



2018 HEALTH PROFESSIONAL-INVESTIGATOR COMPETITION

GUIDELINES

DEADLINES:

LETTER OF INTENT: **NOVEMBER 3, 2017**

FULL APPLICATION: **JANUARY 19, 2018**

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1. Preface

The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR), funded by the province of British Columbia, is BC's health research funding agency. MSFHR helps develop, retain and recruit the talented people whose research improves the health of British Columbians, addresses health system priorities, creates jobs and adds to the knowledge economy. Learn more at www.msfhr.org.

2. Purpose

The MSFHR Health Professional-Investigator (HP-I) Program is intended to help close the gap between health research and its implementation by supporting health professionals to conduct and apply research that leverages their practical knowledge of patient care and health service delivery, allowing them to significantly contribute to health, health care and health system innovation. The HP-I Program achieves this by contributing to the award recipient's salary in order to protect time for research, and/or by defraying the cost of research personnel directly associated with the award recipient's proposed research.

3. Objectives

The HP-I award provides health professionals who are actively involved in patient care or public health practice the opportunity to address significant research questions that will directly impact patient health and/or the health system in BC.

The specific objectives of this program are to:

- Increase the capability of practicing health professionals to do research that will directly impact patient health, health care and/or the health system in BC.
- Contribute to the establishment and/or continued development of research careers for health professionals.
- Increase the capacity for health professionals to produce and utilize research evidence that informs best practices for health, health care delivery and/or health system improvement.

4. Award Amount and Duration

The budget envelope for this funding opportunity is \$4,500,000.

HP-I awards provide an initial three years of funding support at \$90,000 per annum, with the option to renew the award for an additional two years of support at \$90,000 per annum. Award renewal is contingent upon successful review of a renewal application (see section 9) by an external review panel. The award amount is inclusive of benefits and is valued in Canadian dollars.

5. Eligibility Requirements

At the time of application, the applicant must:

- Be a member of a regulated health profession¹, as recognized by the [BC Health Professions Act](#), with a valid license to practice in BC, and a member in good standing of the appropriate regulatory college, **OR** belong to a health profession requiring board certification, and be a member in good standing of its respective provincial or national certification² body.
- Hold a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Be engaged in active service as defined by their professional scope of practice.
- Be actively and directly involved in patient care or public health practice in BC.
- Have a level of research training and/or experience appropriate for the proposed research.
 - Applicants will be required in the application process to describe their past and/or current research activities, and any research training (formal or experiential) they have undertaken. Applicants with no evidence of a research track record will be at a significant disadvantage in the award competition.
- Hold an appointment at, or have a commitment for an appointment from, a BC institution, allowing the individual to engage in independent research activities that conform to the institutional requirements for the conduct of research, to hold peer reviewed funding, and to publish their research results.
- Be based in BC and affiliated with a BC host institution³ that has a signed memorandum of understanding⁴ with MSFHR to administer the award funds for the duration of the HP-I award.

¹ A list of regulated health professions and their respective regulatory colleges can be found at www.bchealthregulators.ca/index.php/sample-page/about/who-are-regulated-health-professionals.

² Individuals must be board-certified or board-eligible.

³ The host institution is the institution where the research project is being conducted and that provides the majority of resources to support the project (e.g. infrastructure, human resources, administration, etc.). The selected host institution will be responsible for administering the award funds.

⁴ In order for host institutions to administer MSFHR awards, they must have a valid memorandum of understanding with MSFHR. A list of host institutions with valid memorandums of understanding can be found at www.msfhr.org/sites/default/files/MOU_List.pdf.



MSFHR reserves the right to declare applications ineligible.

6. Knowledge Translation

MSFHR requires all applicants to include knowledge translation (KT) activities in their research proposal. KT is defined as the broad range of activities meant to improve the use of health research evidence in practice, policy and further research.

KT-related activities must be embedded within the research proposal through, for example, research user⁵ engagement, research dissemination and/or research uptake activities. KT activities should be determined based on their appropriateness given the type of research, expected findings and target audience. Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage research users throughout the research process. For more information about KT and how to embed it within your research, [please see this helpful resource](#).

6.1 KT Science

Applicants may submit a program of research that is fully focused on KT science; these will be evaluated against set KT science evaluation criteria in addition to standard [HP-I Evaluation Criteria](#). KT science explores the theories, mechanisms, concepts and/or methods by which evidence is used in health care practice and policy.

