GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Western Australian Future Health Research & Innovation Fund

WA Cohort Studies – Operational Support Program 2026 (WACS-OSP)

Guidelines and Conditions

Applications close:
1:00 pm (AWST) Tuesday 3 March 2026

fhrifund.health.wa.gov.au

Contents

1. Introduction

The WA Cohort Studies – Operational Support Program 2026 (the Program) is a funding program of the Western Australian (WA) Future Health Research and Innovation (FHRI) Fund.

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 following FHRI Fund Strategy Theme and Priorities:

Strategic Theme 3: Foundational Confidence. Support the people, systems, and infrastructure that underpin WA's health and medical research and innovation sector, ensuring it can attract top talent, win national grants, and deliver sustainable growth.

- **Priority 7: Retain early to mid-career researchers.** Provide targeted support to secure the future of WA's health and medical research and innovation workforce at a critical career stage. Fellowships, near-miss grants, and career pathways will help reduce attrition and keep top talent engaged.
- **Priority 8: Attract and retain world class talent.** Attract and retain global research leaders to WA with competitive programs and conditions. This includes offering strong infrastructure, career incentives, and opportunities to lead impactful work.
- **Priority 9: Make WA competitive.** Deliver funding and ecosystem support that improves WA's success in national and global funding rounds. Investments will focus on closing capability gaps, supporting funding navigation, encouraging collaboration, and rewarding open science.

The expected outcomes are in alignment with the following objectives of the *Western Australian Future Health Research and Innovation Fund Act 2012*:

- improving the health and wellbeing of Western Australians
- advancing Western Australia to being, or maintaining Western Australia's position as, a national or international leader in research and innovation activities.

The Program is administered by the Office of Medical Research and Innovation (OMRI), WA Department of Health (Department of Health). Queries may be directed to DOH.OMRI@health.wa.gov.au.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Program is to provide operational funding to eligible cohort studies based on demonstrable competitive excellence. The Program intends to enable cohort studies to continue contributing to the delivery of improved clinical outcomes, changes to health policy and translational health outcomes.

The aims of the Program are to:

- ensure ongoing operations of WA cohort studies so that they can continue to contribute to the delivery of clinical outcomes, changes to health policy and translational health outcomes
- continue cohort studies' engagement with researchers and availability of data and biospecimen collections to inform research activities
- encourage new partnerships between WA cohort studies and researchers to undertake research and the ability for researchers to leverage competitive grant income

- support students, early and mid-career researcher's careers in health and medical research.

The objectives of the Program are to:

- support activities that are essential to operating cohort studies, with a focus on enabling WA cohort studies to collaborate with each other to realise efficiencies
- support activities and infrastructure essential to operating cohort studies, which are not typically covered by research grants.

3. Program description

The Program will provide funding to WA based cohort studies to support their ongoing operational costs for the 2026-27 financial year. For the purposes of the Program, a cohort study will be defined as an ongoing study where:

- participants are followed over time with continuous or repeated monitoring of risk factors or health outcomes (for at least five years)
- participants are recruited and then followed based on a common characteristic, such as an occupation or demographic similarity (for at least five years).

Funding provided through the Program is not intended to meet the full operational funding gap for eligible cohort studies. It is expected that the studies will use the Program funding as leverage to obtain additional funding from other sources.

The Activity Lead is the authorised representative of the cohort study.

The Responsible Entity* will be accountable for the governance and financial management of any funding awarded.

Funding will be awarded based on demonstrable competitive excellence, recency and relevance.

* *It is acknowledged that the term Administering Institution has traditionally been used by universities and research institutes, however, the term Responsible Entity is inclusive of industry and reflects that grant agreements are the responsibility of the contracted entity.*

4. Eligibility

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

- The Responsible Entity must:
  - have an active Australian Business Number (ABN)
  - have a physical and operational presence in WA
  - be responsible for the financial activities of the cohort study
  - be affiliated with a WA university, WA medical research institute, WA public health service provider[1] or a WA public-private partnership (PPP) provider, who is responsible for the financial activities of the cohort study
- The Activity Lead 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
  - physically reside in WA for a minimum of 80 per cent of the period of the Activity

[1] WA public health service provider means a health service provider established by an order made under section 32(1)(b) of the Health Services Act 2016, such as the Child and Adolescent Health Service, East Metropolitan Health Service, North Metropolitan Health Service, South Metropolitan Health Service, WA Country Health Service and PathWest

- have no overdue reports for any grant funding program administered by OMRI (including FHRI Fund programs) from any year (excludes authorised extensions)
- have a physical and operational presence in WA
- be an authorised representative of the cohort study
- have a position or title at the Responsible Entity for the period of the Activity.

