

New Investigator Research Grants Request for Applications

Overview

Through its National Grants program, SickKids Foundation seeks to strengthen Canada's capacity and knowledge to respond to children's health challenges and needs. To do so, we grant in priority areas of children's health needs based on scientific excellence and relevant impact.

Funding Objectives

New Investigator Research Grants provide important early career development support to child health researchers. It is intended that New Investigator Research Grants will enhance the grant recipient's ability to compete with more senior investigators for research grants from other funders. Through this Request for Applications, we are seeking to fund research carried out by New Investigators in specific priority areas.

The New Investigator Grants Program is a jointly sponsored program of SickKids Foundation and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research - Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health (IHDCYH). Grant recipients may obtain up to three years' support for research within all research sectors (biomedical, clinical, health systems and services, and population and public health), as well as in conventional or complementary and alternative health care.

Funding Priorities

Through this Request for Applications, we are seeking to fund research carried out by New Investigators in specific priority areas that will respond to children's health challenges and needs.

Applicants must indicate in the application the child health research priority in which the proposed project will have relevant impact; as well, they must provide a detailed explanation about how their proposed research is relevant to the selected priority. We acknowledge there may be research projects that fit within more than one of this RFA's five priorities. In these situations, applicants must indicate the priority under which the research will be considered.

Please note that IHDCYH partner funding will participate in applications relevant to the first four priorities only.

Funding decisions will be based on scientific merit as well as relevance to the applicant indicated child health research priority the application is being considered. Relevance to the health priority applied for will be assessed and scored according to the following criteria:

- Fit to the child health research priority (listed below)
- The number of children affected
- The potential for direct impact on the care of children
- Lack of knowledge on the topic

The five funding priorities for this RFA are:

1. Understanding Environmental Influences on Health and Disease

The role of environment in influencing health is of increasing public interest and is of particular importance during development. Research applications in this area will increase knowledge and improve understanding of the interaction between genes and the environment in causing diseases/disorders during. Priority will be given for those genetic-environment interactions that may impact diseases, conditions or disorders of high prevalence or high burden to the family or society.

In the context of this RFA the National Institute of Health definition of environment is used, which recognizes “natural” (air, water and soil, and all the physical, chemical, biological and social features of our surroundings) and man-made or “built” (homes, offices, schools, farms and factories, as well as community systems such as roads and transportation systems, land use practices and waste management) environment. Consequences of human alteration to the natural environment, such as air pollution, are also parts of the man-made environment. The social environment encompasses lifestyle factors like diet and exercise, maternal depression, maltreatment, socioeconomic status, and other societal influences that may affect health.

2. Understanding the Developing Brain

The development of the brain from the prenatal period to early childhood through adolescence is of critical importance to the health, development and prospects for

children to be healthy adults. Research applications in this area will focus on better understanding neurodevelopment, both the normal processes of development and development in the context of disease or disorder (including acquired disorders or injuries). Applications must describe how the research will contribute to better understanding of the trajectory of development and/or potential therapeutic interventions.

3. Improving Mental Health Care for Children & Youth

Mental health care for children and youth is a major public concern today. Research applications in this area will focus on improving our understanding of existing evidence-based prevention or intervention strategies for children and youth; or on developing and evaluating new strategies; or in better understanding how society (family and health, education, social services) could be organized to deliver mental health services in a timely and effective manner. Applications must demonstrate the potential to generate knowledge that will lead to significant impact on children and youth mental health outcomes.

In the context of this RFA, mental illness is defined as "... characterized by alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour (or some combination thereof) associated with significant distress and impaired functioning over an extended period time" (*A Report on Mental Illness in Canada 2002* Public Health Agency of Canada).

4. Improving Prevention & Treatment of Childhood Obesity

Obesity is one of Canada's most significant health challenges given its contribution to many diseases and the prevalence of childhood obesity. For the purposes of this RFA, we are interested in research that focuses on preventing excess weight gain in children and youth and treatment of obesity which has already developed.

5. Improving Outcomes of Paediatric Cancer

While more children are surviving cancer, many survivors experience late or secondary effects, either as a result of the cancer or the treatment. Research applications in this area will focus on improving our understanding of the causes and/or treatment of paediatric cancer, or its late effects. Please note that IHDCYH partner funding will not be applicable to applications relevant to this priority.

