

# 2026 PRF Fellowships Guidelines

**Are you a community leader, practitioner, academic or thought leader with a new idea you're seeking to explore?**

## What is the purpose of the PRF Fellowship Program?

We believe in supporting passionate individuals with promising ideas.

The PRF Fellowship program aims to build a community of leaders and influencers who are collectively amplifying social change in Australia.

PRF Fellowships, valued up to \$250,000 over 18 months, are designed to support innovative research and practice ideas which challenge conventional thinking and identify new ways to create the conditions for people and communities in Australia to thrive across generations.

We value different types of knowledge and experience in our PRF Fellows. You do not need to be an academic willing to produce a lengthy report. We know there are many thought and practice leaders who have ideas with great potential to fill knowledge gaps and create meaningful change, but who may not have the capacity or resources to meaningfully explore and pursue these ideas.

The PRF Fellowship Program provides Fellows the time, resources, and support they need to explore ideas and opportunities that have the potential to shift local and national systems that hold disadvantage in place.

If you have an idea that doesn't align with one of PRF's strategic outcomes, but you feel passionate about it and believe it can make a new and substantial contribution to stop disadvantage in Australia, we are open to considering it.

## What topics can fellowships focus on?

PRF Fellowships support innovative or transformative research and practice ideas that could contribute significantly towards shifting conditions for people, places and communities to thrive and stopping disadvantage in Australia.

We are particularly interested in topics that align with PRF's purpose and one or more of our three strategic outcomes:

- Places and communities are connected, and imagining and leading their own futures.
- Children and young people have positive life paths free from entrenched poverty and harm.
- First Nations peoples and communities are self-determining.

We invite you to be expansive in your thinking about not just 'what' needs to change to enable these outcomes but also 'how' it could be achieved. For example:

- How can we draw from multiple knowledge systems – Indigenous knowledges, lived experience, and scientific understanding – to move us towards more equitable societies?
- What practices are needed for realising just futures?
- What leadership, connections and actions are needed for enduring systems change?
- How can we diversify and direct capital for impact?
- How can we shift hearts and minds, and policy and practice in a particular area?
- What possibilities on the next horizon are we not yet thinking about that we should be?

## What does the Fellowship offer?

Successful PRF Fellows will receive up to \$250,000 to invest in substantially progressing their fellowship idea over 18 months.

We expect to offer up to 5 fellowships nationwide. Fellows will, therefore, be part of a cohort and, in addition to financial support, will participate in a number of in-person and virtual workshops over the 18 months – including a multi-day retreat – to share ideas, lessons and outputs with other Fellows, enhancing the potential for impact through collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Fellows will be actively supported by relevant PRF team members and networks as needed to support their projects. This could include, for example, workshopping with technical experts and engagement with government.

## How can the funds be used?

PRF Fellows will receive **up to \$220,000** to support the work, which can be used flexibly in pursuit of their idea and strictly for the public benefit. This could include:

- The Fellow's own time investment
- Research assistance or professional services such as expert contributors
- Compensation of collaborators and community involvement (rather than relying on volunteers)
- Travel
- Data collection
- Conducting workshops or seminars
- Attending conferences
- Research equipment
- Design of publication materials

Fellows will also receive **up to \$30,000** for personal development opportunities including building their own capability as leaders. This will include support from a coach throughout the Fellowship Program.

You will be asked to submit a **high-level budget** as part of your application. PRF will work with successful Fellows to confirm a budget that will be subject to a negotiated legal agreement.

## Who should apply for a Fellowship?

We believe great ideas and expertise can come from diverse experiences. This could be from deep lived experience, from professional experiences and/or from academic experiences.

We're seeking to support individuals who have:

- Exceptionally promising research or practice ideas that are consistent with our purpose of helping to break cycles of disadvantage in Australia.
- The ability to commit 18 months to substantially progress these ideas.
- Established professional or experiential knowledge related to the issue/idea to be explored.
- The capacity and desire to connect with the fellowship cohort to share knowledge and ideas and build a strong network.
- A relationship with a charity or not-for-profit organisation willing to host the fellowship is desirable. We are committed to exploring this with you if you are not already connected to such an organisation.

If you are motivated by our purpose, and have an idea you are passionate about that is aligned with PRF's strategic outcomes, we encourage you to submit an application. We strongly encourage Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples to apply.

## What is expected of Fellows during the Fellowship?

Fellowships will last for 18 months.

Fellows are expected to make a substantial commitment to exploring their idea over the first 12-months of the fellowship period. This does not necessarily mean a 100% commitment during this time; we recognise that successful fellows will likely have other commitments.

