REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

THE MARATHON OF HOPE HEALTH INFORMATICS & DATA SCIENCE AWARD (2025)

Purpose

To provide outstanding young researchers in health informatics and related fields with funding to support high-quality research in precision oncology. The award is designed to support young researchers as they complete their studies and develop their careers, in close collaboration and mentorship with established Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network (MOHCCN) funded teams. Researchers currently enrolled in graduate (Master and Ph.D.) and post-doctoral studies in the fields of health informatics, data analytics, data science, computational biology, bioinformatics, and related fields at Canadian institutions are invited to apply.

Scope

Support under this Request for Applications (RFA) is targeted at high-quality, clinically related research using MOHCCN data, providing information that may form the basis of innovative cancer prevention, diagnosis and/or treatment. In general research supported by these awards should include, but may not be limited to, studies that develop new:

- Ways of generating therapeutically actionable biological cancer data
- Types of therapeutically actionable biological cancer data
- Tools to analyze existing rich, complex or large datasets, and
- Precision oncology trial design, conduct and analysis.

Applicants must be mentored by researcher(s) (clinician and/or scientist) currently associated with a MOHCCN-funded study. Special consideration will be afforded to applicants who include plans for inclusion of marginalized populations in their work. Research goals should reflect an understanding of the accessibility of data available within the Network at the time of the award.

Support Offered

Up to ten awards of $40,000 each for one **year** to provide:

- Salary support for award recipients;
- Approved research expenses for the research project awarded.

The sponsoring, eligible Canadian institution is required to match the Marathon of Hope Health Informatics Award with a similar amount to be used to augment research expenses

and/or salary supports. Up to ten awards will be made for this round of the competition. We expect to announce additional rounds in subsequent years.

Eligibility

To apply you should:

- Be enrolled in a graduate (Master or Ph.D.) or post-doctoral research program in a field related to health informatics and data science at a Canadian institution
- Have a mentor in the proposed research field from the sponsoring Institution. The mentor must assume responsibility and provide guidance for the research and be associated with a MOHCCN-funded study.
- Applicants must be mentored by a researcher(s) (clinician and/or scientist) currently associated with a MOHCCN-funded study.
- Applicants must not have previously been awarded an MOHCCN Health Informatics & Data Science award on a previous competition call.

The MOHCCN is committed to equity, diversity and inclusivity and strives to promote inclusive excellence in its research programs. We welcome eligible applicants of diverse backgrounds to apply for our funding opportunities.

Funding Envelope

The MOHCCN has an initial funding envelope sufficient to fund up to ten Marathon of Hope Heath Informatics Awards in the first round.

How to Apply

1. A *Full Application* is required electronically by **Sunday January 26, 2025** (11:59 pm Eastern Time)
2. Peer Review Committee meeting – **March/April 2025**
3. Funding Announcement – **May 2025**
4. Funding Start Date: **July 1, 2025**

The Marathon of Hope Health Informatics & Data Science Award Application Guide (2025) will provide detailed guidance to assist applicants in preparing their proposal.

Application Advice

Reviewers normally assess:

- The potential impact of the research and the fit to the scope of the RFA
- The caliber and potential of the applicant
- The excellence and scientific merit of the proposed research, and
- The suitability and mentorship plan offered by the mentor

- Responses to reviewer comments from a previously unsuccessful application (as applicable)
- The quality and quantity of support from the sponsoring Institution (research environment, financial and dedicated time for research, and long-term commitment to help the applicant realize their career development in oncology).

Please note that members of the MOHCCN Patient Working Group will also be invited to provide feedback regarding applications during the review process.

Conditions of Funding

Funded project proposals require a minimum cash match of 1:1 of the TFRI-provided funds, unless otherwise notified. Eligible matching cash fund guidelines are included in Appendix A of the Application Form. We require Cash Match Commitment Letters from an authorized official of each eligible source organization confirming the matching cash funds that will be made available to support the application budget. The work plan part of the Application includes a table to list all the eligible sources of the committed matching cash funds and what part of the project those funds support. In-kind support does not qualify as eligible matching cash funds.

Successful applicants will receive their funds following execution of a standard MOHCCN Research Project Grant Agreement (RPGA) with TFRI which fully details the conditions of funding as well as reporting schedules. Funds for Health Informatics & Data Science projects will be provided by TFRI directly to each collaborating institution.

