

2021 Innovation Grant Program Guidelines

Updated April 2021

These guidelines are reviewed annually and may be subject to amendment. Participation in this funding opportunity requires guideline compliance commencing at application access and, where funding has been awarded, through to completion of reporting requirements.

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1.0 Award overview

This grant program offers competitive operating support for research investigations that lead to improved health outcomes for women and/or children. All applications are peer-reviewed by one of the Biomedical or the Applied Health Grant Advisory Committees. Applications submitted to this grant competition may be either stand-alone projects or projects that provide preliminary data for future applications to provincial and/or national agencies.

2.0 Eligibility

All applications to WCHRI must align with our [relevance criteria](#) in order to be eligible for funding.

- The principal investigator must hold a full-time academic or clinical faculty appointment at the University of Alberta.
- The principal investigator must be a WCHRI academic member for not less than 1 year prior to application, except new recruits with an academic appointment of less than 1 year at time of application deadline.
- Each principal investigator may submit one application (maximum).
- Principal investigators that currently hold program funding may re-apply to the WCHRI Innovation grant program no earlier than year two of their current grant funding. Refer to 10.2 Award Transitioning.

3.0 Budget details

All funding requests are limited to a total maximum of \$60,000. The budget request in this grant application represents the total budget for the 24 month period of support. *Funding associated with this grant cannot be used as either match or top-up funding.* All principal investigators, co-investigators and collaborators must demonstrate an independent stipend/ salary source.

3.1 Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses include (but are not limited to):

- materials, supplies and other expendables;
- laboratory and/or research equipment costs, may not exceed 10% of the total proposed project budget;
- animals and animal facilities;
- computer/CPU time, data access charges and library resources;
- computer and computing equipment or software limited to \$1,000.
- publication costs (including open access publishing);
- salaries (including benefits) for research assistants, technicians, postdoctoral fellows;
- stipends for summer and graduate students;
- travel - limited to \$2,000.00 (total) for conference attendance (includes transportation, registration fees, per diem/ meals and accommodation, etc.);
- travel required for research data collection (mileage paid according to U of A guidelines).

3.2 Ineligible expenses

Ineligible expenses include:

- secretarial and clerical support;
- renovations;
- maintenance of equipment;
- installation of major equipment;
- membership fees;
- laboratory and/or research equipment purchases valued at over 10% of the total proposed budget;
- indirect university costs.

3.3 Award limitations by area of research

WCHRI may limit awards by area of research; where limitations apply, up to one (1) application (maximum) may be considered for funding based on committee recommendation and availability of financial resources.

For this grant program, funding contributions to global health and breast cancer research will be limited. Excluded from this limitation is breast cancer research that includes the participation and engagement of the Allard Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer Clinic (HBOC) at the Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH).

3.4 Targeted and priority award calls

WCHRI may offer either targeted or priority award funding calls to build and/or attract applications in specific areas of research. These opportunities are determined annually by WCHRI. All applications that fall within the targeted or priority area must evidence scientific merit and relevance with WCHRI to be eligible for funding.

4.0 Research project

The research project must clearly detail the work that will be done by the principal investigator and each co-investigator and/or collaborator. All applications must clearly evidence that the proposed research will be completed within the 24-month period of support.

The research project is not to be substantially altered from the funded application. If significant changes should become necessary, the principal investigator must seek WCHRI's approval prior to any significant change being made.

5.0 Application

5.1 Research and scholarship integrity

WCHRI supports the University of Alberta's efforts to ensure the highest standards of research and scholarship practice and behaviour. By submission of the application, the principal investigator asserts that the information provided in the document(s) adheres to all research policies and procedures in place at the University of Alberta. WCHRI reserves the right to request institutional confirmation of assertions contained within this application.

Misrepresentations of authorship, credentials or research support may result in disqualification of the application from this competition. Further actions may include: disqualifying the principal investigator and/or research team member(s) from future competitions for a time period determined solely by WCHRI, withdrawal of any remaining installments of support for any existing WCHRI grant or award for which misrepresentation appears in the submission, and seeking partial or full repayment of any past financial support under any WCHRI grant or award for which misrepresentation appears in the submission.

Please refer to [UAPPOL](#) for further information on the University of Alberta's [research and scholarship integrity](#) policy.

5.2 Application process

Submission of the [WCHRI Innovation Grant Application Access Request Form](#) is required to establish application access for the principal investigator, co-investigators and collaborators (as required). Applications and supporting documentation must be completed and submitted through the application platform. Refer to the [WCHRI Innovation Grant Program information](#) for deadlines. Application access requests, applications and application material/ documents, including biosketch and letters of collaboration, are not accepted after submission deadlines.

Applications with missing information or documentation may be submitted to the Committee "as is" provided program eligibility is met.

It is the principal investigator's responsibility to ensure the application is accurate and complete. Where information is not provided as required in the application, eligibility to participate in the competition and/or hold funds may be affected.