  The Activity Lead will be required to declare which of the following applies:

  (a) employee of the Responsible Entity; or

  (b) honorary or adjunct title at the Responsible Entity.

  ***In the case of (a)**, if the Activity Lead is also employed by the WA public health system (may include Clinical Academics) they will register (WA Health staff access only) a Conflict of Interest for this grant in accordance with the Department of Health Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy that addresses how the Activity Lead intends to ensure WA Health intellectual property (IP) is protected.*

  ***In the case of (b)**, if the Activity Lead is employed by another entity (the Employer), this entity must have an active ABN, a physical and operational presence in WA and evidence must be provided that either:*

  i. an affiliation agreement exists between the Responsible Entity and the relevant Employer; or*

  ii. the intention is for this Activity to be subcontracted to the relevant Employer and there is in-principle agreement between the Responsible Entity and the Employer for this arrangement.*

  ** the affiliation/subcontract agreement must clearly define each entity's responsibilities in relation to the Activity, and in accordance with the 'Contractual arrangements' section below, include relevant permissions to use third-party intellectual property (IP) required to deliver the Activity and address ownership of new IP generated by the Activity.*

- The cohort study must:
  - be physically based in WA
  - have ongoing core operational staff
  - have at least one active study that has or is recalling the cohort to collect biospecimens and/or data (i.e. does not include projects utilising existing samples or data) by researchers not directly involved in the collection and maintenance of the cohort study
  - have received at least $1,000,000 in eligible research grants received over the previous three calendar years, as defined in the Selection Process section
  - have existing Standard Operating Procedures for data capture and biospecimen collection
  - have expenses to provide data and/or samples to researchers for research (not limited to any one field of study)
  - have an existing Scientific Advisory Committee and Consumer and Community Advisory Group.
- The Responsible Entity or other entities that fund or 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.
- The grant funding must not constitute the entire financial base of the Responsible Entity or the cohort study i.e. the Responsible Entity and cohort study (if different) must have other external sources of income.
- The Responsible Entity must ensure applications meet all eligibility criteria as set out in these guidelines.
- Applications must be submitted in accordance with the 'Application instructions' section of this document.
- An application may be deemed ineligible and excluded from further consideration if OMRI identifies that:

- it does not meet all eligibility criteria as set out in these guidelines
- the proposed Activity duplicates activity previously or currently being undertaken
- it includes any incomplete, false or misleading information
- it was submitted after the advertised closing date and time.

- Grant offers may be withdrawn if it is determined that eligibility criteria are not met.
- OMRI reserves the right to request further information and make final decisions regarding eligibility.
- Decisions made in relation to previous grant programs will not be regarded as precedents and will not be considered when assessing eligibility for this grant program.

5. Program funding

Eligible cohort studies will receive grant funding proportional to its 'research excellence' based on eligible research grant income, number of PhD students supported, and number of new projects supported over the previous three calendar years (i.e. 2023, 2024 and 2025), in comparison to other eligible cohort studies.

These measures of 'research excellence' are intended to ensure cohort studies are recognised for activities that are directly supporting current research and building research capability and capacity in WA.

Funding amounts up to $500,000 excluding GST, are available to finance the Activity over a 12-month period.

Funding from the WACS-OSP will be used by eligible cohort studies to fund services and infrastructure that support activities which are not funded by research grants. A comprehensive list of included expenditure items is included in the Program conditions section.

Funding may not be used to fund research projects or major capital works. The Department of Health will not underwrite any costs beyond the funding awarded through this Program.

The intention is that funding will be spent within WA unless goods and services expenditure items are not available in WA and/or it is beneficial to WA if goods or services are procured from outside WA.

Funding is offered subject to budget availability, which could be varied in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

6. Program conditions

Included expenditure

Recipients may use their WACS-OSP grant on the following items, which must be associated with the cohort studies activities during the period of the grant:

- salaries of core personnel associated with the management of the cohort study
- salaries of core personnel associated with cohort assessment/retention and data and bio-specimen collection
- core costs associated with cohort assessment/retention, including consumer consultation
- collection of new data and bio-specimens
- management, storage and curation of previously collected data and bio-specimens
- purchase or upgrade of software (including user licenses) and IT hardware
- research management, including facilitating agreements with external researchers

- general administrative services for the cohort study
- collaborative activities with other WA cohort studies with the aim of increasing efficiencies and access for researchers.

Excluded expenditure

The following are excluded expenditure items:

- travel
- research projects
- major capital works
- non-research purposes such as for diagnostic, therapeutic, forensic, audit, public health surveillance, or marketing authorisation purposes.