Cash Match Commitment Letters must cover the 2025-26 fiscal year budget. Note that expenditures made from both TFRI-provided and cash-match funds must be reported regularly to TFRI.

MOHCCN Membership Prerequisite

A prerequisite to receiving TFRI MOHCCN funds through RPGA agreements, is that the applicant's institution must first be a MOHCCN Member by agreeing to the terms of the MOHCCN Network Master Agreement through the signing of a Joinder Letter. The MOHCCN Network Master Agreement and Joinder letters will be made available to any applying institution if they are not already a Network Member. Requests for these documents should be made to jmicholuk@tfri.ca.

Applicants and sponsoring Institutions are expected to observe TFRI's Research Administration Policy. This includes:

a. **Certificates**

Before funding is made available, the Applicants must obtain from the sponsoring Institution all applicable certificates, including:

1. *Biohazards*. For projects involving use of biological material, a certificate guaranteeing that the project will be conducted under conditions which satisfy the Canadian Biosafety Standard (CBS) 2nd edition (2015) and the Canadian Biosafety Handbook (CBH), 2nd edition (2015). (http://canadianbiosafetystandards.collaboration.gc.ca/)

2. *Animal Care*. For projects involving use of experimental animals, a certificate guaranteeing that all animals will be cared for and studied under conditions meeting the standards set forth in the Canadian Council on Animal Care's "Guide to the Care and Use of Experimental Animals" Vol 1 (1993). (https://www.ccac.ca/)

3. *Human Studies*. For projects involving human subjects, a certificate stating that the protocols and methods have been reviewed by the Institutional Research Ethics Board and found to be acceptable in accordance with current edition of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada: 'Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans' (2014) (www.pre.ethics.gc.ca). If studies use investigational compounds, regulatory approval from Canada's Health Protection Branch is also required.

4. *Use of Human and Biological Samples*. TFRI is committed to ensuring that highquality bio-specimens are used in research it funds, as these yield high, reproducible quality data. For this reason, TFRI requires all applicants for funding to certify that (i) all prospective (new) bio-specimens included in the TFRI-funded research will be collected in accordance with the standards set by the Canadian Tissue Repository Network (https://www.ctrnet.ca/resources/operating-procedures) and/or the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments Act (CLIA) of the UnitedStates (https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA/index.html) and/or (ii) all retrospective (old) bio-specimens used in the TFRI-funded research have come from a CTRNet or CLIA-certified bio-repository. Links to the CTRNet certification program and registered biobanks can be found at https://biobanking.org/webs/certification. Applicants are required to submit evidence of current certification and participation in external quality assurance programs with the proposal.

5. *Human Pluripotent Stem Cell Research*. TFRI endorses the guidelines set forward by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research on 'Human Pluripotent Stem Cells' now integrated into the 'Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2), Chapter 12. Section F (2nd edition) (https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2018_chapter12-chapitre12.html). Applicants are required to contact TFRI before submitting an application for support of cancer research requiring any use of human pluripotent stem cells.

b. Reporting

TFRI requires an (1) Annual Scientific Research Progress Report, (2) an Annual Research Metrics Report, and (3) Quarterly Financial Statements from awardees. TFRI also expects

the funded researchers to contribute to/present at TFRI and MOHCCN Meetings during the term of the award.

c. Project Title & Use of TFRI and MOHCCN logos

Funded Applications are to be called 'The Marathon of Hope Health Informatics Award in [*title of program*]'. Investigators are expected to comply with TFRI and MOHCCN Visual Identity Guidelines as appropriate, to be found at: www.tfri.ca and www.mohccn.ca

d. Employment Equity

TFRI is committed to compliance with the Canadian Employment Equity Act and to ensuring that our funded research programs provide equal employment opportunities to women, Indigenous persons, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities. All Funded Applications are required to employ non-discriminatory hiring practices in their workplaces.

e. Inclusion of sex and gender in research design where appropriate

Applicants are expected to include a statement in the proposal that they have considered sex- and gender-based analysis (SGBA) as appropriate. The purpose of SGBA is to promote rigorous science that is sensitive to sex and gender and therefore has the potential to expand our understanding of health determinants for all people[1].
Applicants may also include additional statements regarding inclusion of other minorities in their research, including hard-to-reach populations.

For inquiries, please contact:
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[1] Please refer to http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50836.html for more resources on SGBA.