

Dust Diseases Board



Dust Diseases Board Scholarships and Fellowships Program

Guidelines for Applicants

March 2021

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1. Overview

The Dust Diseases Board (the Board) has been providing research funding since 1983.

The 2020-2024 DDB Grant Strategy aims to make a positive difference to those impacted by hazardous dust exposure and dust diseases. This will be achieved through the Fellowship and Scholarship funding stream.

Through funding research, we aim to reduce the risk of people developing dust diseases and to optimise health and care outcomes for people with a dust disease and their families.

icare dust diseases care, also known as the Dust Diseases Authority (DDA), provides financial and health care support to over 5,100 people affected by work-related dust diseases annually.

More than 86% of the dust diseases managed by icare dust diseases care are asbestos related. icare dust diseases care only administers research funds directly related to the dust diseases dealt with by icare dust diseases care:

- Aluminosis
- Asbestosis
- Asbestos induced carcinoma
- Asbestos related pleural diseases (ARPDs)
- Bagassosis
- Berylliosis
- Byssinosis
- Coal dust pneumoconiosis
- Farmers' lung
- Hard metal pneumoconiosis
- Mesothelioma
- Silicosis
- Silico-tuberculosis
- Talcosis
- and other diseases caused by the same dusts that cause the above diseases.

2. Description of the scholarships and fellowships funding program

The Dust Diseases Board offers funding that contributes to:

- a. knowledge growth
- b. advancement and acceleration of research translation into policy and practice
- c. expanding research capability
- d. building research capacity.

The Scholarships and Fellowships Program under the Board's Grant Strategy 2020-2024 aims to support the objective of building capability and research capacity in dust diseases research to ensure the ongoing pursuit of excellence research in relevant fields and offers funding for:

- PhD Scholarships
- Postdoctoral Fellowships
- Clinical Fellowships.

PhD scholarships and fellowships are available to eligible students, researchers and clinicians in dust diseases related fields who are involved in research or programs that support one or more of the following principles:

1. Benefits NSW workers with dust diseases and their families and contributes to a better quality of life of workers with dust diseases.
2. Develop a better understanding of dust diseases in NSW, including epidemiology, to prevent the development of dust diseases among people at risk.
3. Contributes to the effective administration and sustainability of the dust diseases care scheme in NSW.
4. Provides funding for novel and innovative benchtop research, new treatments and pilot programs to improve health outcomes and quality of life.
5. Supports early stage innovations and ideas that can be turned into impact.
6. Advances and accelerates the translation of research into policy and practice, delivering meaningful outcomes to workers.
7. Fosters collaboration to develop and broaden expertise and leverage investment to increase impact.
8. Builds capacity and capability; developing dust disease researchers of tomorrow.

The Grants Strategy also encourages research that targets all phases of the lifecycle of dust diseases from risk identification and disease prevention, through treatment and care to quality of life initiatives.

Similarly, the Grants Strategy encourages research that covers various research methodologies including epidemiology, basic science, clinical trials as well as translation research impacting policy and practice.

3. Objectives of the funding program

3.1 PhD Scholarships

The objectives of the PhD scholarships are to:

- focus on building capability and capacity in dust diseases research to ensure the ongoing pursuit of excellence
- develop capability and skill of high quality PhD candidates
- promote the development of researcher knowledge and expertise across any aspect of the dust disease lifecycle and research and translation methodologies.

3.2 Postdoctoral and Clinical Fellowships

The objectives of these fellowships are to:

- ensure the recruitment and retention of outstanding early career researchers within the field of dust diseases research
- build collaboration across industry and/or research organisations and/or disciplines in dust diseases relevant fields
- support research in one or more of the 8 principles of the Grants Strategy
- strengthen research and clinical capacity in dust diseases fields including, but not limited to, thoracic oncology, respiratory and occupational health, occupational hygiene, nursing and radiology
- enhance research, medical and healthcare capability in relevant dust diseases fields.

