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2015-16 Research Opportunities Program Guidelines

Prevention Office | Ministry of Labour

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1. General Information

The Ministry of Labour (MOL) strategically invests in research to:

- Improve health and safety in Ontario workplaces;
- Enhance delivery of effective occupational health and safety services and products; and
- Strengthen the occupational health and safety system in Ontario.

The Research Opportunities Program (ROP) provides strategic research investments through public calls for occupational health and safety (OHS) research projects that focus on identified OHS system priorities. The ROP makes investments through two streams:

- Research for the Workplace (R4W)
- Evidence for Practice (E4P)

2. Priority Areas

The strategic priority research areas in the table below have been selected based on:

- the province's strategic priorities outlined in [Healthy and Safe Ontario Workplaces: A Strategy for Transforming Occupational Health & Safety](#);
- a review of literature and an environmental scan of Canadian and international jurisdictions; and
- input from occupational health and safety system partners.

While primary prevention is the main focus of the ROP, priorities for this call for proposals are also informed by:

- the seriousness of a hazard or problem;
- the number of workers at risk for a particular injury or illness; and
- the chance that new data or approaches could have an impact.

To ensure the best outcomes for the OHS system, the ministry has identified the following research priorities for 2015-16:

(Note: These research topics are not intended to be exhaustive. Applicants may submit research proposals related to other sub topics / areas of research that align with research priorities.)

Research Priority	Examples of Research Areas
<p>Highest Hazards that result in occupational injuries, diseases or fatalities</p> <p>This priority focuses on: identification of the Highest Hazards – defined as the tasks leading to a greater frequency or severity of work-related injuries, illnesses and/or fatalities; and, activities to address the leading causes of injuries, illness and fatalities. The emphasis will be on addressing work activities that increase the risk of workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Role of work organization in critical injuries, illness and fatalities. ▪ Role of human factors (i.e., factors that influence the decisions and actions of workplace parties) in improving occupational health and safety outcomes in high hazard environments. ▪ Role of psycho-social factors in critical hazards. ▪ Development of workplace practices and interventions that reduce the frequency and/or severity of occupational hazards. ▪ Development of more effective means of evaluating hazards at workplaces. ▪ Identification and investigation of the relationships between hazardous working conditions and associated occupational illnesses, injuries and fatalities. ▪ Role of technology in improving occupational health and safety outcomes in high hazard environments. ▪ Hazards associated with new industries and new technology.

Research Priority	Examples of Research Areas
<p>Occupational health and safety improvements in small businesses</p> <p>Generally, workers in a small business have a higher risk of workplace injury than workers in large firms. This priority focuses on small businesses (defined as those with fewer than 50 workers) and explores unique issues that can make it more difficult for them to develop effective workplace health and safety practices. The emphasis is given to understanding and managing the risks of workplace injuries in small businesses, and interventions / solutions that could improve OHS outcomes in small businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective occupational health and safety practices, processes and interventions in small businesses. ▪ Unique features that affect the approach to workplace health and safety among small businesses and approaches to improve occupational health and safety outcomes. ▪ Potential hazards which may be concentrated in small businesses and means to addressing them. ▪ Determinants of occupational health and safety of young workers in small businesses. ▪ Understanding and enacting processes related to occupational health and safety among small business workplace parties. ▪ Efficacy of health and safety management systems in small businesses.
<p>Occupational health and safety of most vulnerable workers</p> <p>This priority focuses on various aspects of worker vulnerability. A worker’s vulnerability depends on many individual and workplace factors that interact in complicated ways to increase risk of occupational injuries, illnesses or fatalities. While it is difficult to define “vulnerability” with precision, vulnerable workers (in the context of OHS) are those who are more likely than other workers to become injured or ill as a result of their work. Although individual factors are often the focus when defining vulnerability, workplace factors like hours of work employment stability and hazards in the workplace are also important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Occupational health and safety of migrant workers and other vulnerable groups. ▪ Occupational health and safety of young workers or those just starting work. ▪ Factors contributing to worker vulnerability and solutions to reducing vulnerability. ▪ Individual, organizational and system determinants of worker vulnerability. ▪ New and emerging issues, including shifting demographics in the workplace (e.g., age, gender and ethnicity). ▪ Innovative strategies and best practices to engage vulnerable workers in health and safety issues. ▪ Occupational health and safety issues of specific occupational groups (e.g., construction workers, migrant workers, mine workers, health care workers, etc.). ▪ Improving occupational health and safety outcomes in areas with high proportion of vulnerable workers.

