CIHR Project Grant
Spring 2020
In this info-session:

• Overview of the Project Grant program, timelines, and eligibility
• Review of requirements for Registration
• Application components
• CIHR Peer Review process
• Assessment criteria and strategies for effective writing (Jodi Smith)
Project Grant

• Supports defined projects from all areas of health research, at any stage (from discovery to commercialization/knowledge translation).

• Designed to capture ideas with the greatest potential to advance health-related fundamental or applied knowledge, health research, health care, health systems, and/or health outcomes.

Registration Deadline:
February 5, 2020

ORS submission deadline:
February 19, 2020
(4:30 p.m.)

Application deadline:
March 4, 2020
Spring 2020 funding

- $550M available from CIHR for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020
  - Approx $275M awarded in each of previous 2 competitions – more expected in future with sunset of Foundation Grant
- $13.75M envelope available for large grants (top 2% of requests)
- Equalization of success rates for early career researchers. There will be a specific funding envelope for ECRs (not specified)
- No formal requirements for partnering (but reviewers may reasonably expect partnered projects to include an appropriate commitment)
- Total awarded grant amount in Fall 2019 competition ranged from $76k to $2.2M. Average grant size was $713,250 over 4.36 years. Includes across the board reduction of 23.5% to budgets (consistent with recent competitions).
Eligibility

- Nominated Principal Applicant (NPA): Independent Researcher OR Knowledge User
- Co-Applicants may also include trainees
- PA: responsibility for direction of proposed activities
  Co-Applicant: contributes to proposed activities
  Collaborator: provides a specific service (e.g. data, equipment, training, patients)
- Maximum of 2 Project Grant applications as NPA
- Early Career Investigators: less than 60 months as independent researcher as of March 4, 2020
Registration

- Registration is mandatory!
- CCV is not required at registration
- NPA must remain unchanged between registration and application. Other participants can be added, removed, or change roles between registration and application.
- Provide total budget estimate (can change at application)
- Suggested reviewers (5; not in conflict of interest)
- Reviewers to exclude (optional)

- Suggested peer review committees (2)
  - Mandatory justification for each committee selected (750 characters)
  - Cannot be changed at application

- Descriptors:
  - Descriptors
  - Themes
  - Areas of Science
  - Suggested Institutes
  - Methods/Approaches
  - Study populations/Experimental Systems
Registration, cont.

- Lay title and abstract (2000 characters)
- Research Summary (3500 characters, scientific/technical, headings required):
  - Background and Importance
  - Goal(s) / Research Aims
  - Methods / Approaches / Expertise
  - Expected Outcomes

**Application will be available once Registration is completed!**
Equity and Diversity Questionnaire

- New as of 2018
- Mandatory for all application participants (except Collaborators)
- Application cannot be submitted until all participants have completed
- Responses will be retained for future applications
Specific Project Types

- Indigenous Health Research
  - TCPS – Chapter 9 principles (at Registration)
  - May be eligible for Iterative Peer Review Process
- Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs)
  - Applications over $250k/yr must submit to RCT committee
  - All applications with RCT as major component must consider specific RCT evaluation criteria
- Commercialization
  - Research/Technical Plan and Commercialization Plan in 10-pg attachment
- Integrated Knowledge Translation (iKT)
  - At NPI’s discretion whether to flag as iKT project, given level of Knowledge User involvement
  - CIHR will bring in Knowledge User reviewers
Application – CV requirements

- Principal Applicants AND Co-applicants must complete a CIHR Biosketch CV
- CV *not required* for Collaborators and will not be considered in application review. Collaborator role should be detailed in proposal. Collaborators are strongly encouraged to have a validated CIHR PIN, however.
- All Principal Applicants and Co-Applicants will have access to the application on ResearchNet in order to allow them to contribute to the application. *Only the NPA can submit, however.*
- All Principal Applicants and Co-Applicants must complete the following:
  - Enter their CCV confirmation number;
  - Complete their most significant contributions (Maximum of 5; 3500 characters)
  - Consent.
- *All PAs must complete an SGBA learning module and upload certificate*
Application – Attachments

• 10-page Research Proposal
  • PDF with minimum 12 point black type and single line spacing, 2 cm margins, max 30 MB – for all attachments! No narrow/condensed fonts.
  • Page limit includes any charts, tables, figures, and images as well as text. Make sure text in insets and attachments is legible without zooming.

