

## **Pre-Announcement - CIHR Funding for SARS-COV-2 Variant Research**

### **Sponsor**

Canadian Institutes of Health Research

### **For More Information**

For additional information, please visit the [CIHR site](#) [1]

### **Description**

CIHR would like to provide the research community with information about the upcoming launch of a rapid research response, comprised of three separate but linked initiatives, designed to contribute to global efforts to address SARS-CoV-2 variants.

CIHR is providing preliminary information at this time to allow the research community to continue to mobilize and respond to expedited processes. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

### **Background**

Given these observations, the increasing presence of known SARS-CoV-2 variants in Canada, and the urgent need to monitor the emergence of new variants, CIHR is planning a rapid research response to address this issue. Between now and the end of March 2021, CIHR will make targeted investments into Canadian research on SARS-CoV-2 variants. Specific areas of interest include the biological characterization of emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants to inform clinical management and evolving public health initiatives, and to provide critical, time-sensitive understanding of emerging variants to inform clinical and public health strategies. These investments will also enable the assessment, in near real-time, of both the immune response to emerging variants and immune escape from existing vaccines and thus will serve to provide decision makers with rapid guidance regarding drug therapy, vaccine effectiveness, and other public health strategies.

Moving forward, **CIHR will invest up to \$25M to fund three complementary initiatives.** The funding provided for these initiatives is new from the Government of Canada and is not taken from any existing CIHR initiatives (e.g., the Project Grant Program).

#### **Initiative 1: Supplementary funding for CIHR funded COVID-19 researchers studying variants**

This funding opportunity will be launched within the next week and will provide two streams of

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supplementary funding for Nominated Principal Applicants (NPA) [funded through one of CIHR's previous rapid COVID-19 competitions](#) [2].

### Initiative 2: Priority funding of applications focusing on SARS-CoV-2 variants

Leveraging the Fall 2020 Project Grant competition, CIHR will invest in applications specifically addressing SARS-CoV-2 variants across all pillars of research. Nothing is required from applicants to the competition at present and additional details will follow in the coming weeks.

### Initiative 3: Funding of a Canadian Network of Networks for SARS-CoV-2 Variant Research

CIHR will launch a funding opportunity in the coming weeks to provide up to \$9 million funding for a national network of networks focused on all four pillars of SARS-CoV-2 variant research. Specifically, up to \$6M will support the establishment of a single Canadian Network of Networks for SARS-CoV-2 Variant Research and up to \$3 million will enable the rapid support of research activities required to swiftly characterize and assess the individual and population health threats of emerging VOCs. As the pandemic evolves, CIHR may consider providing additional funding. The funded entity is expected to coordinate the networks and fill gap areas so that it is composed of interdisciplinary teams that integrate biomedical, clinical, population health and social science researchers working together on emerging variants. It is anticipated that the networks will span a broad range of research areas which may include, but may not be limited to, in silico modelling, functional genomics, in vitro and in vivo characterization, immunological assessment, and health systems, public health and social policy impacts.

The combined expertise will enable Canada's research community to deliver on all aspects of the characterization of emerging variants, in a rapid, coordinated, and open fashion. It is expected this investment will result in the characterization of biologically-meaningful emerging SARS-CoV2 variants that could affect human health and the mechanism(s) by which they do so. This will inform ongoing research initiatives, clinical care, public health systems and policy formulation in a time sensitive manner using the principles of open science.

As such, the national network will work synergistically and seamlessly with the (developing) VOCN (variants of concern network) composed of the National Microbiology Laboratory, provincial public health laboratories and networks, and Canadian COVID-19 Genomics Network (CanCOGeN) that are focused on epidemiological and genomic sequencing surveillance to complete the whole spectrum of SARS-CoV-2 variant research.

The delivery of this initiative will be patterned on the successful process implemented for the development of a [Network of Clinical Trials Networks](#) [3] which was completed within 6 weeks, that [facilitated the collaboration and coordination of research](#) [4] on interventions to prevent, detect, manage, and/or treat COVID-19. Details for this initiative will be announced shortly with the target anticipated application deadline around the end of February 2021.

[Read the full pre-announcement](#) [5].

Alert Classifications **Category:**

Funding Opportunities and Sponsor News

**Disciplines:**

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Health and Life Sciences

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### Source

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### Links

[1] <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52305.html>

[2] <https://suivi.lnk01.com/c/443/bd7f1e49d6d0a1d9ed50aa5101797005c5ae2c7c245e3b1c675498e6a471790523f1f694ea285081>

[3] <https://suivi.lnk01.com/c/443/bd7f1e49d6d0a1d9ed50aa5101797005c5ae2c7c245e3b1cc89daea9a14c983223f1f694ea285081>

[4] <https://suivi.lnk01.com/c/443/bd7f1e49d6d0a1d9ed50aa5101797005c5ae2c7c245e3b1cd6046bb89c6e88e623f1f694ea285081>

[5] <http://suivi.lnk01.com/c/443/bd7f1e49d6d0a1d9ed50aa5101797005c5ae2c7c245e3b1c9cac0090a5c0154923f1f694ea285081>