CIHR UD Meeting (Webcast) June 4, 2020

Hello everyone,

The June CIHR-UD meeting was held by webcast on June 4, 2020. Here are the highlights:

CIHR Updates (Adrian Mota, Associate Vice President, Research Programs)

1. Catalyst Grant: Health Effects of Vaping -
In January 2020, CIHR and its Institutes of Cancer Research (ICR); Circulatory and Respiratory Health (ICRH); Human Development, Child and Youth Health (IHDCYH); and Neurosciences, Mental Health, and Addiction (INMHA), in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society, launched the Health Effects of Vaping Catalyst Grant funding opportunity to support research to address urgent knowledge gaps related to the health effects of vaping in youth and adults. This competition is now active. This is the only strategic competition that CIHR is delivering at this time, other than COVID-19 related competitions. Approximately 100 registrations have been submitted to date and the application deadline is June 10, 2020. Funding decisions are anticipated to be released in mid-July 2020 (July 14).

2. COVID-19 May 2020 Rapid Research FO -
CIHR issued a clarification to confirm the intent for applicants to address the collective objective. The timing of the clarification was not ideal and not well received. CIHR later pulled back the clarification and extended the application deadline by an additional day. Approximately 1,500 applications were received. CIHR has had to make some adjustments to the competition timeline due to the large number of applications. The notice of decision (NOD) date was pushed out to June 12, 2020.

Delegates expressed concerns about the peer review of these grants, where comments were available to the reviewer group but not the scores. CIHR acknowledged that this was sub-optimal and a limitation of ResearchNet, and that it will not be used for Project. CIHR cannot determine yet what the success rate in this competition will be.

3. Spring 2020 Project Grant Competition
CIHR has decided to move forward with adjudication of the applications received for the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition during the summer. [The full announcement is here](). CIHR peer review process will be delivered with videoconference panels from late July through August. While in-person peer review remains CIHR's standard, it is not a viable option for this competition. CIHR had planned to invest $275M in this competition and, as with all competitions, this investment would have been made over multiple fiscal years. CIHR will use a small portion of these funds (approximately $31M) to continue to support the funding extensions offered as a support due to the impacts of COVID-19 and the remaining amount will go towards funding applications that were submitted in the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition. The timelines for the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition will be adjusted to allow for sufficient time to deliver the Spring 2020 competition. Applications not funded through the Spring 2020 competition can be submitted in the Fall 2020 competition. The preliminary dates for the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition are anticipated to be in mid-September, for registration, and the

application deadline is anticipated to be in mid-October. CIHR plans to re-introduce the notice of recommendation (NOR) for the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition, which allows applicants to view their score, their rankings and notes provided from the Scientific Officer (SO) and the reviewers. From this information, applicants will be able to determine the likelihood of their application being funded. The NOR will also provide applicants two weeks to determine if they will register for the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition. Timelines of the Project Grant competitions are anticipated to return to normal for the Fall 2021 Project Grant competition or the Spring 2022 Project Grant competition.

Delegates expressed concerns about virtual review environment. CIHR responded that the reviews would be conducted in real time using videoconference, with full discussion and consensus. The standing peer review committees for Project will be maintained. CIHR is trying to develop flexibility for the peer reviewers who will be working remotely, with shorter sessions to accommodate the different time zones and the need for regular breaks (suggestion was 11 am to 2 pm EDT). Dates for these meetings will be announced soon. CIHR is in discussion with the committee chairs about increasing the number of proposals that are streamlined. CIHR indicated that is unlikely that ECR Observers will be possible in this competition. Also, no updates or supplements to original submissions will be permitted.

4. Trainee Funding to CIHR grantees
On April 22, the Government of Canada committed $291.6M to support students, postdoctoral researchers and research support personnel impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, through the federal tri-agencies. Part of this investment will be used to support trainees paid directly through scholarships and fellowships, and the other part will go towards trainees and research support personnel supported indirectly through grants awarded to their supervisors. The tri-agencies shared more information with the research community on Friday, May 29th about direct supports for scholarship or fellowship holders (through CGS-M, CGS-D, Vanier, Banting, and agency-specific programs). The full announcement is here. For eligible students and postdoctoral researchers whose research scholarship and fellowship ends between March and August 2020, support will be extended for an additional four (4) months and be fully funded. This represents an investment of up to $40M. Award holders will be contacted in the coming weeks by their respective agency. Award holders will need to attest that their research was disrupted by COVID-19 constraints and that they are not benefiting from compensation under the Canada Emergency Student Benefit or the Canada Emergency Response Benefit or other income supports related to COVID-19. Details of the supports are available here.

Next CIHR-UD meeting is on July 2, 2020. Bye for now!

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