



National Research Program

Asthma Australia

Asthma Australia is the recognised national community voice of people with asthma and linked conditions and their carers. It comprises the Asthma Foundations from each Australian state and territory working together on national policy, advocacy and programs - and promoting research. Asthma Australia is a national, nongovernment, incorporated body with no political affiliations. Asthma Australia's vision is to free the community of asthma. We enact this through our mission of working together to help people with asthma and linked conditions to breathe better.

Our research history

Research has been a priority of the Asthma Foundations since their conception in 1961. At that time, a group of visionary Australians conducted what was then the biggest ever community fundraising appeal in Australia's history. This initiated a fifty year history in which research has been a major priority. Some of the world's most eminent asthma researchers received early career grants from an Asthma Foundation. Since that time, the Foundations have provided millions of dollars in research grants, making a unique and strategic contribution to national and global thinking about asthma and its treatment.

Research: a national Asthma Australia priority

Asthma Australia has five strategic priorities. These encompass provision of education and training; community information, resources and support; social inclusion; research; and working in partnerships to achieve our mission of helping people with asthma to breathe better. Research is both a priority in itself and informs and enables our other strategic priorities.

Our national intent

The intention is for the new National Research Program to:

- Focus on peer reviewed and publishable outcomes and development of new knowledge that can be directly applied for the benefit of people with asthma
- Grow the funds available and form partnerships to enhance the scope and impact of the research program
- Give priority to outcomes that benefit people of greatest need – because of the severity of their asthma and/or lack of access to relevant and timely services
- Inform social policy for the benefit of people with asthma
- Be flexible in allocating program funds, funding only the best research
- Support pilot programs that enable future nationally competitive grants including National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and Australian Research Council (ARC) funding
- Contribute to the global effort to reduce the burden of disease and create a community free of asthma.

Governance

Oversight of the National Research Program is undertaken by the Asthma Australia Board's National Research Council. The Board appoints the Independent Chair and ratifies membership of the Council. The Council:

- Oversees the announcement, selection and monitoring of grants
- Provides advice about opportunities for program enhancement and sustainability
- Receives advice from the National Medical and Scientific Advisory Committee (MASAC) and other stakeholders
- Co-opts additional expertise as required
- Supports the public and professional dissemination of asthma and related research
- Reports to the National Board.

Administration of the Program is managed by Asthma Australia's National Office.

Program summary

Asthma Australia is striving to help people with asthma to breathe better. The extent to which this can be achieved through the National Research Program depends on the goodwill and generosity of our funders and supporters.

The Program has three components:

1. Strategic Research Grants
2. Grants in any area of asthma research
3. Scholarships

The total funding available for the program is about \$500 000 per annum, with the intent of increasing the amount in the future. As a guide to the level of grant funding, the program will offer grants for one or two years in the vicinity of \$75 000 to \$150 000 per year. Scholarships will be funded at levels similar to Australian Universities ie ~ \$25 000 each year for three years dependent on satisfactory progress.

In addition, the National Board may elect to support specific initiatives with discretionary funding. The Board may also enter into partnership arrangements to broker additional research activity, for example as an NHMRC partnership project or ARC linkage grant partner or in partnership with another consumer organisation to undertake research funded by corporate or community supporters.

Grants will not provide supplementary funding for larger studies or projects. Projects that could obtain pilot data for subsequent NHMRC or ARC grant funding are welcomed.

At times, research donations specify a particular research, population and/or geographic area. Routine reporting on the Program will incorporate the allocation, use and impact of funding in accordance with all specified and agreed funding conditions.

Funded researchers will be required to provide regular progress reports. Asthma Australia will use this information in communicating with consumers, funders, supporters and the wider community about current research.

Asthma Australia will also:

- Encourage consumers to participate in the National Research Program
- Liaise with respiratory researchers more widely, sharing information and offering collaboration for the benefit of consumers
- Advocate with policy makers and potential funders and supporters for enhanced investment in asthma research.

Program components

1. Strategic Research Grants for Asthma Australia

Strategic Research Grants will be awarded to institutions or organisations with appropriate credentials in social policy research and/or health services, education and training program evaluation and must be undertaken in Australia.

