



2021 CONVENING & COLLABORATING (C²) COMPETITION

GUIDELINES

DEADLINE: JUNE 4, 2021, 4:30 P.M. PT

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Help with your Application

For questions regarding the C² Program, application and submission process, please contact:

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

MSFHR Help Desk
helpdesk@msfhr.org

1. Introduction

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.

Delivering for BC in a changing context

As BC's health research funding agency, MSFHR is committed to helping develop, support, and retain the province's research talent base. The COVID-19 pandemic has created rapid change and uncertainty within BC's health research community.

We reached out to stakeholders in BC's health research system to better understand current needs. We listened and we're introducing changes to eligible expenses, the term of the award, and the review process for the 2021 C² competition.

Knowledge translation (KT) is about using health research to improve health, and refers to the broad range of activities used to close the gap between research evidence and its use in practice, policy and further research. KT is an important element of all MSFHR funding programs. Our goal is to help BC health researchers develop the skills they need to increase the impact of their research. MSFHR offers KT-focused funding opportunities designed to foster collaboration and support the dissemination and implementation of research evidence through the Convening & Collaborating (C²) and Reach Programs.

For more information about KT and MSFHR's KT activities, please visit [MSFHR's KT page](#) or contact MSFHR's KT unit at KT@msfhr.org.



Purpose

The Convening & Collaborating (C²) Program is designed to bring together researchers¹ and research users² to co-develop research so as to increase the likelihood that the research findings will be relevant to users.

If the KT activity you are seeking funding for focuses on the dissemination of research evidence with research users (i.e. end of grant KT activities), you should apply to MSFHR's [Reach Program](#).

Objectives

The objectives of the C² Program are to:

- Support meaningful collaboration and knowledge sharing between health researchers and research users.
- Support the co-development of research questions and processes.
- Build KT capacity, experience and skills in BC's research and health professional trainees.

Projects might include, but are not limited to [developing a research agenda](#), [building a new partnership](#), or [evaluating a peer support initiative](#).

2. Key Competition Dates

Action	Target Date
Competition launch	Early April 2021
Application deadline (applicant)	June 4, 2021, 4:30 p.m. PT
Application deadline (host institution)	June 11, 2021, 4:30 p.m. PT
Anticipated notice of funding decision	September 2021
Anticipated start of funding	October 1, 2021

¹ A researcher is an individual who is eligible to hold research operating funds at the time of the award start date.

² 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. A research user may include, but is not limited to, other researchers, policy makers, health care practitioners, decision makers, health care administrators, educators, patient user group, or health charity, and the public. [Adapted from 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 March 2021].



3. Award Amount and Duration

The maximum amount for each C² award is **\$15,000**. Recognizing the challenges of planning activities concurrently with changing public health guidelines, MSFHR has extended the award duration to **18 months** for the 2021 competition (see eligibility requirements for additional details). A complete list and description of allowable expenses can be found in **Appendix A**.

Awards will be distributed across the Reach and C² Programs proportional to the number of applications received for each program. Over the past three years (2018 – 2020), MSFHR has awarded an average of 28 new Reach and C² awards in each competition, for an average success rate of 65 percent. Additional funds contributed by partners (see section 8) may increase the number of awards MSFHR is able to offer in a given competition.

4. Eligibility Requirements

Team

The team may be new or pre-existing and must include the following members:

1. Researcher co-lead³ who will act as the primary applicant. The researcher co-lead must be based in BC and affiliated with an eligible BC host institution.
2. Research user co-lead⁴ who will provide expertise on the needs, environment and local context of the target audience. Note: BC government employees who are directly in the employ of provincial ministries are not eligible to apply as a researcher or research user co-lead, but may be named as a team member. Employees of organizations funded directly by the BC government such as health authorities, school districts, etc. are eligible to serve as co-leads.
3. At least one research or health professional trainee. The research or health professional trainee must be based in BC, and may be an undergraduate or graduate student, post-doctoral or clinical fellow, or equivalent engaged in a formal training or education program.

All other personnel named in the application are designated as team members.

Applicants can only serve as the primary applicant on one application, but can be included in up to two applications total per competition.

If appropriate, the individual in the role of research/health professional trainee may also fulfill the role of research user co-lead.

³ See footnote 1.

