Pipeline Accelerator 2020-21 (Round 2 - Screening) Guidelines

## Facilitating Access to Australia’s Screening Capability

## Background

The **Australian Therapeutic Pipeline** (the “Pipeline”) is an initiative of TIA to bring together a diverse range of Australian translational medical research capabilities. An objective of the Pipeline initiative is to create the framework for a facilitated pathway for researchers and industry (including SMEs) to access Pipeline members’ translational research capabilities. This can leverage public sector investment in such capabilities and reduce duplication. To support this aim, TIA has developed a voucher-style researcher access scheme - the **Pipeline Accelerator**.

This round of the **Pipeline Accelerator** scheme seeks to support meritorious therapeutic development projects that specifically relate to **assay development** forscreening of small molecule libraries against drug targets. Considerations will be given to compounds screening and hit validation projects.

## Scheme Objectives and Key Features

The Accelerator scheme is designed to be able to respond quickly to the needs of researchers and industry by facilitating access to the expertise available in HTS facilities. The scheme has three key participants, **Providers**, **Applicants** and **TIA**. For **Providers** (HTS facilities selected by TIA), the general aims of the scheme common to all rounds are to:

* Enable and increase external business from SMEs and publicly-funded research groups
* Raise the profile of the TIA facilities and their capabilities within the Australian research community
* Incentivise collaborative projects, leading to more effective use of research infrastructure

For **Applicants** (public and private sector researchers) the aims of the scheme are to:

* Provide a mechanism for financially supporting and enabling hard-to-fund activities
* Lower the financial bar to access high quality translational research services

To obtain a voucher, the project must require access to a TIA-supported HTS facility (see **Eligibility of Providers** below). Applications must be made with the Providers involvement and agreement. Funding is via a fixed-value allocation of **either** $10,000 ex GST, $20,000 ex GST **or** $50,000 ex GST, and will be provided directly to the service provider at project commencement, **allowing this cost saving to be passed to the Applicant**. The voucher may **contribute** to the cost of accessing a facility but cannot cover or exceed the entire cost.

For **TIA** the aims of the scheme are to

* Support access to facilities
* Enable co-investment with NCRIS funding
* Increase external access to national research infrastructure
* Provide a means to identify and track progress of supported projects
* Provide case studies and exemplars for TIA reporting to government

## Eligibility of Applicants

The Pipeline Accelerator scheme is open to applications from the following organisations:

* University-based researchers and research groups
* Research groups within Publicly Funded Research Organisations, including Medical Research Institutes
* University or Medical Research Institute’s technology transfer offices or organisations, and university/MRI spin-outs
* Commercial entities that meet the general eligibility criteria for the [R&D Tax Incentive](https://www.business.gov.au/assistance/research-and-development-tax-incentive).
* **Applications from international organisations will also be considered.**

## Eligibility of Providers

**Only** the following facilities are eligible for voucher support from this round of the scheme (“Providers”). Multiple Providers can be named on a single application if the project makes use of capabilities at several different facilities. This list of providers may be amended for future rounds, subject to demand.

| Facility Name | Contact(s) | Email |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [ACRF Drug Discovery Centre for Childhood Cancer (Children's Cancer Institute)](https://www.ccia.org.au/our-services/drug-discovery-centre/) | Greg ArndtAndrew StoneTim Failes | garndt@ccia.org.auAStone@ccia.org.autfailes@ccia.org.au |
| [ANU Centre for Therapeutic Discovery (ANU)](https://jcsmr.anu.edu.au/services/high-throughput-screening) | Amee George | amee.george@anu.edu.au |
| [Cell Screen SA (Flinders)](https://www.flinders.edu.au/research/facilities/cell-screen-sa-facility) | Amanda Aloia | amanda.aloia@flinders.edu.au |
| [Community for Open Antimicrobial Drug Discovery (UQ)](http://www.co-add.org/) | Johannes Zuegg Mark Blaskovich | j.zuegg@imb.uq.edu.au, m.blaskovich@imb.uq.edu.au |
| [Griffith Discovery Biology (Griffith)](http://www.discoverybiology.org/) | Vicky Avery | v.avery@griffith.edu.au |
| [GRIDD Mass Spectrometry Screening (Griffith)](https://www.griffith.edu.au/institute-drug-discovery/unique-resources/mass-spectrometry-screening) | Wendy LoaRaya Monteiro | w.loa@griffith.edu.au, r.monteiro@griffith.edu.au |
| [Monash Fragment Platform (Monash)](https://www.monash.edu/researchinfrastructure/mfp) | Martin Scanlon Bradley Doak | martin.scanlon@monash.edubradley.doak@monash.edu |
| [National Drug Discovery Centre \* (WEHI)](https://www.wehi.edu.au/about-business-development/partnering-opportunities/opportunities-platform-technologies) | Jeff MitchellKym Lowes | mitchell.j@wehi.edu.aulowes@wehi.edu.au |
| [Victorian Centre for Functional Genomics (Peter Mac)](https://www.petermac.org/research/core-facilities/victorian-centre-functional-genomics) | Kaylene Simpson | kaylene.simpson@petermac.org |
| [Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute Innovation Centre](https://www.victorchang.edu.au/innovation-centre) | Jeffrey McArthurJohanna Barclay | j.mcarthur@victorchang.edu.auj.barclay@victorchang.edu.au |

