



Australia's National
Science Agency

AAHL Science Merit Access

Program Guidelines 2019/20

Australian Animal Health Laboratory
(AAHL)

Geelong, Australia

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Contents

1	About the AAHL Science Merit Access Program.....	2
1.1	Program purpose.....	2
1.2	Program Overview.....	2
1.3	How to apply.....	2
1.4	Important dates.....	3
2	About the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL)	3
3.	Eligibility	3
3.1	Eligible Applicants	3
3.2	Eligible activities	4
4.	Assessment Criteria.....	5
5.	Assessment and Selection Process.....	6
5.1	Assesment.	6
5.2	Selection and approval process	6
5.3	Provisional Access Granted	7
5.4	Confidentiality.....	7
5.5	Notification.....	7
6.	AAHL Science Merit Access Program Conditions.....	7

1 About the AAHL Science Merit Access Program

1.1 Program Purpose

The AAHL Science Merit Access Program facilitates the use of the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) by other research organisations for projects of benefit to Australia. Through the program, AAHL aims to build the capacity of the Australian scientific community and maximise the use of Australia's biocontainment infrastructure for national interest, as well as enhancing the skills and networks of AAHL's own scientific teams.

1.2 Program Overview

AAHL is seeking Expressions of Interest (EOI) from Australian research organisations and their collaborators (national or international) wishing to access the facility and its capabilities, to conduct high impact research of national importance on animal and zoonotic diseases that require high levels of biocontainment.

This round is seeking EOIs for:

- Priority 1 proposals: Bench-ready research proposals capable of completion by 30 June 2020 (a pool of up to \$50k is available).
- Priority 2 proposals: Multi-stage research proposals requiring advanced planning, capable of completion by 30 June 2021 (subject to future program funding availability).

Research proposal may include requests to access:

- well-equipped PC3 and PC4 laboratories
- small and large animal facilities PC2 to PC4 (subject to institutional Animal Ethics Committee approval)
- a partnership with CSIRO staff at the facility as co-researchers
- existing facility capabilities or services (e.g. genome engineering, virology, serology, bacteriology, diagnostic molecular capability (including next generation sequencing and bioinformatics), histology, confocal microscopy, electron microscopy etc)

1.3 How to apply

Expressions of interest should be lodged by 5pm Thursday 31 October 2019 using the template attached to the invitation email. Email applications to: access2aahl@csiro.au

Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact relevant AAHL scientists to discuss their ideas, to ensure the feasibility of the proposed work and its ability to meet the criteria. If you would like us to nominate a suitable AAHL scientist with whom to collaborate, please contact us at access2aahl@csiro.au

Only submissions received by the closing date on the EOI template will be accepted.

1.4 Important dates

Closing date for Expression of Interest	5:00pm (AEST) Thursday 31 October 2019
Announcement of successful applicants	Anticipated late November 2019
Projects completed by	30 June 2020 (Priority 1 proposals)

2 About AAHL

Owned and operated by CSIRO on behalf of the nation, AAHL is Australia's national biocontainment facility. The purpose-built facility enables the highest levels of biocontainment research, helping to protect Australia's livestock and aquatic industries, as well as people, from emerging infectious disease threats.

The AAHL facility houses extensive laboratories, including animal facilities, capable of hosting research on risk groups 3 and 4 pathogens. Coupled with highly specialised teams of researchers and scientists, AAHL is recognised nationally and internationally as a centre of excellence in disease diagnosis, research, and policy advice in animal health and human diseases of animal origin.

The research performed by CSIRO and visiting scientists includes: diagnostic assay development, the identification and characterisation of new and emerging viruses, comparative immunology, vector studies, preclinical studies of new vaccines and therapeutics, genome engineering for biosecurity purposes and pathogenesis studies.

3 Eligibility

EOI can only be accepted by eligible organisations for eligible activities outlined below.

