ACMD Pitch

Phase 1 Guidelines – 2027

Engineering the future of healthcare

The Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery

ACMD

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1. ABOUT THE SCHEME

ACMD Pitch is a component of the *Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD)*, funded by St Vincent's Foundation Victoria and inspired by St Vincent's Curran Foundation, to enhance research, innovation and entrepreneurship across the ACMD.

ACMD Pitch provides seed funding to advance innovative diagnostics, medical devices and digital health solutions towards their next translational milestone.

Based on the pitch performance this ACMD Pitch 2027 round will offer:

- Two ACMD Premier Pitch Grants valued at $100,000 each for one year, comprising $75,000 in direct project funding and $25,000 in ACMD Program Support
- Two ACMD Supportive Pitch Grants valued at $20,000 each for one year, comprising $15,000 in direct project funding and $5,000 of ACMD Program Support

These grants aim to help bridge the "valley of death" between discovery research and developed technologies by accelerating projects towards a higher Technology Readiness Level (TRL). TRLs are a metric (1-9) used to assess the maturity of a particular "technology" during its development, from concept to deployment. Depending on the type of project being submitted to this scheme, we would expect it to be from **TRL 3 for a diagnostic/device, or a digital-focussed project**.

Examples of types of projects eligible for this scheme include:

a) Generation of a prototype of a medical device
b) Validation of diagnostic assays, platforms, algorithms, or other digital tools
c) Pre-clinical testing or feasibility studies
d) Generation of evidence needed to achieve the next significant translational or TRL milestone

Grant funding is generously provided by supporters of ACMD through St Vincent's Foundation Victoria, ACMD's fundraising partner.

2. ABOUT ACMD

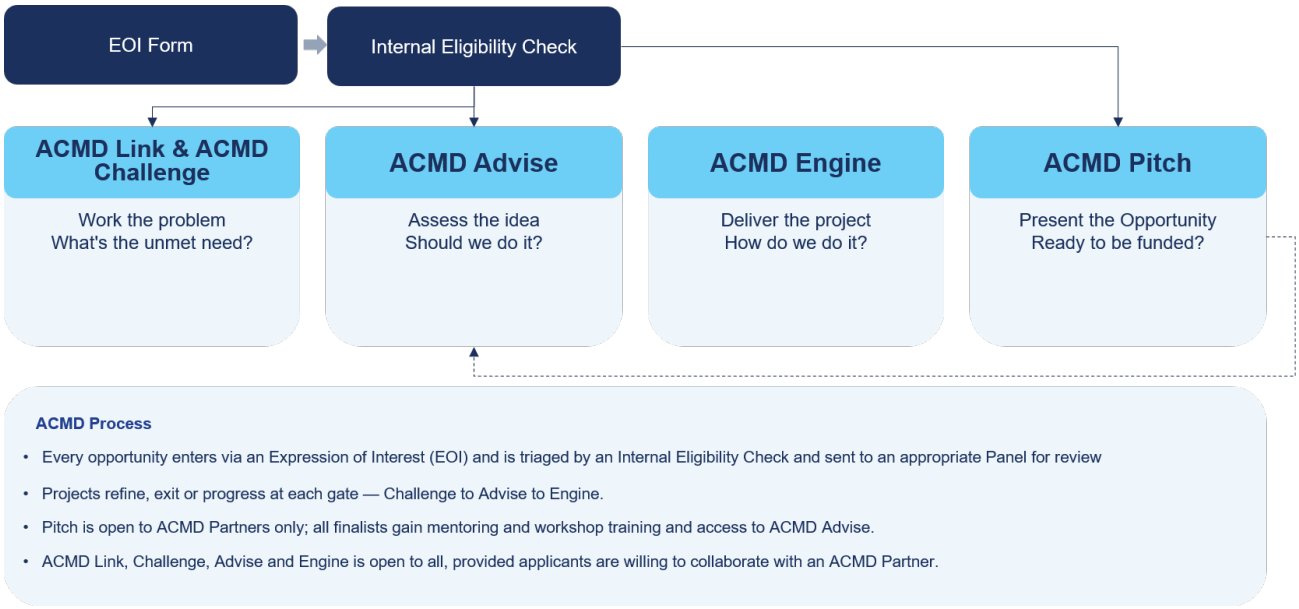
The Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD) is a collaborative centre for health innovation, bringing together clinicians, researchers, engineers, industry and entrepreneurs to accelerate the translation of healthcare discoveries into real-world patient outcomes. ACMD supports the development of new diagnostics, devices, digital health solutions and models of care through multidisciplinary collaboration and innovation programs.

