

WOMEN AND INFANTS RESEARCH FOUNDATION

RESEARCH ACCELERATION AWARDS

*Supporting perinatal research in Western Australia in the service of women's,
maternal and newborn health*

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

2025

About the WIRF Research Acceleration Awards

The Women and Infants Research Foundation (WIRF) seeks to support basic and translational research exhibiting strong potential to drive improvements in the health and wellbeing of women, mothers and babies. WIRF seeks to achieve this objective through the funding of high-quality research studies, and the development of world-class investigators, within Western Australia. In addition to its core priority areas of preterm birth, obstetrics and gynaecology, the Foundation enthusiastically seeks to support a diverse body of research (i.e. nursing, maternal mental health, midwifery, allied health, rare diseases, femtech, clinical audit) relevant to the enhancement of women's, maternal and newborn health.

WIRF has established the Research Acceleration Awards as a means of supporting early-stage research activity. The awards provide funding for two streams of research:

i) Quality Improvement: being awards for the purposes of assessing clinical practice implementation and/or outcomes assessed against a defined standard. Specifically, audits or reviews undertaken in order to identify opportunities for improvements to clinical care and/or outcomes and to provide a mechanism for bringing them about; and

ii) Discovery: being awards for the testing of new hypotheses or generating new preliminary data. A particular focus of this stream is the generation of data leading to new lines of investigation and the generation of nationally and internationally-competitive funding applications.

In addition to funding support, applicants will have access to development support provided by the Foundation's Research Talent Development Officer. Applications for both Quality Improvement and Discovery funding must be in an area aligned with the Foundation's above research objectives, directly relevant to the enhancement of maternal and newborn health, and undertaken in Western Australia.

Funding Quantum, Number of Grants, and Duration of Funding

Grants to a total value of either: \$45,000.00, \$30,000.00, or \$15,000.00 may be applied for.

There is no set minimum of maximum number of grants to be funded through each call.

All grants shall be awarded for a maximum period of twelve months.

A single, six-month extension may be considered on a case-by-case basis due to extenuating circumstances.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for this Program, all of the following criteria must be met:

i) Applications must be submitted through WIRF or an external administering institution which has an active Australian Business Number (ABN) and both a physical and active operational presence in Western Australia;

ii) For non-WIRF administered applications, the funding requested via the Research Acceleration Awards must not constitute more than 10% of total competitive grant revenue awarded to the administering institution in the previous calendar year;

iii) The Chief Investigator must be an Australian Citizen, or Australian Permanent Resident, or New Zealand Citizen ordinarily resident in Western Australia, and employed by a Western Australian Health Service or University, through which the funding application is made;

iv) The Chief Investigator must spend no less than 80% of the award duration (including any extension) in Western Australia and remain employed by the administering institution. For clarity, 'employment'

is defined as follows: (a) employee of the administering institution (b) honorary position at the administering institution (c) adjunct status at the administering institution that has an affiliation agreement with the employing entity. Should (c) apply, the administering institution is required to clearly identify the employing entity;

v) Neither the Chief Investigator nor any member of the collaborating team may have outstanding reports for WIRF-awarded funding in previous years;

vi) Chief Investigators and collaborating team members may be named on only one application each calendar year;

vii) Research proposals must include a brief plan for community and consumer engagement, aim to solve problems and deliver tangible outcomes that will benefit maternal and/or new born health;

viii) Applications must be accompanied by institutional and collaborator letters of support. For projects involving the use of institutional facilities (i.e. laboratories, surgical suites, animal holding areas) for which general usage or access fees are usually charged (i.e. daily rental of space), institutions must confirm that such fees will be waived or met from another source of funds.

What the grant money may be used for

- Direct research costs (e.g. consumables, reagents, data recording, interviews, sample collection, sample storage).
- Equipment purchases (only those directly relevant to the research and not for equipment ordinarily used for clinical care ordinarily funded by the Department of Health or equipment for general administrative purposes).
- Outsourced analyses (e.g. sequencing platforms, biostatistical support, translations).
- Salaries of research support and technical staff.
- Animal holding and breeding costs (e.g. agistment, veterinary care).