⁴ See footnote 2.



Activities and Activity Timelines

1. Activities starting or taking place before the funding start date are not eligible for funding through this opportunity.
2. **Activities must be planned to occur within 12 months of the funding start date (October 1, 2021).** To reduce administrative burden on award recipients, should delays occur, funds may be spent up to 18 months after the start date without the need to request a no-cost extension. Recipients must request a no-cost extension if delays require funds to be spent more than 18 months after the start date.
3. Activities or events that are part of an annual series (e.g. workshop, public engagement event, etc.) may only be funded **once** through the C² Program, if eligible. Any collaborative events, or activities funded by a C² award are not eligible for additional MSFHR support (i.e. sponsorship).

MSFHR reserves the right to declare applications ineligible.

Additional Contributions

MSFHR encourages applicants, when appropriate, to engage other organizations and stakeholders to:

- Contribute to the co-development and implementation of research programs, projects, and/or activities between researchers and research users.
- Enhance the availability of funding for the proposed co-development of research programs, projects, and/or activities through additional cash or in-kind⁵ support.

Any additional in-kind or cash support should be indicated in the budget section of the application, and appropriately captured in a signed letter of support outlining the nature and amount of the contribution.

5. How to Apply

The application process for the MSFHR C² award is comprised of two steps:

1. Eligibility quiz to determine eligibility for the C⁵ Program
2. Online application:
 - **Deadline: June 4, 2021**
 - Includes:
 - Research user co-lead task
 - Department head sign-off task

⁵ Cash-equivalent goods or services that represent an incremental expense that the partner would not normally incur, and which would have to be purchased by award funds if not donated. This can include research and technical staff, providing direction and direct participation in the project, or the provision of access to specialized and/or proprietary equipment, tools or technology.



- Letter(s) of support⁶ (upload, if applicable)

To complete your application, sign in or create an [MSFHR ApplyNet](#) account and follow the instructions in the online application form. Ensure your application is complete and submitted by MSFHR's application deadline. Incomplete or late applications cannot be considered. Additional information on how to use the MSFHR ApplyNet online platform can be found [here](#).

Note: The primary applicant, i.e. the one who initiates and submits the full application, is designated as a researcher co-lead.

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

Applicants applying to MSFHR for the first time must register on [MSFHR ApplyNet](#) and create a system account email and password.

6. Review Process

C² award applications will be screened for eligibility by MSFHR staff. Eligible applications will be reviewed and funding recommendations will be provided by an external review panel consisting of researchers and knowledge translation specialists.

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 see this [overview of MSFHR's peer review process](#).

The information presented in the **Evaluation Criteria** and **Rating Scale** sections below will be used for the peer review process. All applications will be assessed against a defined set of criteria in the

⁶ A signed letter of support is required for partners secured by the applicant who provide cash or in-kind contributions in support of the collaborating and convening activities described in the application. Letters of support must include how the partner is involved in the proposed work, describe the potential benefits the partner may derive from participating in the proposed work and detail any cash or in-kind contributions.

following categories: 1) team quality and engagement, and 2) quality of the proposed work. To be **considered** for funding, the application must receive a minimum score of **3.5**.

MSFHR recognizes each BC region brings strengths to the provincial health research system and that there is variation in the infrastructure, resources, and supports available to health researchers at different institutions. MSFHR's commitment to rigorous peer review includes ensuring applications from across BC are reviewed fairly and equitably.

Evaluation Criteria

All applications are assessed against the criteria and weightings below. A full description of the evaluation criteria can be found on our [website](#). **It is highly recommended that applicants refer to the evaluation criteria when completing their applications.**

Criterion	Weighting
Team quality and engagement	50%
Quality of proposed work	50%

Rating Scale

Descriptor	Range	Outcome
Outstanding	4.5 – 4.9	May be funded
Excellent	4.0 – 4.4	
Very good	3.5 – 3.9	
Fair	3.0 – 3.4	Not fundable
Less than adequate	0 – 2.9	

Funding Decision

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

Applicants receive notification of the funding decisions and the reviewers' comments. A list of successful applicants is published on MSFHR's website.

Award Start Date

Funding for C² awards begin **October 1, 2021**. Successful applicants must confirm their acceptance of the award within the stipulated time indicated in the award notification package. Deferral of the award is not permitted.