The ACMD partner organisations include Australian Catholic University, The Bionics Institute, RMIT University, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, St Vincent's Institute, Swinburne University of Technology, and the University of Melbourne.

Through these partnerships, ACMD helps identify unmet clinical needs, build multidisciplinary teams, develop translational research projects, and connect innovators with expertise, facilities, funding and commercialisation pathways to improve health outcomes.

Learn more at the ACMD website www.acmd.org.au

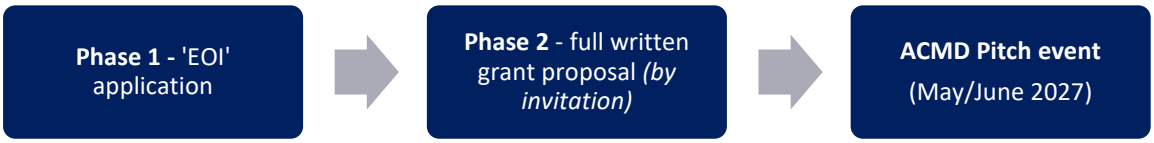
ACMD Programs Framework at a glance



3. APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process follows a staged approach. Phase 1 is brief and functions as an Expression of Interest (EOI). The application process is as follows:

- **Phase 1:** Applicants submit a short Expression of Interest (EOI), which will be reviewed by the ACMD Partners Panel.
- **Phase 2:** Shortlisted applicants will be ***invited*** to submit a full written application, which will be reviewed by the ACMD Commercial Experts Panel.
- **ACMD Pitch:** Finalists from Phase 2 will be invited to pitch their projects to the ACMD Pitch Judging Panel at the ACMD Pitch event TBC in May/June 2027.
    - Pitch training will be provided to all finalists



4. KEY TIMELINES

Phase 1 applications open	1 December 2026
Information session (hybrid and recorded)	14 December 2026
Phase 1 applications close	11 January 2027 5:00pm
Review Period	January 2027
Shortlisted applicants notified and invited to Phase 2 applications	5 February 2027
Phase 2 applications close	25 February 2027 5:00pm
Review Period	February – March 2027
Finalists notified to prepare for the pitch event	mid-March 2027
Pitch workshops	April – May 2027
ACMD Pitch event for finalists	TBC end May / June 2027
Grants funded to awardees	From June 2027
Milestone report(s)	As set out in the funding agreement
Grant expiration date	Maximum 12 months after grant award date
Final report due	Maximum 12 months after grant commencement

5. HOW TO APPLY

Phase 1 applications must be submitted via EOI Form - https://acmd.grantplatform.com/

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to provide a full submission for Phase 2 and more information will be provided at that stage.

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Phase 1

1. Lead applicants must be affiliated with an eligible ACMD Partner: Australian Catholic University, the Bionics Institute, RMIT University, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, St Vincent's Institute, Swinburne University of Technology, or the University of Melbourne.
2. The Project must be led by clinicians, clinician-researchers or researchers from at least one of the eligible ACMD Partner organisations.
3. The Project must involve collaboration between two or more ACMD partners.
4. The Project Lead must remain affiliated with an eligible organisation for the full grant period.
5. The funded portion of the project must be able to be completed within one year.
6. The Project Lead must be available to attend and present at the pitch event.
7. Application must secure nominal support by an ACMD TRAC (Translational Research Advisory Committee) member or their delegate representing their organisation – see details below.
8. Projects for a medical device, or software as a medical device must be from TRL 3 onwards, with funding intended to support achievement of the next significant translational milestone.