What the grant money may not be used for

- Publication charges.
- Chief Investigator or Collaborator salaries.
- Institutional staff salaries.
- Meals, entertainment and gifts.
- Computer equipment or IT costs (unless directly related to the project and budgeted for).
- Travel.
- Project management costs.
- Institutional overhead charges, facility hire costs or bench fees.
- Legal, patent or compliance fees.
- Advertising, websites (unless budgeted for and used solely for data collection, recruitment or research), or social media promotions.

How to apply

Applications for funding are to be made via a two-stage process. Firstly, applicants are to complete a Research Acceleration Awards Expression of Interest (EOI) Form, which may be downloaded from the Foundation's website. EOIs are not scored for merit; they will simply be reviewed by the Foundation ensure that applications align with the scope of the funding scheme. Submission of EOIs additionally

allows the Foundation's research team to arrange review resources and expertise ahead of the grant round closing, and for the Foundations Research Talent Development Officer to engage with potential applicants prior to the funding call closing. Following receipt of an EOI, the Foundation will email a copy of the 2024 Application Form to the nominated Chief Investigator. Both the initial EOI form, and the completed form (along with any supporting documentation) are to be submitted to grants@wirf.com.au by the advertised closing date. Late, partial or incomplete applications will not be considered for funding.

The grant selection process

Grants are awarded by the Foundation's Board, following review by and on the advice of the Foundation's Scientific Grants Sub-Committee. This committee is comprised of experienced researchers, clinician-scientists, experts and consumer representatives. All reviews are undertaken in confidence and the Foundation may, at its discretion, seek the advice of an external expert on the merits of a particular application. Funding will be awarded on merit, based on a process of assessment and selection. Decisions regarding eligibility, funding outcomes, and the quantum of funding awarded are the sole preserve of the Foundation's Board.

The Foundation reserves the right to negotiate lower funding rates than requested, the timing of the funding awarded or to request modification to research proposals on a case-by-case basis.

Assessment Criteria

Significance of the project (20% Weighting):

The problem that the research addresses.

The relevance and scale of the problem in relation to women's, maternal and/or new born health in Western Australia.

Anticipated contribution of the research to the identified problem (e.g. advancing knowledge, informing policy/practice, improving health care or health outcomes).

Potential economic, social and environmental benefits of the research to WA.

Novelty (15% Weighting):

Novel approach and distinction from any similar or related research in this area.

Potential benefit and value of the novel approach.

Consumer involvement (5% Weighting):

How consumers (e.g. patients, carers, community members) have been involved in the development of the proposed research.

The plan for ongoing consumer engagement in the research, including their roles and how their lived experience perspectives will inform the research.

Research Plan (25% Weighting):

Quality of the research proposal, including: hypothesis, research questions and objectives, methodology, including objective measurement of expected outcomes, achievable milestones and timeframe.

The proposed budget to undertake the activity and justification for budget items (including allowance for equipment maintenance where relevant), including any proposed salary components.

Feasibility (15% Weighting):

The knowledge, expertise and experience of the Chief Investigator and the Collaborating Team.

The contribution of the Chief Investigator and the Collaborating Team.

Appropriate level of partner engagement and collaboration, e.g. healthcare providers and policy makers, during both the development of the research proposal and the conduct of the research.
Access to technical resources, infrastructure, equipment, facilities and additional support personnel, if necessary.

Potential outcomes (20% Weighting):

Potential for translation and implementation of research findings into policy and practice, including potential commercialisation.

Potential for applications to national or international funding bodies.

Potential to develop local perinatal research capacity in Western Australia.

Notification of application outcomes

All outcomes will be notified via email, with the Chief Investigator receiving all correspondence.

Successful grant applications

Grants to entities external to the Women and Infants Research Foundation are offered in accordance with the Foundation's Funding Agreement (and its Terms and Conditions) which is a legal agreement between the Foundation and the administering institution. Research must be conducted in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018, and must have any required ethics and governance approvals. The Foundation reserves the right to withdraw an offer of award to an administering institution if the Grant Funding Agreement cannot be agreed between the parties.

Insurance

An administering institution external to the Women and Infants Research Foundation will be required to demonstrate appropriate levels of insurance as a condition of the Grant Funding Agreement.