Additional Research Eligibility Criteria

To be considered for funding, applications must demonstrate that the proposed research will be collaborative across disciplines and include an appropriate translation and knowledge dissemination/uptake plan for the research findings.

As well, we are seeking applications from across research methodologies (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods) and research sectors (biomedical, clinical, population health, and health services).

Who is Eligible to Apply

The principal investigator must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada, based in or formally affiliated with an eligible sponsoring institution within Canada. The principal investigator will usually hold a doctoral degree (Ph.D) or equivalent medical/health care degree and have had formal research training. Co-Principal Investigators are researchers who may or may not have a formal affiliation with the sponsoring institution, but will take responsibility for particular administrative and scientific aspects of the research project. Trainees (i.e. doctoral students or fellows) cannot be Co-Principal Investigators.

Applicants are expected to work with a mentor at their institution to ensure their application is competitive in terms of both scientific excellence and relevance to one of the five specified child health priorities for this RFA.

The applicant must be a new investigator at the beginning of the research project; i.e., *at the time the individual is awarded funding*. For the purpose of this award, a new investigator is defined as an individual who:

- has **not** received an operating grant from any funder greater than \$100,000
- is within **four years** of having taken up their first academic appointment or equivalent (academic appointment is defined as an appointment which allows an individual to apply for research grants as an independent investigator). For the purpose of this call, the date of their academic appointment must not be earlier than **January 1, 2005**

- without an academic appointment, the equivalent would be a clinician, health care worker, CAHC practitioner, or other community worker who does not have an academic appointment, but who has institutional support (through a registered charity) to do research as a principal investigator

Recognition of a break in the research career:

Individuals who have taken time off for personal reasons or for other reasons (such as to establish a private clinical practice, family or health reasons, or parental leave) within the first four years of their research career may be considered a new investigator. These individuals must include a letter documenting the duration of the interruptions and indicating whether or not there was any research productivity during that time. This time off will not count towards the four years. Please note that time spent doing industry or government research will count towards the four years. The Foundation reserves the right to make the final determination as to whether an individual is considered a new investigator or not.

If there are two principal investigators applying for funding, both must qualify as new investigators. Co-applicants are not required to be new investigators.

Funding

If approved, funding will be granted in the following three allocations:

1. Research Operating Grant

New Investigator Researchers may obtain a maximum of **\$100,000 annually** for up to three years for their research project. The research operating grant may be used for:

- Research costs – materials, services, salaries of staff including research assistants /technicians etc, knowledge translation or dissemination of results, travel, supplies, resources, animals
- Equipment purchase up to \$10,000 per item (including set-up) or rental (including computers)

2. **Mentorship Award**

Mentorship awards of **\$5,000 annually** for approved projects will be offered for the duration of the grant in recognition of the importance for New Investigators to receive the support and guidance that will yield the best possible research.

- The mentorship award will be directed to the mentor through the mentor's institution and may be used by the mentor in support of the mentor's child health research activities.
- Applicants must include a letter from their mentor at the time of application, explaining the mentorship provided and the mentor's relationship to the applicant. The mentorship letter will be assessed by the Grant Review Committee.
- The mentorship prize payments will be subject to progress reporting on an annual basis for the duration of the grant

3. **Child Health Research Infrastructure Costs**

To support the building of child health research infrastructure across Canada, an additional payment of up to **40% of the amount of the research operating grant will be paid annually** for the duration of the grant to the sponsoring institution of the Principal Investigator. If the sponsoring institution is not a paediatric health centre and/or research institution, funds will be directed to the faculty and department of the Principal Investigator's sponsoring institution.