Research Priority	Examples of Research Areas
<p>Promoting a culture of health and safety</p> <p>Generally, an organization’s health and safety culture consists of its shared working practices, including internal responsibilities systems, its tendency to accept or tolerate risk, how it controls hazards and how it deals with accidents and near misses. The health and safety culture priority focuses on achieving a significant and sustained improvement in health and safety outcomes through a focus on promoting increased understanding, awareness, leadership, and reporting of hazards both within workplaces, and broader society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effectiveness of current workplace systems, practices and processes (e.g., joint health and safety committees) and ways to improve them. ▪ New methods, ideas, processes or technological changes for workplaces to prevent injury and promote workplace health and safety. ▪ New methods for the occupational health and safety system to target or identify opportunities to inform prevention strategies. ▪ New and emerging issues, including shifting demographics in the workplace (e.g., age, gender and ethnicity). ▪ New and emerging issues, including shifting demographics in the workplace and work intensification (e.g., age, gender, pace, and duration). ▪ Innovations in disseminating research findings and best practices to workplaces. ▪ Occupational health and safety management systems.
<p>Exposure and prevention of occupational disease</p> <p>Workplaces are required to ensure that work is being conducted safely and to protect workers from work-related hazards, including exposure to occupational diseases. This priority focuses on the dynamic nature of occupational diseases and the challenges associated with their prevention. The emphasis will be on prevention and recognition strategies that could help to reduce occupational disease in Ontario workplaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emerging occupational diseases. ▪ Infectious occupational diseases. ▪ Health and safety concerns associated with nanotechnologies (e.g., dominant exposure routes, potential exposure levels, and material toxicity of engineered nanomaterials). ▪ Mixed exposures in complex workplace settings. ▪ Role of complex workplace exposures/histories. ▪ Risks in working environment (e.g., ergonomic, biological, physical, psychosocial factors) ▪ Relationship between workplace and mental health and psycho-social issues. ▪ New occupational risks that emerge as a result of technical innovation and social changes.

3. Funding Parameters

A) Research for the Workplace (R4W)

- 12-24 months in duration, maximum of \$150,000 annually (up to \$300,000 per proposal).
- R4W awards are for fully developed research proposals that:
 - have clearly specified innovative research question(s) and detailed methodology;
 - have identified a research team and the measurement tools the team proposes to use;
 - have secured such access to information and workplaces as will be required;
 - have the support of all relevant parties; and
 - demonstrate a commitment to collaboration with occupational health and safety system partners, knowledge users and relevant stakeholders.

B) Evidence for Practice (E4P)

- Up to 12 months in duration, maximum of \$60,000 per proposal.
- E4P awards are intended for projects that:
 - build innovative partnerships among workplaces, researchers and prevention organizations to address specific workplace needs; or
 - develop completed research into practical applications and/or solutions, while creating partnerships among workplaces, researchers and prevention organizations.

The ROP will only fund eligible direct operating costs (including salaries and benefits and limited costs for facilities, equipment, management and administration; see section 7 and the ROP Budget Guidelines in Appendix A for details). Grant funds will be provided by way of a transfer payment agreement between the MOL and the lead institution. The agreement sets out the respective rights and obligations concerning the granting of funds from the MOL.

4. Application Review Process

A) Application Review

The ROP features a four-step review process. In order for the MOL to award research funds, an application must meet all criteria at each stage. The review process helps ensure that the assessment of scientific / technical merit is separate from the funding decision.



Step 1 is conducted by the Transfer Partner and Research Funding Unit (TPRFU) of the Strategy and Integration Branch at the MOL. The purpose is to determine whether applications meet requirements outlined in the call for proposals.

Every application that is deemed to be eligible based on the administrative review will proceed to Step 2A. Applications will be reviewed by senior MOL staff who will assess the degree to which the application aligns with strategic research priorities and its relevance to Ontario's occupational health and safety system. Every application that is deemed to be eligible based on the administrative review will also proceed to Step 2B. In this step, external peer reviewers will review proposals to assess the scientific merit and quality of the research.

