CIHR Project Grant

Spring 2021
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 projects or programs of research 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:
March 4, 2021

ORS submission deadline:
March 18, 2021
(4:30 p.m.)

Application deadline:
April 1, 2021
Spring 2021 funding

- $325M available for Spring 2021
- $16.25M envelope available for large grants (top 2% of requests)
- $14.95M dedicated to applications with Indigenous Health focus
- Equalization of success rates for early career researchers, female applicants, and applications submitted in French.
- 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
- Same application cannot be submitted to competitions with overlapping review periods (i.e., Strategic Competitions, other Tri-Agencies)
- Early Career Investigators: less than 72 months as independent researcher as of **April 1, 2021**
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!*
OK, I’m registered. Now how do I fill out the application?
Full application - ORS Submission

• Work with your Research Facilitator and informal peer reviewers in advance of internal deadline

• Download a complete PDF of the application from ResearchNet and submit with the FAAF for internal deadline – do not submit in ResearchNet
  • Be sure to follow your Faculty/College’s internal submission process/FAAF signing deadlines!

• ORS will review, provide comments and advise on final submission

• Final submission in ResearchNet by 11:00 am on final deadline day to allow for a last review of all uploads before submission.
Application – CV requirements

• CIHR Biosketch CCV required for Canadian independent researchers
• Applicant Profile CV can be used for international team members and non-academics (including Knowledge Users and Indigenous elders/community representatives)
• No CVs for Collaborators; their role should be detailed in proposal. Collaborators are strongly encouraged to have a validated CIHR PIN.
• 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.
• The NPA must complete an SGBA learning module and upload certificate
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
Application – Attachments

• 10-page Research Proposal
  • PDF, maximum 30 MB
  • 12 point, black font
  • Single line spacing
  • 2 cm margins
  • Page limit includes any charts, tables, figures, and images as well as text. Make sure text in insets and figures is legible without zooming.

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

• Response to previous reviews (2 pgs)
  • Upload *all* 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.

• Summary of Progress (2 pgs) – *new as of Spring 2021*
  • Progress/productivity in overall research program
  • Impact of COVID-19 on research progression
  • Foundation grant context (for ECR Foundation Grant holders only)
  • Narrative of request in relation to pending/awarded grant funding
Application – Attachments

• Other application materials:
  • Supplementary figures
  • 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! Any charts, preliminary data, etc. that are critical to understanding your proposal should be in the 10-pg body.
Specific Project Types

• Indigenous Health Research
  • Address TCPS – Chapter 9 principles (at Registration)
  • May be eligible for Iterative Peer Review Process
  • Dedicated funding pool

• 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 – very rigid format

• Commercialization
  • Research/Technical Plan and Commercialization Plan in 10-pg attachment

• Integrated Knowledge Translation (iKT)
  • Must have a Knowledge User as a Principal Applicant
  • CIHR will bring in Knowledge User reviewers
Application – Budget

• Budget categories:
  Research Staff: *Research Associates, Research Assistants, Technicians*
  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 (open access costs), travel for conferences*

• Refer to Tri-Agency Financial Administration 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
  • Reviews will likely continue to be held remotely for the Spring 2021 competition
• 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)
- Divide into top/bottom group – some may be “streamlined out” of discussion.
- Applications with a score of less than 3.5 are not eligible for funding.
- Reviewers will reach consensus score and committee will vote
- Reviewers will advise on budget but will not factor into scientific review.
- An application’s ranking is transformed into a percent rank score that enables comparison across committees. Applications are then funded across committees in order of percent rank until insufficient funds remain to fund the highest ranked application(s) remaining.
- Bridge funding/Priority Announcements may provide funding to projects in strategic priority areas below the funding cut-off.
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. Spring 2021 Priority Announcements include:

- Aging
- Award of Excellence in Research in Aging
- Breast Cancer Research
- Cancer Prevention and Early Detection of Hard to Treat Cancers
- Circulatory and Respiratory Health
- CMA Foundation – Virtual Care
- Epigenetics/epigenomics in human health or disease
- Equity in Cancer Prevention and Control
- Genetics: Research Priorities (Bridge Funding)
- Health Services and Policy Research
- HIV/AIDS and STBBI Bridge Grant
- HIV/AIDS and STBBI Multi-Year Grant
- Human Development, Child and Youth Health (Bridge Funding)
- Infection and Immunity (Bridge Funding)
- Infection and Immunity (Early Career Research Support)
- Mid Career Investigator Prize in Research in Aging
- Nutrition Metabolism and Diabetes (Bridge Funding)
- Pandemic and Health Emergencies Research
- Patient-Oriented Research
- Population and Public Health
- Racism, Sex and Gender in Health Research (Bridge funding)
- The Bhagirath Singh Early Career Award in Infection and Immunity
OK, I know how to apply. But how do I get funded?
Assessment Criteria

• Criterion 1: Concept – Significance and Impact
• Criterion 2: Feasibility
  • Approaches and Methods
  • Expertise, Experience, Resources

• Address these in the Proposal section
• *New: Weighting of the sections has been removed
Assessment Criteria (cont’d)

Criterion 1: Concept – Significance and Impact

• 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
Criterion 1: Concept – Significance and Impact

- 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

• Approaches and Methods
• Expertise, Experience, Resources
Approaches and Methods

• 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 (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

- 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.
Summary of Progress (*new)

• Mandatory for all applicants
• Maximum 2 pages

• Purpose:
  • Provide added context to enable a more robust peer review
  • Describe how application fits within overarching research program

• Scope:
  • Progress/productivity, especially funding that supports any results presented in the application
  • Impact of COVID-19 (replaces previous 1 page)
  • ECRs especially those who have held a Foundation grant (replaces previous ½ page in the Proposal section)
  • Budget information including grants currently held, applied for. Further opportunity to justify why funds are needed, **how Project funds will be distinct from other funding.
Other Suggestions

• Lay Summary: careful to use lay terms
• Budget: 1750 characters for each category
• Sex and gender-based analysis
• Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

• 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?