Eligible costs of the Child Health Research Infrastructure payment include:

- Salary support for the Principal Investigator, based on percentage of effort directed to the proposed research project. Please note that salary award recipients from another funder and physicians who are paid through an Alternate Funding Plan are not eligible to apply for this salary support funding.
- Operational costs – lighting, heating, facilities maintenance
- Equipment maintenance and upgrades
- Insurance
- Renovations and maintenance of research facilities
- Operating costs of libraries
- Management and administration (HR / payroll, accounting and audit)
- Intellectual property

Ineligible Costs

We are unable to fund projects:

- Not relevant to children (conception up to 18 years of age)
- Not relevant to the specified child health research priorities of this RFA
- Primarily to the benefit of children outside of Canada
- Applications in which:
 - The principal investigator is a trainee (i.e. a fellow or doctoral candidate)
 - The principal investigator is not affiliated with a Canadian institution that is a registered Canadian charity or otherwise qualified donee. All applicants must have an affiliation with such an institution, where that institution is willing to financially administer the grant).
 - The Principal Investigator is currently a holder of an active SickKids Foundation grant
- Established, ongoing research projects

Funding within this RFA is contingent upon availability of funds by both SickKids Foundation and the CIHR's Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health.

Knowledge Translation

SickKids Foundation is committed to advancing children's health and therefore support of Knowledge Translation is an important investment in ensuring that funded research will have impact on child health practices, policies and/or further research.

To be eligible for consideration, applications must include a Knowledge Translation (KT) plan. The objectives of the KT plan are to ensure that the research is translated appropriately for relevant stakeholders and potential end-users. Up to 15% of the research operating grant may be used for knowledge translation activities.

To assist in the development of your KT plan, we encourage you to use the Knowledge Translation resources available by going to the webpage

<http://www.sickkidsfoundation.com/grants/default.asp> and clicking on Knowledge Translation Resources for Researchers.

Complementary and Alternative Health Care Research

As objectives of this RFA are to fund research projects that have the potential to have significant impact on child health outcomes, we recognize that this may be done through conventional medicine or complementary and alternative health care (CAHC) or natural health products. We encourage applications that will increase knowledge and understanding on the efficacy and safety of complementary and alternative treatments and products for children and youth provided the research is directly relevant to one of the specified research priorities of this RFA.

Deadline Date for Applications

Applications must be received by 5:00 pm EST on **Monday, February 23, 2009**. Applicants can expect to be notified of the funding decision by late September 2009.

Applications in French are welcomed; these applications will be reviewed by French speaking reviewers. To facilitate the decision process, applications will be adapted to English for reference by the Grant Review Committee and Foundation Staff.

Institutional Support

Reviewers will give preference to applications from researchers who have strong institutional support. All applications must be accompanied by a letter of support from the applicant's Department or Division head. This letter must indicate the ways in which the institution will support the applicant, in terms of resources (lab space, computer hardware, etc.), mentorship and research time for the applicant. If the principal investigator is a clinician (understood as health care practitioners such as nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, naturopath etc. as well as physicians), the letter from the individual's Department or Division head must also guarantee that at least 50% of the applicant's time will be protected research time for the duration of the project.

This competition is highly competitive with a limited funding envelope. All applicants should contact their institution's research awards or grants management office to discuss any potential internal process that may be required that will enhance the strength of their application.

Review and Selection Process

The selection process is based upon expert peer review. Assessments by qualified external reviewers are provided to the Grants Review Committee who will critically evaluate each grant application for scientific merit and relevance to research funding priorities of this RFA. Assessment will also consider potential impact and institutional support. Overall budget and knowledge translation plan or dissemination of results as applicable are carefully reviewed. Final approval, based upon recommendation from the Grants Review Committee, rests with the Grants Advisory Committee, a standing committee of SickKids Foundation Board of Directors.

The Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health's mission is to promote and support research that improves the health and development of mothers, infants, children, youth, and families in Canada and throughout the world. The Institute has eleven Strategic Research Priorities that can be consulted at: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/31147.html#5> . Applications should be relevant to a least one or more of IHDCYH's strategic directions.

Scientific Merit

Proposals must demonstrate excellence with respect to research design, methodology, instrumentation, statistical analysis and project outcome measurement. Projects that show a high degree of innovation and incorporate a multi-disciplinary approach will be favoured. Budgets must be sound, and projects must adhere to ethical standards. If a project involves research on humans it must be in accord with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (for more information please visit the following website: http://pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/pdf/TCPS%20October%202005_E.pdf



Resubmissions

An applicant who did not receive funding may submit a revised application in a future competition, if they still meet all eligibility criteria. The same project, if eligible, may be resubmitted once.

Contact Us

For any questions related to this Request for Applications, please direct an email to: national.grants@sickkidsfoundation.com or telephone us at 416.813.6166 x 2354