OHSRAP conducts Step 3 of the review process. The OHSRAP review will focus on the overall value of the proposed research project with respect to its potential to enhance occupational health and safety outcomes in Ontario workplaces. The OHSRAP will recommend proposals for funding to the Chief Prevention Officer (CPO).

The CPO will make the final decision about the research funding allocations, which concludes the application review process.

B) Award Decisions

Funding decisions will be communicated to the institution's executive authority responsible for research, the principal investigator, and the co-lead (where applicable). The ROP is a discretionary, non-entitlement program and all funding decisions are final. There is no appeal process. External peer review feedback will be provided to all applicants.

5. Eligibility

A) Eligible Institutions

Funding opportunities are open on a competitive basis to individuals and teams that are based at eligible organizations.

Funds contributed by the ROP for approved projects will be disbursed to one eligible lead research institution per award. All projects supported by ROP funds must be conducted in Ontario and led by an eligible institution.

The following are eligible institutions:

- Ontario publicly funded universities;
- Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology;
- Ontario hospital / academic health science centre-based research institutes;
- Ontario not-for-profit research institutions, excluding those funded primarily by business or industry;
- consortia of the above, with one institution as lead applicant assuming responsibility and accountability for the consortium; and
- other Ontario not-for-profit / charitable organizations at the MOL's discretion.

A not-for-profit organization seeking eligibility for ROP funding must demonstrate its ability and capacity to conduct research.

For-profit organizations and agencies of for-profit entities do not qualify for ROP funding as lead institutions. However, such entities may collaborate on research and knowledge dissemination projects where eligible institutions are the designated lead.

If there is doubt about an institution's eligibility to apply for ROP funding, the institution should first request and receive confirmation of eligibility from the MOL's Transfer Partner and Research Funding Unit (see section 12 for contact information). Otherwise, the application could be deemed ineligible.

It is important for project leads submitting an application to the ROP to be aware that their sponsor (university, affiliated teaching hospital or officially associated research institute) will play an important role throughout the term of any award. The sponsor assumes responsibility for the accounting and payment of the award.

B) Ineligible Research Projects

The ROP will **not** support proposals seeking funding for:

- biomedical research;
- clinical research, including clinical trials;
- drug / technology efficacy research; and,
- high performance computing platforms.

6. Application Details

The purpose of the ROP is to improve OHS outcomes in Ontario workplaces, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that the results of research are transformed into policies, practices, procedures, products and services. To achieve these goals, all applicants are required to provide detailed information on the following key areas:

- **Alignment with Strategic Priorities**

The ROP awards focus on strategic value / policy relevance and scientific excellence. All applications must detail how an investment in their research project will address the OHS strategic priority area(s).

- **Relevance**

The applicants must clearly demonstrate outcomes of the proposed research and outline practical applications for workplaces in Ontario.

- **Knowledge Dissemination**

To increase the probability that research will produce positive outcomes within the OHS system and workplaces in Ontario, each application must include at least one knowledge user who will have the responsibility of helping the team identify the conditions and knowledge dissemination strategies necessary for system and workplace level impact.

In addition, to optimize workplace-centred approaches as well as stakeholder involvement, each proposal will be expected to describe how the knowledge will be disseminated to maximize the program's impact outside the research community.

Project lead(s) must describe any in-kind and financial contributions that partners will bring to their research. They are required to describe how they will set up a structure that will ensure the full engagement of team members and partners throughout the project.

All team members must have the support of their organization to participate in the project. All team members must have an active, meaningful role in the planning and implementation of the research project.

A minimum of two letters of support, including one from the knowledge user team member, must be included in the submission. Letters of support must not be form letters signed by multiple individuals; they must be individualized, clearly articulating their knowledge of the project, and if applicable, confirm the commitment of in-kind or other resources. Letters of support will not be accepted from team members.