Intellectual property and Equipment

Intellectual Property (IP) that arises out of the activity will vest with the administering institution. For grants not administered by the Women and Infants Research Foundation, the administering institution must ensure that appropriate IP agreements are in place with the Lead Investigator, any other team members, and participating entities. This includes relevant permissions to use third-party intellectual property required to deliver the activity and have Freedom to Operate to undertake the activity.

Equipment purchased as part of an approved award budget will remain the property of the administering institution at the completion of the study. The administering institution will be solely responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of equipment purchased as part of an approved award budget and no claim may be made against the Women and Infants Research Foundation.

Requests for variation

Requests for variations to the Grant Funding Agreement, such as timing and duration, administering institution, approved expenditure, payment schedules must be directed to grants@wirf.com.au

Approval of the variation will be at the discretion of the Foundation and require endorsement by the administering institution. If variations are not approved this could result in termination of the grant with associated funding reverting to, or being recoverable by, the Foundation, where for example eligibility or viability of the activity is affected. Variation requests must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the end of the Agreement.

Funding conditions

Payment instalments

For awards administered by the Women and Infants Research Foundation, funding will be made available following completion of post-award agreements. For Funding awarded to administering institutions external to the Women and Infants Research Foundation, funding will be provided in a single instalment to the administering institution following execution of a Grant Funding Agreement.

Termination of Funds

Funds shall revert to, or be recoverable by, the Foundation in instances where:

Eligibility requirements are no longer met, unless a request for variation to address this is approved;

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;

Successful grant applicants fail to take reasonable steps to acknowledge the Foundation's support, or fail to work with the Foundation in promotional activities as outlined below under 'Acknowledgements';

Funds are not fully expended at the conclusion of the activity (including any extensions approved by the Foundation); and

The recipient is found to have provided misleading or fraudulent information.

Research ethics and research governance

The administering institution, and any participating entity, will be responsible for obtaining any research ethics and governance approvals that might be required for undertaking funded activities, before those activities are commenced. Research ethics approvals must be obtained from appropriate ethics committees (human and/or animal). Research governance authorisation (also known as site specific authorisation) must be obtained from each relevant institution/site conducting the project or providing access to data, participants or tissue samples.

Use of data collections

A project that requires access to a WA public health system data collection requires review and approval for this access in accordance with the Health Services Act 2016 and the Health Services (Information) Regulations 2017. In addition to research ethics and governance approval, accessing these data may include feasibility assessment and approval for data release. Preliminary cost and time estimates should be included in the Research Activity Proposal.

Final Report

A final report detailing the activity and outcomes is to be submitted to grants@wirf.com.au within 8 weeks of the conclusion of the project. Failure to submit the final report at this time may render all investigators on the grant application ineligible for further funding from Women and Infants Research Foundation until the report is received.

Financial Acquittal Statement

A financial acquittal statement outlining the expenditure of funds must be submitted to grants@wirf.com.au within 8 weeks of the conclusion of the activity. Acquittal statements must be certified by an authorised finance officer (or equivalent) of the administering institution. The Women and Infants Research Foundation reserves the right to request interim acquittal statements at any stage during the activity. Any unexpended funds must be returned to the Women and Infants Research Foundation. Any over expenditure is the responsibility of the administering institution and no claim may be made against the Women and Infants Research Foundation.

Acknowledgments

The Women and Infants Research Foundation will promote its role as funder and publicly announce the recipients of this grant round. All other parties must withhold announcement/media coverage promoting their association with the selected projects until after the Foundation advises that the announcement of recipients has occurred. Acknowledgment of Women and Infants Research Foundation funding must be made as opportunities arise in publications, conference presentations, public discussion, press statements etc. The preferred citation is: “this project was/is funded by the Women and Infants Research Foundation”. In accepting funding, successful grant applicants agree to work with the Foundation’s scientific, media, communications and fundraising teams to assist in the promotion of the Foundation and its work, to attend WIRF-sponsored events, and to provide regular project updates for promotional and donor-engagement purposes as requested from time to time.

Complaints

Applicants who feel that their interests have been adversely affected by an action taken by the Foundation in administering a funding round 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: grants@wirf.com.au

Confidentiality

Plain language summaries and researcher statements provided in the Application Form or in reports may be used for publicity purposes as stated on the relevant templates. All other information provided in the Application Form and reports will be maintained in confidence by the Foundation and review panels / delegates.