7. Partnerships

MSFHR partners with other funders to build capacity and fill strategic gaps in health research in BC. By partnering on our competitions, MSFHR and our partners are able to increase the total number of applications funded by the HP-I Program. Partnered awards have the added benefit of offering researchers the opportunity to develop relationships with partners and their community of stakeholders. Details regarding potential partners will be available on our website in the coming weeks.

There are two ways for applicants to be considered for partnered awards:

⁵ Research users are the target audience(s) of research evidence. Research users are experts on their needs, environment and local context. Including research users as equal members of the research team will ideally result in more relevant research evidence and an increased likelihood of its use for the purpose of making informed decisions about health policies, programs and/or practices. Research users may include, but are not limited to: other researchers, policy makers, health care practitioners, decision makers, health care administrators, educators, patient user groups, health charities, and the public. [Adapted from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's "Guide to Knowledge Translation Planning at CIHR: Integrated and End-of-Grant Approaches" www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/45321.html. Accessed Aug 2017].



- Applicants interested in being considered for partnered awards are encouraged to email partners@msfhr.org to register your interest. Please indicate the partner(s) of interest and how your research aligns with their funding priorities.
- MSFHR uses keywords provided by partners to identify applications that may be relevant to and align with partners' areas of interest. Applicants are encouraged to review the list of partner keywords available on our website.

Applications that fulfill the funding criteria for both MSFHR and a partner organization are eligible for a partnered HP-I award. However, only those applications that receive an MSFHR peer review rating of 3.8 or above will be considered. Funding decisions on partnered awards are based on existing MSFHR policies, confirmed partnership support, and available funding. Financial contributions from MSFHR and its partners are subject to availability of funds and the annual budgetary approvals by both the MSFHR Board of Directors and the partnership organization beyond year one of the award.

8. Commitment from the Host Institution

The applicant's host institution must:

- Use MSFHR funds to support one or more of the following:
 - Salary and benefits of the award recipient
 - Protected time for a minimum of 0.5 FTE dedicated to the award recipient's health research activities, including buy-out time from administrative, teaching and clinical responsibilities. This represents no less than 20 hours per week.
 - Stipends and/or salaries of undergraduate and graduate students, residents, post-doctoral fellows, research assistants, research technicians and statisticians working directly with the award recipient on the proposed research. A description of the individual's role in the project and justification for their inclusion will be required.

The selection of the host institution is based on the institution where the research project is being conducted and that provides the majority of resources to support the project (e.g. infrastructure, human resources, administration, etc.). The selected host institution will be responsible for administering the award funds.

Note: Applicants should communicate with their chosen host institution to verify that they are the appropriate institution for award administration.



9. Reporting Requirements and Award Renewal

HP-I award recipients are required to complete annual progress reports and provide their up-to-date Canadian Common CV (CCV) to MSFHR on an annual basis. MSFHR will provide reporting information for these purposes before the anniversary of the award.

Near the end of the third year, award recipients will be invited to renew their award for an additional two years of support. Funding support for these additional two years is contingent upon a successful review of a renewal application. Information regarding the renewal process will be made available to award recipients approximately three months prior to the end of the third year of their award. Requirements for the renewal application may include, but are not limited to, a detailed research progress report for years 1-3, an updated CCV and research plan for years 4-5, a summary of future research directions beyond the period of MSFHR funding, and updates on research and professional activities, career goals and funding history.

Applications for renewal will be evaluated by an external review panel to ensure that award recipients have made sufficient progress in their research project and have met their stated research objectives. Upon approval of the application, the award recipient will be eligible for renewed funding for two additional years. An unsatisfactory evaluation may result in the denial of further funding. Annual reporting to MSFHR will continue to be required for the remainder of the award term.

A final report and financial statement of expenditures, signed by the award recipient and an authorized financial officer of the host institution, will be required within three months following the award end date. Any unexpended funds must be returned to MSFHR. MSFHR will provide reporting information and/or materials for these purposes.

MSFHR reserves the right to contact award recipients after the award end date to determine the short and middle-term outcomes and/or impacts of their HP-I award.

Additionally, to inform evaluation and continued improvement of our award programs, award recipients will be invited to provide feedback to MSFHR staff to determine areas of improvement for this funding opportunity.