▪ **Collaborations and Partnerships**

Collaborations and partnerships between OHS organizations, workplace parties and researchers will foster new knowledge, tools and methods to develop the best strategies for diverse aspects of intervention, action research, program delivery and policy development that will be appropriate for our rapidly changing times. OHS organizations represent major sources of expertise and innovation that are based on front-line experience. For their part, researchers offer breadth and depth of knowledge and skills in the field of OHS, which shed light on the rapidly changing workplaces as well as new and emerging health and safety issues, and thereby offer new approaches to problem-solving.

It is expected that partners will contribute in a number of areas, which include but are not limited to:

- helping formulate the research plan(s) and the research questions;
- providing input into the development of research projects;
- advising on the need for the synthesis and dissemination of the research findings;
- influencing the application of the research findings to inform policies, programs and/or practices;
- funding a portion of the knowledge dissemination activities; and
- supporting the conduct of the research.

Researchers are encouraged to submit applications jointly with one or more Ontario OHS organizations to collaboratively develop and implement research activities. The project partners jointly define research activities as well as the participatory arrangements under which individual researchers and research teams will carry out those activities.

Researchers are strongly encouraged to create partnerships with OHS organizations without research capacity to explore the possibility of collaboration. All such research partners must have an active, meaningful role in the planning and implementation of the research project.

- **Expected Outcomes and Potential Impact**

Applicants must clearly articulate the significance of the project in terms of potential impact of project outcomes on the OHS system, including relevance to workers and employers (including Joint Health and Safety Committees and health and safety representatives), decision makers, service providers, and other OHS system partners (the project knowledge users).

- **Occupational Health and Safety Research Innovations**

Researchers are encouraged to explore innovative solutions to address complex issues within the occupational health and safety system as well as issues at the workplace level. The ROP encourages applicants to demonstrate how well the innovation opportunity enhances the understanding, and accelerates the resolution, of the occupational health and safety question, problem or issue identified in the research proposed.

7. Budget

All applicants are required to supply an estimated budget. The budget must reflect how the funding will be distributed in five (5) key sections:

- Salaries and benefits;
- Supplies and services;
- Travel (no more than 10%);
- Equipment (no more than 5%); and
- Other eligible costs that do not fit into the categories above.

All applicants are required to provide a zero-based budget that details all revenue sources that will support the operating needs of the proposed research project, including:

- Institutional contributions (contributions from non-profit / charitable organizations, foundations, private donors / philanthropists, as well as municipal, provincial and federal governments contributions qualify as institutional contributions); and,
- ROP funds.

A detailed justification of each budget line item must be provided to allow reviewers to assess all costs and whether the requested resources are appropriate for the execution

of the project. The final determination of an item's eligibility (contribution or expenditure) rests with the MOL.

Accurate multi-year and in-year budget forecasts are vital for the success of the project. Applicants must demonstrate that they will be able to provide accurate forecasts and timely requests for payment on an accruals basis.

(Note: For details regarding eligible and ineligible costs, please see the ROP Budget Guidelines in Appendix A.)

8. Open Access to Research Products

The MOL considers that greater access to research publications and data will promote the ability of researchers and knowledge users to use and build on the knowledge needed to address significant occupational health and safety issues and challenges. Open access will promote accessibility to MOL-funded research. The ROP grant recipients must make every effort to ensure that research papers and data / information generated from ROP funding are freely accessible online and other appropriate formats. The MOL will publicly post the final report of all completed research projects.

9. Performance Measurement

The MOL is committed to collecting and disseminating information on the outputs and impacts of the research it funds. This information is an important part of the MOL's funding accountability within the Government of Ontario:

- ROP award recipients are required to submit a final report to the MOL, as well as progress reports summarizing the outcomes to date and describing how the grant funds were used. In future years, following receipt of the final report, recipients may be contacted and asked to provide updates on how the research has been implemented.
- The example in the following table illustrates how research objectives are to be linked to expected outcomes and measures, which must be included in final reports:

Research Goal	Research Objectives	Short-term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Performance Measures / Indicators
To improve health and safety outcomes for new immigrant workers who are employed in the restaurant industry.	<p>To develop evidence-based tools, strategies and programs that will help prevent workplace disease and injury.</p> <p>To effectively promote and transfer new knowledge from research findings.</p>	<p>New tools, strategies and programs are developed.</p> <p>Research findings and new knowledge are effectively transferred to the field.</p>	<p>Improved understanding and knowledge of why workplace injuries and disease occur, and how to prevent them.</p> <p>New knowledge is translated into practice and policy.</p> <p>New tools, strategies and programs are adopted into the field.</p>	<p># of training programs designed based on research.</p> <p># of workplaces in the restaurant industry that adopt new tools, strategies and programs.</p> <p># of workplaces in an industry that report reduced injury / disease after implementing new tools, strategies and programs.</p>

10. Funding Approval

The CPO makes the final funding decisions at his sole discretion. The award notification provides detailed terms and timelines for the award, which must be agreed to before any payment can be made. During the award period, payments will be transferred electronically to a prearranged account at the sponsoring institution.

The MOL reserves the right to terminate a research funding agreement without cause at any time by providing written notice of the termination.

When funding for a full application is approved, the sponsoring institution will sign a transfer payment agreement (i.e., a contract) with the MOL. The agreement will address terms and conditions for the disbursement of the grant that include, but are not limited to:

- milestones, deliverables and performance measures, including both research and knowledge dissemination activities;
- project budget;
- project management;
- mode and schedule of payments;
- accountability framework;
- communications strategies;
- contract termination clauses; and
- monitoring and reporting requirements, including progress reporting, financial audits and other reports as stipulated.

The MOL will monitor the project in relation to:

- timely submission of progress reports, including success stories;
- milestones, deliverables and performance measures;
- cash flow and accuracy of cash flow forecasting;
- financial reporting and audits; and
- other requirements as set out in the agreement.

Please note that the MOL reserves the right to undertake periodic reviews of funded projects.

11. Application Deadlines and Submission Information

The ROP timelines are as follows:

Action	Target Date
Release of Call for Applications	July 13, 2015
Information Session	August 6, 2015
Application Closing date	October 9, 2015

Questions can be directed to the Transfer Partner and Research Funding Unit at researchgrants@ontario.ca.

Information sessions will be held by teleconference on **August 6, 2015** in both English and French. If you wish to attend the August 6th information teleconference, please send an email to researchgrants@ontario.ca identifying **your language** preference no later than 5:00 p.m. July 29, 2015. The Prevention Office will provide you with the teleconferencing details and time upon confirmation.

Please send your completed application, along with all other required materials outlined in the application form to:

Research Opportunities Program
Transfer Partner and Research Funding Unit
Strategy and Integration Branch
Prevention Office
Ministry of Labour
10 Dundas Street East, 8th floor
Toronto, ON M7A 0B2

Completed applications must be received no later than **5:00p.m. October 9, 2015**. Late submissions will be disqualified from further consideration.

Application Submission Instructions

- Produce one original package comprising Sections 1-9 and Appendices A-C. Include ten (10) double-sided copies of the original package.
- Include a USB drive containing a complete electronic version of the application in PDF format. The electronic file should be named using the following format: "Last Name of PI_First Initial_Org Name_Stream (R4W or E4P)". Please limit the number of files on the USB drive to three or fewer.
- The original package, double-sided copies and USB drive must be sent by courier, registered mail or delivered in person to the address above.

12. Program Contact Information and Service Standards

Questions related to the Research Opportunities Program should be directed to:

Transfer Partner and Research Funding Unit
Telephone: 416-212-6518
Email: researchgrants@ontario.ca

The TPRFU will respond to questions within two (2) business days, and will acknowledge receipt of all applications by e-mail. If you do not receive an acknowledgement by **noon on October 16, 2015**, please contact researchgrants@ontario.ca.

13. Notice of Collection, Use and Disclosure of Information

Pursuant to paragraph 5 of subsection 4.1(2) of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), the ministry is authorized to collect and use the information in this application package to evaluate your research proposal under the ROP. The ministry may collect, use, and disclose any personal information in this application package under the authority of paragraph 5 of subsection 4.1(2) of the OHSA and subsection 38(2) and clauses 41(1)(b) and 42(1)(c) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA).

The ministry may disclose this information to reviewers which includes Ministry of Labour staff and external experts.

The information is subject to FIPPA and may, therefore, be disclosed by the ministry under a freedom of information request made under Part II of the FIPPA.