4. Eligibility and assessment

4.1 PhD Scholarships

Scholarships are awarded through a competitive process to an individual Candidate with the support of an Administering and Research organisation(s). The Administering Organisation and Research Organisation may be the same or different.

4.1.1 Eligibility

Candidates will be eligible to apply for a scholarship if:

- the Candidate is an Australian citizen or a Permanent Resident of Australia
- the Candidate has obtained a Bachelor's degree with Honours (or equivalent qualification) in a relevant area of study and/or a Master's Degree in a related field
- the degree proposed or underway is a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD)
- the Candidate is eligible for admission or has been admitted as a PhD candidate at an Australian University
- the Candidate is undertaking or is proposing to undertake research that is aligned with the Grants Strategy
- the application is supported by the enrolling university or a research organisation or institute.

4.1.2 PhD application process

Candidates must nominate a single Administering Organisation that will be responsible for the management of the scholarship grant funds. Applications are to be lodged through the Administering Organisation.

Applications are to be made on the prescribed form and submitted via email to ddcgrants@icare.nsw.gov.au by 23 April 2021, 5pm AEST.

The application form includes word limits that must be strictly adhered to. Any information provided beyond the word limit will not be considered.

The application must include evidence of the Candidate's acceptance or enrolment as a PhD student at an Australian Institution, a copy of the Candidate's Resume/ Curriculum Vitae (CV), along with a certified copy of their academic record and two separate referee statements.

One referee must be the Primary Supervisor who will be the individual responsible for mentoring and supervising the Candidate to undertake the research proposal. The Primary Supervisor's referee statement should outline their view of the Candidate's abilities and capacity to undertake a PhD project and more specifically the Candidate's capability in relation to the research proposal in the application.

The second referee must be qualified to comment on the Candidate's work during the qualification or work experience most relevant to the research proposal that the Candidate intends to undertake and on the Candidate's capacity for research.

4.1.3 Selection criteria and assessment

Candidate applications will be assessed in accordance with three criteria:

1. Academic merit (60%), which includes but is not limited to the Candidate's performance in completed studies and research achievements.
2. Research potential (20%), which includes the contributions to be made through the research proposal and research environment.
3. Research Proposal (20%), which includes the project objectives and potential outcomes, and alignment with the Dust Diseases Board Grants Strategy.

The assessment and selection process involves an initial eligibility appraisal of the application as to whether the application has satisfied all of the eligibility requirements (including word limits). An application that meets all the eligibility requirements will proceed for assessment against the selection criteria. Recommendations and approvals for funding will be based on the application assessment results.

4.1.4 Award of PhD scholarship

Awards for PhD scholarship funding of up to \$40,000 per year exclusive of GST are available.

Successful applications will be awarded funding up to a period of three years. Offers of scholarships must be formally accepted by the Administering Organisation and Candidate in writing via email or post within two weeks of the date of the offer.

For funding to commence, a funding agreement must be entered into with the icare dust diseases care through the nominated Administering Organisation. Funding agreements must be executed by the Administering Organisation and icare dust diseases care.

4.1.5 General requirements of PhD scholarships

Project Requirements

Research project proposals outlined in the application must specify clear aims and outcomes that are aligned to the Grants Strategy. The proposal must be explicit as to how the research project is of significance to and will benefit people living with, or at risk of developing, dust diseases.

Administering organisation requirements

The application must be supported by and lodged through an Administering Organisation for it to be eligible. icare dust diseases care requires the Administering Organisation to:

- support the Candidate
- approve and endorse the research proposal outlined in the application
- have in place policies and procedures for the administration and management of public funds including scholarship grants
- ensure ethical and moral scientific conduct and practice
- be capable of supporting students throughout their studies
- execute the funding agreement to administer and manage the funds.

The Administering Organisation and Research Organisation may be the same or different.

