



Lowitja O'Donoghue Excellence in Leadership Public Sector Scholarship Terms and Conditions

Introduction

The Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation (**Foundation**) is a program within Lowitja Institute, Australia's only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health research institute, named in honour of its co-patron, Yankunytjatjara woman the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. The Foundation carries forward Dr O'Donoghue's legacy of courageous Aboriginal leadership and her vision of empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to create meaningful change.

The Foundation offers the inaugural national Lowitja O'Donoghue Excellence in Leadership - Public Sector Scholarship (**Scholarship**) to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander professionals with substantive Public Sector experience to deepen their leadership capacity, cultural authority and influence, strengthening their ability to drive reform and create positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

This document sets out the Terms and Conditions on which the Foundation will offer the Scholarship. Successful applicants will be required to enter into a further scholarship agreement, as set out below.

Please read these Terms and Conditions and agree to them before submitting your application.

Eligibility

Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation will only accept applications that satisfy all eligibility requirements:

1. You must provide confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity.
2. You must be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander professional with substantive Public Sector experience currently employed or recently between roles.
3. You should demonstrate cultural authority, community impact, lived experience, and leadership potential.

4. You must be working (or have recently worked) in Health, Aboriginal Affairs, Education, or Human Services, within the Commonwealth, State/Territory, or Local Government, a statutory authority, or a government-funded agency.
5. You must be seeking leadership development rather than a formal academic qualification. If your application is successful, you must be willing to co-design a personalised 12-month leadership pathway plan with the Foundation.
6. You must have the capacity to undertake and complete the Scholarship over the 12-month period if successful and expend scholarship funds in full before 30 June 2027.
7. You must provide two letters of support from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employer/manager/colleague, other professional associate, or community peer, with brief comments against the selection criteria which confirm your employment/role and their support for your participation.
8. You must provide an Employment Release form signed by your current employer/manager which approves your participation in undertaking the scholarship for the period of 12 months.
9. You must have no outstanding reports, acquittals, or serious breaches related to any previous funding from the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation and/or Lowitja Institute.
10. You must provide details of other funding support you are currently receiving or have applied for (i.e. relevant to other scholarships and/or grants other than this initiative)
11. You must identify and declare any conflict of interest/s.
12. You must have a Valid National Police Check.
13. You must have Valid Working with Children Check.

Scholarship details

Distinct from a traditional academic scholarship, the round awards three recipients up to \$50,000 each (excluding GST) for a personalised 12-month leadership pathway plan to be co-designed with the Foundation, that may include - mentoring, executive and governance training, on-Country learning, conference and exchange opportunities, or any combination of experiences that will deepen leadership capacity and create high-impact outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

14. There will be **three Scholarships** offered nationally in this round.
15. The inaugural Scholarship runs for a 12-month period from the date the scholarship agreement is executed.

Application process and key dates

16. Applications must be submitted online via the Lowitja Institute SmartyGrants online portal.
17. Applications open 7 August 2026 and close 31 August 2026. Late applications will not be considered.
18. Applicants are assessed by a panel comprising Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Executive Managers, Board Directors, and community leaders.

19. Applications are assessed against: *Public Sector Experience and Future Leadership Pathway; Commitment to Community; Impact and Vision; Alignment with the Purpose and Beliefs of the Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation; and Cultural Strength and Identity.*

20. The Assessment Criteria weighting includes:

Criterion	What the panel is looking for	Weighting
Public Sector Experience and Future Leadership Pathway	(a) Describe your leadership experience within the Public Sector to date and your potential for growth. (b) Outline an initial vision of a leadership pathway plan to be progressed through co-design with the Foundation if successful. Well-considered details are encouraged (<i>please note this is a starting point for discussion and not a fixed plan at this stage</i>). Proposed expenditure of funds and ability to expend funds in full before 30 June 2027.	25%
Commitment to Community	Evidence of sustained commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, beyond the requirements of the applicant's current role.	15%
Impact and Vision	A clear, compelling vision for the life legacy you are driven to accomplish, the impact you hope to achieve through this Scholarship, and your vision for your future leadership ambitions.	15%
Alignment with the Purpose and Beliefs of the Foundation (as outlined in our Strategic Plan)	(a) Describe how your goals align with the Foundation's Purpose and Beliefs, and Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's legacy. (b) Which of Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's achievements has had the greatest impact on your life and career, and how has it inspired you to follow in her footsteps?	25%
Cultural Strength and Identity	Evidence that cultural strength, authority, and identity inform the applicant's leadership approach.	20%
Total		100%

21. The Foundation aims to contact the successful recipient(s) by late October 2026.
22. Any conflicts of interest must be declared as part of your application, or you must confirm that, to the best of your knowledge, none exist.
23. Lowitja Institute's Board and/or Executive Management are the final decision-making authorities and will consider the assessment panel's recommendations before determining the successful recipients.