10. Incentives and Top-Up Funding

Applicants who hold external salary awards at the time of application or at the award start date, or who apply and receive such an award during the period they hold an HP-I award, are eligible to

receive top-up or incentive funding. MSFHR considers a salary award to be external if the award meets all of the conditions below:

- Is external to BC
- Is granted through an open competition
- Is peer reviewed
- Is valued at more than 50 percent of the value of the MSFHR HP-I award

The top-up or incentive funding would be available for the duration of the HP-I award or to the end of the external award, whichever comes first.

Example (top-up): External salary award amount is \$60,000. MSFHR HP-I award amount is \$90,000. The external salary award amount is more than 50 percent of the HP-I award amount. MSFHR will pay the different (\$30,000) between the other salary award amount and the HP-I award amount so the total sum is \$90,000 per year.

Example (incentive): External salary award amount is \$100,000. MSFHR HP-I award amount is \$90,000. The external salary award amount is more than the HP-I award amount. MSFHR will provide an incentive award of \$15,000 per year.

11. Review Process

The HP-I competition consists of a two-stage review process: 1) the letter of intent (LOI) and 2) the full application.

11.1 Letter of Intent

The LOI will be adjudicated. The purpose of this stage is to ensure that the proposed research aligns with the purpose and objectives of the HP-I Program, and that applicants possess a level of research experience and expertise, as well as access to mentorship and educational resources, that will allow for successful completion of the proposed research project and future success beyond the time frame of this award.

LOIs will be initially screened for eligibility by MSFHR staff, and those that satisfy all eligibility criteria will undergo review by external reviewers. Only those applicants whose LOIs successfully pass review will be invited to submit a full application. Budgets are only required at the full application stage. Feedback from external reviewers will be forwarded along with the results of the LOI review.



Applicants will be informed of the results of the LOI stage no later than the end of November 2017. A full description of the LOI evaluation criteria can be found on our [website](#).

11.2 Full Application

Applications that satisfy all eligibility criteria will undergo review by an external review panel for funding recommendations.

Applications will be evaluated via a process that incorporates six principles of peer review: integrity, accountability, transparency, balance, confidentiality and impartiality. For further details, please visit www.msfhr.org/funding/review-process.

The information presented in the **Evaluation Criteria** and **Rating Scale** sections below will be used for the full application review process. All applications will be assessed against a defined set of criteria in three categories: 1) track record, 2) research proposal and 3) environment and support. The overall score for an application will be the sum of the scores for the three categories. To be considered for funding, the application must receive a minimum score of 3.8.

11.3 Evaluation Criteria

Full applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

| Criterion | Weighting |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Track record | 35% |
| Research proposal | 45% |
| Research environment and support | 20% |

A full description of the evaluation criteria can be found on our [website](#).

11.4 Rating Scale

| Descriptor | Range | Outcome |
|--------------------|-----------|---|
| Outstanding | 4.5 – 4.9 | May be funded (min. score of 3.8) |
| Excellent | 4.0 – 4.4 | |
| Very good | 3.5 – 3.9 | |
| Adequate | 3.0 – 3.4 | Not fundable |
| Less than adequate | 0 – 2.9 | |

11.5 Funding Decision

Following application review, the highest rated applications will be identified. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the review process after the review panel meetings and the subsequent approval of the results. There is no appeal process.

Applicants will receive notification of the funding decisions, as well as the reviewers' comments. A list of successful applicants will be published on MSFHR's website.

12. Award Start Date and Deferral

Award recipients are normally offered a start date of June 1, 2018. The start date may be delayed up to a maximum of 12 months. The start date must be on the first day of any month and be no later than June 1, 2019. **Deferred start dates, once confirmed by MSFHR, will not be revised.**

13. Key Competition Dates

| Action | Target date |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Competition launch | Early October 2017 |
| LOI deadline | November 3, 2017, 4:30 p.m. PT |
| Anticipated notice of LOI decision | Late November 2017 |
| Full application deadline | January 19, 2018, 4:30 p.m. PT |

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Anticipated notice of funding decision | Early May 2018 |
| Anticipated start of funding | June 1, 2018 |

14. How to Apply

The application process is composed of two mandatory stages: submission of a letter of intent (LOI) to apply, and the full application. Applications must be submitted online through MSFHR ApplyNet, MSFHR's online grant system.