Research organisation requirements

The application must be supported by a Research Organisation for it to be eligible. A Research Organisation includes, but is not limited to, a research or scientific institute, university or relevant industry clinic. Where the research is proposed to be performed across multiple research organisations, a lead organisation must be nominated.

icare dust diseases care requires the research organisation to:

- support the Candidate and application
- approve and endorse the research proposal outlined in the application
- comply with work, health and safety practices and provide a safe environment to undertake research
- provide the necessary facilities and infrastructure to undertake the proposed research
- provide quality mentoring and supervision of the student
- ensure ethical and moral scientific conduct
- be capable of supporting students throughout their studies.

Administrative requirements

The Candidate is responsible for their contribution to the research project proposal and performance throughout the course of the scholarship. This includes securing the relevant support and approvals and any paperwork associated with the PhD candidature.

The Administering Organisation is responsible for the administration of the project and the scholarship funds in accordance with the funding agreement. It is also responsible for coordinating the scholarship reporting requirements under the agreement with the Candidate, Research Organisation and icare dust diseases care. This includes progress reports on the scholarship and financial reports which must account for the receipt and expenditure of scholarship funds

Successful Candidates are required to report on the progress of the research project every six months over the scholarship period. In accordance with the funding agreement, if reports are not submitted or completed to a satisfactory standard or funds are not being used appropriately, icare dust diseases care can suspend funding until such time that these requirements are met.

Successful Candidates will also be responsible for acknowledging funding support from the Dust Diseases Board on those occasions that the research is publicly discussed or presented. This includes but is not limited to conferences, forums, media interviews, journals, printed articles and social media.

4.2 Postdoctoral and Clinical Fellowships

Postdoctoral and Clinical fellowships are awarded through a competitive process in respect of an individual Candidate with the support of an Eligible Organisation.

4.2.1 Postdoctoral Fellowship eligibility

Candidates will be eligible for a Postdoctoral fellowship if:

- the Candidate is an Australian citizen or a Permanent Resident of Australia
- the Candidate has been awarded a PhD or has a research degree or experience equivalent to the award of a PhD or has a Masters degree and proven track record of work experience in a relevant field
- for Industrial (Occupational) Hygiene Fellowship Candidates, the Candidate must have a proven

track record of a minimum of 2 years full time (or equivalent part-time) work experience in relevant fields

- the Candidate is undertaking or is proposing to undertake a program of activity that is aligned with the Dust Diseases Board Grants Strategy
- the Candidate is supported by an Eligible Organisation
- the application in respect of a Fellowship Candidate is submitted by and through the Eligible Organisation.

An Eligible Organisation includes a university or higher education organisation, research or medical organisation or institute. The Eligible Organisation will be the organisation with responsibility for the administration of the funding should the application be successful. Therefore, the Eligible Organisation is effectively the Administering Organisation with policies and procedures in place to administer and manage public funds.

4.2.2 Clinical Fellowships eligibility

Candidates will be eligible for a clinical fellowship if:

- the Candidate is an Australian citizen or a Permanent Resident of Australia.
- the Candidate must have degree qualifications in fields relevant to dust diseases such as, but not limited to, thoracic oncology, respiratory and occupational medicine and radiology
- the Candidate must have a minimum of 2 years full time (or equivalent part-time) work experience in dust diseases relevant fields
- for Candidates from an Occupational Hygiene setting, the Candidate must have a proven track record of a minimum of 2 years full time (or equivalent part-time) work experience in relevant fields
- the Candidate is undertaking or is proposing to undertake a program of activity that is aligned with the Dust Diseases Board Grants Strategy
- the Candidate is supported by an Eligible Organisation
- the application in respect of a Fellowship Candidate is submitted by and through the Eligible Organisation.

An Eligible Organisation includes a university or higher education organisation, research or medical organisation or institute. The Eligible Organisation will be the organisation with responsibility for the administration of the funding should the application be successful. Therefore, the Eligible Organisation is effectively the Administering

Organisation with policies and procedures in place to administer and manage public funds.

4.2.3 Fellowship application process

Applications are to be made through the Eligible Organisation on the prescribed form and by 23 April 2021, 5pm AEST submitted via email to ddcgrants@icare.nsw.gov.au

The application form includes word limits that must be strictly adhered to. Any information provided beyond the word limit will not be considered.

