REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

THE TERRY FOX RESEARCH INSTITUTE & THE MARATHON OF HOPE CANCER CENTRES NETWORK

PATIENT VOICES IN RESEARCH INITIATIVE (2024)

Purpose

This funding opportunity from the Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network (MOHCCN) will provide funding to research teams to address themes identified by the MOHCCN Patient Working Group (PWG) (see Research Themes section). Applicants should consider the tight timeline and present realistic goals for the 1-year project based on the research themes. Projects may be exploratory, focused on identifying barriers and/or challenges, proof-of-concept and feasibility studies, literature reviews, etc. Successful applicants will commit to presenting their findings and recommendations for future research, particularly within the context of the MOHCCN and future growth of the Network, to the MOHCCN PWG following the award period (1 year). We encourage collaboration among research groups and highly encourage a Pan-Canadian approach to research groups.

Background

The vision of the Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network (MOHCCN) is to bring together leading cancer centres across Canada to collaborate on precision medicine developments to benefit cancer patients and drive innovation. Although precision medicine is a promising framework for cancer care, presently it only benefits a fraction of cancer patients in Canada; the Network is therefore uniting researchers, clinicians, patients, administrators, funders, and other parties across the country to close the gap between research and clinical care and accelerate precision medicine for cancer and make it a reality for all Canadians.

The goal of the Network is to apply advanced technologies such as genomics, high-powered imaging, and artificial intelligence (AI) to solve complex cancer cases. A key objective of the MOHCCN is to create the largest and most complete cancer case resource in Canada: the MOHCCN Gold Cohort will contain paired genomic and clinical data from 15,000 individuals representative of the diversity of Canadian cancer patients. Leveraging the strengths of Canadian healthcare systems in collecting and sharing health data, this dataset will include detailed clinical information, including thorough treatment and outcome data, that will provide high-quality real-world evidence for precision oncology. It is the vision of the Network that the creation of such a rich data resource will not only enable cutting-edge

research but will also help create the necessary evidence to support enhanced clinical decision-making so that each patient can benefit from personalized care.

High-quality, impactful research requires patient participation, which means that it is pivotal for patients, caregivers, and survivors to play an important role before, during and after research is conducted. The MOHCCN is committed to increasing patient involvement and engagement in Canadian cancer research and is led in these efforts by its Patient Working Group, a group of 30 cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers from across the country that are helping to guide Network priorities and activities (click here to read about the group's achievements in its first year).

This funding opportunity aims to support research studies that centre patients, caregivers, and survivors and their needs as it relates to precision cancer research and care. It is driven by research themes identified by the Patient Working Group and has a goal of amplifying patient voices and priorities to elevate the quality and impact of cancer research in Canada.

Scope & Eligibility

Support under this Request for Applications (RFA) is targeted at high-quality research teams at Canadian institutions working on innovative cancer research, including various aspects of prevention, detection and diagnosis, treatment, socioeconomic and psychosocial factors surrounding cancer, health technology assessment, and learning healthcare systems. Applicants are not required to be currently affiliated with MOHCCN. Successful applicants will need to work with their institutions to sign the Network Joinder Agreement before funding can be awarded.

Collaboration across multiple Canadian cancer centres is encouraged, though not required. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to begin work in November 2024 and to complete work within the timeframes (see Support Offered and Conditions of Funding).

Applications should be presented in plain language as PWG members will be reviewing all applications. Scientific reviews will also be conducted. Applications must clearly respond to at least one of the research themes identified in this RFA.

Lead Investigator Eligibility (update June 14th, 2024): For the role of lead investigator on applications, MOHCCN will be following CIHR Applicant Eligibility criteria for Principal Applicants.

- Eligible individuals include researchers, knowledge users, scholars, health professionals, undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.
- Individuals must be affiliated with a Canadian postsecondary institution and/or their affiliated institutions.

Research Themes

1. Equity, access, and disparities related to the continuum of precision medicine care
Research related to better understanding existing intersectional disparities in access to and implementation of precision medicine and approaches to overcome them. Topics may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following: provincial disparities in drug access and coverage; jurisdictional disparities in screening guidelines and accessibility of familial genetic testing; accessibility of post-treatment screening and testing; implementation of palliative care; psychosocial effects of precision medicine access in underserved populations. Special attention to provincial and urban/rural/remote disparities, patient-centred approaches, and underserved/equity-deserving populations.

2. Clinical trials access
Research related to increasing patient accessibility to clinical trials and promoting patient-centred trials. Topics may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following: decentralized trial design to increase trial accessibility for interested participants; differences in regional and urban/rural/remote access to clinical trials; cross-provincial/international clinical trials; support for clinical trial implementation in smaller or non-research cancer centres; resources to increase direct patient education and facilitate identification of relevant clinical trials.

3. Patient involvement and engagement in precision oncology research
Research related to patient involvement and engagement, specifically in the context of precision oncology research. Topics may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following: methods and approaches for effective and meaningful patient involvement and engagement; initiatives to support patient involvement in research, including clinical trials; patient-centered knowledge translation and educational resources.

