



Victorian Infection
& Immunity Network

Strategic Plan 2024 - 2028

Version 1

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
VIIN's vision, mission, values and objectives	2
VIIN's points of difference	4
Achieving our objectives	5
Conclusion and goals	7

Executive Summary

The Victorian Infection and Immunity Network (VIIN) came to life in 2004, when the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University established the successful Monash Infection and Immunity Network (MIIN) at Monash University. In 2009, the MIIN evolved into the present day VIIN.

VIIN has operated for over 12 years and has grown to include 15+ Contributing Organisations and 1600+ individual members. Contributing Organisations are the departments, faculties, research institutes and other organisations that provide a financial contribution to VIIN's annual budget. Individual members come from VIIN's Contributing Organisations, as well as other Victorian, Australian and international organisations, or may be unaffiliated to any organisation.

Between 2012 and 2014, the VIIN Industry Alliance was funded by the Victorian Government to foster, manage and fund bilateral exchange between VIIN researchers and industry.

Today, VIIN provides networking and development opportunities to Victorian infection and immunity researchers through free annual events and the annual Lorne Infection and Immunity Conference. VIIN communicates to its members through its website, email list and social media accounts to promote the activities of its Contributing Organisations and to advertise events and employment vacancies of relevance to VIIN members.

This is VIIN's first strategic plan. It will direct our priorities, activities and operations for 2024 to 2028; an interim review and evaluation will occur after three years.

The plan clarifies our vision, mission, values and strategic objectives and how we will measure our success in meeting these objectives. To focus and articulate our priorities, it notes VIIN's distinguished contribution to the infection and immunity landscape in Victoria and Australia by outlining our unique strengths and capabilities. It provides a framework for how we will achieve our objectives through our activities, operations, funding model and through the network's growth.

The plan is concluded with a summary of key projects for 2024 to 2028 that will support achievement of our objectives and an invitation to you, our VIIN members, to provide feedback on this plan.

We thank you for your involvement in VIIN over the many years of its existence and we look forward to having you share in VIIN's vision and mission in the future.

VIIN's vision, mission, values and objectives

Vision

To unite infection and immunity researchers in academia and industry for better health.

Mission

To promote and grow an inspiring, inclusive network that champions infection and immunity research and education for impactful discoveries and practical health outcomes.

Values



Strategic objectives

Objective	Measurement of success
1. Promote excellence and collaboration in discovery, translational and implementation research towards achieving real-world impact.	<p>1.1 Publications from cross-institutional VIIN authors.</p> <p>1.2 NHMRC / ARC / MRFF grants awarded to cross-institutional VIIN investigators.</p> <p>1.3 Case studies from Contributing Organisations.</p>
2. Provide professional development and networking opportunities for early-career researchers and students.	<p>2.1 The number of events held for early-career researchers and students.</p> <p>2.2 Statistics on participation by early-career researchers and students for VIIN events and the Lorne conference.</p> <p>2.3 Case studies from Contributing Organisations.</p>
3. Identify and support opportunities for collaboration in research and professional development between academia and industry.	<p>3.1 Recruit a member of industry onto the VIIN Executive.</p> <p>3.2 Ensure at least one invited speaker for annual VIIN events is from industry.</p>
4. Champion Victoria's position as a national and international leader in microbiology and immunology.	<p>4.1 Promote Contributing Organisation successes on website (including publications) and social media.</p> <p>4.2 Job advertisements circulated by VIIN from overseas.</p> <p>4.3 Promote VIIN to Victorian Government representatives in one face-to-face meeting or VIIN event per year.</p>
5. Enhance the reputation of the Lorne Infection and Immunity Conference, so it is an internationally recognised meeting for our field.	<p>5.1 Numbers of national and international delegates at the conference.</p> <p>5.2 Growth of the mailing list for the conference.</p> <p>5.3 Sustaining or increasing sponsorship for the conference.</p>
6. Expand our community of researchers striving to make a difference by promoting inclusiveness and collegiality in our activities and among our members.	<p>6.1 Develop an equity and diversity policy.</p> <p>6.2 Continue to measure participation in activities by gender.</p> <p>6.3 Measure and improve participation in activities by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>6.4 Implement accessibility plans for all events, ensuring physical accessibility for differently abled people and virtual participation for those unable to attend in person.</p> <p>6.5 Growth of member list.</p>
7. Ensure the sustainability of the network.	<p>7.1 Establish financial buffer.</p> <p>7.2 Annual surplus until financial buffer target met.</p> <p>7.3 Develop and environmental policy that addresses VIIN's impact on the environment.</p>

VIIN's points of difference

Victoria is the home of more national and international leaders in microbiology and immunology than any other Australian state.

1. VIIN focuses on the interface of pathogens, the microbiome and immune system

We uniquely bring people together to work at the interface of microbiology and immunity.

We do this by promoting cross fertilisation and engagement among researchers studying:

- microbiology, including a broad spectrum of infectious agents (viruses, parasites, fungi and bacteria), environmental organisms and the microbiome;
- innate and adaptive immunity;
- inflammation, autoimmunity and their contributions to disease; and,
- complementary disciplines, including biochemistry, medicinal chemistry, molecular and cell biology.

