



Western Australian  
Future Health Research  
& Innovation Fund

## FHRI Fund Communique #4

### 14 February 2023 meeting

It was my pleasure to welcome the Advisory Council members to the first meeting of 2023. Many exciting opportunities lie ahead, including those that will be enabled by an [additional \\$84 million available through the FHRI Fund over the next four years](#), which was announced by the Minister for Medical Research, the Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, in December last year. While looking ahead it is also important to inform our activities through evidence-based evaluation and continued engagement with the research and innovation sector.

In this meeting the FHRI Fund Annual Report 2021-22 was endorsed by the Advisory Council and will be published on the [FHRI Fund website](#) following approval from the Minister for Medical Research. The Advisory Council heard from PricewaterhouseCoopers who presented their plan for evaluation of the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the Fund's programs and initiatives over the first 10 years.

In December 2022, the Advisory Council endorsed an [equity funding principle](#), which can be viewed on the FHRI Fund website. This involves supporting equitable outcomes by considering the structures of bias, disadvantage and inequity in Australian society and ensuring that strategies to promote equity are considered, and incorporated where appropriate, into the design and implementation of funding programs and initiatives. In this meeting the Advisory Council endorsed mechanisms for operationalising the Equity Funding Principle across the programs and initiatives, some of which are already in the process of being implemented.

### Advisory Council Meetings

For the upcoming May Advisory Council meeting there will be a departure from the usual format of these meetings to align with the annual Science on the Swan (SOTS) Conference, which will be held in Perth on 8-10 May 2023. Recipients of FHRI Fund grants from 2020-21 will be presenting at the State conference and members of the Advisory Council will be attending. The Advisory Council endorsed a change to their meeting schedule, with meetings to now take place in December, May and September each year aligning with the March, July and November funding cycles respectively. This allows for more strategic and efficient management of the Fund.

### Funding cycle Open Day

The March 2 Open Day will be co-hosted by the enAble Institute at Curtin University. The Minister for Medical Research will be speaking at the event as well as other eminent presenters from Curtin University and the Mental Health Commission. The Office of Medical Research and Innovation will be presenting the programs and

initiatives launching in this cycle. Registrations for the event are open via [Eventbrite](#). The event can be attended on-line or in-person.

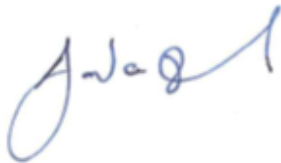
## Key and new programs update

The Advisory Council endorsed the following new/updated programs:

- Co-Funding Partnerships Program – Steam B aims to establish funding partnerships with WA charitable organisations to leverage existing successful programs in the State and making these accessible to more researchers/innovators through increased budget.
- National Reconstruction Fund Capacity Building Program aims to increase the capacity and capability of the WA research and innovation sector by providing training and support to facilitate future applications to the National Reconstruction Fund.
- DISCOV3R Focus Grants will provide funding for research investigating the accuracy of Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits for use for new COVID-19 variants, the efficacy of RAT kits beyond shelf life and identifying opportunities for re-purposing of RATs that are beyond their shelf-life, for example for research use for COVID and/or other coronaviruses.
- Innovation Challenge: Generative AI Applications will fund innovative projects that apply machine learning and artificial intelligence methodologies to proposed solutions in health and medical research, innovation, health service delivery, and medical education & training.
- The Major Research Application Support (MRAS) program provides in-principle support to competitive grant applications to national and international sources. In response to positive stakeholder feedback the Advisory Council endorsed the removal of the \$1 million cap until 2026. Other program conditions will remain the same.

Following approval by the Minister for Medical Research, full details, guidelines and conditions for all these programs will be made available when they are launched on 2 March 2023 at the next Open Day.

Unanimous recommendation was also made to reform the Research Institute Support program and Research Excellence Awards, in line with the FHRI Fund's Equity Funding Principle, to improve their appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency. These reforms will be implemented for the July 2023 funding cycle.



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