Phase 2

1. Shortlisted from Phase 1.
2. Request a budget typically between $15,000–$75,000 and provide a fully justified budget.
3. Undertake project work at the ACMD facility at 27 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy and upload nominal support by the TRAC member or their delegate.
4. If applicable, have or be in a position to obtain all required HREC and research governance approvals before the project start date.
5. Upload support and relevant governance sign-offs.

7. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Based on the TRL and type of product, the award will support activities including, but not limited to:

- Early-stage commercialisation/market assessments
- Proof of concept data collection
- Optimisation and validation studies
- Clinical trials
- Development of prototypes
- User testing, usability testing and implementation evaluation
- Contracting specialists, for example software development

Ineligible activities include:

- Patent filing or similar costs associated directly to registering intellectual property rights
- Basic research not directed at translation/TRL advancement
- Significant capital infrastructure purchases
- Business as usual service delivery, routine equipment replacement or recurrent operating costs
- Undergraduate activities, postgraduate core training, fees, stipends, and similar costs.

8. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Assessment criteria Phase 1 applications will be assessed primarily on the potential impact of the work and whether the proposed next step is credible:

1. **Unmet need and impact**. The problem or opportunity is clearly defined and translational benefit is significant.
2. **Pathway to impact.** The application explains what the funding would enable and the credible next steps towards impact.
3. **Finances**. The proposed budget is proportionate to the activities and potential impact.
4. **Approach and feasibility.** The proposed activities are appropriate to the question or problem, and the stated deliverables can realistically be achieved within the funding period.
5. **Capability and support.** The project can access the expertise, collaboration, sponsorship and organisational support required to progress the work.
6. **Distinctiveness**. The work offers a meaningful scientific advance, new capability or improvement over the current approach.

9. REVIEW PANEL

Applications are assessed at each stage by a different panel:

- **Phase 1 (shortlisting):** ACMD Partners Panel
- **Phase 2 (finalists):** ACMD Commercial Experts Panel
- **ACMD Pitch (awardees):** ACMD Pitch Judging Panel

Panels include ACMD and external experts in MedTech research, translation, IP and commercialisation.

10. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)

IP rights generated during the course of the grant work will be managed via the relevant policies of the Principal Investigator's (Project Lead) primary institution. We appreciate that your research may be sensitive in nature and that confidentiality for your submission will be important. The External Review Panel members will enter into a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) with ACMD to maintain the confidentiality of project applications and related information. Finalists must check with relevant IP/legal expertise from their home organisation to ensure they are not inadvertently damaging claims to future IP.

11. INSTITUTIONAL APPROVALS AND TRAC SUPPORT

Applicants must contact the ACMD TRAC (Translational Research Advisory Committee) member or their delegate representing their organisation to seek nominal support and upload evidence of this support with their application. See Appendix B for a Template.

Organisation	TRAC member	Email
Australian Catholic University	Leon Karagounis	leonidas.karagounis@acu.edu.au
Bionics Institute	James Fallon	jfallon@bionicsinstitute.org

Organisation	TRAC member	Email
RMIT University	Rob Kapsa	rob.kapsa@rmit.edu.au
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne	Megan Robertson	megan.robertson@svha.org.au
St Vincent's Institute	Natalie Sims	nsims@svi.edu.au
Swinburne University of Technology	Alan Duffy	aduffy@swin.edu.au
University of Melbourne	Andrea O'Connor	a.oconnor@unimelb.edu.au

12. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
ACMD Programs	ACMD's programs provide a structured pathway to help transform healthcare challenges and research opportunities into impactful translational outcomes. The programs support ideas from early problem identification through to project development and implementation, with opportunities entering through a single Expression of Interest (EOI) process and progressing through a staged pathway as appropriate – accelerating commercialisation. ACMD assesses the project through ACMD Advise and delivers the translational research project through ACMD Engine.
ACMD Advise	ACMD's advisory pathway, providing early, targeted advice to help innovators refine unmet need, project scope, translational pathway, commercialisation considerations, and readiness for further ACMD program support.
ACMD Engine	ACMD's project development pathway, providing project management, commercialisation mentoring, and translation support to accelerate promising health technology projects from business case through implementation, regulatory readiness, investment, partnership development, and commercialisation.
TRAC	TRAC (Translational Research Advisory Committee) is an ACMD advisory committee that supports the identification, development, and translation of research opportunities by connecting projects with relevant expertise, providing strategic advice, and fostering collaboration across ACMD partners
TRL	(TRL 1 - 2): Concept/Clinical Need Defined (TRL 3 - 4): Feasibility/Early Prototype – Proof of Concept prototype developed (TRL 4 - 5): Pre-clinical testing – Functional prototype with pre-clinical testing (TRL 5 - 6): Verification and Validation – Usability (TRL 6 - 7): Clinical Trial Initiated – Early Product Version Built (TRL 7 - 8): Clinical Trial Completed – Safety & Performance Demonstrated. Regulatory Submission Prepared (TRL 8 - 9): Regulatory Approval Granted (TRL 9+): Manufacturing Scale-Up

Term	Definition
Clinician	A healthcare professional involved in the delivery of patient care, including medical practitioners, nurses and allied health professionals.
Project Lead	The Project Lead is the Principal Investigator (PI), who serves as the primary researcher and overall lead for the project.
Researcher	An individual engaged in research, innovation or translation activities, including scientists, engineers, technologists, software developers and other research professionals.
Shortlisted	An applicant whose Phase 1 Expression of Interest has been selected by the ACMD Partners Panel and who is invited to submit a full Phase 2 application.
Finalist	A shortlisted applicant whose Phase 2 application has been selected by the ACMD Commercial Experts Panel and who is invited to pitch at the ACMD Pitch event.
Awardee	A finalist selected by the ACMD Pitch Judging Panel, based on pitch performance, to receive an ACMD Premier Pitch Grant or an ACMD Supportive Pitch Grant.

13. CONTACT

If you have any further questions about the ACMD Pitch, please contact Programs@acmd.org.au

APPENDIX A – APPLICATION QUESTIONS

These are the indicative questions; the most recent questions are on the online form.

A1. Phase 1

Grant applications will be assessed against the likelihood of the proposed projects further developing technologies or discoveries along the translational pipeline to higher levels of technology readiness.

1. **Project title**
2. **Project Team details**
   Include all team members from your organisation and collaborators.
   a) *Names, academic title positions*
   b) *Organisational affiliations*
   c) *Role in project*
3. **Technology Readiness Level**

   a. *Current TRL*
   b. *Justify the current Technology Readiness Level for your project.*
   c. Type of product

4. **Project summary** (max 300 words)
   a. *Provide a high-level summary of your project. This should be non-confidential – and appropriate for a lay audience. Outline the research idea, unmet need, key objectives, how you will meet these, and the potential for translational impact.*

5. **Unmet clinical need / opportunity for impact** (max 200 words)
   a. *What is the specific clinical problem your project addresses? Why is this important in an Australian or global context? How might your proposed solution change clinical practice or health outcomes, or substantially reduce costs for the health care system?*

6. **Indicative budget** (max 100 words)
   a. The maximum available budget is $75,000 for 1 year
   b. Note: if you are shortlisted in this expression of interest stage, you will need to provide a fully justified budget in the next stage
   c. *Brief overview of the estimated budget and major cost categories - e.g., research assistant time, consumables, sequencing, equipment, library screening, software development, etc.*

7. **Key activities to meet objectives** (max 200 words)
   a. *What will you do and how?*
   b. *What approaches will you be using to meet your objectives?*
   c. *What methodologies will you employ?*
   d. *Where relevant – what preliminary data do you have?*

8. **Timelines and milestones** (max 150 words)
   a. To be eligible, projects must have a maximum duration of 12 months
   b. *List 2–4 key milestones you will aim to achieve with projected timeline. Indicate any critical dependencies.*

9. **Translation success, potential and/or distinctiveness** (max 400 words)
    a. *You must tell us – what translational success would this funding enable?*

You could also cover: What TRL you expect to achieve. What is the potential pathway to translation, implementation or adoption? Who are the likely end users (e.g. patients, consumers, clinicians, health services)? How have consumers, patients and end users been engaged in identifying the need, designing or testing the solution? How will your approach promote equity, accessibility and inclusion? What makes your approach novel or more effective than current alternatives? Who are your competitors and what else is in the pipeline? Who will pay for it (individuals, health services, governments, insurers, etc.)?

