the CF community, collaboration opportunities and the Activity Lead's (or teams') track record. The weighting of criteria will vary across the four streams and will reflect weightings and criteria set by major funding agencies such as the NHMRC, for similar program types.

## Grant review process



(Image copyright of Cystic Fibrosis Australia <https://www.cysticfibrosis.org.au/acfrt/>)

The grant reviewing committee (ACFRT) and CFWA, CCF may seek external expert reviews if required to assist the assessment and selection process. Applications will be ranked based on the application's combined weighted scores for each criterion.

## 6. Further information

Prospective applicants can contact CFWA with queries related to the relevant stream and associated application process via email to [info@cfwa.org.au](mailto:info@cfwa.org.au). Please use the subject header: "WA Cystic Fibrosis Research Collaborative Program 2025 enquiry: Stream X".