

**University Delegates WebEx Meeting**  
**June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 - 12:30-1:30 pm EDT**  
**Minutes**

Chair: Adrian Mota, Associate Vice President, Research Programs

## **1. CIHR Updates**

### **Catalyst Grant: Health Effects of Vaping**

- In January 2020, CIHR and its Institutes of Cancer Research (ICR); Circulatory and Respiratory Health (ICRH); Human Development, Child and Youth Health (IHDCYH); and Neurosciences, Mental Health, and Addiction (INMHA), in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society, launched the Health Effects of Vaping Catalyst Grant funding opportunity to support research to address urgent knowledge gaps related to the health effects of vaping in youth and adults.
- This funding opportunity will advance understanding of the health consequences of vaping, vaping behaviours, mental health and addiction health impacts, and will expand and strengthen the overall knowledge base related to vaping in Canada.
- Although originally subject to a three-month pause on strategic initiatives and funding opportunities to allow CIHR to focus on supporting the Government of Canada's rapid research response to COVID-19, this competition is now active. This is the only strategic competition that CIHR is delivering at this time, other than COVID-19 related competitions. This FO was identified as a priority competition because vaping is an emerging health issue funded through CIHR's Emerging Health Threats Research Fund. Additionally, due to the impact of COVID-19 infections on lung health, evidence is needed to understand whether vaping may be linked to more frequent and severe adverse outcomes for patients experiencing COVID-19 infections.
- 100 registrations have been submitted to date and the application deadline is June 10, 2020.
- Funding decisions are anticipated to be released in mid-July 2020 (July 14).

### **COVID-19 May 2020 Rapid Research FO**

- CIHR issued a clarification to confirm the intent for applicants to address the collective objective bullets after a number of questions from applicants were received regarding eligibility and the relevance review process. We understand the timing of the clarification was not ideal and not well received. CIHR later pulled back the clarification and extended the application deadline by an additional day.
- Approximately 1,500 applications were received.
- CIHR has had to make some adjustments to the competition timeline due to the large number of applications received and more time being required for application processing, ability to review, peer reviewer assignments, etc. With that in mind, the notice of decision (NOD) date was pushed out to June 12, 2020.
- 1,114 peer reviewers have been recruited, and approximately 920 have been assigned to review.
- Four reviewers were assigned to each application.
- 99% of the applications have a declared expertise of high or medium.
- CIHR appreciates the response and continued dedication from the peer review community for the positive response to support the successful delivery of this competition.

### **Spring 2020 Project Grant Competition**

- Over the last several months, CIHR has been at the centre of delivering the research component of the Government of Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Now that CIHR has a clearer understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the community, CIHR employees, partners and stakeholders, CIHR has decided to move forward with adjudication of the applications received for the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition during the summer.
- CIHR anticipates that the peer review process will be delivered with videoconference panels from late July through August. While in-person peer review remains CIHR's standard, it is not a viable option for this competition. More details will be provided as the exact dates for virtual review meetings are determined.
- CIHR had planned to invest \$275M in this competition and, as with all competitions, this investment would have been made over multiple fiscal years. CIHR will use a small portion of these funds (approximately \$31M) to continue to support the funding extensions offered as a support due to the impacts of COVID-19 and the remaining amount will go towards funding applications that were submitted in the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition that will now be adjudicated in the summer.
- CIHR's emergency funding for COVID-19 research was not taken from the Project Grant funding envelope. It is specifically a component of the Government of Canada response to this crisis
- The timelines for the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition will be adjusted to allow for sufficient time to deliver the Spring 2020 competition and to ensure there is no overlap between competitions, so that applications not funded through the Spring 2020 competition can be submitted in the Fall 2020 competition.
- The preliminary dates for the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition were provided. The registration deadline is anticipated to be in mid-September, and the application deadline is anticipated to be in mid-October.
- CIHR is working to re-introduce the notice of recommendation (NOR) for the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition. The NOR allows applicants to view their score, their rankings and notes provided from the Scientific Officer (SO) and the reviewers. From this information, 95% of applicants will be able to determine if their application will be funded. The NOR will also provide applicants two weeks to determine if they will register for the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition.
- The timelines of the Project Grant competitions are anticipated to return to normal for the Fall 2021 Project Grant competition or the Spring 2022 Project Grant competition.

