

# 2026 NSW CVRN - VCCRI Research Innovation Grants Guidelines

## Background

The NSW Cardiovascular Research Network (CVRN) is focused on developing and supporting world-class cardiovascular research through the facilitation of cross-disciplinary and institutional collaboration. With its 14 NSW CVRN Member Organisations, 3 Affiliated Organisations, and over 600 members, its goal is to form alliances to deliver integrated solutions to key knowledge gaps and unmet needs in cardiovascular disease and health in NSW. One of its main priorities is to build the capacity and capability of early to mid-career researchers by providing career development opportunities.

The CVRN and Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute Limited (VCCRI) have partnered to offer the 2026 NSW CVRN – VCCRI Research Innovation Grants. This opportunity provides vouchers for VCCRI Innovation Centre services, to the value of \$10,000 ex GST, to access the equipment and expertise of the VCCRI Innovation Centre. This opportunity is open to early to mid-career researchers, for short-term projects focused on cardiovascular health and disease. Up to three vouchers are on offer in the 2026 round.

Proudly supported by the NSW Government, the VCCRI Innovation Centre gives researchers access to state-of-the-art equipment and cutting-edge technologies, as well as expert staff who can assist with everything from project planning through to data analysis and interpretation. The Innovation Centre has 8 Facilities:

- Stem Cell Production Facility
- Cell Function & Screening Facility
- Micro Imaging Facility
- Preclinical Imaging Facility
- Clinical Imaging Facility
- Metabolomics Facility
- Cryo-EM Facility
- Biomedical Data Science Facility (Software engineering)

For more information regarding the Innovation Centre, please refer to the website ([innovationcentre.org.au](http://innovationcentre.org.au)) or contact Dr Jacek Kolanowski, Head, Research Facilities & Innovation Centre, [j.kolanowski@victorchang.edu.au](mailto:j.kolanowski@victorchang.edu.au)

## Objectives and Assessment Criteria

The NSW CVRN – VCCRI Research Innovation Grants aim to support early to mid-career cardiovascular researchers by giving them access to world-class technologies, training and expertise in the VCCRI Innovation Centre.

Priority will be given to projects that:

- focus on knowledge gaps in cardiovascular health and diseases, particularly in NSW; and
- are likely to lead to tangible outcomes.

Applications will be assessed according to the following criteria:

| CRITERIA                                                                                                                           | WEIGHTING |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| The quality of the research project                                                                                                | 30%       |
| The likelihood that the project will lead to tangible outcomes, including career development of applicant.                         | 30%       |
| The track record of the applicant, relative to opportunity.                                                                        | 15%       |
| The likelihood that the research project will address an important gap in CVD, and lead to significant new knowledge in this area. | 15%       |
| Feasibility of the research project (incorporating the proposed project budget, Gantt chart, risks and timeline).                  | 10%       |

## Eligibility of Applicants

The NSW CVRN – VCCRI Research Innovation Grants are open to early to mid-career researchers:

- who have been awarded a PhD no more than 10 years prior to the application closing date, unless valid circumstances for career disruptions can be demonstrated;
- whose research is in the field of cardiovascular disease and related conditions;
- who are employed in a NSW CVRN Member Organisation (please refer to Appendix for a list) or NSW Local Health District, and
- who are CVRN members (membership can be organised prior to the application being lodged – see application form for details).

***Please note that you are not eligible to apply if you have received a NSW CVRN-VCCRI grant***

***Only 1 grant can be awarded to an applicant from VCCRI within a single funding cycle.***

## Eligible use of vouchers

Each grant will be in the form of a voucher for VCCRI Innovation Centre services and/or access to the value of \$10,000 ex GST. (A voucher can be used across multiple Innovation Centre Facilities).

