

CIHR: Planning for the Fall 2020 Project Grant Competition

Sponsor

Canadian Institutes of Health Research

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Description

A Message from CIHR President, Michael J. Strong:

The COVID-19 crisis has struck many researchers very hard, with interruptions to ongoing studies and restricted access to labs and patients. CIHR recognizes that many of you were also affected by CIHR's postponement of the Spring Project Grant competition and have been asking for information about the Fall 2020 competition. Although key details remain to be finalized, I want to reassure you that the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition will proceed.

CIHR has been contributing to the pandemic response by delivering new investments from the Government of Canada for COVID-19 research. While many of you have been able to participate in these new research funding opportunities, many more have not been able to. To be certain, 100% of these COVID-19 funding opportunities are being delivered with new funding from the Government of Canada, and not CIHR's existing program funding. As a result, CIHR has been able to fully preserve the funding available for the Fall competition.

To this competition, CIHR will also be adding all funding from the Spring competition that is not being allocated to support researchers, as per the April 3 announcement. At minimum, this means that there will be approximately \$246M spread out over the next two Project competitions. The distribution of funds will be announced when the Project is launched and will be informed by the upcoming consultations. CIHR does anticipate that the vast majority of applicants from the Spring competition will carry their application forward into the Fall competition. The applications themselves have been retained (unless explicitly withdrawn by the applicant) and will be automatically moved forward to the Fall 2020 competition, to decrease the burden on researchers.

With respect to the competition itself, it is highly unlikely that the traditional face-to-face reviews will be a viable option for this competition. As such, CIHR is now in the process of exploring other options. The experience with review processes in the current competitions, although smaller in size, is helping to understand some of the technical challenges that must be

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addressed before a Fall Project Grant competition, where CIHR anticipates over 3,000 applications. They are also looking carefully at the experiences of other granting agencies in using virtual review processes.

Over the coming weeks, the Scientific Directors will be reaching out for your thoughts on how best to roll out the Fall competition. CIHR will also be developing a mechanism to allow you to submit feedback online; if you have ideas on how best to conduct peer review (or any other issues related to Project Grant program design), CIHR encourages you to share them. They have set a milestone of no later than July 1 to provide you with the full details and timelines of the Fall funding opportunity.

Finally, recognizing the challenges faced by the research community during this time, CIHR will continue to work closely with other departments and agencies of the Government of Canada to develop support packages such as the recently announced trainee support package. As these packages receive approval, we will endeavour to keep you informed of their details as rapidly as possible.

Please rest assured that CIHR continues to work hard on your behalf. Together, we will get through this challenging time.

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[1] <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51917.html>