If you have any questions regarding privacy matters, you may contact the ministry's Freedom of Information and Privacy Office at 416-326-7786.

Appendix A: ROP Budget Guidelines

Eligible Costs

The ROP provides operating funds only (direct costs). Funding for indirect costs[^] will not be provided.

ROP funds can be used for the following five types of direct costs:

(a) Salaries and Benefits

These may include salaries, stipends and related non-discretionary benefits of researchers, knowledge brokers, technical staff and management and administrative staff directly involved in the program, and consultants' fees.

For assistantships for students directly involved in the program, the ROP will cover up to:

- \$20,000 per student, per year – for student research assistants (Bachelor's, Master's or PhD students)
- \$50,000 per year – for postdoctoral fellows.

Institutions are free to top up the stipends extended to students and postdoctoral fellows assisting the program.

(Note: As part of the budget submission, please identify the students' time – *e.g.*, number of hours or days – that will be allocated to the project funded by the ROP.)

Salary requests must parallel those paid to similarly classified persons at the sponsoring organization. Personnel paid from the grant are not considered employees of the MOL.

Fees for consultants – defined as individuals unrelated to any of the project partners and subcontracted to provide service or knowledge of a highly specialized nature for up to one quarter per fiscal year – must be essential to the research. Their fees must reflect reasonable market rates.

[^] Examples of indirect costs include:

- academic services such as the library and computer service;
- university-provided administrative services such as purchasing, finance and human resources, as well as the university administration itself, President's Office, deans, department heads and directors and administrative staff;
- research and contract administration and support such as the Office of Research Services; and
- building operating costs including heating, cooling, power, cleaning, maintenance and landscaping.

Personnel costs, reflective of actual salary and benefits, can only be claimed in proportion to the time spent working on the project. The MOL may request supporting documentation to this effect, such as time sheets or certification by the faculty Dean.

(b) Supplies and Services

These may cover:

- commercially available consumable supplies;
- costs for dissemination of research results;
- costs of holding a workshop or seminar;
- data access and data analysis costs; and
- other costs, such as external audits of the finances of the project, as defined in the grant agreement.

Costs *not* covered are renovations and alterations of existing space and leased space or institutional contributions of space when that space is newly developed, renovated, refurbished or leased.

(c) Travel Costs

These may cover:

- reasonable travel costs to visit collaborating universities / colleges or occupational health and safety system partners for the purpose of the program (amount may be limited at ministry discretion); and
- air travel costs – not to exceed full economy fares (amount may be limited at ministry discretion).

(Note: Travel costs cannot account for more than 10% of overall direct costs.)

(d) Equipment

This may cover research equipment, supplies, computer and communication equipment as well as software required for the research project, including costs of purchase, refurbishment, transportation, extended warranties, importation costs, staff training for use, maintenance and operating costs (not including indirect costs such as power, insurance etc.).

All four of the following conditions must be met for an item to be considered “equipment”:

- it is nonexpendable and tangible;
- it has a useful life of more than 1 year;
- it costs C\$2,000 or more; and
- it is critically and explicitly needed to carry out the project.

(**Note:** Equipment costs cannot account for more than 5% of overall direct costs.)

(e) Other Costs Not Captured Above

The ROP may also cover certain other costs not captured above but items within this category will be subject to ministry approval and reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

These may include:

- Collaboration activities; and
- Innovative knowledge dissemination activities.

Ineligible Costs

The ROP grants cannot be used for the following:

- indirect costs;
- capital expenses;
- costs related to proposal development;
- audits;
- fees for use of equipment owned by the institution unless such fees are charged to all institutional users based on a published schedule;
- costs relating to existing facilities' infrastructure improvements, not specifically related to the proposal and/or not included in the original application;
- opportunity costs;
- any items or services not directly related to the program;
- contract research and development (where the private sector owns the resulting intellectual property);
- clinical trials; and
- high performance computing platforms.

Dates for Eligibility of Contributions and Expenses

Expenditures for the project are eligible only from the award's start date to the completion date, as defined in the funding agreement.

Eligible in-kind contributions are deemed expensed at the same time they are contributed or acquired by the research institution. As such, they can only be shown as contributed and expensed between the start and end dates as defined in the funding agreement.