

University Delegates (UD) Meeting Minutes August 5th, 2021

Chair: Adrian Mota – Associate Vice-President, Research Programs (Operations)

1. CIHR Updates

Scientific Director Recruitment

CIHR has started the search for the next Scientific Director of the Institute of Cancer Research. The job search will be open until September 30. Please consult the [job poster](#) for additional information on the position. CIHR would appreciate the UD network's help in spreading the word.

CIHR Vice-President of Research Program Recruitment

CIHR has begun [recruiting for a Vice-President \(VP\) of Research Programs](#), a role that oversees the development, implementation, management, and continuous improvement of CIHR's funding competitions and related functions. The decision has been made to divide [Dr. Tammy Clifford's](#) role of VP of Research Programs into two distinct roles. Tammy will transition to the role of Vice-President Research (VP) - Learning Health Systems, which will ensure that CIHR's broad spectrum of knowledge mobilization initiatives fulfill our mandate in this area, as expressed in the *CIHR Act*, including embracing the vital importance of using data and research evidence to improve patient care.

UD members were informed that CIHR is aware of the discrepancies in the current job posting (salary and closing date for applications) and will be making the required changes.

Ask Me Anything Sessions

CIHR held four "Ask Me Anything" webinars related to the Fall 2021 Project Grant competition in July hosted by Adrian Mota, Associate Vice-President of Research Programs. The AMA sessions focused on the following primary themes:

- Competition timelines;
- Changes (extension to the Authority-to-Use-Funds date, extension to Early Career Researcher (ECR) status, Tri-Agency Interdisciplinary Peer Review Committee);
- Application requirements (Summary of Progress, Applicant Profile CV, response to previous reviews);
- Funding (the across-the-board cut and Priority Announcements) and;
- Peer review (remote peer review, the Reviewer-in-Training program, and the quality of reviews).

The meeting summary will be published on [CIHR's webinar page](#) in both official languages shortly. If you have any questions, comments or feedback in response to our AMA sessions, please send them to the [University Delegates](#) mailbox.

2. Tri-Agency Interdisciplinary Review Committee

The Tri-Agencies have collaborated to launch a one-year pilot of a Tri-Agency Interdisciplinary Peer Review Committee. The new committee is part of the tri-agency response to recommendations made in the [Fundamental Science Review](#). It serves as a mechanism to review and support interdisciplinary research by establishing a committee with expertise from across the social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, engineering, and health sciences.

Guidelines

Applications considered relevant for review by this committee must pertain to two or more research across disciplines and subject areas such as the social sciences and humanities, natural sciences and engineering, and health and wellness, and must clearly articulate interdisciplinary approaches.

Applicants should submit their application to the funding opportunity at the agency that supports the research project's dominant research discipline or area. Applications are competing only against applications submitted to the same agency. Applicants (or applicant teams) cannot submit an identical project to more than one agency.

Applications to CIHR

Applicants aligning to CIHR (i.e., with health-focused applications) should apply to the Project Grant competition and follow the same timelines and the same application process with ResearchNet. Applicants must indicate the new interdisciplinary committee as their first suggested committee at registration (TIR).

For further information on the Tri-Agency Interdisciplinary Peer Review Committee criteria, please consult [CIHR's webpage](#).

3. Funding Opportunities

3.1 Fall 2021 Project Grant Competition

The Project Grant competition is set to return to its regular, pre-pandemic schedule for the Fall 2021 competition.

CIHR is aware of the recommendations made to push the Fall 2021 Project Grant competition timelines. CIHR is committed to reviewing these recommendations further and will provide a response to the UD Network at a later date. It should be noted that because of CIHR's practice of running two non-overlapping Project competitions per year, pushing competition timelines may result in further inconveniences, i.e., reviewing over Christmas/New Year's.

Timeline

- Registration Deadline: August 18, 2021
- Application Deadline: September 15, 2021
- Peer Review Committee Meetings: November 16 – December 16, 2021
- Release of Notice of Recommendation (NOR): January 19, 2022
- Anticipated Notice of Decision (NOD): February 2, 2022
- Funding Start Date: April 1, 2022

Peer Review

Peer review meetings for the Fall 2021 Project Grant competition will occur virtually in November and December 2021. Decisions on the future of peer review will be informed through engagement with the community and analysis of feedback received. This includes feedback collected from applicants, peer review committee members and the [community survey](#).

A call for [expressions of interest](#) for the Fall 2021 Reviewer in Training program is now open on the CIHR website for interested parties. The deadline for submissions is August 20, 2021

3.2 Spring 2021 Project Grant Competition

Results of the Reviewer-in-Training Program

While CIHR understands that the program is oversubscribed, the results received through a survey sent to participants was positive:

- 403 Applications
- 122 Participants
- 30% success rate
- 97% recommend program to their peers

Results of Foundation Grant Holders

Interest was shown in understanding the overall results of the Foundation Grant holders who applied to the Spring 2021 Project Grant competition. CIHR committed to providing the Network with an analysis of these results at a later date.

Quality of Reviews

Assuring the quality of reviews remains a priority for CIHR. The [Review Quality Assurance \(RQA\)](#) process measures and monitors reviewers' participation and performance in peer review. The process is designed to encourage and support high quality reviews as well as recognize good performance by reviewers.

The [CIHR Standards of Practice for Peer Review \(SPPR\)](#) were created to promote transparency and support review quality excellence by clearly outlining peer reviewer responsibilities.

CIHR staff, Chairs and Scientific Officers will use the [Reviewer Quality Feedback Form](#) to provide information on the performance of reviewers throughout the peer review process and highlight reviewers that are outstanding or need support. CIHR encouraged the Network to provide CIHR with low quality reviews when they are received so that they could be assessed and investigated as appropriate.

Equalization

It is important to reiterate that no one was overlooked in terms of equalization. For the Spring 2021 Project Grant competition, CIHR equalized for ECRs and French language applications. It was not necessary to equalize for female applicants in this competition. Recognizing it can be challenging to understand how CIHR performs the equalization process, CIHR has committed to providing more information at a future UD meeting.

Appendix A: Strategic Funding Opportunities

A list of strategic funding opportunities can be found at the end of the slide deck.

Appendix B: Funding Opportunities

A list of current and released funding opportunities can be found at the end of the slide deck.

4. Future Priorities for Patient-Oriented Research

The Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR) team joined the meeting to inform the Network about their upcoming online discussion that will focus on identifying future priorities for patient-oriented research over the next 5 years. The focus of SPOR is to support the implementation of research at the front line with patients to improve patient outcomes.

There are two parts to this consultation:

Step 1: Short survey to identify research priorities over the next 5 years. This survey will only take about 15 minutes to complete.

Step 2: Online forum on common research priorities based on survey results.

CIHR asks that the Network please share the [survey link](#) with stakeholders within their respective institutions.

5. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 1:25pm. The Chair thanked the Network for their participation. The next meeting of the University Delegates will be deferred by one week. The next meeting will take place on September 9th, 2021.