

University Delegates (UD) Meeting Minutes July 8th, 2021

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

1. CIHR UPDATES

Membership Survey

A summary of feedback obtained through the UD membership survey was provided. The purpose of this survey was to seek feedback from University Delegates' Network members to ensure the effective engagement and ongoing dialogue between CIHR and UD members. One area that members provided feedback on was how they share information with their colleagues/institutions. Examples provided include sharing the meeting materials with the Vice-President of Research (VPR), who then shares the information with the wider community; sharing personal key meeting notes with research administrators and the research community; forwarding CIHR's meeting materials across the faculty(ies); sharing the meeting materials as part of the university's newsletter, which is disseminated across the institution; and the distribution of CIHR's Access newsletter.

The UD Support team will continue modifying the approach of the monthly meetings based on suggestions received to facilitate active participation, continued engaging discussions, and the timely dissemination of materials.

Research Proposal Page Limit Increase for French-Language Applications

CIHR supports official languages, and has undertaken activities to ensure equitable access to CIHR programs and funding. CIHR has now implemented an approach to increase the allowable length of all Research Proposal or equivalent attachments for French-language applications by 20% across all CIHR funding programs. The following attachment types are considered eligible for the increased page limit:

- Research Proposal
- Personal Leadership Statement
- Training Expectations
- 5-year Research Plan
- Research Project Summary

An internal validation process of the page limits will take place to ensure compliance. CIHR may reformat and remove any pages that exceed the stated limit of the funding opportunity instructions, with no further notification to the Nominated Principal Applicant (NPA). All applicants are encouraged to submit their funding applications in the official language of their choice. These changes align with principles outlined in [CIHR's Official Language Action Plan](#) and in the [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Action Plan](#), and help meet the goals linked to the application of Sex- and Gender-Based Analysis (SGBA+) and the embedding of EDI principles and practices throughout agency policies and programs. For any questions, please contact support-soutien@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

Extension to the Authority to Use Funds

CIHR is providing an extension to the authority-to-use funds date for any active grant at the request of a researcher. These requests will be assessed on a **case-by-case basis**, and will give researchers additional

time to use any residual funds to compensate for disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A request for an extension can be submitted to the CIHR Contact Centre at support-soutien@cihr-irsc.gc.ca with a short justification to support their request.

While CIHR does recommend that applicants work through their respective institutions, the extension to the authority-to-use funds can come directly from the grantee and does not need to go through the Research Granting Officers (RGOs).

2. Spring 2021 Project Grant Competition

The Spring 2021 Project Grant competition is progressing as anticipated and the peer review committee meetings took place throughout the month of June. In total, 61 peer review committee meetings were successfully delivered between June 1st and 30th, 2021 with 2,381 Project Grant applications reviewed and 1,523 committee members. 122 committee members were Early Career Researchers who were part of the new [Reviewer in Training](#) (RiT) Program.

The Notice of Recommendations (NORs) and the Notice of Decisions (NODs) are on track to come out on July 15 and July 22, respectively.

3. Fall 2021 Project Grant Competition

As signaled in [Adrian Mota's message to the community](#), peer review committee meetings for the Fall 2021 Project Grant competition will continue to be conducted virtually using MS Teams. CIHR has heard from the community that face-to-face and virtual meetings both have their strengths and weaknesses. The decision to continue with virtual peer-review directly aligns with Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, yet it is important to reiterate that this virtual approach is not permanent. CIHR is surveying all those who participated in the Spring 2021 competition for their thoughts, and will also be surveying the wider community. When the results become available, they will be provided to the Network and CIHR will have an open discussion. The Fall competition is on track to launch on July 20th. The deadline for registration will be August 18th with an application deadline of September 15th.

Extension to Early Career Researcher (ECR) status

CIHR is extending the pause for all ECRs for one additional year; that is, the ECR term will be extended to 0-84 months from 0-72 months unless an individual submits a request to opt out of the pause. Any ECRs who wish to opt out can register their choice to do so by submitting a request to the CIHR Contact Centre (support-soutien@cihr-irsc.gc.ca) at the time of application.

CIHR is working to ensure that those who were impacted by COVID-19 are considered and are accounted for. Equalization across applications for the Project Grant competition, specific to groups such as ECRs, female Nominated Principle Investigators and applications submitted in French will continue to be monitored by CIHR during the application process. CIHR is committed to considering all EDI-related opportunities, and will continue to work on ensuring processes are equitable.

Across-The-Board Cut

While CIHR remains committed to removing the across-the-board cut, we recognize that removing the cut has important implications to our competitions and will require time for the community to adapt. The decision was made to delay implementing this change, to ensure that peer review committee members have the information they need to properly assess budget requests, and that applicants become

comfortable using the Summary of Progress to clearly contextualize their budget requests. This remains a priority for CIHR and additional information will be provided to the UD Network, as it becomes available.

Ask Me Anything sessions

CIHR has started planning for the next Ask Me Anything sessions focused on the Fall 2021 Project Grant competition. These sessions will be taking place the weeks of July 19th and July 26th in both French and English. Further information on times and connection details will be available on [CIHR's webinar page](#).

Interruption in In-person Research

Members of the UD Network shared concerns regarding the interruptions to in-person research that has occurred in many institutions across Canada due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While face-to-face research has been suspended, there continues to be a need to pay trainees despite the fact that budgets, including supplemental funds, have been exhausted. This remains a significant burden for grantees.

While recognizing that additional funding would be welcomed, CIHR explained that it is not anticipated that supplemental funding will be received from the Federal Government, particularly following the recent federal budget announcements. CIHR is committed to monitoring the impacts of the pandemic on the research community and to continue the discussions on pandemic recovery efforts.

Tri-Agency Interdisciplinary Peer Review Committee

The Tri-Agency is committed to supporting interdisciplinary investigator-initiated research projects. The Tri-Agency Interdisciplinary Peer Review Committee will be treated as a panel within CIHR. To apply to the interdisciplinary committee, researchers will be required to submit a Project Grant application and justify why they would like their application to go to this specific committee. Moreover, CIHR will assess whether or not the application is well suited to the interdisciplinary committee, and if not, it will be transferred to a different panel.

Further information on the [Tri-Agency Interdisciplinary Peer Review Committee](#) will be provided at a later date.

4. Appendix A: Strategic Funding Opportunities

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

5. Appendix B: Funding Opportunities

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

6. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 1:30pm ET. The Chair thanked the network for their participation. The next meeting of the University Delegates will take place on August 5th, 2021.