7. Application instructions

The instructions below must be followed when making a submission:

- The Application Form and the Assessment of Research Excellence spreadsheet must be submitted via the Department of Health Grant Management System by **1:00 pm (AWST) Tuesday 3 March 2026**.
- Applications must be complete, include requested certifications and be submitted by the closing date/time. Consideration must be given to the time needed to comply with internal deadlines.

Instructions for the Grant Management System are located at https://fhrifund.health.wa.gov.au/Funding/GMS-link-page.

Acknowledgement of receipt of the Application Form will be provided via email to the Responsible Entity and the Activity Lead after submission in the Grant Management System.

Queries related to the Guidelines and Conditions can be directed to DOH.OMRI@health.wa.gov.au with the subject line beginning with 'Query – WACS-OSP2026'.

Queries regarding the application process can be directed to DOH.GMS@health.wa.gov.au with the subject line beginning with 'GMS Application Assistance – WACS-OSP2026'.

8. Selection process

Assessment process

Funding will be awarded on merit, using a funding formula.

The formula will calculate the relative 'research excellence' of eligible cohort studies in comparison to each other and will be based on eligible research grant income, the dollar equivalent for eligible PhD students supported, and the dollar equivalent for new projects supported by the cohort study in the previous three calendar years of 2023, 2024 and 2025, with the following weighting applied:

Assessment criteria
Eligible research grant income • Equivalent to the grant amount received by researchers utilising the cohort study data and/or biospecimens • Must meet a minimum threshold of $1,000,000 of eligible grant income over the previous three calendar years.

PhD students supported • Equivalent to $30,000 per student per year
New projects supported • Equivalent to $10,000 per new project supported • Must include at least one new project that is accessing the cohort study's participants to collect new biospecimens and/or data.

Eligible research grant income:

Eligible research grant income includes research grant and fellowship income which has been received in the previous three calendar years (2023, 2024 and 2025) for health and medical research.

Eligible research grant income includes income which is:

- from a funding source where the grant or fellowship has undergone a competitive review process:
    - a competitive review process must allow for any applicant to apply, must not give preference to the type of institution nor its geographical location, have publicly available selection criteria against which all applications are assessed and have publicly available guidance stating how assessments are conducted
    - has been awarded following scientific peer review, committee or panel review or corporate board review.
- received by researchers whose research project is based on utilising biospecimens and/or data from the cohort study
- for health and medical research. For the purposes of this Program, health and medical research is inclusive of:
    - research to understand human health, wellbeing and disease, and the biological, behavioural, social, and environmental factors that contribute to these
    - research to measure the magnitude and distribution of a health problem o
    - research to develop solutions, interventions, products, and technologies that could contribute to improving human health and wellbeing
    - research to understand how interventions, policies and programs aimed at improving human health and wellbeing can be most effectively delivered.

If a funding source is not listed in the Australian Government Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) Specifications for the collection of 2024 data, eligibility of the funding source for the Program's purposes will need to be assessed and the Application Form's *Funding Source Assessment* worksheet included in the *WACS-OSP 2026 – Assessment of Research Excellence Spreadsheet* must be completed.

It is incumbent on the Applicant to complete the statements of compliance and provide all necessary documentation to ensure all eligible research grant income claims are made and the minimum threshold is met.

OMRI has the final determination regarding eligibility of research grants claimed.

For the purposes of this program, eligible research grant income does not include research grant income:

- received from the WA Department of Health and the FHRI Fund
- resulting from a direct grant approach from a funding body or from donations
- provided for quality assurance, clinical audit, needs analysis or literature review purposes
- provided for equipment, travel, infrastructure, or training/education purposes.

Research grant income that applies to multiple cohort studies

If eligible research grant income uses biospecimens and/or data from more than one cohort study that is applying to this Program, applicants must determine which cohort study will claim the research grant income in their application.

If there is agreement between cohort studies to split the research grant income, details of the agreement to split the income must be included in the Assessment of Research Excellence spreadsheet.

OMRI reserves the right to request external audits of submitted research grant income claims at any time.

PhD students supported

The number of PhD students accessing the cohort study to undertake research that uses biospecimens and/or data from a cohort study represents the contribution of the cohort study to building the research capability of WA researchers.

The number of PhD students accessing the cohort study over the previous three calendar years (2023, 2024 and 2025) can be claimed.

The number of PhD students are determined by whether the student is collecting and/or analysing biospecimens or undertaking research on cohort study data during the previous three calendar years (not when they commenced their PhD).