The following documents must be submitted with the application:

- Copy of the Candidate's Resume/Curriculum Vitae (CV), along with certified copies of their Degree/qualification(s) and academic records.
- Statement of support from the Candidate's nominated Professional Referee outlining their knowledge and opinion regarding:
 - the personal and professional qualities of the Candidate
 - the academic and professional achievements and merit of the Candidate in their discipline or profession
 - the Candidate's commitment to their discipline and profession
 - how the Candidate will benefit professionally from the fellowship.

The Professional Referee is expected to be an Australian Citizen or permanent resident of Australia who knows the Candidate in a professional capacity and has knowledge of the Candidate's academic and/or professional achievements and personal qualities.

- Statement of support from the Candidate's nominated Project Referee outlining their knowledge and opinion regarding:
 - the merit of the research project proposal
 - why the proposed research/project is necessary
 - how the Candidate's experience and input is relevant to the proposed research/project
 - how both the Candidate and people living with, or at risk of developing, dust diseases would benefit from the completion of the research project proposal.

The Project Referee is expected to be an Australian Citizen or permanent resident of Australia who is familiar with the field and topic of the proposed research project, has some knowledge of the Candidate's standing in the field of their proposed project, and understands the importance of the proposed project.

The Project Referee and Professional Referee must be different individuals and cannot be the same person.

- Statement from the Eligible Organisation signed by a senior executive of the organisation outlining:
 - how the proposed program of activity involving the fellowship aligns with the Grants Strategy
 - the extent to which the fellowship Candidate aligns with and/or complements the research activity, work and profile of the Eligible Organisation
 - the facilities and resources that will be provided by the Eligible Organisation to support the Candidate during the term of the Candidate's fellowship
 - how the support of the Eligible Organisation will assist the fellowship Candidate to further develop their skills and assist them with their future career in a dust disease relevant field.

4.2.4 Fellowship selection criteria and assessment

Applications will be assessed in accordance with three criteria:

1. Candidate performance (60%), including but not limited to the research opportunity and output performance, capacity and capability, and track record of quality contributions or achievements relevant to the discipline.
2. Proposal quality (20%) which includes the merit of the proposed program of activity involving the fellowship in terms of outcomes, approach and benefits, and alignment of the program with the Grants Strategy.
3. Capacity building potential (20%), which includes the potential of the fellowship to build research and/or specialist capability and collaboration in a relevant dust diseases field, and the nature and level of support the Eligible Organisation will provide to the Candidate during the fellowship.

The assessment and selection process involves an initial eligibility appraisal of the application as to whether the application has satisfied all of the eligibility requirements. An application that meets all the eligibility requirements will proceed for assessment against the selection criteria. Recommendations and approvals for funding will be based on the application assessment results.

4.2.5 Award of fellowship

Awards for fellowship funding of up to \$80,000 per year exclusive of GST are available.

Successful applications will be awarded funding for a period of up to three years. Offers of fellowships must be formally accepted by both the Eligible Organisation and fellowship Candidate in writing via email or post within two weeks of the date of the offer.

For funding to commence, successful Eligible Organisations must enter into a funding agreement with icare dust diseases care. Funding agreements must be executed by the Eligible Organisation and icare dust diseases care.

4.2.6 General requirements of fellowships

Proposal requirements

Proposals outlined in the application for programs of activity in respect of the fellowship must specify clear aims and outcomes and demonstrate how this aligns to the Grants Strategy. The proposal must be explicit as to how the program is of significance to and will benefit people living with, or at risk of developing, dust diseases.

Where it is proposed that a fellowship Candidate undertakes research/project activities at an organisation other than the Eligible Organisation during the fellowship, that organisation must be listed and identified as a Host Organisation within the proposal.

The proposal may identify one or more Host Organisations which do not have to be Eligible Organisations. In these cases, the proposal must describe:

- the extent of collaboration between the fellowship Candidate, the Eligible Organisation and the Host Organisation(s)
- how the Host Organisation(s) will provide suitable resources and facilities to support the fellowship Candidate.