3.1 Eligible Applicants

- EOI must be submitted by an Australian research organisation. International collaborators can be named in the EOI but cannot be the lead applicant.
 - A formal agreement of the research collaboration will be required if the project is selected for access under this program.
 - AAHL is committed to building the capacity of the next generation of scientists. Students, under the supervision of the applicant, are eligible to be nominated as collaborators in an EOI.
- A maximum of 10 researchers can be nominated as the collaborating team.

- The EOI applicant must be a legal entity.
 - A Sole Trader, an individual (person), an international entity or an unincorporated association are not considered eligible, legal entity types for this program.
- The legal entity must have an Australian Business Number (ABN).
- The legal entity must hold public liability and professional indemnity insurance for the duration of the project (AAHL may request to view evidence of insurance policy).
- If selected for access, the EOI applicant must be capable of satisfying security requirements required to access the facility.

3.2 Eligible activities

- Applicants are invited to nominate proposals for scientific research on infectious agents or quarantine materials that require high biocontainment at PC3 or PC4 level.
- Research proposals should demonstrate national benefit and the results must be capable of being disclosed publicly.
- Priority 1 research proposals (bench-ready proposals) supported under this round must be able to be completed by 30 June 2020. Approval of Priority 2 projects (multistage proposals) may be subject to variances in the available AAHL Science Merit Program Funding pool. Priority 2 projects must be capable of completion by June 2021.
- Within their EOI, applicants can request the following support activities from AAHL which are offered at no cost to the applicant, as part of the AAHL Science Merit Access Program:
 - laboratory access to PC3 or PC4 laboratories and use of existing equipment
 - access to AAHL capabilities (research services or research staff expertise)
 - Research consumables (including animals) of up to \$20k
 - Mentoring or training in work at PC3 or PC4 laboratories
- You cannot seek AAHL Science Merit Access support for research proposal components that are already fully funded by someone else. Leveraged funding for parallel activity is permitted and encouraged.

Research proposals selected under the AAHL Science Merit Access Program will be supported through:

- The assignment of an AAHL scientist as collaborator and site liaison
- Contract development related to the proposed research including Intellectual Property negotiation (if required)
- Assistance in applying for relevant research permits and transport of materials
- Relevant training in scientific processes and safe working in high level biocontainment
- Establishing and conducting research methodology under quality systems (e.g. NATA, GLP)

The AAHL Science Merit Program is not responsible for the following costs associated with a research project:

- Employment, salaries and on-costs of EOI applicant organisation or partners
- Travel and accommodation costs in attending the AAHL facility
- Costs associated with documenting or publishing research
- Costs associated with the research proposal prior to AAHL Science Merit Access being granted
- Costs associated with documenting and submitting progress reports and final report required by the AAHL Science Merit Access Program

4 Assessment Criteria

All EOIs received within the defined application period are competitively assessed relative to one another, using three equally weighted selection criteria:

1. The scientific and/or technical excellence of the project;
2. Project Impact; and
3. The potential of the project to contribute to Australia's national benefit; and

Criterion 1. Scientific and/or technical excellence of the project

This criterion is examining the capability of the proposal to achieve its intended outcomes. Specifically, this includes:

- 1a) A technically and scientifically sound methodology, as evidenced through a detailed description of planning and research method, with a detailed description timing, milestones and resources required.
- 1b) Project team capability, as evidenced through a detailed description of team skills, experience or proven success.

Criterion 2. Project Impact

This criterion is examining the difference that the research proposal will make to an important scientific issue or problem:

- 2a) The impact to the research need, as evidenced through a detailed description of how the need for the research proposal was identified, why the need is important and how the intended outcomes of the research proposal will resolve the need.
- 2b) The extent to which the proposal leads to transferable techniques, methods or knowledge of importance, evidenced through a detailed description of how the research findings will be disseminated

Criterion 3. The potential of the project to contribute to Australia's national benefit

This criterion examines the contribution of the research proposal to national interest. Specifically, this includes:

- 3a) Alignment with research priorities of importance and significance, as evidenced through description of the contribution that the project proposes to make towards local, national or international research priorities or strategies.
- 3b) Benefit to the end user, as evidenced through a detailed description of the end user and the planned engagement with the end user by the applicant.
- 3c) Clear path to impact, as evidenced through a description of how the data and results make an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society and environment, beyond contributions to academic knowledge.