7. Reporting Requirements

Award recipients are required to submit a final report **30 days** after the award end date. MSFHR will provide reporting information and/or materials for these purposes. The final report may include the following:

- Details on the main activities that were supported by the award.
- Description of the involvement of trainees and research users with your team.
- Activity-specific outcomes such as a grant application or post-activity working paper, media release, workshop materials, etc.
- Description of any expected or realized benefits to the BC health system and/or the health British Columbians as a result of activities funded by the award.

A financial statement of expenditures, signed by the award co-leads and an authorized financial officer of the host institution, is required within **three months** following the award end date. Any unspent funds must be returned to MSFHR.

MSFHR reserves the right to contact award recipients up to five years after the award end date to determine the outcomes and/or impacts of the C² award.

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

Note: MSFHR-funded award recipients may not submit a new application for any MSFHR funding program until all outstanding award information (e.g. final report, financial statement, etc.) requested by MSFHR has been received.



Appendix A – Eligible Expenses

Applicants must provide justification for the amount of funds being requested, including a breakdown of estimated costs for eligible expenses, within the budget section of the online application. Eligible costs must be incurred within the funding period. MSFHR will not support any expenses incurred prior to, or after completion of, the funding period. The majority of expenses must be incurred within BC.

This funding opportunity will support the following costs that are reasonably and properly incurred in the development and implementation of one or more convening and/or collaborating activities, programs or meetings.

Human Resources

Eligible Expenses

- Honoraria for guest speakers and/or key meeting participants, up to maximum value of C\$500 per individual.
- Fees for meeting facilitators/ knowledge brokers, or similar.
- Partial or full salary support for research users' participation as a team member or key meeting participant, including buy-out/release time from work.
- The Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (TCPS 2 – Chapter 9 Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada) recognizes the importance of respecting the cultures and traditions of Indigenous Peoples. To help enable culturally safe KT activities, eligible expenses may include (but are not limited to):
 - Costs related to Indigenous community mobilization and engagement, including culturally relevant promotional items such as, tobacco, cloth, feasting and gift giving for honoring ceremonies, and cash reimbursements (in a method acceptable to the individual or community being reimbursed) to compensate community participation.
 - Contracts and/or consultant fees for knowledge translation and communication activities for Indigenous Elders, community members, and Indigenous Knowledge Holders involved in activities related to the Indigenous community.
- Research/health professional trainees and staff may be paid to complete services *directly* related to and integral to the success of the proposed activities.

Non-Eligible Expenses

- Partial or full salary support for researchers including buy-out/release time from work, teaching, clinical or administrative duties.



Services and Supplies

Eligible Expenses

- Costs for the purchase or maintenance of equipment required to bring people together for the purposes of collaborating, networking and knowledge exchange (e.g. tablets, cell phones, etc.).
- Direct costs associated with bringing people together for the purposes of collaborating, networking and knowledge exchange, including planning, co-ordination, translation, and/or outreach activities (e.g. teleconference call, internet conferencing, etc.).
- Meeting rooms and associated meeting costs (e.g. audio-visual equipment fees, videoconference fees, registration services, etc.).
- Office costs including supplies, communications, stationery, photocopying, software and network or internet access directly related to the proposed work.
- Hospitality costs (non-alcoholic refreshments and/or meals).

Non-Eligible Expenses

- Costs associated with developing a new intervention or to pay the cost of interventions or their scale-up.
- Costs associated with pilot research studies or research operating funds (e.g. primary research or primary data collection including surveys).
- Other expenses already funded by another grant (MSFHR-funded or otherwise), e.g. publication costs, open access fees, etc.
- Purchase of alcohol.

Travel

Eligible Expenses

- Travel to attend collaborative trips and similar meetings integral to the activity, program or meeting(s) proposed in the C² application.
- Travel and accommodation for invited guests if integral to the activity, program or meeting(s) proposed in the C² application.
 - **Note:** Convening and collaboration activities should be planned in accordance with public health guidelines. As public health guidelines may change over the course of the pandemic, applicants are encouraged to develop mitigation and/or contingency plans with this in mind (e.g. consider a back-up plan to host a virtual meeting if travel is not possible.).
 - When travelling by air, individuals must obtain the most economical airfare which, in most cases, is economy class. First or business class air travel may only be authorized in specific circumstances where warranted (such as where the in-flight travel time



exceeds five hours), and if allowed by the host institution's financial policies and approved by MSFHR and the appropriate financial officer at the host institution.