The fellowship Candidate may perform activities described under the proposal at the Host Organisation(s) provided that the activities are aligned with the Grants Strategy and the work will benefit people living with, or at risk of developing, dust diseases.

Eligible organisation requirements

The application must be submitted by an Eligible Organisation for it to be eligible.

icare dust diseases care requires the Eligible Organisation to:

- coordinate the completion and submission of the application
- support the fellowship Candidate identified on the application
- meet the proposal requirements
- have in place policies and procedures for the administration and management of public funds including fellowship grants
- ensure ethical and moral scientific conduct
- be capable of, and committed to, supporting the fellowship candidate throughout the term of the fellowship
- provide the relevant resources and facilities to support the fellowship candidate
- submit a Statement from the Eligible Organisation signed by a senior executive
- execute the funding agreement.

Administrative requirements

The fellowship Candidate is responsible for their contribution to the work described in the proposal and for their performance throughout the term of the fellowship.

The Eligible Organisation is responsible for the administration of the proposal and of the fellowship funds in accordance with the funding agreement.

The Eligible Organisation is required to report on the progress of the fellowship and proposal every six months over the period of awarded term. An End of Year Financial Report must be submitted by the Eligible Organisation no later than 3 months after the end of the financial year for which funding has been awarded. The financial report must account for the receipt and expenditure of fellowship funds.

In accordance with the funding agreement, if reports are not submitted or completed to a satisfactory standard or funds are not being used appropriately, icare dust diseases care can suspend funding until such time that these requirements are met.

Both the fellowship Candidate and Eligible Organisation will be responsible for acknowledging funding support from icare dust diseases care on those occasions that the proposal work is publicly discussed or presented. This includes but is not limited to conferences, forums, media interviews, journals, printed articles and social media.

5. General provisions

5.1 Assessment of applications

Applications should be submitted to ddcgrants@icare.nsw.gov.au by no later than 5pm AEST 23 April 2021. Upon receipt, applications will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility and adherence to word limits.

All eligible applications will be scored and ranked based on an assessment of merit against the principles of the Board's Grants Strategy, the selection criteria and the amount of funding requested.

Applications may be reviewed by additional independent assessors if required.

The submission of an application does not confer any entitlement on the applicant.

The decision to make a grant is totally within the discretion of the Dust Diseases Board.

The Board requires its members and independent assessors to declare conflicts of interest and to withdraw from considering individual applications where such conflict exists.

Applications will be considered in the first instance for eligibility and adherence to one or more of principles of the Board's Grants Strategy.

Applications meeting the eligibility requirements and Grant Strategy principles will be merit assessed against the designated selection criteria for scholarships and fellowships accordingly.

5.2 Funding

Scholarship and Fellowship grant funding is offered for a maximum of three years. The grant will be offered as a "one line" grant without specification of distribution and there will be no additional sums paid by icare dust diseases care outside of the one line grant.

The grant must be spent wholly for the purposes for which it was applied for and awarded, and so certified by Administering Organisation or Eligible Organisation.

Payments in respect of a grant will be within the terms and conditions specified in the funding offer and set out in the Funding Agreement.

Funds will not be provided to cover any overhead costs levied by the Administering Organisation.

All amounts referred to in the Funding Agreement are exclusive of GST. Administering Organisations and Eligible Organisations are responsible for all financial and taxation implications associated with receiving funds.

5.3 Incomplete, false or misleading information

The application is the only source of information available for assessment. As such it must contain all the information necessary for assessment without need for further written or oral explanation or reference to additional information. All details provided in the application must be current, particularly concerning any other grants or awards, at the time of application.

If you provide false or misleading information within the application to icare dust diseases care, it will be excluded from any further consideration for funding.

5.4 Declarations/certifications

Signatures on the application form certify the accuracy and validity of all information submitted. It is the responsibility of the Administering Organisation or Eligible Organisation to coordinate the signing of the various declarations required on the application form.

