OCRF Witchery Prize for Ovarian Cancer Research: 2027 Guidelines for applicants

Background

The **Witchery White Shirt Campaign** has supported the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation for almost 20 years. Originally inspired by the lab coats worn by researchers, the campaign has raised awareness and more than $18 million for research to advance the detection, treatment, and prevention of the most lethal gynaecological cancer.

In 2026, the **Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation (OCRF)** and **Witchery** have come together to establish the **OCRF Witchery Prize for Ovarian Cancer Research**, a $75,000 prize recognising an outstanding female or non-binary mid-career researcher. One prize will be awarded in 2027. The prize offers substantial, flexible funding that enables the recipient to build their research capability and advance their research and their professional career through activities such as international collaboration, conference presentations, direct research costs and support and protected time for research projects.

Eligibility criteria

Applicants must:

- Be a mid-career researcher, 5–15 years post-PhD (or equivalent research doctorate) at the application closing date, that is, with a PhD conferred between January 2012 and January 2022. Career interruptions are considered (see point 1 in Notes).
- Identify as female or non-binary
- Hold a current appointment at an Australian research institution, university, hospital or medical research institute for the duration of the prize (a Funding Agreement will be held between the OCRF and the Administering Institution, who will auspice the funds).
- Be conducting research directed at ovarian cancer early detection, treatment or prevention
- Not be a current member of the OCRF Board or committees, or OCRF staff (or an immediate family member thereof).

Current and past OCRF grant recipients are welcome to apply, and the prize may be held alongside other OCRF fellowships, grants or awards.

Detailed assessment criteria can be found at the end of this document.

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Eligible use of the prize may include:

- Career development activities that build the recipient's expertise, networks, and position as a future leader in ovarian cancer research, such as:
    - Research visits / attendances at national or international cancer centres or conferences (travel and accommodation costs)
    - Training in specialised methods or technologies
    - Establishing or strengthening collaborations with national or international research groups and the wider ovarian cancer community. For example, hosting a visiting researcher to develop lab skills, running a symposium or workshop, or holding workshops with people with lived experience of ovarian cancer.
- Laboratory, field or deskwork, including hiring research or postdoctoral assistants
- Purchasing research equipment and materials
- Professional development programs that advance the recipient's career or leadership prospects.

- Protected time for research projects, outside clinical work
- Addressing career disruptions that limit the ability to undertake research activities (including but not limited to any activities proposed in this application). Examples may include circumstances stemming from caring for children or others.

Timeline: Prize funds are made available upon execution of a funding agreement and funded activities should commence within 12 months. All funds should be spent within 24 months of the award. Where activities are delayed, a variation request may be submitted to OCRF for consideration.

How to apply

Applicants must submit:

- A cover letter outlining their reason for applying and the impact the prize would have on their career
- A completed application form, submitted through OCRF's OmniStar portal, outlining the proposed activities and budget*. This includes but is not limited to:
    - A plain-language summary of their research (maximum 300 words, written for a general audience)
    - Intended use of the prize against the criteria list
    - Where relevant, adjusted post-PhD years and a brief supporting statement describing any career interruptions.

Budget: There is no set requirement for how prize funds are divided. Applicants should provide a budget that outlines proposed expenditure and briefly explains how each item supports the assessment criteria: advancing current research, building research capacity and career development. A single item may support more than one criterion. A budget template is provided as part of the application process.

Assessment process

- **Stage 1, eligibility screen:** OCRF staff confirm eligibility and that the application is complete
- **Stage 2, written assessment:** members of OCRF's Agile Partnership Assessment Group (APAG), representing both scientific and lived experience perspectives, independently score applications against the assessment criteria
- **Stage 3, shortlist interviews:** three to five candidates are invited to interview with a panel that includes the OCRF CEO, to discuss their development plan and the pathway for their research and career
- **Stage 4, recommendation and approval:** the OCRF CEO recommends a preferred candidate to the OCRF Board for approval.

Conditions of award

The successful recipient will be asked to:

- Acknowledge the OCRF Witchery Prize for Ovarian Cancer Research in all resulting publications, presentations and media.
- Take part in the prize announcement at Witchery White Shirt Day in early May 2027*.
- Take part in agreed OCRF and Witchery communications activities, including presenting their work in plain language for a general audience.
- May be invited to take part in the 2028 Witchery White Shirt Campaign, including:
    - The campaign shoot in Sydney in February 2028*
    - The campaign launch in Sydney in April 2028*
- Submit a final report and 12-month follow-up report to OCRF on how the funds were used and the resulting research, career and capability benefits. This report may be shared with Witchery and Country Road Group.

**Flights and accommodation for all interstate travel for Witchery x OCRF White Shirt Campaign appearances will be covered separately and will not come out of the prize funds.*

Key dates

Milestone	Timing
Applications open	25 November 2026
Applications close	11:59pm AEDT, 31 January 2027
Assessment	February 2027
Shortlist interviews	March 2027
Recipient selected	April 2027
Recipient announced	May 2027

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Assessment criteria

Criteria	Weighting
Advancing current research How the prize will be applied to one or more specific ovarian cancer research project(s), including: • A clear link between the proposed activities and defined project(s) in early detection, treatment or prevention of ovarian cancer • How the prize will progress or strengthen that project	30%
Building research capacity The benefits for the broader ovarian cancer research sector, including: • Fostering collaboration between researchers and research groups • Sharing and disseminating knowledge • Developing skills within the research community	30%
Career development The specific benefits to the applicant's research career, including: • How the prize will advance the applicant's skills, networks and leadership • The impact this career progression would have on ovarian cancer research	40%

Notes

1. Career interruption provisions

- Applicants who have had career interruptions may subtract an allowance from their post-PhD years when assessing their eligibility. Eligible interruptions include parental leave, primary carer responsibilities, illness or disability, and periods of part-time employment.
- For every 12 months of full-time interruption, two years may be subtracted. The allowance is doubled because time away from research affects a career well beyond the time itself.
- Part-time employment counts in proportion to the time not worked. For example, three years at 0.6 FTE equals 1.2 years of full-time interruption, giving an allowance of 2.4 years.

Example: *an applicant awarded their PhD in January 2010 is 17 years post-PhD at the closing date. With 12 months of parental leave, their allowance is two years, giving adjusted post-PhD years of 15. They are eligible.*

- Applicants should enter their adjusted post-PhD years in the application form and briefly explain their calculation.
- APAG may use its discretion in borderline cases where an applicant is clearly mid-career in practice.
- Applicants without a PhD may be considered if they can demonstrate equivalent research experience and standing, at APAG's discretion.