### **Trainee Funding to CIHR grantees**

- On April 22, the Government of Canada committed \$291.6M to support students, postdoctoral researchers and research support personnel impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, through the federal tri-agencies. Part of this investment will be used to support trainees paid directly through scholarships and fellowships, and the other part will go towards trainees and research support personnel supported indirectly through grants awarded to their supervisors.
- The tri-agencies shared more information with the research community on Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup> about direct supports for scholarship or fellowship holders (through CGS-M, CGS-D, Vanier, Banting, and agency-specific programs). For eligible students and postdoctoral researchers whose research scholarship and fellowship ends between March and August 2020, support will be extended for an additional four (4) months and be fully funded.
- This represents an investment of up to \$40M.
- Award holders will be contacted in the coming weeks by their respective agency. Award holders will need to attest that their research was disrupted by COVID-19 constraints and that they are not benefiting from compensation under the Canada Emergency Student Benefit or the Canada Emergency Response Benefit or other income supports related to COVID-19.
- For more details on the supports for trainees paid indirectly through grants, please consult the CIHR website: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51992.html> ([en français](#)).

### *Questions from members:*

- I am concerned that there will be no discussion/consensus and only independent reviews during the peer review meetings for the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition.
  - CIHR explained that the review process will mimic that of a face to face meeting, only it will have full committee meetings online.

- I was advised that reviewers from the May COVID-19 competition were able to see the reviews from other reviewers, but were not able to see the scores.
  - CIHR is currently analyzing options to provide other reviewers with the scores of the applications. CIHR confirmed that the model used for the COVID-19 May competition will not be used from the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition reviews.
- What is the anticipated success rate and cut off for the COVID-19 May Rapid Research funding opportunity?
  - CIHR explained that the success rate for the COVID-19 May Rapid Research funding opportunity would likely be lower than the success rate for the Project Grant competitions. CIHR added that the cut off will be different for each panel, depending on how many applications are assigned.
- Will the Project Grant peer review committees be maintained?
  - CIHR confirmed that the peer review committees will remain intact.
- How will the funding be distributed amongst the topic groups for the COVID-19 May Rapid Research funding opportunity?
  - CIHR explained that each research area will obtain a proportion of the funding based on the number of applicants for the COVID-19 May Rapid Research funding opportunity.
- Will CIHR accommodate spaced peer review meetings for the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition.
  - CIHR is currently analyzing options to offer flexibility to reviewers. One of the options is to have meetings over two to three days with frequent breaks. These meetings would have a duration of five to six hours.
- When will the dates of the peer review meetings be released?
  - CIHR confirmed that the dates of the peer review meetings will be released soon.
- I am concerned about the delay of the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition and how many cycles will be required to return to the normal Project Grant timelines.
  - CIHR clarified that the preliminary dates that were shared for the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition are tentative. These dates can evolve. CIHR also explained that it is anticipated that the Project Grant competition timelines will return to normal by the Fall 2021 or the Spring 2022 Project Grant competition.
- Is it a possibility to increase the score bar for discussion grants to reduce panel load?
  - CIHR clarified that they will work with Chairs and SOs to see if it is possible to streamline at a higher rate.
- A recommendation was made from a UD member for peer review meetings to take place from 11 am to 2 pm EDT and ask reviewers to bring their lunch. This could spread peer review meetings over five days and may be easier to all.
- Could panels have more Early Career Researcher (ECR) observers given the no-cost to having them in a meeting?
  - CIHR explained that the ECR Observer Program may not be delivered for the Spring 2020 Project Grant competition. CIHR clarified that it is important to consider the short review timeline while ensuring a high quality review. CIHR explained that the decision will be released next week.
- Is there any scope for Principle Investigators to add a one-page update before the review of the Spring 2020 Project Grant application reviews?
  - CIHR confirmed that a decision has not been made on this regard. CIHR is considering not allowing applicants to add a one-page update. This will ensure fairness. Applicants will also have the option to withdraw their applications. Peer review panels will also be given instructions to judge applications with a COVID-19 lens. The decision will be released early next week.
  - **Meeting update:** As announced on [June 8 \(en français\)](#), we have consulted with a number of groups and have decided that, in fairness to all applicants in the Spring 2020 competition, **no updates and/or supplements will be accepted and the applications will be reviewed as submitted.**
- Is there an update on the number of competitions that were postponed to July 2, 2020?
  - CIHR explained that there are no updates on the strategic competitions. CIHR anticipates having to delay some or all of these competitions again to ensure reviewer burden is controlled.

## 2. Adjournment

- The meeting ended at 13:30. The next meeting of the University Delegates will be on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020.