Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Grant Writing Workshop

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CIHR Approach

• CIHR takes a problem-based and multidisciplinary approach to the health challenges facing Canadians.

• Multi-faceted approach encompasses research in four pillars:
  
  Biomedical
  
  Clinical
  
  Health systems and services
  
  Population and public health
CIHR Pillars (themes)

• **Biomedical Research:**
  Goal of understanding normal and abnormal functioning at the molecular, cellular and whole body level *(Theme 1)*

• **Clinical Research:**
  Goal of improving the diagnosis and treatment of disease and injury and improving the health and quality of life of individuals (E.g. clinical trials) *(Theme 2)*

• **Health Systems and Services Research:**
  Goal of improving efficiency and effectiveness of health professionals and the health care system through changes to practice and policy *(Theme 3)*

• **Social, Cultural, Environmental and Population and public health:**
  Goal of improving the health of the Canadian population through a better understanding of the ways in which social, cultural, environmental, occupational and economic factors determine health status *(Theme 4)*
How CIHR Funds

• Approx. 70% of research funding is investigator-driven while 30% is reserved for strategic initiatives

• Investigator-Initiated (Open Competition)
  ➢ University-based researchers develop proposals and submit applications
  ➢ Successful applications based solely on peer-review
  ➢ Includes operating grants, salary awards, training awards, etc.
  ➢ Regular competition cycle (September & March)

• Strategic Initiatives
  ➢ Targeted to address major health challenges and priorities
  ➢ Developed by Institutes along with other partners
  ➢ Successful applications based on peer-review and merit review
  ➢ Competition cycles held throughout the year
The CIHR Open Operating Grant Program (OOGP) provides operating funds to support research proposals in all areas of health research, including randomized controlled trials.

Specifically, this funding opportunity is to contribute to the creation, dissemination and use of health-related knowledge, and to help develop and maintain Canadian health research capacity, by supporting original, high quality projects or teams/programs of research proposed and conducted by individual researchers or groups of researchers, in all areas of health.

The OOGP is further expected to: Contribute to the creation and use of health-related knowledge; Contribute to the dissemination, commercialization/knowledge translation, and use of health-related knowledge; Develop and maintain Canadian health research capacity, including research training.
CIHR Open Operating Grant Program (OOGP) basics

• Currently, 2 competitions per year – March 1st and September 15\textsuperscript{th}

• Grants will usually be awarded for a \textit{period of 2 to 5 years}. Operating grants are renewable.

• There is \textbf{no limit} to the number of applications an applicant can submit as a Principal Applicant, or to the number of applications for which an individual is a Principal Applicant or a Co-applicant, as long as these applications are different.

• \textbf{No max. or min.} with respect to funds being requested.

• Be aware of any applicable \textbf{Priority Announcements} announced by the Institutes.

• No specific requirements or restrictions on the specific research activities to be undertaken.

• CIHR uses \textbf{ResearchNet} and the \textbf{Common CV}.
Eligibility to apply

• To be eligible to apply as the Nominated Principal Applicant for CIHR funding, you must have an independent academic or research appointment with an eligible Canadian institution or organization by the time the funding begins.

• All Principal Applicants must be independent researchers (additional PA’s are optional).

• A co-applicant can be an independent researcher, a knowledge user, or a trainee (additional Co-A’s are optional).

• Foreign researchers can be principal applicants, but not nominated principal applicants on CIHR grants.
Applying to the OOGP: Timeline

**SPRING COMPETITION**
- Registration: Feb 1
- Full Appl’n: Mar 1
- Peer Review: May – June
- Notification: ~ July 1
- Funding: Oct 1

**FALL COMPETITION**
- Registration: Aug 15
- Full Appl’n: Sept 15
- Peer Review: Nov – Dec
- Notification: late Jan
- Funding: Apr 1
Evaluation Criteria

Criterion #1: Research Approach
Criterion #2: Originality of the Proposal
Criterion #3: Applicant(s)
Criterion #4: Environment for the Research
Criterion #5: Impact of the Research

<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/39914.html>
CIHR OOGP peer review basics

- 48 peer review committees (term membership or by invitation; no reliance on external reviewers)

- Applicants provide primary and secondary choice of peer review committees for their application. CIHR has final say on committee allocations.

- Each peer review committee given approximately the same success rate. Ultimately, success is determined by the percentage rank of your application score at the committee-level.

- No distinction between new applications, renewal applications, new/senior investigators in application or peer review process.
## CIHR OOGP peer review basics: rating scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Range**</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>4.5 - 4.9</td>
<td><strong>May Be Funded - Will be Discussed by the Committee</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>4.0 - 4.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>3.5 - 3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable, but low priority</td>
<td>3.0 - 3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs revision</td>
<td>2.5 - 2.9</td>
<td><strong>Not Fundable - May or May Not be Discussed by the Committee</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs major revision</td>
<td>2.0 - 2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriously flawed</td>
<td>1.0 - 1.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejected</td>
<td>0.0 - 0.9</td>
<td></td>
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OOG peer review process

- Each application assigned a **primary** and **secondary** reviewer as well as a reader.
- Applications are “**streamlined**” and **not discussed by the committee** when they are ranked by both reviewers in their bottom group and more specifically, in the bottom 25-30% of all applications in the committee (can mean applications ranked with an average score of 3.8 and below are not discussed at the committee table)
- Internal reviewers provide brief assessment of each application including score. Reader raises additional issues as appropriate.
- Committee discussion recorded by the **Scientific Officer (SO)**; SO notes provided along with reviewers’ comments to applicants.
- Internal reviewers agree on a consensus score for the application; all committee members vote on final application score +/- 0.5 of consensus rating (confidential vote)
- Budget is discussed following voting.
CIHR New Open Suite of Programs and Peer Review process

- New Open Suite of Programs to include a Project Scheme and a Foundation (Program) scheme

- CIHR will hold 3 more OOGP competitions (March 2013, September 2013 and March 2014). There will also be a transitional OOGP competition in March 2015. (There will be no September 2014 OOGP competition.)

- The first Foundation (program) competition is scheduled for August 2016.

- The first formal Project competition is scheduled for January 2016.

- The last CIHR New Investigator Award competition will be held in September 2015.

- CIHR is establishing a College of Reviewers – expert reviewers (trained and mentored) to span the spectrum of health research
CIHR New Open Suite of Programs and Peer Review process

- **Project Scheme** – most like the current OOGP
  - grants to be **1-5 years** in duration
  - avg. grant value approx. **$125,000/year**
  - individual researchers or teams of researchers and/or knowledge users can apply
  - not renewable
  - **2 competitions** per year (spring and fall)
  - **2 stage approach**: reviewers virtually review applications (5-7 page proposal) in 1st stage; limited # of committees meet in stage 2 to determine successful applications
CIHR New Open Suite of Programs and Peer Review process

- **Foundation (Program) Scheme** – new funding opportunity!
  - To provide long-term support to top researchers at any career stage
  - Grants to be 5-7 years in duration
  - Avg. grant value approx. $300,000/year
  - Single or multiple Program Leaders
  - Requires institutional commitment for research support
  - 1 competition per year (early fall)
  - 3 stage approach: calibre of applicant (1st stage); quality of proposed program (2nd stage); and final assessment (stage 3)