Non-Eligible Expenses

- Travel for candidates under recruitment consideration, or for relocation purposes.
- Travel to attend conferences, workshops, symposia, congresses, etc. not directly related to the activity, program or meeting(s) proposed in the C² application.
- Reimbursement for airfare purchased with personal frequent flyer points.
- Reimbursement for costs resulting from a stopover requested for reasons unrelated to the primary purpose of travel.

All items not specified should be deemed as non-eligible 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.**



Appendix B – Frequently Asked Questions

General Program Questions

1. What is the difference between the MSFHR Convening & Collaborating (C²) and Reach awards?

Although the C² and Reach Programs both fund knowledge translation (KT) activities related to health research, each program supports distinct KT activities at different points in the research process:



The C² Program is designed to bring researchers and research users together to co-develop research; for the purpose of this award, this is defined as KT activities that occur earlier in or throughout the research process, i.e. integrated KT, rather than at the end of the research process.

In contrast, the Reach Program is designed to support the dissemination of research outputs within the context of an established body of knowledge; for the purpose of this award, this is defined as KT activities that occur near the end of the research process, i.e. end-of-grant KT.

Applicants should take the time to consider which funding opportunity is most relevant to their proposed activity, event or tool. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the content of their C² or Reach application aligns with the objectives of that program.

2. What is research evidence?

Research evidence involves the explicit documentation of methods, peer review and external scrutiny that helps provide a means to judge the trustworthiness of findings, and offers the potential to assess the validity of one claim compared to another. For example, this may include research articles, case studies, systematic reviews, meta-analysis, etc.



3. What does “uptake” of research evidence mean?

Research uptake refers to the processes through which a diverse set of audiences, including policy-makers, practitioners and other researchers, use research evidence to inform practice or decision-making. Research uptake is most likely to occur when there is communication and dialogue between researchers and research users to ensure the research conducted produces evidence that is both relevant and useful to the research users.

Team Composition and Eligibility Questions

4. Who must be included on a team?

All applications must include, at a minimum:

- A researcher co-lead, who initiates and submits the application in MSFHR ApplyNet.
- A research user co-lead, who completes a research user co-lead form in MSFHR ApplyNet.
- A research or health professional trainee included in the project in a meaningful way.

Teams may include more members according to the needs of the proposed research project.

5. Who is eligible to apply as a researcher co-lead?

The researcher co-lead is the primary applicant, i.e. the one who launches and submits the application. This must be an individual that holds an appointment at an eligible host institution⁷.

For the purposes of this award, the researcher co-lead must be an independent investigator eligible to hold research operating funds at the time of the award start date, according to their host institution's guidelines.

6. Who qualifies as a research user?

For the purposes of this award, a researcher user is a member of the target audience of research evidence. A research user is any individual who might use, benefit, or be impacted by the results of research, but are not necessarily involved in their production. These include, but are not limited to health professionals, patients, family members, community leaders, health charities, policy makers, decision makers, other researchers, etc.

Each team must include at least one research user designated as the research user co-lead on the application. Applicants may include additional research users as team members.

⁷ For a list of current eligible institutions, see www.msfhr.org/sites/default/files/MOU_List.pdf.



7. Who qualifies as a research/health professional trainee?

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, a trainee is defined as any individual involved in formal research or clinical training that is under the supervision of an independent investigator. These typically include, but are not limited to, undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and clinical fellows. At least one BC-based trainee must be included as a team member in the application.

MSFHR is aware trainee appointments can differ in name and requirements depending on the institution.

8. What are MSFHR's expectations of a trainee being included in a "meaningful" way?

The co-leads should actively engage the trainee in the proposed activities in a way that builds KT capacity.

Depending on the program (C² or Reach), some examples of meaningful KT involvement for trainees may include:

- Engaging them to develop innovative means of collaborating with end-users throughout the research process, or engaging with the audience of a dissemination event.
- Mentoring them to develop the stakeholder engagement plan, or to engage and develop relationships with champions/key opinion leaders.
- Providing the opportunity to craft the message and assemble the information for an event or the final report to MSFHR.