• References
  • Should be cited within the application and use a standard format.

• Response to previous reviews (2 pgs)
  • Upload reviews being addressed as well together in a single PDF– does not count as part of page limit.
  • Do not include Notice of Decision or results letter.

• Other application materials
  • Letters of support/collaboration
  • Questionnaires and consent forms
  • Up to five publications from the past five years, relevant to proposal
  • Letter from Dean of Faculty required for pending appointments (must start by effective date of funding)
  • Reviewers are not required to read other application materials!
Application – Budget

• Budget categories:
  Research Staff: Research Associates, Research Assistants, Technicians, Co-Applicants and Collaborators who are not independent researchers

  **NOTE MAX 3 Years support for RAs and Postdocs who hold a PhD**

  Trainees: Training and mentoring costs, including for knowledge users
  Consumables: Material and supplies, services, travel for research
  Non-consumables: Equipment and operating and maintenance costs
  Knowledge Translation: Dissemination including publication, travel for conferences

• Refer to Grants and Awards Guide for more details on eligible costs
Application – Budget

• All amounts entered should be totals over the entire project, rounded to the nearest $1,000, and add to multiple of $5,000

• 1750 characters per category to justify costs
  • Use space to break down costs: e.g., if using animals, how many of what type, daily costs for housing/food etc... If salary, how many hours/wk doing what tasks, in which portions of the project?

• Cost quotations should not be appended

• Partner Budget details (if applicable)

“The expectation of the budget request is that it is a reasonable estimate that takes into consideration the needs of the research project and any anticipated changes in requirements over the term of the grant.”
Review Process

• Single-stage committee-based peer review
  • Reviewers will review applications remotely, then meet face-to-face to streamline, discuss, and rate applications.

• *Be sure to review committee mandates before making selections at registration!* *This cannot be changed at the application stage.*
  • No major changes to committee mandates since the Spring 2019 competition
  • CIHR will consult with committee Chairs and Scientific Officers before assigning applications.
Review Process (continued)

• Each application assigned to three reviewers (primary + 2 secondary)
• Reviewers will rate each criterion on scale of 0.0-4.9 – criteria are weighted to derive overall score
  • Concept – 25% (Significance and Impact of the Research)
  • Feasibility – 75% (Approaches and Methods; Expertise, Experience, and Resources)
• Divide into top/bottom group – some may be “streamlined out” of discussion.
• Reviewers will reach consensus score and committee will vote
• Reviewers will advise on budget but will not factor into scientific review.
Priority Announcements

Priority Announcements will provide additional funding of up to $100,000 for one year to highly-rated proposals in target areas which are not funded through the normal CIHR Project Grant review process. The Priority Announcements include:

- Arthritis, Dental and Craniofacial, Skin and Musculoskeletal including pain (IMHA)
- Epigenetics/epigenomics in human health or disease
- HIV/AIDS and STBBI
- Human Development, Child and Youth Health - Bridge Grants
- Institute of Nutrition Metabolism and Diabetes (Bridge Funding) Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction
- The Bhagirath Singh Early Career Prize in Infection and Immunity ($25k)
- Maud Menten New Principal Investigator Prizes in Genetics ($30k)
Assessment Criteria

• Criterion 1: Concept – Significance and Impact (25%)
• Criterion 2: Feasibility (75%)
  • Approaches and Methods (50%)
  • Expertise, Experience, Resources (25%)
Assessment Criteria (cont’d)

Criterion 1: Concept – Significance and Impact (25%)

• Creativity of the project:
  - New, incremental, innovative, high-risk types of inquiry
  - New/adapted research (or KT/commercialization)

• Sound rationale

• Well defined goals and objectives
  - Goal states purpose/expected to achieve
  - Objectives clearly define proposed research/activities required to meet goal
  - Research outputs clearly described and aligned with objectives
Assessment Criteria (cont’d)

Criterion 1: Concept – Significance and Impact (25%)

- Advance health-related knowledge (basic science, model organisms, other discovery research; healthcare, health systems, and/or health outcomes)
  - Context of the project clearly described
  - Anticipated contributions should be relevant to issues/gaps
  - Anticipated contributions realistic (directly stem from outputs, rather than marginally related)