Research should impact positively on health outcomes for people with asthma in terms of quality of life and morbidity and support Asthma Australia's Strategic Directions. For example:

Strategic Directions (asthmaaustralia.org.au)

Examples of possible research areas

Education and training

Evaluating the impact of our community programs in the childcare sector or workplace or piloting new programs

Community information & resources

Determining the benefit to people with asthma of our information and resources eg evaluation of the telephone information services

Social inclusion

Addressing asthma risks exacerbated through social/financial disadvantage eg impact of the cost of medication

Partnerships

Community and health professional partnerships that best support people with asthma eg pilot programs between Asthma Foundations and general practice

Some strategic directions can overlap eg in partnerships and education and training.

Outcomes from this work will contribute to the body of evidence which defines and disseminates promising practice in the treatment and support of people with asthma including the associated social, emotional and financial aspects. The evidence will also inform national policy advocacy.

2. Grants in any area of asthma research

These Grants are investigator led projects relating to asthma and may be in basic sciences, clinical fields, epidemiology, public health etc.

Grants will be awarded to applicants who best fulfil the grant selection criteria and who are employed at an institution with appropriate research facilities, under the supervision of a responsible investigator.

Special consideration will be given to the applicants submitting:

- Proposals from emerging research units or investigators not currently with NHMRC or ARC funding
- Innovative research ideas
- Proposals which are a feeder or a precursor to larger future NHMRC or ARC projects.

3. Scholarships

A range of scholarships will be offered under the auspices of the National Research Program, with the aim of developing capacity in research and evidence-based practice.

Scholarships available in any given year vary with the funding offered by our supporters.

Travel Scholarships are awarded to researchers to support the quality of the Foundations' programs in information, education, training, social inclusion, research, policy and advocacy.

Postgraduate scholarships are offered to students from medical, nursing, science and related disciplines who meet criteria of eligibility and excellence. Applicants from Aboriginal and Torres Strait and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will be particularly encouraged to apply. Successful applicants require support from their academic institution for their application. The research proposal is neither planned nor supervised by Asthma Australia.

In general, postgraduate scholarship candidates will be evaluated on:

- Academic record
- Suitability for research training
- Significance of the proposed research; and
- Suitability and support of the institution and intended supervisor(s).

Grant Process

Step 1 Expressions of Interest

Expressions of interest will be called for each of the program components. A short template will be provided on the asthmaaustralia.org.au website for completion online. Applications will be reviewed by the National Research Council and shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application. The assessment criteria for Expressions of Interest will be as outlined for full applications in step 2.

Step 2 Assessment of full applications

Details regarding full applications will be on the website in February 2012 (see asthmaaustralia.org.au).

Full applications will be reviewed by at least two assessors without conflict of interest, in an independent process using the following criteria:

- Relevance to consumer care or service delivery 20%
Demonstrate significance of the need being addressed; how the proposal will result in improved consumer outcomes or service delivery; how, and how quickly, the research could have an impact; and relevance to the following areas of asthma care: prevention, epidemiology, diagnosis, treatment, supportive care, service evaluation, needs analyses and policy development.
- Collaboration 15%
Demonstrate (where appropriate) cross-disciplinary approaches with researchers, clinicians, consumers, clinician-managers, health care policy makers, industry and/or multiple site collaboration. If the research proposal is not collaborative, demonstrate how the adoption of the research findings is expected to occur.

Demonstrate how the results of the research proposal could be communicated with Asthma Australia to other researchers, clinicians, students, consumers and health care decision makers.
- Impact 15%
Demonstrate how the research proposal will build improved asthma outcomes in Australia.
- Merit 50%
Address: feasibility, rationale, methodology, timeframes, innovation, team capacity and track record relevant to opportunity

The National Research Council will make recommendations to the Asthma Australia Board on the awarding of funds and the duration of funding.

Key dates (first funding year 2012-2013)

Grant applications and announcements

Announcement	December 2011
Expressions of interest open	12 January 2012
Expressions of interest close	31 March 2012
Invited full applications open	30 April 2012
Invited full applications close	11 June 2012
Announcement	End of June/early July 2012
Deed of Agreement finalised	July 2012
Project commencement	July/August 2012

Grants that operate over more than one year will have milestone and progress report dates negotiated and included as part of the agreement.

Scholarship applications and announcements

Announcement	September 2011
Applications open	October 2012
Applications close	November 2012

More details @ asthmaaustralia.org.au September 2012