\***National Drug Discovery Centre**: Applications to the Pipeline Accelerator scheme may seek to access capacity and capability at the National Drug Discovery Centre, if the project is outside the [NDDC’s ongoing process to identify and support large scale high throughput screens](https://www.wehi.edu.au/research/research-technologies/drug-discovery/apply). Pipeline Accelerator applications may describe a subsequent application to NDDC as part of a development plan, and external projects emerging from NDDC may apply to the Pipeline Accelerator scheme for support for hit validation

TIA also offers to arrange access to a new service that provides guidance on compound selection and triaging for further development via medicinal chemistry. This service is offered by the [Australian Translational Medicinal Chemistry Facility (ATMCF)](https://www.monash.edu/atmcf) and is known as APHID (Action Plan for Hit Identification). The APHID service will perform relevant electronic structure-activity relationship (e-SAR) studies and assess the feasibility of sourcing the follow-up sets of molecules/compounds of interest, including library searches for additional potential compounds of interest. [Click here for more information on APHID](https://www.therapeuticinnovation.com.au/aphid). This service will be offered to relevant voucher holders at no additional cost.

## Eligibility of Projects

Projects considered eligible for support must align with at least one of the following activities:

1. Development of a novel assay into a format suitable for compound library screening
2. Screening of compound libraries against a target with a suitable assay
3. Post-screening hit validation prior to entry into medicinal chemistry

**PLEASE NOTE: This round of the scheme will have a focus on assay development projects**

To achieve support, the Project applications must:

* Indicate which core facility will be accessed.
* Briefly articulate the current state of research relating to the chosen therapeutic modality in terms of biochemical characterisation, mechanism of action, target validation*,* etc.
* Be regarded as scientifically meritorious by an assessment committee with external members appointed by TIA.
* Demonstrate a plan for the next steps in therapeutic development as they relate to the project, in the context of the project’s potential to lead to new therapeutic product or product/service for an existing or new market (including via out-licencing).
* Have obtained appropriate service quotes from the selected Provider
* Define an indicative desired timescale for the project
	+ The timescale should align with the award and would ordinarily not exceed 12-18 months from commencement. Note: this timescale applies to the supported activities only, and **not** the full completion of the project or development of a potential therapeutic.
* Define an endpoint for the supported Project (as noted above, not necessarily for the entire development project).
* **NEW**: Provide some level of assurance **in the indication of facility support** (see application form) that the project can commence **within 6 months** of award.
* **NEW:** Applicants seeking to access facilities within their own academic units or host entities (that is, “Internal” projects) will be required to briefly articulate why voucher funding is necessary to access an internal facility.
* Submit all the required documents – Application form, quotes from Providers, letter/email or support from Providers. Incomplete applications will be automatically rejected.

## Funding level

The scheme will offer three separate funding levels (as listed below) to account for the range of potential projects costs.

* + **$10,000** ex GST **OR**
	+ **$20,000** ex GST **OR**
	+ **$50,000** ex GST

Applications should specify the level of funding to apply for. Applicants will **not** be offered a **different** level of funding than was applied for.

**PLEASE NOTE the following:**

* We are no longer offering $5,000 vouchers or multiples of vouchers.
* Multiple facilities may be accessed using a single voucher.
* An applicant may apply to multiple facilities to support **different aspects** of the same project, although the maximum voucher benefit to a facility is $50,000 per project.

## Co-investment expectations

Co-investment is an important aspect of this scheme, as applicants must have some “skin in the game” and must have access to sufficient resources to complete the proposed work. **Vouchers are not intended to fully-fund projects**. Applications must therefore demonstrate significant cash co-investment to confirm that, should the voucher be awarded, the proposed work is fully supported.

The *ideal* level of co-investment is 1:1 (100%) matching of the voucher value. For example, for a service quoted at $100,000, an Applicant can apply for $50,000 voucher, but contributes $50,000 to meet the total cost of the quoted service.

The *minimum* level of co-investment is 50% of the voucher value. For example, for a service quoted at $30,000, an Applicant can apply for a $20,000 voucher, but must contribute an absolute minimum of $10,000 to meet the total cost of the quoted service.

## Application and funding process

1. ***Applications open***

TIA publishes a call for applications through a variety of channels.

Applicants approach Providers with a project (i.e. request to access a specific translational research capability) and request a quote for services.

Applicant writes brief application for support and requests either $10,000 ex GST, $20,000 ex GST or $50,000 ex GST.

***IMPORTANT: It will be assumed that Providers will have worked closely with Applicants on the application and will have provided the necessary advice and guidance to maximise the chance of project success.***

The Application package will be hosted on the TIA website at the following URL: <http://www.therapeuticinnovation.com.au/accelerator>. Detailed instructions are included on the Application form template.