4. Survivorship care plans and post-treatment resources
Research related to survivorship care plans and identifying, collecting, and creating resources for post-treatment guidance for cancer patients. Topics may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following: assessment of current guidelines in different contexts and existing disparities; educational resources for clinicians and/or patients; tools to improve guidance and reminders; impact of follow-up guidelines and approaches on rates and/or timing of recurrence detection; psychosocial effects of differing levels of post-treatment guidance; special considerations for survivorship care plans in the context of advanced cancers; multidisciplinary post-treatment care plans and breaking down of silos; management of co-morbidities.

5. Lifestyle interventions in precision oncology
Research related to assessing the feasibility and impact of lifestyle interventions in cancer care. Topics may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following: benefits of exercise during cancer treatment and/or end-of-life care; impact of preparation for and administration of certain therapies (e.g. immunotherapy) on lifestyle factors (and vice-versa); accessibility of interventions for patients with different needs (e.g. reduced mobility).

6. Rare cancers across the age spectrum
Research related to individuals with rare cancers, including pediatric, adolescent, and young adult populations. Topics may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following: increasing inclusion of individuals with rare cancers in research; unique considerations related to genetic testing for patients with rare cancers; psychosocial effects of a rare cancer diagnosis; approaches to standardize diagnosis and care for rare cancers; lifetime effects and follow-up for pediatric/AYA patients; tumour-agnostic biomarkers to improve diagnostic and care for patients with rare cancers.

Support Offered and Conditions of Funding

TFRI funding will begin November 2024 and be available for a project term of up to one (1) year. Projects may apply for up to $250,000. The total envelope available for this initiative is $1,000,000 and the number of awards will be dependent on the sizes of the proposed projects (estimated between 4 and 8 awards).

Through the generous support of TFRI for this funding opportunity, applicants are not required to provide any matching funds for these projects. For details regarding eligible expenses, please see Appendix A in the Full Application Form.

Successful applications will receive their funds after execution of a standard MOHCCN Research Project Grant Agreement (RPGA), which details the funding, terms and conditions, and reporting schedules. Agreements and funds for the projects will be provided by TFRI directly to the project host institution. Only one institution per award will receive funds; as secondary or sub–granting from MOHCCN funds is not allowed, the choice of host institution should be considered carefully and collaborators (if any) who incur expenses should seek reimbursement from the host institution likely through an invoicing process.

As a pre-condition of receiving funding, each of the project's applicants must be from institutions who are, or agree to become, members of the MOHCCN Network (see MOHCCN Membership Prerequisite below).

Update (June 14th, 2024): While main project activities are expected to take place in the 1-year timeframe (November 2024 to November 2025), some funds may be allotted to activities

through March 31st, 2026 to report to the PWG, gather feedback from PWG members, and make further recommendations for next steps in the research and related to Network activities.

Timeline

1. MOHCCN Patient Voices in Research Initiative Launch – **June 6, 2024**
2. Deadline for MOHCCN Patient Voices in Research Initiative Applications – **Monday August 12th (5:00 p.m. Pacific Time)**
    - All application materials must be submitted to MOH@TFRI.ca
3. Review Period – **August – September 2024**
4. Award Announcement to Applicants – **October 2024**
5. Funding Start Date – **November 1, 2024**

Review Criteria

Reviewers will assess the following criteria:

- Relevance to research themes, potential for impact, innovation/originality
- Patient involvement and engagement: incorporation of patient views/voices in the development and execution of the research project, strategies for patient engagement and knowledge translation following completion of the research project
- Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA): incorporation of EDIA principles in the development and execution of the project, potential for project to benefit diverse cancer patients including equity-deserving groups
- Feasibility: research team readiness, assessment of the budget, investigators' qualifications
- Applicability to MOHCCN activities and the future of the Network

MOHCCN Membership Prerequisite

A prerequisite to receiving MOHCCN funds through an RPGA is that the host institution in the project must first be an MOHCCN Member by agreeing to the terms of the MOHCCN Network Master Agreement though 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. A membership process is a one-time event and once a Member, project funds can be provided by TFRI to the institution through one or more RPGA(s) over time.

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

a. Certificates

Before TFRI funding is made available by institutions to their respective researchers, the Applicants must first obtain from the sponsoring Institution all applicable safety 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/en/resources/national-standards/) and/or the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments Act (CLIA) of the United States (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.

TFRI also expects the applicant and collaborators to contribute at TFRI and MOHCCN Meetings during the project's term. Applicants and collaborators may have the opportunity to join relevant MOHCCN working groups and will be invited to make recommendations for future research in the context of continued Network growth and future Network deliverables. Research teams may be invited to create new collaborations

with the MOHCCN Patient Working Group and other Network members to develop further research projects and address these deliverables.

b. Project Title & Use of TFRI logo

Funded applicants will be designated as a "TFRI–MOHCCN Patient Voices in Research Initiative Project in [project short title]". 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

c. 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.

d. 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].

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.