9. Can the trainee also qualify as the research user co-lead member of the team?

Yes, if appropriate, provided the individual meets the eligibility requirements for both.

10. Can a student, trainee, or research associate apply for the award?

Please check with your research services office. Primary applicants must be able to hold operating funds as an independent investigator.

If you are unable to apply as a primary applicant, we encourage you to approach your supervisor (if they are eligible to apply) to co-develop an application.

11. Individuals employed within BC government ministries and departments are not eligible to apply as a co-lead. What does this mean?

Due to the nature of the source of our research program funding, we cannot allow funds to be awarded to individuals who work **directly** within the BC government. This includes those who are employed within BC government ministries or departments. This does not apply to



individuals who are employed by organizations or institutions who receive provincial government funding, e.g. health authorities, school boards, non-profit agencies, etc. If you, or someone on your proposed application are unsure of their status as a BC government employee, please contact MSFHR Help Desk (helpdesk@msfhr.org) for more information.

Application Questions

12. Will MSFHR tell me the score of my application?

After peer review, MSFHR's standard practice is to provide applicants with a quartile ranking of their application for the competition, as well as the reviewers' comments. The final score is not shared.

13. How many applications can I submit?

Applicants who are eligible may submit one Reach and one C² application in one year, provided the proposed activities are sufficiently different.

Applicants can be included in up to two applications in total per competition (i.e. as researcher co-lead on one application and a researcher team member on another application).

14. If I received a Reach or C² award in the past, can I apply for one again for the same activity?

Activities or events that are part of an annual series (e.g. annual conference, seminar series, etc.) may only be funded once through either program, if eligible.

15. I am applying to the Reach award to support my dissemination event. Can I also request sponsorship support from MSFHR?

No. Events funded by the Reach award are not eligible for MSFHR sponsorship.

16. Where can I find information on or examples of KT?

The KT section of MSFHR's website contains a [link for KT resources](#) that can assist both researchers and research users in their exploration of KT methods, including methods of KT evaluation.

17. What is an integrated knowledge (iKT) translation plan?

iKT refers to collaboration between research users and researchers as equal partners, the purpose of which is to generate research findings that are more relevant, and thus more likely to be useful to research users. Each stage in the research process is an opportunity for significant collaboration with research users, including the development of research questions and methodology, interpretation of findings and dissemination and potentially implementation of



findings. As such, it is not a separate stand-alone plan from the research project but a series of embedded activities.

18. Is an integrated KT (iKT) plan an eligible topic for a C² or Reach award application?

Both the C² and Reach awards can be used in the context of an iKT plan as they involve collaboration with research users. The C² award may take place at the beginning of iKT projects as researchers seek to begin engagements with research users. The Reach award may be used at the conclusion of a project as researchers work with research users to plan for and create a dissemination event, tool or activity.

19. When do the activities funded by the C² or Reach award need to occur?

Activities must be planned to occur within 12 months of the funding start date (October 1, 2021). To reduce administrative burden on award recipients, should delays occur, funds may be spent up to 18 months after the start date without the need to request a no-cost extension. Recipients must request a no-cost extension if delays require funds to be spent more than 18 months after the start date.

20. Can dissemination events or activities funded by the C² and Reach award be held outside of British Columbia?

Outputs supported by this funding opportunity must be based within British Columbia.

21. Can expenses for the activities take place outside of BC?

The majority of expenses must be incurred within BC.

22. Is providing salary support/buy-out time for the researcher co-lead an eligible expense?

No.

23. Can trainees or other research staff be hired to coordinate award-related activities?

Research/health professional trainees and staff may be paid to complete services *directly* related to and integral to the success of the proposed activities.



Award Administration Questions

24. Can I renew my award?

No. The award is not renewable.

25. Can I defer the start date of the C² or Reach award?

No. The award is not deferrable.

26. How much time do I have to respond to an offer of the C² or Reach award?

Successful award recipients will have to accept or decline the offer of funding within the date stipulated on the award notification letter.

27. What documents will I need to provide before I can start my award?

A copy of the *Award Acceptance Form* signed by you, your research user co-lead, and an authorized finance personnel from the host institution must be uploaded in .pdf format to MSFHR ApplyNet.