1. LOI

- **Deadline date: November 3, 2017, 4:30 p.m. PST**
- Consists of the LOI Form in MSFHR ApplyNet, which includes:
 - A description of the proposed research to be undertaken
 - A description of how the applicant's combined professional and research expertise and experiences are relevant to, and allow for, the successful delivery of their proposed research project
 - A description of the applicant's research track record, including relevant training, activities and outputs, and any continuous education or mentorship to be undertaken during the award term
 - Canadian Common CV – MSFHR Abbreviated Version (last five years)
 - List of Publications, Patents and Property Rights, uploaded as an attachment to the CCV

The LOI phase will be used to ensure that eligible applicants with the highest potential for research success advance to the full application phase. The LOIs will be assessed by the review panel chair, scientific officer and a third reviewer, who are independent of MSFHR, against a standard set of criteria that take into account the applicant's interest, training and experience in research, and how these are related to the applicant's capacity to carry out a successful research project. **Only successful LOIs will advance to the full application stage.**

2. Full application

- **Deadline date: January 19, 2018, 4:30 p.m. PST**
- Consists of:

- Research proposal and associated appendices⁶
- Budget template
- Updated Canadian Common CV – MSFHR Abbreviated Version (last five years)
- List of Publications, Patents and Property Rights, uploaded as an attachment to the CCV
- Department Head (or Equivalent) Form in MSFHR ApplyNet
- Dean Approval Form in MSFHR ApplyNet (if applicable)
- Three letters of reference from each category below:
 - A previous or current supervisor, or equivalent, who can comment adequately on the applicant’s professional and research experience and achievements
 - An expert in the area proposed in the applicant’s research proposal
 - A mentor or collaborator from outside the host institution (within BC, national or international)
- Letters of collaboration⁷ (if applicable)

To complete your application, follow the instructions as stated in the 2018 Health Professional-Investigator Competition Instructions. Please ensure that applications are complete and submitted by MSFHR’s application deadline. Incomplete or late applications cannot be considered.

Note: Host institutions typically have their own internal deadlines that are earlier than that of MSFHR’s. Please check with the Office of Research Services or equivalent at your host institution for more information.

14.1 Submission Requirements

- All steps of the application must be submitted using [MSFHR ApplyNet](#), the Foundation’s online application submission system.
- All documents uploaded onto MSFHR ApplyNet must be in .pdf format. No other formats will be accepted.

⁶ References, charts, figures, tables and photographs only.

⁷ A collaborator is an individual who participates at some point in the overall program for research and may make a significant contribution to the intellectual direction of the research or research-related activity, and who may play a significant role in the conduct of the research or research-related activities.



- As an applicant, you will be able to access a .pdf copy of the full application to review the information you have entered.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to review the .pdf copy of the application prior to submission to ensure that all data entered are complete and accurate. Once an application is submitted, it cannot be modified in any way.

MSFHR reserves the right to declare applications ineligible based on the established criteria.

All applicants and referees applying for the first time to MSFHR will need to register on MSFHR ApplyNet and create a system account email and password. Additional information on MSFHR ApplyNet can be found in the [MSFHR ApplyNet FAQ](#) document.

15. Contact Information

For questions regarding the application and submission process, please contact:

Andrew Biagtan
Research Competitions Coordinator
604.714.6602
HPI@msfhr.org

For more information about the MSFHR ApplyNet system or help with login information, please contact:

MSFHR Help Desk
604.714.6609
helpdesk@msfhr.org



Appendix A – Eligible Expenses

HP-I awards provide partial salary contributions, inclusive of benefits, to the award recipient or designated individuals directly related to the conduct of the award recipient’s research activities. An HP-I award cannot be used as an operating grant.

Eligible Expenses

- Salary and/or benefits of the award recipient
- Stipends and/or salaries of students, post-doctoral fellows, research assistants, technicians or statisticians directly involved in the research activities of the award recipient
- Salary and/or benefits of personnel who provide teaching or clinical duty (patient care and/or treatment) relief to enable the award recipient to maintain protected time

Ineligible Expenses

- Costs related to travel
- Costs related to conference presentations, publications, or open-access fees
- General administrative and facility operating costs inherent in managing human resources, finances, supplies, laundry, etc. (normally funded by the host institution)
- Costs related to equipment, materials and supplies

All items not specified should be deemed as ineligible expenses unless prior approval from MSFHR is received. If the applicant can demonstrate the added value and make a case for an item identified as an ineligible expense, then MSFHR will evaluate the merit of the argument. **Such a case must be made before the expense is incurred.**