The PhD full time equivalent status is not included in the calculation of the number of eligible students.

The funding formula will apply an amount of $30,000 per PhD student (for both full time and part-time) for each year that they are accessing the cohort study.

New projects supported

The number of new projects accessing biospecimens and/or data from the cohort study represents the relevance and ongoing contribution made by the cohort study to build WA's research capacity.

The number of new projects that have been approved to access biospecimens and/or data from a cohort study via an appropriate review process can be claimed. Appropriate review processes include an ethics committee approval or scientific review committee approval

The funding formula will apply an amount of $10,000 for each new project that commenced accessing biospecimens and/or data from the cohort study in the previous three calendar years (2023, 2024 and 2025).

Selection of recipients

A formula will be applied to calculate 'research excellence' by adding eligible research grant income, the dollar equivalent for eligible PhD students supported, and the dollar equivalent for new projects supported. Each eligible cohort study will receive a grant that is proportional to its 'research excellence' value in comparison to other eligible cohort studies.

Based on the application of the funding formula, the Department of Health will determine and approve the awarding of grants in accordance with the Department of Health financial and procurement processes and delegation authorities. OMRI reserves the right to offer lower funding rates than requested and/or request modification to the Activity on a case-by-case basis.

9. Contractual arrangements

Grants are offered in accordance with the Department of Health *Grant Funding Agreement* (and its *Terms and Conditions*), which is a legal agreement between the Department of Health (Us) and the Responsible Entity (You).

The Responsible Entity must ensure that appropriate agreements are in place with the Activity Lead, team members and participating entities.

The Department of Health reserves the right to withdraw an offer of award to a Responsible Entity if the *Grant Funding Agreement* and/or *Grant Funding Agreement Terms and Conditions* cannot be agreed between the parties.

Insurance

A Responsible Entity external to the WA public health system will be required to provide evidence of appropriate insurance as a condition of the *Grant Funding Agreement*, which may include:

- Public Liability (mandatory for all grants)
- Professional Indemnity (mandatory if the Responsible Entity is conducting a clinical trial, provides any form of medical treatment or advice, training, or will provide any tailored design, advice or specification services)
- Property for the Responsible Entity's replacement value of assets (mandatory for building, plant, machinery, equipment)
- Workers Compensation (mandatory if the Responsible Entity has employees or is paying salaries, noting this includes payments to working Directors)
- Product Liability (mandatory if the Responsible Entity manufactures, supplies, sells, services or repairs a product)
- Motor Vehicle if the Responsible Entity owns vehicles
- Clinical Trials if the Responsible Entity undertakes clinical trials (note this insurance may include Professional Indemnity)
- Cyber Liability if the Activity involves confidential data, e.g. identifiable patient information.

OMRI recommends that you seek advice from your insurance advisors to confirm what level and type of insurance is required for the Activity.

The Responsible Entity is responsible for ensuring participating entities have appropriate insurance.

Note that any Activity that requires site governance approval will also be required to provide evidence of appropriate insurance during the governance process, which may vary depending on the site.

Requests for variation

Requests for variations to the *Grant Funding Agreement*, such as Activity description, Activity Lead or Responsible Entity, must be directed to OMRI. Approval of the variation will be at the discretion of the Department of Health. If variations are not approved this could result in termination of the grant with associated funding reverting to, or being recoverable by, the Department of Health, where for example eligibility or viability of the Activity is affected.

10. Funding conditions

Payment instalments

Funding will be provided in a single instalment* to the Responsible Entity subject to execution of a *Grant Funding Agreement*.

* *Within the WA public health system, payment will be made to the Responsible Entity via a General Ledger Journal (GLJ) transfer progressively upon receipt of evidence of expenditure.*

If ethics and governance approvals are required (refer to 'Approvals' section of this document), then the Responsible Entity may only release the first instalment to the Activity Lead once all approvals for the Activity have been obtained and lodged with the Responsible Entity.

Partial payment or suspension of funds

The Department of Health reserves the right to:

- provide funding instalments in parts, based on Activity to date and risk assessment of future Activity
- suspend payment of funding instalments or part instalments where Activity viability has become uncertain.

Additional funding sources

Additional sources of funding are permitted, and encouraged, provided the additional funding supports activities that complement, but do not duplicate, the Activity for which grant funding under this Program is awarded.