- Note: this criterion does not assess feasibility
Assessment Criteria (cont’d)

Criterion 2: Feasibility (75%)

• Approaches and Methods (50%)
• Expertise, Experience, Resources (25%)
Approaches and Methods (50%)

- Assesses the quality of the Project's design and plan; including how and when the project will be completed
- Appropriate approaches and methods to deliver the output(s) and achieve proposed contribution(s)
  - Methods, strategies, approaches allow successful completion of the research
  - Maximize project contributions to advance health-related knowledge
  - Research &/or KT/commercialization approaches/methods/strategies justified and appropriate
- Timelines
  - Realistic?
  - Should be appropriate for proposed activities; align key milestones with objectives
Approaches and Methods (50%) (cont’d)

• Potential challenges and mitigation strategies
  ▪ Identify scientific, technical or organizational challenges
  ▪ Provide realistic plan to address potential risks (does not have to be exhaustive)

• Please be sure to integrate gender/sex considerations into the research design (where appropriate)
Expertise, Experience, Resources (25%)

• Assess the appropriateness of the complement of expertise, experience, and resources among the applicants

• Estimate the number of hours per week (contribution) for each applicant working on the project

• Appropriate expertise and experience to lead the project and deliver output(s)
  ▪ Describe roles, responsibilities of each applicant, and link to objectives

• Appropriate level of engagement from applicants

• Appropriate environment to successfully complete the research
  ▪ Infrastructure, facilities, support personnel, equipment, other supplies to perform roles, and manage/deliver proposed output(s)
Points to consider

• Is more preliminary data needed? Is it clear how preliminary data supports this project as the next step?

• Do the experiments outlined clearly/fully address the research questions being posed? Will the models produce results that will accurately address the question? Why are the particular techniques being used/data types being acquired needed to address the question?

• Are the references current – is the project clearly building on the latest science? Does the literature review clearly demonstrate the basis/need for the project?
Points to consider cont’d

• Are the significance and impact on knowledge/health/healthcare clearly expressed – especially for basic science projects where there may not be an immediate translational impact?

• Do the applicants clearly have expertise using all the techniques described? Is each applicant’s role clearly described? Is there a need to bring in additional collaborator support to execute the project successfully? Is there evidence of previous meaningful collaboration among the applicants?

• Has the creativity/novelty of this research been described, and mentioned throughout the application?
Complete Summary

- Provide the following sections:
  - Background and importance, Goals/Research Aims, Methods/Approach/Expertise, Expected outcomes

- Suggestions:
  - Also include impact/significance (it is good as a concluding section)
  - Describe the creativity/novelty of your research
  - Write this section after the Research Proposal is complete
  - Spend time making the Summary concise, cohesive, and understandable (only part some reviewers will read)
  - Start the Summary with a description of the overall problem & why it is important; grab the reviewer’s attention and sell how important your research (and this project) is (i.e. why YOU should get the funding for THIS grant)
Responses to Previous Reviews

• Up to 2 pages total
• Include previous review comments that are being addressed
• Combine responses and reviews into 1 PDF document

• Address the comments thoroughly
• Use a collegial tone, explain misunderstandings
• Comments don’t always have to be incorporated, but if not, explain why
• Don’t waste space including praise or positive comments, unless you have responded to something in the positive comment.
• Include a clear reference to the comment so the reviewer knows which one you are responding to.
Other Suggestions

• Lay Summary: careful to use lay terms
• Budget: 1750 characters for each category

• Avoid jargon
• Make the grant easy for the reviewer to read and understand
  ▪ Knowledge gap clearly identified
  ▪ Objectives address the gap
  ▪ Methods support objectives
  ▪ Objective text consistent throughout the grant
  ▪ Significance throughout the grant
Other Suggestions (cont’d)

• Be sure that you are clear on the objectives and path forward before writing
• Start writing early; multiple drafts; multiple reviewers (SME, non-SME)
• Throughout the application:
  ▪ Creativity, Significance/impact
• How your research furthers health-related knowledge
  ▪ basic science, model organisms, other discovery research; healthcare, health systems, and/or health outcomes
• Timeline: include a timeline specifying the full term and consecutive or concurrent research objectives.
• Expertise section: worth 25% so give it appropriate consideration
  • CIHR recommends mentioning expertise in the Summary although no longer required
Questions?
Discussion?