5.3 Co-investigator Biosketch

A maximum of five co-investigators are permitted on this grant. WCHRI defines a co-investigator as an individual who contributes to the proposed research activities. The role of each co-investigator must be clearly defined in the application. Co-investigators must be: academic faculty, clinical academic colleagues (CAC), postdoctoral fellows, clinical/ health fellows or residents/sub-specialty residents.

WCHRI will send the co-investigator biosketch form directly to each nominated co-investigator listed on the access request form. The co-investigator must complete and submit the biosketch information by the application deadline.

5.4 Letters of collaboration A maximum of six collaborators are permitted on this grant. WCHRI defines a collaborator as an individual whose role in the proposed activities is to provide a specific service or resource (e.g., access to equipment, provision of specific reagents, training in a specialized technique, statistical analysis, access to a patient population, etc.).

WCHRI will send a letter of collaboration form directly to each collaborator listed on the access request form. The collaborator must complete and submit the letter of collaboration form by the application deadline. Letters of collaboration must clearly detail the role of the collaborator. Collaborators must be responsible for and able to formally commit the service or resource committed to the proposed research. Non-academic personnel must be committed to the grant by the responsible manager.

6.0 Review process

WCHRI uses the [CIHR pillars of health research](#) to allocate applications in this competition to committees.

WCHRI makes the final decision as to the review panel assignment. Applications are forwarded to the panel where overall expertise and/or capacity to review the proposed work is available.

Committees are composed of experts from the University of Alberta and are broadly representative of the application demographic for this program opportunity. All eligible applications are forwarded to one of the Innovation Grant Committees and undergo peer-review according to program review criteria.

7.0 Review criteria and scoring

All applications that are forwarded to the committees undergo rigorous peer-review. Scientific merit of the following review criteria is assessed by committee:

| Review criteria | Scoring allocation |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Quality of Proposal | 75% |
| Quality of Research Team | 15% |
| Impact / KT | 10% |

WCHRI adopted a rating scale similar to CIHR to assess the merits of applications submitted to this program. Committee members are asked to review the above criteria using the rating scale provided below:

| Narrative Rating | Numerical Rating |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Outstanding | 4.4 – 4.9 |
| Excellent | 4.0 – 4.4 |
| Very Good | 3.5 – 3.9 |
| Good | 3.0 – 3.4 |
| Needs Revision | 2.5 – 2.9 |

Applications which score below a 3.5 consensus rating, will not receive an in-depth, detailed discussion of the relative scientific merits. For applications scoring above a 3.5 consensus rating, the committee will engage in a full application discussion, and provide a consensus recommendation (rating) and Scientific Officer Notes.

8.0 Competition results

Awardees will be posted on the WCHRI website. Notification of funding and competition feedback will be emailed to the principal investigator 1 week following the competition result posting. In the event of discrepancy between the website posting and the formal outcome letter, the website posting constitutes our notification of outcome. All institutional sponsors will be provided with application outcomes.

9.0 Institutional sponsorship

All applications must be institutionally sponsored on behalf of the principal investigator. Changes to institutional support may result in WCHRI's withdrawal of an application during the competitive process or financial commitments for an offered or currently implemented award.

Application sponsorship confirms that adequate support exists at the institutional level to achieve the proposed/funded research and that all signees have reviewed and agreed that: 1. the application meets research scholarship and practice requirements and 2. is consistent with UAPPOL policies and procedures. Please refer to the [Meaning of Signatures](#) for details on sponsorship responsibilities.

Institutional sponsors also agree to the public release of information and/or support of any WCHRI communication initiatives subsequent to award funding. By signing the application, institutional sponsors agree to timely disbursement of award funding to RSO established accounts. Where changes to employment, and/or human resources concerns arise that affect institutional sponsorship, WCHRI must be contacted without delay.

WCHRI disburses award funding upon confirmation from the Research Services Office (RSO) that an account has been opened (Advice Notice). Note that ethics and all other institutional approvals must be received by RSO in order to open the account. *WCHRI must be listed as the award funder.*

10.0 Award Funding

Financial disbursements are based on the availability of financial resources, followed by financial need, research progress and award compliance.

10.1 Funding implementation

Funding provided at the commencement of the award will not exceed 50% of the total award value except where recommended by committee and confirmed by WCHRI in the notification of funding. Award funding for year two of the grant will be disbursed based on evidence of research progress and financial need, and correspond with cash flow requirements (or evidenced spent rate). Satisfactory progress must be evidenced in reporting, where limitations and/or barriers to completing work are disclosed/ and actively addressed and evidence that the project should in all likelihood be completed within a 24-month period of support.

Where research progress is satisfactory, WCHRI expects that the remaining funding commitment will be released after review of award reporting.