Applicant submits application package to TIA before the closing date, which will be advised on the scheme’s webpage and on the application form.

1. ***Applications close***
2. ***Project selection***

A panel including independent external experts assesses applications and decide on awards. The assessment process may be staged, depending on the number of applications received.

TIA sends unsuccessful applicants a letter with, if available, feedback on the application.

TIA sends successful Applicants a **Letter of Offer**, cc: the specified Provider. This letter includes the obligations of TIA, Applicant and Provider as follows:

**TIA must:**

* pay invoices submitted by the named Provider totalling either $10,000 ex GST, $20,000 ex GST or $50,000 ex GST (depending on the voucher value) should the Applicant and Provider meet certain obligations to the satisfaction of TIA (see below).

**The Applicant must:**

* co-sign with the Provider the received letter of offer and return to indicate agreement with the terms
* enter into a legally binding agreement with the Provider (**NOT** with TIA) to provide payment for access to capabilities specified in the Application (*note*: TIA does not require sight of the contract, but requires written confirmation that such a contract exists in the Letter of Commencement)
* co-sign a **Letter of Commencement** with the Provider, confirming that work has commenced. A template Letter of Commencement is available for download on the scheme’s [webpage](https://www.therapeuticinovation.com.au/accelerator).
* provide brief (<1 page) reports on project progress according to a reporting schedule agreed with TIA.
* provide a **Letter of Completion** including a brief final report that describes the overall outcomes. A template Letter of Completion is available for download on the scheme’s [webpage](https://www.therapeuticinovation.com.au/accelerator).

**The Provider must:**

* co-sign with the Applicant the received letter of offer and return to indicate agreement with the terms.
* enter into a legally binding agreement with the Applicant (**NOT** with TIA) to provide specific capabilities in exchange for payment. The final quoted cost should include subsidy from the awarded voucher.
* co-sign a **Letter of Commencement** and a **Letter of Completion** with the Applicant, as described above.
* Ordinarily, TIA would expect the project to commence within 6 months of award of the voucher. Because of the nature of this scheme, ***offers may be withdrawn if projects do not commence within six months of award without a reasonable explanation***.
* submit an invoice to TIA for part-reimbursement for the services as described in the quotation to the value of the awarded voucher.
* provide the services as described in the quotation within an agreed time window.
1. ***Project commences***

Once Project has commenced, Provider is directly reimbursed by TIA according to the following conditions:

* The Provider has sent to TIA a copy of a proper invoice for the awarded voucher value + GST, that references the Project and the Applicant
* The Invoice must have extended payment terms (60 days) to allow TIA to assess whether payment conditions have been met
* The Invoice accompanies **written notice** that the services have commenced. This proof shall be a TIA-provided template **Letter of Commencement** from the Applicant (counter-signed by the Provider) stating that the services have begun, and briefly outlining the capabilities being provided.

Note:

* The voucher awarded is **not transferable** to another project.
* TIA **does not** need to see the agreement between Provider and Applicant.
* TIA **does not** seek any ownership or beneficial interest in supported projects but reserves the right to receive brief project updates (~1/2 page) on request.
* In the event of early termination, the Provider must notify TIA in writing at the earliest possible opportunity. Depending on the scenario, TIA will advise the Provider on the next steps.
1. ***Project complete***

Once the work of the Provider is complete, Provider and Applicant must meet the following conditions:

* The Applicant and Provider have provided **written proof** that the services have completed. This proof shall be a TIA-provided template **Letter of Completion** from the Applicant (counter-signed by the Provider) describing the capability provided. This template includes instructions for a brief completion report.
1. ***Acknowledgement of TIA/NCRIS***

Applicants and/or Providers are expected to acknowledge TIA and NCRIS in all publications associated with this work and send publication details to TIA via the following online form:

[**http://bit.ly/ATRAX-DOI**](http://bit.ly/ATRAX-DOI)

Guidance for acknowledging TIA/NCRIS, including use of logos, is available at the following URL:

[**http://www.therapeuticinnovation.com.au/acknowledging-tia**](http://www.therapeuticinnovation.com.au/acknowledging-tia)

## Scheme timelines

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Stage | Timeframe |
| Scheme opens for applications on the TIA website | 26th Feb 2021 |
| Scheme closes for applications | 5pm, 30th April 2021 |
| Applications assessed | Early May 2021 |
| Awards made | Late June 2021 |
| Projects commence | From early July 2021 |

\*Offers may be withdrawn if projects have not commenced within six months without an explanation satisfactory to TIA.

## Scheme documents

These documents make up the Application and reporting package for the **Pipeline Accelerator** scheme.

* 1 Pipeline Accelerator Guidelines 2021-21 Round 2 Screening.docx **(this document)**
* 2 Pipeline Accelerator Application 2021-21 Round 2 Screening.docx
* 3 Letter of Commencement template 2020-21 Round 2 Screening.docx **to accompany initial invoice**
* 4 Letter of Completion template 2020-21 Round 2 Screening.docx **to inform TIA of project completion**