Fellows are also expected to commit time in the following 6 months for communication and dissemination of their findings, insights and recommendations.

This time commitment may include undertaking research (involving desktop or field research), developing practice (building capability around how others do the work), and permissible advocacy activities.

Fellows will be expected to participate in a small number of workshops and events with other fellows in their cohort. Fellows may also need to meet the requirements of their host organisation as required (e.g. through an auspicing or other funding agreement).

Fellows will be supported by PRF to determine specific goals, objectives and outcomes of the fellowship at the outset. Outputs developed by Fellows through the Fellowship Program will be shared for wider public benefit with the aim of increasing discussion and uptake of opportunities that can have positive generational impact.

## Does a Fellow need to be hosted by an organisation?

Yes, in order to receive funding Fellows need to be affiliated with an organisation that is willing to 'host' the Fellow. The fellowship grant will be received and administered by the host organisation. PRF is limited to funding charities, not-for-profits and universities whose work is relevant to our charitable purpose of breaking cycles of disadvantage in Australia.

Fellows do not need to be academics or linked to a university. If you are not connected to a potential 'host' organisation at the time of applying (e.g. you are an individual, or represent another type of organisation), please make this clear in your application. We will endeavour to connect you to aligned organisations, subject to appropriate partnership agreements.

## What are the expectations of the host organisation?

Please talk to your proposed host organisation before you submit an application to ensure they're comfortable with the role they would play.

Please discuss if there are any administrative/indirect costs that may need to be built into your Fellowship budget or any in-kind support they may be able to provide.

Host organisations will be asked to:

- Review and sign a Grant Agreement with the Foundation.
- Remain a charity operating in Australia, registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, under the charitable purpose category of Advancing social or public welfare.
- Receive the grant from the Foundation.
- Administer the funding to the PRF Fellow on an appropriate basis agreed between the PRF Fellow and the host organisation.
- Take legal and financial responsibility for the spending of the grant in accordance with the Grant Agreement and Australian law, including under relevant charity laws and regulations.
- Provide written confirmation, by letter or email, to the Foundation at the end of the grant period that the funds have been acquitted appropriately and solely in accordance with the intended purpose.

## Selection criteria and process

Applications will be scored against five high level criteria:

1. Alignment to **PRF purpose and strategy**.
2. Strength of proposed approach and methodology, including how the fellow proposes to engage with the ecosystem and collaborators.
3. Innovation: The degree to which this is pioneering work that has yet to be explored in the same way in Australia.
4. Potential for systems impact: how likely will this idea contribute to transformational systems change?
5. Quality of candidate: Including their demonstrated leadership, passion, values, expertise, personal and lived experience, other experience.

Applicants will be assessed based on their online applications and a short list of applicants will be interviewed in December.

## Eligibility criteria:

The applicant must:

- ✓ Be over 18 years old
- ✓ Be entitled to work in Australia for the duration of the Fellowship
- ✓ Conduct the research in Australia for the benefit of Australian communities
- ✓ Be hosted by a charity, not-for-profit or university whose work is relevant to breaking cycles of disadvantage
- ✓ Focus on a topic aligned with PRF's purpose and strategic outcomes
- ✓ Commit to the term of the Fellowship (18 months from March 2026)

## What are funding exclusions?

The PRF Fellowship program will not support the following:

- ✗ Projects that:
  - are not aligned with PRF's charitable purpose
  - are focused on program or service delivery
  - are already well developed or have already been well tested
  - promote or oppose a political party or candidate
  - engage in or promote activities that are unlawful or contrary to public policy
- ✗ Capital or endowment campaigns
- ✗ Research that is purely or primarily academic in nature (e.g. work towards higher degrees)
- ✗ Individuals that have previously participated in a PRF fellowship program
- ✗ Medical research

## Timeline

**Applications open:** 22 October – 19 November 2025

**Online information session:** 30 October 2025, 2pm (AEDT)

**Applications reviewed:** November/December 2025

**Additional information requests as needed, and finalist interviews (virtual):** early to mid-December 2025

**Fellows to be selected and informed:** January 2026

## How to apply

Please review these Fellowship Guidelines, and complete the application form by **19 November**.

We recognise that this can be a busy time of the year, and that this timing may not be optimal for all potential applicants. If you anticipate challenges meeting this deadline, please reach out to our contact email.

**Apply online >**

## Questions and more information

Join the **online information session** on Thursday 30 October at 2pm (AEDT) or email us with any further questions at [hello@paulramsayfoundation.org.au](mailto:hello@paulramsayfoundation.org.au).