

University Delegates Meeting
April 1st, 2021 – 12:30 – 1:30pm EDT
Meeting Minutes

Chair: Allison Jackson, Director General, Operations Support

1. Spring 2021 Project Registration Data

UD members were reminded that caution should be applied when analyzing registration data, as it is not final. It was also noted that this is the first competition in which the first cohort of Foundation Grant holders has been eligible to re-enter, and that this needed to be taken into consideration when analyzing registration data. Additional considerations when reviewing registration data include:

- There is attrition between registration and submission stages. In Project competitions since 2018, an average of 17.3% [15.3% - 21.7%] of registrants do not submit applications to the competition.
- Some of the data is an approximation. For example, placeholder amounts are inputted into the budget field (e.g. the smallest budget in this group of registrants is \$10).

Updated information will be shared with UD members when application data is available, including data on attrition and variability.

Members discussed several aspects of CIHR's approach to handling large grants, including the cut off, bridge grants, and impacts of the current Spring Project competition. CIHR is in the process of finalizing web content that will focus on large grants and will share the information with the UD members when available. CIHR will continue to monitor the large budget envelop in the current and future competitions.

CIHR is working with Chairs and Scientific Officers to provide reviewers the necessary guidance required to adjudicate Project Grant applications, responses to previous reviewers and other elements outlined in the summary of progress to ensure uniformity across the review process.

2. COVID-19 Funding

CIHR understands that there is a need for more information about COVID-19 funding mechanisms. It is important to note that COVID-19 competitions have not and **will not** be funded using the Project Grant competition budget. Rather, early in the pandemic, CIHR used our "emerging health threats fund" and the remainder of the funding has since been provided by the Government of Canada specifically to fund COVID-19 research projects.

Operating Grant: Emerging COVID-19 Research Gaps and Priorities

The Operating Grant: Emerging COVID-19 Research Gaps and Priorities funding opportunity was launched on March 3 and the application deadline is April 15. By design, the application deadline is scheduled two weeks after the Spring 2021 Project Grant competition application deadline to balance the urgent nature of this competition with ensuring applicants interested in applying to both competitions (with different applications) will have sufficient time to do so. There were 313 Letters of Intent (LOIs) submitted based on the following breakdown:

- Variants - 51
- Vaccines - 37
- Confidence in Science - 60
- Post COVID - 126
- Testing Models - 24
- Long Term Care - 15

CIHR is not funding any longer term (over 3 years) COVID-related Project Grant applications. We focused on identifying projects that showed promise to address our most urgent needs, were not streamlined, had a final score above 3.5, and

had a committee recommended term of 3 years and under. CIHR intends to deliver additional rapid response COVID-19 competitions focusing on research gaps and priority areas as determined through a consultation/prioritization process with Scientific Directors, and policy and decision-makers. This is a rapid response and grants will be 1 year in length. Depending on how the pandemic evolves, CIHR may consider adding a COVID-19 Priority Announcement/pool of funding in the Project Grant competition. The 1-year term for COVID-19 research acknowledges that rapid results and evidence is critical to help mitigate and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Update on the Tri-Agency Grants Management Solution (TGMS)

TGMS is a collaborative initiative between the three federal granting agencies. They have embarked on this initiative to modernize their grants management system to better support applicants, administrators and reviewers during the grants management lifecycle. TGMS is continuing to advance the work to find a grants management solution that will better support applicants, reviewers and research administrators.

Proofs of concept

A select number of internal and external users assessed the proofs of concept from a pre-selected list of potential providers to assess whether these out of the box grants management solutions would meet TGMS business needs. The assessment found that these solutions were viable, and that multiple vendors demonstrated solutions that would provide the desired benefits such as increased effectiveness, interoperability, accessibility and flexibility. Based on results of a poll shared with UD members during the meeting, CIHR will work with the TGMS team to schedule proof of concept demonstrations.

The proof of concept demonstration sessions aim to build awareness around the TGMS initiative, to demonstrate select TGMS business capabilities from potential providers and to collect high-level feedback from participants. It is important to note that if you wish to participate in a proof of concept demonstration session, you will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) due to the procurement process.

What's next?

TGMS is following a competitive process to select the new solution and a vendor for implementation. We are aiming to submit and receive the required authorities from the federal government to move forward with this procurement in fall 2021. The issuing of the Request for Proposals (RFP) and the evaluation of the bidders' proposals are scheduled to be conducted in winter 2022 and spring 2022, respectively.

Thank you for your engagement!

In the fall of 2020, the TGMS team conducted change readiness workshops (135 participants) and a survey (688 respondents) with the research community to better understand how prepared the research community is to embrace and support the change TGMS will bring. From the insights and survey results, we discovered five themes, which will inform the planning, development and implementation of the change management strategy for the TGMS initiative and project. The main themes are communication, user engagement in the development cycle, training, support, and monitoring.

The Bio-profile (CV) ideation workshops:

The workshops began in December 2020 and will continue into the spring of 2021. These workshops are being conducted to better understand the specific pain points of the current CV management process, data, and tools to ensure an improved grants management experience and to develop a set of prioritized data needs for the development of prototypes to help inform the selection of a new solution.

More information about TGMS and the External Advisory Board (EAB) can be found on the [TGMS webpage](#).

4. CIHR UPDATES

CIHR welcomes two new UDEC members

The University Delegates Executive Committee (UDEC) nomination process closed with a tie between two members. After discussion with the UDEC, we are happy to have welcomed two new members to the UDEC, Dr. Liisa Galea from the University of British Columbia and Dr. Tania Watts from the University of Toronto. We thank all of the University Delegates for participating in this important process.

5. Funding Opportunities

A list of current and released funding opportunities can be found at the end of the meeting slide deck (Appendix A: Funding Opportunities). CIHR confirmed that there is no information currently available regarding the Collaborative Health Research Projects (CHRP). An update will be provided to the UD Network as soon as more information is available.

The Notices of Decision for the Fellowship Competition are expected to be released at the end of May.

6. Adjournment

The April 1st, 2021 University Delegates meeting concluded at 1:30pm EDT. The Chair thanked the network for their participation. The next University Delegates meeting will take place on May 6, 2021.