The Administering Organisation and Eligible Organisation signatory is certifying that it will be responsible for the appropriate use of the funds awarded, for the performance of the scholarship or fellowship and related research/project proposal resulting from the application, and all other items as dictated by the funding agreement.

The signatories (as applicable) of the Administering Organisation, Eligible Organisation and Research Organisation must have the appropriate authority to sign on behalf of their organisation.

Electronic signatures on grant applications are acceptable.

5.5 Privacy and confidentiality

Documents containing personal information will be handled and protected in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

Candidates are required to consent to the information supplied as part of their application being disclosed for assessment and purposes connected with the making and administration of the Grant. Such disclosure includes, but is not limited to, members of the Dust Diseases Board, independent assessors requested by the Board to provide advice, and relevant employees of Insurance and Care NSW involved in the grant process.

The announcement of the successful Candidates will involve the dissemination of information to the public about the general nature of the scholarship and fellowship grant funded including summary descriptions provided in the application, the funding awarded, the Candidates involved in the grant, and the Administering Organisation, and any other organisations at which the scholarship and fellowship research/project proposal is being carried out.

5.6 Conflict of interest

All parties involved in or associated with the application are required to disclose to icare dust diseases care any conflict of interest that has the potential to influence, or appear to influence the scholarship and fellowship and research/project proposal, publications and media reports, or request for funding related to the application/proposal. Such conflicts may be disclosed to icare dust diseases care at the time of submission of the application, and in reporting on funded grants as soon as practicable after the conflict of interest is identified.

5.7 Notification of outcome

All Candidates will be notified directly of the outcome of their application. The details of successful applications will be published on icare's website.

5.8 Enquiries

Enquiries can be emailed to icare dust diseases care via ddcgrants@icare.nsw.gov.au

6. Funds administration

6.1 Funding agreement

If the application for a scholarship or fellowship is successful, the Administering Organisation or Eligible Organisation will be required to enter into icare dust diseases care's standard Funding Agreement.

The Funding Agreement details the specific conditions for scholarships and fellowships and each individual grantee including reporting requirements and financial management.

All parties involved in a grant should familiarise themselves with the Standard Agreement conditions. The Administering Organisation or Eligible Organisation and icare dust diseases care will be parties to the Agreement.

By signing the Agreement, the Administering Organisation or Eligible Organisation is agreeing to the conditions contained in that Agreement.

It is the responsibility of the Administering Organisation or Eligible Organisation to ensure it has entered into its own agreement with the Candidate in respect of the performance of the research/project proposal activities and the overall accountabilities of the Candidate for the term of the scholarship or fellowship. A copy of this agreement may be required by icare dust diseases care before funding is commenced.

Scholarship or Fellowship funding will not commence, nor funds be expended, prior to:

- the Agreement between icare dust diseases care and the Administering Organisation or Eligible Organisation has been signed by both parties; and
- appropriate clearances have been obtained relevant to the project (as applicable), for example ethics approval, and provided to icare dust diseases care.

Evidence of Research Ethics Committee approval, Institutional Biosafety Committee approval or other regulatory body approvals, as appropriate and applicable to the proposed research/project activities outlined in the application, must be forwarded to icare dust diseases care upon receipt. The offer of funding may be withdrawn if the necessary approvals are not received 6 months after the date of the Funding Agreement.

Requests to vary an Agreement or schedules must be forwarded in writing. Amendment of any clauses of the Agreement will be at icare dust diseases care's absolute discretion.

6.2 Progress reporting

The grantee is required to submit progress reports and expenditure reports according to the Schedule of Progress Reports which is part of every funding agreement. Any departure from the approved research/project activities described in the application during the term of the scholarship or fellowship must be disclosed in the progress reports.

The DDB reserves the right to suspend or terminate a scholarship or fellowship grant if progress reports are not provided by the due date or if progress is considered unsatisfactory by the Dust Diseases Board. icare dust diseases care will provide notice in writing of any concerns to the Administering Organisations.