10. **Intellectual property** (max 100 words)
    a. *Do you hold or have access to relevant IP (e.g., patents, know-how)?*
    b. *Are there any potential barriers to commercialisation or translation?*
    c. *Have you sought advice from your organisation's relevant IP, legal or commercialisation office?*

Answer not applicable where the project does not create or rely on intellectual property

11. **Partnerships** (max 100 words)
    a. *Briefly outline any existing or planned collaborations relevant to this project's translational success, including clinical, research, or industry partners. What will they contribute?*

12. Video Pitch (2-minutes)

Create a brief video (under two minutes) that introduces your team, explains your innovation, and shares your passion for the problem you are solving.

A2. Phase 2

These questions will be sent to the shortlisted applicants from Phase 1. These are the indicative questions; the most recent questions will be on the online application form.

1. **Your Application ID, Principal Investigator name and institution**
    a. Note – the Application ID is provided in your feedback from Phase 1 and must be included in your Phase 2 application
2. **Lay summary**
    a. This should be non-confidential – and appropriate for a lay audience. Do not use technical language, acronyms or field-specific jargon.
3. **Plan & milestones**
    a. Include specific aims, methods/workplan for the 12-month period, 2-4 time-bound milestones, and any go/no-go criteria
    b. These may be modified if appropriate from your Phase 1 application following feedback from the panel
4. **Regulatory, ethics & governance**
    a. Outline relevant requirements (e.g., HREC, data governance, MTAs, etc.), and status of these/timelines to approvals, etc.
5. **Team & capability**
    a. Roles, relevant expertise (including in delivering translation), access to key infrastructure, any industry engagement, etc.
6. **Budget & justification**
    a. Use template provided
    b. Detailed, fully justified, and include quotes where applicable

7. **Responses to Panel-specific questions**
    a. You have received a set of tailored questions from the Review Panel – respond to these concisely, and ensure you address all questions
8. **Institutional support**
    a. Upload support and relevant governance sign-offs

APPENDIX B: TEMPLATE FOR TRAC

Instructions for applicants: Send this template to the ACMD TRAC member or delegate at your organisation (see Section 11). They should complete the bracketed fields, place it on organisational letterhead, sign it, and return it to you to upload with your application. Delete this instruction before sending.

[Date]

ACMD Pitch Program Team
Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery (ACMD)
27 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy VIC
Programs@acmd.org.au

Re: Nominal support – ACMD Pitch 2027, Phase 1 application: [Project title]

Dear ACMD Pitch Review Panel,

As the ACMD TRAC (Translational Research Advisory Committee) member [or delegate] representing [Organisation], I confirm that [Organisation] provides nominal support for the above application to the ACMD Pitch 2027 grant scheme.

Project title: [Project title]
Project Lead (Principal Investigator): [Name, position, department]
Collaborating ACMD Partners: [Organisations]
Grant type requested: [Premier Pitch Grant / Supportive Pitch Grant]

On behalf of [Organisation], I confirm that:

- The Project Lead is affiliated with [Organisation], an eligible ACMD Partner, and is expected to remain affiliated for the full grant period.
- [Organisation] nominally supports this application and the Project Lead's attendance and presentation at the ACMD Pitch event if selected as a finalist after Phase 2 review.

[Optional: add a short statement on how the project aligns with [Organisation]'s priorities or the support the organisation will provide.]

Please contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

_____
[Name]
ACMD TRAC Member [or delegate]
[Position]
[Organisation]
[Email] | [Phone]
Date: _____