5 Assessment and Selection Process

5.1 Assessment

Each application is initially reviewed against the eligibility criteria. Only eligible applications will move to the next stage of assessment.

A Selection Panel consisting of relevant CSIRO staff are appointed to assess eligible applications and to determine a prioritised list of recommended research proposals to the AAHL Director for approval.

Members of the Selection Panel assess and score the responses to the assessment criteria 1 -3 for each eligible and compliant application. Criteria are scored on a scale of 0-5 according to how well the response meets each criterion.

5.2 Selection and approval process

Applications are ranked according to total score received for Criteria 1-3. The Selection Panel then discuss each application in order of ranking, highest to lowest.

As part of the discussion, the Selection Panel are considering the alignment with AAHL facility objectives and feasibility of its use. This includes consideration of:

- The level of complementarity between the science within the EOI proposal and the capabilities and specialisms of AAHL scientists, highlighting the capability development opportunities that the EOI proposal presents to CSIRO employees currently working at AAHL.
- The compatibility between the timing of the research proposal and laboratory and key personnel availability (which is changeable and may not be known at the time of issuing these program guidelines).
- The perceived value of the research to Australia, which considers the overall investment requested by AAHL and the perceived likelihood of success.

5.3 Provisional access granted

The AAHL Director decides which research proposals are selected for access, based on the recommendations of the Selection Panel. Access selection is provisional on the applicant meeting the conditions stated in section six.

5.4 Confidentiality

EOI applications submitted as part of the AAHL Science Merit Access Program are handled in confidence, to protect innovative research ideas. However, it should be noted that AAHL will disclose the project title of research proposals successful in obtaining access through the AAHL Science Merit Access Program and there is an expectation that project outcomes will be made publicly available.