10.2 Grant transitioning

Awardees may actively hold funding for more than one Innovation grant concurrently to support transitioning research to a newly awarded Innovation grant. The following applies to the currently held grant when transitioning to a new grant:

- all current grant funding must be exhausted to within 10% of the (total) award amount at the time of new funding implementation, and
- the previously held grant must have concluded, including submission of a final report, within 3 months of the new grant being implemented.

Where terms and conditions are not met, account access for the new grant will be interrupted.

10.3 Deferred implementation

Awardees are subject to deferred implementation where the terms of award transitioning are not met by the start date of a new grant.

Awardees may also opt to defer implementation where either research support (such as staffing, equipment) or institutional approval (such as ethics) will not/ may not be in place by the required (start) date. Awards may be deferred for up to 1 year from the (earliest) award commencement date. A deferred start must be requested prior to WCHRI release of the notification of funding.

A deferred start date exhausts no-cost extension eligibility in the same manner as an end date no-cost extension. WCHRI will consider up to a single, one-time (1), one-year (1) start date deferral. WCHRI financial commitments will be void where an award that has benefited from a deferred start, is non-compliant to commence at the deferred start date.

10.4 Deferred payment

Where funding has accrued in a research account, awardees may either request payment deferral or deferral may be allocated by WCHRI.

Where a deferred payment has been either requested by the awardees or allocated by WCHRI, a no-cost extension may also be applied against the grant to allow the awardee time to support/ resource research activities that will be achieved within the reporting cycle.

Extension offered following a deferred payment exhausts end of grant no-cost extension eligibility; deferred payment extension may not exceed 1 year (total). Grants that have received a deferred payment extension and that are unable to satisfactorily resolve concerns that impact or limit research progress, may be subject to termination of the period of support.

10.5 Extension requests

Where an awardee has benefited from a deferred start, only the residual remaining extension balance may be considered as an end of grant no-cost extension. The total period of extension will not exceed 1 year, including any extension offered at the time of implementation.

In the event that progress is delayed after award implementation, WCHRI may consider a no-cost extension to the period of support. In order for WCHRI to assess extension eligibility, formal reporting with a request to extend the award must be submitted to WCHRI 2 months prior to the end of the period of support.

Awards are eligible for a single, one-time (1) one-year extension where reporting supports that research will be complete, up to and including publication/ research outcomes as defined by the funded application within the period of extension.

At the end of the period of support, WCHRI will recover residual funds.

11.0 Leaves of absence

11.1 Maternity/paternity leave

WCHRI awardees who take maternity/ paternity leave during the tenure of the award must provide WCHRI with formal notification prior to the commencement of the leave. This notification should be supported by the awardee's department chair or faculty dean. Following the period of leave, the awardee may request an extension to the term of the award equal to the time allocated to the leave but not exceeding 1 year.

11.2 Unpaid leave(s) of absence

WCHRI must be notified of any unpaid leaves of absence not less than 1 month prior to the leave and will consider all requests on a case by case basis. WCHRI may consider extending the award by an amount of time not exceeding the duration of the approved leave. Formal notification of intent to return from a leave must be provided to WCHRI within one month of returning and request of award extension must be requested within this one month period. Formal notification must include institutional support to reinstate the award.

12.0 Reporting

12.1 Research day presentation

Either during the term of the award or no later than the November following the end of the period of support, a member of the research team is expected to present outcomes related to the research at WCHRI's Research Day.

12.2 Progress and/or final reporting

The principal investigator must complete and submit the report form within 60 days of the request to report. An on-line survey link will be sent to the principal investigator to facilitate reporting.

Failure to comply with reporting requirements may result in ineligibility to apply to future WCHRI funding programs, interrupt access to current grant and/or awards, and/or may affect or interrupt support through WCHRI [Research Platforms](#). In addition to research achievements and current requirements, annual progress reporting must clearly detail research activities that are to occur within the next funding period and the corresponding budget requirements for these activities. No funding will be released until reporting has been reviewed, satisfies grant requirements and evidences the need for further funding payment where further funding commitments exist.

13.0 Communications and acknowledgements

All publications, including public messages, arising from research supported by WCHRI grants and/or awards must acknowledge the support of WCHRI. Funding acknowledgement is provided in the formal offer of award letters and can be found on our [website](#).

Awardees are asked to inform WCHRI in advance if their research will be published in a major journal and/or receive media coverage. WCHRI reserves the right to publish and/or disseminate information relevant to grants and awards. Awardees may be highlighted in WCHRI communication initiatives.

14.0 Award termination

WCHRI reserves the right to terminate any award if the conditions of the award are not met, or if there is evidence of unsatisfactory progress. The principal investigator must immediately notify WCHRI of any changes to the research team particularly if the change may affect eligibility to hold an award. This includes termination of employment, and leaves of absence.

15.0 Contact information

If you have any questions regarding this program or application process, please contact WCHRI grants administration at wcgrants@ualberta.ca.