Termination of funds

Funds shall revert to, or be recoverable by, the Department of Health in instances where:

- eligibility requirements are no longer met
- the Activity is terminated by OMRI as a result of insufficient progress being made, or it has been otherwise determined by either the Responsible Entity or OMRI that the Activity is no longer viable
- full or partial funding for the Activity is obtained from another source, noting the date funds revert to, or are recoverable from, would be the date you are notified by the funding source
- funds are used for purposes other than those for which they were awarded
- funds were spent on activities that require ethics and/or governance approvals and such approvals were not obtained before undertaking the activities
- funds are not fully expended at the Activity end date (including any extensions approved by OMRI)
- it is determined that misleading or fraudulent information has been provided
- the Responsible Entity does not enter into formal agreements with respect to this Activity, which includes Intellectual Property ownership, where appropriate
- other entities fund or are involved in the Activity that are part of an industry that produces products or services that may contribute to poor physical health or mental wellbeing of the community.

11. Approvals

Research ethics and research governance

The Responsible Entity, and any participating entity, will be responsible for obtaining and lodging all relevant research ethics and governance approvals that are required for undertaking funded activities, and ensuring these are maintained as required for the duration of the Activity.

Research ethics approvals must be obtained from relevant ethics committees (human and/or animal). Research governance authorisation (also known as site specific assessment or access request review) must be obtained from each relevant institution/site conducting the Activity or providing access to data, participants or tissue samples.

For information on research ethics and governance submission requirements for the WA public health system please refer to the following websites: Research Ethics; Research Governance; Multi-centre Research.

Use of data collections

An Activity that requires access to and use of WA Department of Health data collections requires review and approval for data release in accordance with the *Health Services Act 2016* and the *Health Services (Information) Regulations 2017*. This is in addition to research ethics and governance approvals and will include a feasibility assessment to determine whether the data requested is appropriate for the purposes of the study and approval for use of the data from the data custodian.

Preliminary cost and time estimates can be obtained by contacting DataServ@health.wa.gov.au. Cost estimates should be included in the proposed budget and an estimate of time for release of the data should be incorporated into the milestones in the Application Form.

For further information please review the Data Linkage Services website.

Should the application for funding be successful, we recommend you immediately begin the data request and approval process.

12. Reporting

The Activity Lead and Responsible Entity are responsible for meeting reporting requirements over the duration of the Activity and at its conclusion.

All reports are to be completed on templates provided by OMRI.

Final Activity Report

A *Final Activity Report* detailing the Activity and outcomes must be submitted to OMRI at the conclusion of the Activity. Failure to submit the *Final Activity Report* at this time may render the Activity Lead ineligible for further funding from the FHRI Fund and OMRI until a satisfactory *Final Activity Report* is received.

Financial Report

A *Financial Report* outlining the expenditure of funds may be required as part of a *Progress Report* and must be submitted to OMRI at the conclusion of the Activity. *Financial Reports* must be certified by an authorised finance officer (or equivalent) of the Responsible Entity.

OMRI reserves the right to request a *Financial Report* at any stage during the Activity.

Any unexpended funds must be returned to the Department of Health. Any over-expenditure is the responsibility of the Responsible Entity, and no claim may be made against the Department of Health.

13. Publicising, acknowledgements and publications

The Minister for Medical Research and/or the Department of Health will publicly announce recipients, including the title of the Activity. All other parties must withhold announcement/media coverage until after OMRI advises this has occurred.

Acknowledgement of FHRI Fund support must be made in publications, conference presentations, public discussion, press statements etc. A copy of any published material or media must be provided to Us.

In order to maximise knowledge exchange, funding recipients must comply with the NHMRC 'Publication and dissemination of research: a guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research', which can be downloaded from the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research page, and the NHMRC Open Access Policy.

14. Confidentiality

Activity title, Activity Lead, funding amount, Responsible Entity, plain language summaries and sections indicated on applications or reports may be used for publicity purposes.

All other information provided in applications and reports will be maintained confidentially by OMRI, review panels, evaluation panels, co-funding partners and the FHRI Fund Advisory Council. If requests are received by OMRI to make public any aspect of the Activity, other than the aspects listed above, the authorisation of the Responsible Entity will be sought, notwithstanding information requested under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA)* or information pertaining to the receipt of State Government financial assistance tabled in the Parliament of Western Australia.

15. Evaluation

OMRI undertakes evaluations of Funding Programs, which will include unsuccessful applications. All parties in the application, including team members and consumer representatives, are required to contribute to the evaluation.

16. Complaints

Responsible Entities or Activity Leads who feel that their interests have been adversely affected by an action taken by OMRI in administering the Program may lodge a complaint. Complaints can only be considered when they refer to the administrative process and not to the funding decision. Complaints must be submitted via email (marked Confidential) to: Deputy Director General, Infrastructure, Medical Research, and Innovation (ODDG.IMRI@health.wa.gov.au).

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.