5.5 Notification

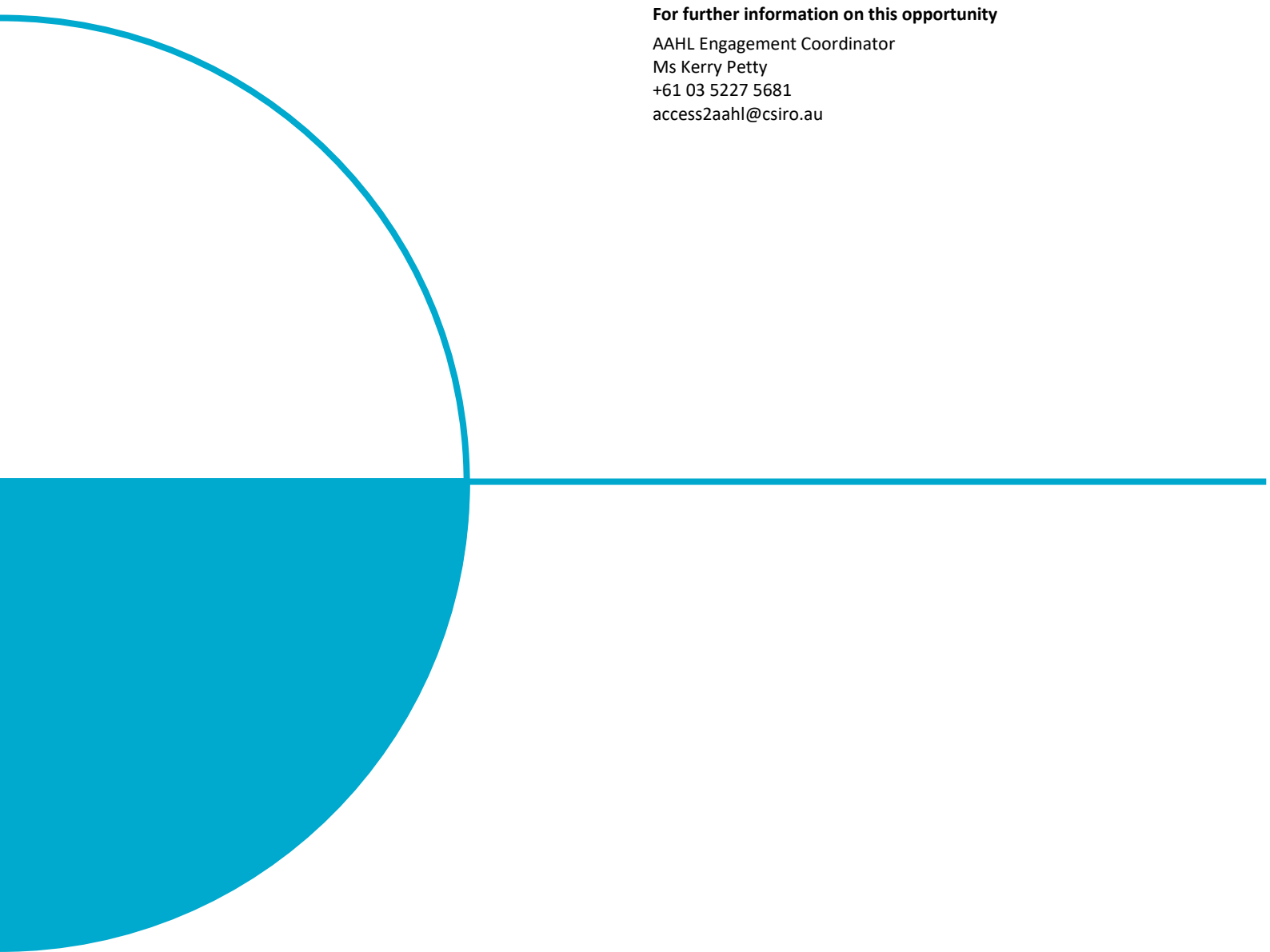
AAHL will notify all applicants about the outcome of their application. Research proposals granted access will be advised of any specific conditions.

6 AAHL Science Merit Access Program Conditions

Approval by the AAHL Director for access to the AAHL facility through the AAHL Science Merit Access Program is provisional on the following conditions:

- 6.1 All proposals for research at AAHL must complete facility approvals including Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) and Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) approval (for projects involving in-vivo work).
- 6.2 Access to existing capability at AAHL (laboratories or people) will be made available where possible, however where there is no availability, access may be withdrawn or deferred to a future AAHL Science Merit Access Program round.
- 6.3 Applicant is to be aware that visitor access to some laboratories is restricted and that supervised access in the secure laboratory area is a program requirement. All visitors to the site will be required to follow the security and safety requirements of AAHL as directed.
- 6.4 Applicants successfully granted access under the AAHL Science Merit Access Program will be required to enter into a legally binding agreement with CSIRO.
- 6.5 Successful applicants will be required to participate in a commencement meeting to finalise a delivery schedule for the research prior to any benchwork being undertaken at AAHL.
- 6.6 Successful applicants will be provided with progress report templates, to be completed at 6 month and 10 months. A Final Report will be provided following the completion of the project. Satisfactory completion of the Final Report will formally close the AAHL Science Merit Access Project.

- 6.7 Personal information disclosed as part of this program is handled in accordance with law, including the Australian Privacy Principles under the Privacy Act 1988.
- 6.8 All documents that the Australian Government has, including those about the AAHL Science Merit Access Program, are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982. All freedom of information requests must be referred to the CSIRO Freedom of Information team by email: FOI@csiro.au
- 6.9 AAHL commits to ensuring that the AAHL Science Merit Access program process is fair, according to the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct.



As Australia's national science agency and innovation catalyst, CSIRO is solving the greatest challenges through innovative science and technology.

CSIRO. Unlocking a better future for everyone.

For further information on this opportunity

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