

CIHR UD Meeting (Webcast) December 3, 2020

Hello everyone,

The November CIHR-UD meeting was held by webcast on December 3, 2020. Here are the highlights:

1. CIHR Updates (Allison Jackson, Director General, Operations Support)

CIHR Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan for CIHR was recently approved by Governing Council. CIHR is now preparing a First-Year Action Plan to accompany it. The Strategic Plan will be launched in early 2021. Once launched, details will be shared.

Questions from members:

Is the Strategic Plan going to change the ability to submit more than one (1) grant in the Spring competition? CIHR will continue with the status quo for now, which is a maximum of two applications submitted per competition. Some aspects of the Strategic Plan will be ready to launch right away and others, such as this, will require time to implement.

Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 Project Grant Competitions

Fall 2020 competition peer review meetings will continue to take place remotely for this competition, January 14 to February 4, 2021. There are 2,360 applications and 59 committees involved in this competition. Discussions are ongoing, regarding the budget allocation for the Spring 2021 Project Grant Competition given the anticipated increase in application pressure due to the return of Foundation Grant holders and applicants coming off their 1-year extension.

Identical/Essentially Identical Applications

CIHR has long had a policy that prohibits the submission of identical or essentially identical applications to competitions with overlapping timelines. New guidelines have been published and a direct link to the policy was added to the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition. CIHR will be screening the Fall 2020 Project Grant applications and the Nominated Principal Applicant (NPA) institutions will be copied on confirmed cases of non-compliance.

Questions from members:

How prevalent is dual/duplicate submission? Just over twenty (20) applications in the most recent Project Grant competition have been flagged. Those applicants have or will be notified regarding the detection of an overlapping application. Individuals are provided an opportunity to respond to the perceived overlap. The standard practice is that the first application submitted will be accepted, while the second application will be withdrawn.

Will the summary of the progress page be re-introduced to the project applications? Work is currently underway and CIHR is looking towards re-introducing the summary of progress page; however, a timeline remains to be determined.

Is it possible to copy research grant offices (RGO) on these communications to the Principal Investigators (PI)? Yes, the process includes sharing a copy of the communication with the institutions—specifically, with the RGOs.

Should the panel Chairs weigh in on whether it's different enough? Otherwise, I think PI would argue. To date, CIHR has not had to escalate or seek additional insight from others. Furthermore, applicants have not pushed back. The possibility to engage Chairs from time to time, as necessary, will be considered as a part of the process.

We recently had this happen: the applicant received bridge funding instead of a full award and then re-submitted for a full award consideration. He was told that this was a duplicate although he had been advised he could re-submit for full funding consideration. Can you provide further context? Applicants are allowed, for bridge funding, to apply to the next competition with the same application. If they were successful in the subsequent application, their bridge funding would be cut off. UD members were encouraged to reach out to CIHR directly with specific examples for additional information.

During the previous competition, there were some differences between the French and English instructions for the sex and gender section of the application. Has this issue been resolved for the next competition? CIHR is aware that there have been interpretation issues between the French and English application instructions regarding who on the team is required to complete the Sex-and-Gender-Based Analysis (SGBA) training, in order to complete the application. The instructions in question have been identified and the team will be making adjustments to these accordingly. CIHR committed to reaching out to the UD member who raised this concern to confirm the issue was well understood and the instructions in question have been properly identified. An update will be provided to the full UD Network when available.

Across the board, we are not provided with the information to discuss potential scientific overlap between existing funding and the funding applied for. We are always told just to flag this if we see something and it will be handled administratively but it is the panels that are able to best determine this. I do think we should be guided to discuss at the panel and provide more input. The applicants should have to justify how the application differs from funding held. The identical and essentially identical application policy is for applications. An applicant cannot have two identical or essentially identical applications submitted, at the same time, to two (2) different competitions. In the case where an individual applies and receives funding for a project and it evolves, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the change is clearly conveyed. The peer reviewers will definitely look at the history and current work to see how the funding that an applicant is currently applying for differs from the funding they have received, in order to determine if it warrants more funding.

Can a feature be built into the new grants management system to automatically add an application to the CIHR CV if a CIHR application is submitted? CIHR was not in a position to provide a response but committed to taking this question to the Tri-Agency Grants Management Solution (TGMS) initiative team to obtain more information. The Tri-Agency Grants Management Solution (TGMS) initiative team has noted that this business need has been documented based on previous consultations with applicants. Whilst being in the process of

assessing capabilities offered by two ‘out of the box’ grants management solutions, it is not clear as to whether or not this would be achievable. The TGMS team’s understanding of what is possible will grow as the work progresses.

Some of our PIs have been contacted about their early career researcher (ECR) status and the RGO was not copied on these communications. Could this be improved in the future? CIHR tries, to the best of our ability, to make sure the institutions are being copied on all communications. These requests will be shared with the teams responsible.

2. Strategic Funding Opportunities

As announced previously, strategic competitions resumed in September. With respect to the Collaborative Health Research Projects (CHRP), discussions, which had been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, are ongoing between CIHR and NSERC. More information will be shared when available. Information on the Institute Community Support (ICS) program will be available shortly. For more information about the current funding opportunities, please refer to the PowerPoint presentation that was circulated ahead of the meeting.

Questions from members:

CIHR would not release the registration list for the COVID Indigenous opportunity for our institution. Is this now standard for strategic competitions to not release this or will we be allowed to see registration lists for our institution for future competitions? CIHR confirmed that sending registration lists is not a standard practice. However, this request can be brought forward for internal discussion and CIHR can consider the impacts moving forward.

3. Update on EDI Engagement Plans

In October CIHR issued a statement about enhancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the research funding system. This included a commitment to listen to the lived experiences of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour—and a commitment to act on what we heard to develop an action plan to address systemic racism in CIHR’s funding system. An update was provided to members regarding CIHR’s equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) engagement plans.

In January, CIHR will begin an online discussion which will give members of the research community an opportunity to share their experiences of barriers in CIHR’s programs, policies and processes—and their advice and recommendations for tackling these barriers. While CIHR is particularly interested in hearing from people with lived experience of systemic discrimination in the research ecosystem, the online engagement will be open to the broader research community. CIHR would appreciate your help in spreading the word about this online engagement activity, and more details will be forthcoming. For the latest updates, we invite you to monitor the ACCESS newsletter and social media channels. You can expect to receive a message in about a week. The insights from this online engagement will inform future small-group listening sessions to be held in spring 2021, and, ultimately, the development of an Anti-Racism Action Plan. CIHR thanks our partners such as the Black Health Alliance and the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, who have been advising us on our approach to engaging with the community. This is certainly not work CIHR is doing in isolation—rather, we are looking to contribute to the broader effort across all the granting councils to ensure equitable access to funding opportunities and drive equitable and inclusive participation in the research system.

Questions from members:

Are there any plans to incorporate an EDI section into the grant applications as seen in NSERC Discovery or NFRF? CIHR is increasingly integrating EDI requirements into strategic funding opportunities. There currently are no plans to incorporate a standing EDI section within applications; however, moving forward, we will be exploring ways to strengthen EDI requirements across funding programs.

CIHR and Tri-Agency have extended the eligibility for ECRs by 1 year due to the pandemic. Will they consider extending this to postdocs? (Eligibility for Post-Doctoral Fellowships extended to 6yr post-PhD?) As the pandemic progresses, CIHR continues to monitor impacts across the research community. Discussions are ongoing for not only Post-Doctoral trainees but also mid-career researchers. More information will be shared with the UD Network as soon as it becomes available.

Next CIHR-UD meeting is on January 7, 2021. Happy holidays everyone!

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