A voucher can be used for the following services from the VCCRI Innovation Centre:

- Project development and planning (a minimum of 2 hours must be allocated for consultation as part of the award)
- Training
- Instrument time
- Data processing
- Data analysis
- Fee-for-service to perform the experiments
- Consumables (no more than 10% of the total award value) – the rest, if relevant, will need to be covered from other sources by the recipient

A voucher is not redeemable for cash and cannot be used for the following services:

- Travel to or from the Innovation Centre (although travel and accommodation support will be considered for regional members - see application form)
- Transport of samples/consumables to or from the Innovation Centre

## Application Process and Timeline

Applications are to be made by completing the NSW CVRN – VCCRI Research Innovation Grants 2026 Application Form and submitting to [info@innovationcentre.org.au](mailto:info@innovationcentre.org.au). Please include NSW CVRN – VCCRI Research Innovation Grant in the subject and body of the email.

Applications will be assessed by an independent cardiovascular scientific review panel against the Assessment Criteria. The applicants may be invited to present their project to the panel as part of the assessment process. Details of this step will be communicated to the awardees at least two weeks prior to the date of the presentation. If there is a perceived or existing conflict of interest with an assessor and an application, that assessor will not review an application.

| ACTIVITY                                         | DATE*                           |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Applications open                                | Thursday 12 February 2026       |
| Optional visit to Victor Chang Innovation Centre | Early March 2026                |
| Deadline for application submission              | 5pm AEDT, Tuesday 31 March 2026 |

|                                                                           |                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Assessment period (may include online presentation of the project)</b> | <b>April 2026</b>        |
| <b>Applicants notified of outcomes</b>                                    | <b>End of April 2026</b> |
| <b>Projects need to start**</b>                                           | <b>1 June 2026</b>       |
| <b>Project Completion Deadline**</b>                                      | <b>30 November 2026</b>  |

\* Please note, timelines are indicative only and may need to be adjusted if circumstances change.

\*\*Start of the project requires Statement of Work signed by both parties before commencement

\*\*\*Completion refers to all the experiments at the VCCRI Innovation Centre completed, which usually requires samples to be delivered no later than 1-2 months ahead of time

## Researcher obligations post award

- Attendance at pre-commencement networking event, and progress/completion networking event.
- If the researcher's organisation has not entered into an agreement with VCCRI to allow access to the Innovation Centre\*\*, a VCCRI Master Services Agreement must be signed before the commencement.
- Statement of Work, that defines the exact scope of service and associated costs, must be signed by all Awardee's, their parent organisation, and the Innovation Centre before commencement. If the Statement of Work (SOW) is not signed within two months of the award, the Innovation Centre reserves the right to delay project commencement, reallocate facility time, or withdraw the voucher. Extensions may be considered only under exceptional circumstances and must be approved in writing by the NSW CVRN.
- All projects must begin by 1 June 2026, with all funds expended by 30 November 2026.
- Acknowledgement of CVRN, VCCRI, and OHMR in any publications or presentations and informing those institutions about any of those activities even after the end of the project if they contain results generated during this work.
- Provision of a final report to the CVRN within one month of completion of the project or the end date of the round (whichever is earlier).

\*\* The VCCRI Master Services Agreement has been provided with the other grant documents. Please note that it is already in place with the following research organisations:

- The University of Sydney
- The University of Newcastle
- University of New South Wales
- University of Technology Sydney

- The Heart Research Institute Ltd
- Centenary Institute
- Garvan Institute of Medical Research
- University of Wollongong
- Macquarie University
- Western Sydney University

## Appendix

### 2026 NSW CVRN Member Organisations:

- The University of Sydney
- Hunter Medical Research Institute and The University of Newcastle
- UNSW Sydney
- University of Technology Sydney
- The Heart Research Institute Ltd
- Centenary Institute
- Garvan Institute of Medical Research
- The George Institute for Global Health
- Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute Limited
- University of Wollongong
- Macquarie University
- University of New England
- Southern Cross University
- Charles Sturt University

### Affiliated Institutions:

- Western Sydney University
- The Sax Institute
- The Baird Institute