2. VIIN focuses on students and early-career researchers

We focus on and champion early-career researchers and students. We do this with the financial donations of Contributing Organisations to provide annual, free or low-cost activities for career and professional development, networking and leadership (events, prizes, committee work), which are accessible and available to all. Activities for early-career researchers and students are organised by the VIIN's Young Investigator Committee.

3. VIIN is agile and influential

We are a network, currently hosted by Hudson Institute of Medical Research, which supports VIIN with necessary operational infrastructure. Our income and operating costs are modest and we are strategic in how we use our resources and capacity to achieve maximum impact.

Achieving our objectives

Activities: what we do

VIIN will focus its activities on supporting and developing the careers of students and early-career researchers.

We will do this through the Lorne Infection and Immunity Conference, which will provide students with subsidised registration and early/mid-career researchers with Career Development Awards and other opportunities, including the Hartland Oration. VIIN will continue to lead the premier infection and immunity events for students and early-career researchers in Victoria, through annual activities that include a Young Investigator Symposium, Careers Evening, online workshops and other career development and networking opportunities.

VIIN will continue to strengthen its processes, operations and policies. We will continue to use our current communications channels and enhance these for increased accessibility, security and for the purpose of expanding the network.

Operations: how we do what we do

VIIN is directed by volunteer Co-Convenors, who co-convene the VIIN Executive Committee. The selection and responsibilities of VIIN Co-Convenors are described in the VIIN Policy on Selection of New Co-Convenors.

The VIIN Executive Committee are volunteers from each of VIIN's Contributing Organisations. The selection, responsibilities and process of renewing VIIN Executive Committee Members are described in the VIIN Policy and our Statement of Expectations for Members.

The Co-Convenors are supported by a Program Manager, responsible for the management of the operations of the VIIN and Lorne Infection and Immunity Conference. The Program Manager is employed currently by Hudson Institute of Medical Research and a position description is formalised on Hudson Institute template.

The VIIN's financial accounts are hosted and managed at Hudson Institute of Medical Research.

The VIIN's strategic decisions and operations are guided by its policies, found on the VIIN website.

The VIIN manages a website (www.viin.org.au) and social media presence¹.

Funding model: how we fund what we do

VIIN is reliant on financial donations from Contributing Organisations², a small amount of sponsorship annually, a small number of registration fees by VIIN members who do not belong to a Contributing Organisation, and a contribution from the Lorne Infection and Immunity Conference budget for the Program Manager's time.

¹ Twitter: @The_VIIN; <https://www.facebook.com/VictorianInfectionandImmunityNetwork>;
<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/6951958/>

² VIIN's Contributing Organisations are each department, centre, faculty, institute or other entity that provides a financial contribution to VIIN's annual budget. Current Contributors are: <https://www.viin.org.au/contributors/>

Our goal for 2024 - 2025 is to accrue the equivalent of at least one year's operating expenses in our fund. This means we would carry-forward a balance of approximately \$80,000 to \$100,000 annually by the end of 2025, increasing with CPI. This would give us security and confidence about our ongoing operations and current commitment to continue offering free events to VIIN members from our Contributing Organisations.

Our intermediate targets:

Year ending	Target balance carried forward
2024	Increase from 2023
2025	The sum of one year's operating expenses
2026	The sum of one year's operating expenses plus buffer

Our priority actions to increase income are to:

Action	Potential impact
Approach the Victorian Government to discuss and apply for grants	Moderate
Identify and apply for relevant non-Government grants	Moderate
Increase sponsorship from pharmaceutical companies and allied industry networks with tailored approaches for support	Moderate
Explore the potential for philanthropic support for our work	Moderate
Increase Contribution Organisation annual contributions with CPI	Small
Increase income from the Lorne Infection and Immunity Conference to support VIIN	Small
Increase sponsorship from trade companies with the sponsorship prospectus	Small
Increase the number of Contributing Organisations, including from industry	Small

Growth: how we expand what we do

VIIN will grow in ways that support our strategic objectives, which include the goal to be financially sustainable. VIIN will aim to:

- Expand its network of individual members and Contributing Organisations by being inclusive, collegial, welcoming and accessible.
- Increase its links, collaborations and activities with strategic partnerships, including with industry.
- Champion Victoria's position as an international leader in microbiology and immunology and grow the reputation of:
 - VIIN
 - our Contributing Organisations
 - Victoria as a place to do microbiology and immunology research
 - the Lorne Infection and Immunity Conference, so it is an internationally recognised meeting for our field.

Conclusion and goals

Between 2024 and 2028, VIIN will aim to achieve its strategic objectives through the following projects:

Project	Activities	Timeline
Annual events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• VIIN Young Investigator Symposium• VIIN Careers Evening• VIIN online workshops• Lorne Infection and Immunity Conference	2024 - 2028
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• VIIN website re-development• Publication of a new, annual report to members	2024 – 2025 and annually
Policy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data privacy• Equity and diversity• Environment• Social media	2024
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement with the Victorian Government• Engagement with allied organisations• Engagement with industry	2024 - 2028

VIIN aims to be an inclusive and accessible network for all Victorian researchers working in infection and immunity. We welcome your constructive feedback on our Strategic Plan: please email info@viin.org.au.