The Scholarship Agreement

24. Prior to receiving an agreement, the successful recipient/s will be issued with a conditional offer of a Scholarship. This offer must be acknowledged and agreed to within (10) ten days of issue otherwise the recipient will be deemed unsuccessful in being awarded a scholarship.
25. Any offer of a Scholarship is conditional upon the successful recipient/s entering into a legally binding Scholarship agreement with the Foundation, on terms provided by Lowitja Institute on behalf of the Foundation. Each agreement will include, but not be limited to, the following minimum terms:
 - (a) you must use the funding to deliver the agreed, co-designed leadership pathway plan only and expend all funds by 30 June 2027;
 - (b) payments will be made according to the agreed schedule and are subject to satisfactory progress;
 - (c) you must provide progress reports and acquittal documentation via the SmartyGrants online portal, at the times and in the format determined by the Foundation;
 - (d) any funding not validly used for the agreed pathway, or unspent at completion, must be repaid to the Foundation;
 - (e) you must promptly notify the Foundation of anything reasonably likely to affect your ability to complete the pathway;
 - (f) the Foundation will provide a complaints process for the period of the scholarship;
 - (g) the Foundation may recover funding in the event of a breach of the agreement, i.e., the recipient no longer meets the eligibility requirements, withdraws, make changes to the activity plan once executed, and breaches moral and behavioral standards.
 - (h) the Foundation may withdraw a scholarship at any stage if incorrect, false, or misleading information is provided, or relevant information is withheld. This includes circumstances where false information is unrelated to the assessment in awarding the scholarship.

Milestones

26. The Scholarship awards **three recipients** up to \$50,000 each (excluding GST). The scholarship funding must be expended by the recipient/s by 30 June 2027.

Payment of each milestone amount is made following receipt of a valid invoice and provision of report.

Milestone	Activity	Due date	Payment on approval
Milestone 1	Report 1 and Finalisation of the Leadership pathway plan	1 December 2026	35% (\$17,500)
Milestone 2	Report 2 – Progress update	10 April 2027	30% (\$15,000)
Milestone 3	Report 3 – Progress update	30 June 2027	35% (\$17,500)
Milestone 4	Report 4 – Acquittal of scholarship and Final report	1 October 2027	

Cultural material and intellectual property

27. Secret and sacred material remains the confidential information of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who hold it.
28. Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property must not be collected or shared as part of the Scholarship without the free, prior, and informed consent of the communities to whom it belongs, who will be actively involved in decisions concerning it.

Cultural Safety

29. The Foundation is committed to providing a culturally safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all scholarship recipients. Cultural safety is a core principle of the program and will underpin all aspects of the scholarship experience.

Announcements

30. The Foundation will announce and publish the name of the successful recipient(s) on its website and associated channels, honoring Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue's legacy.

Promotion and Publicity

31. You may be requested to participate in promotion and publicity for the scholarship program from time to time. This may include promotion and publicity in your state or territory of residence or employment. Recipients may be contacted for an interview and photograph opportunity and asked to sign a consent form. Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation and Lowitja Institute may also publicise the scholarship by publishing the names of the recipients.

Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue Legacy Circle

32. You will become an inaugural member of the Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue Legacy Circle — a growing community of alumni from Foundation programs, demonstrating Blak Excellence in leadership and committed to carrying Dr O'Donoghue's legacy forward.

Taxation advice

33. You are responsible for seeking taxation and Services Australia/Centrelink advice regarding your own individual circumstances. For information on how your scholarship may affect your benefits, contact the Australian Taxation Office and Services Australia/Centrelink via My Gov.

Enquiries

34. Any feedback or questions about the Scholarship process or decisions should be directed to the **Lowitja O'Donoghue Foundation**
foundationscholarships@lowitja.org.au
35. For technical issues with the SmartyGrants online portal, contact the
SmartyGrants Help Hub for Applicants - service@smartygrants.com.au

By agreeing to these Terms and Conditions, you acknowledge that, if successful, you agree to receive the Scholarship on these terms, including entry into a scholarship agreement.



www.lowitja.org.au

www.lowitja.org.au/lowitja-foundation/