**Important:** The Ministry will defer to the [ORF-RE Round 10 Program Guidelines](#) for other COVID-19 Rapid Research Fund ("Fund") requirements such as: Eligible and Ineligible project costs, Eligible Contributions, Intellectual Policy (IP), Ethical, Safety and Integrity Requirements, Research Interests in Private Sector Partners, and Grant Agreement. This Fund does not have a youth engagement and outreach component.

## Overview

- The Ontario government is providing rapid research funding to contribute to global efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Applicants are invited to submit proposals that:
  - Contribute to the global response to the COVID-19 outbreak to mitigate the rapid spread of COVID-19 and its potential negative consequences;
  - Provide evidence to inform clinical and public health response (including, but not limited to research in medical, social and policy countermeasures), and/or inform decision-making and planning at the provincial, national and international levels;
  - Are highly feasible with immediately achievable and important results; and,
  - Are supported by the Vice President of Research, CEO or Scientific Director at the applicant's institution.

## Application Process

- Institutions must have submitted proposals through the Ontario Together Portal **first** before submitting MCU funding applications to this Fund.
  - Proposals should be submitted to Ideas Section of Ontario Together portal ([https://www.ontario.ca/form/submit-your-ideas-to-help-fight-coronavirus](https://www.ontario.ca/form/submit-your-ideas-to-help-fight-coronavirus))
  - The project title should start with the words: "MCU Research Proposal:"
  - The institution name should be included in the portal submission.

- Institutions must submit full MCU funding applications within seven (7) days of having received the MCU application form from the Ministry. The Ministry will confirm this date to the applicant/institution at the time it provides the applicant/institution with the application form for this Fund via email.
- See section on Application Submission Requirements of these guidelines.
- The earliest a project can start is January 1, 2020. Expenditures are eligible from the project start date, which is January 1, 2020.

There are two stages of adjudication review:

**Peer Review Committee**
The first stage of review is by a peer review committee made up of scientific and medical experts. The committee will review all applications and will make a recommendation to the Ontario Research Fund Advisory Board (ORFAB) based on the following criteria:

1. Quality of the project:
   - Expected outcomes
     (what are the proposed deliverables and how do they support the immediate/current needs to contribute to global efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic?)
   - Likelihood of success
     (has the applicant outlined a plan that appears feasible in the given timeline?)
   - Institutional endorsement/commitment
     (is institutional support clear through access to infrastructure, VP or CEO/CAO endorsement of the application?)
   - Appropriateness of the budget and justification for amount requested
     (is the funding request appropriate to achieve the proposed deliverables, within the proposed timeline?)

2. Ability of the research team to carry out the proposed research, including:
   - Access to relevant infrastructure, data, computing tools to increase probability of success
   - Track record of team members in fields related to proposed research
     (does the team have the required skills to achieve the proposed outcomes, as outlined in the team's CVs, publication record?)
   - Ability of team to quickly mobilize necessary resources
     (does the team have the ability to quickly deploy the resources necessary to implement the proposed project?)

3. Immediacy and importance of the proposed research impact:
   - Potential to contribute to Ontario and/or Global response to COVID-19
     (if achieved, does the proposed project contribute to addressing current challenges related to COVID-19? Are proposed outcomes expected in the short-term?)

**Ontario Research Fund Advisory Board**
The Ontario Research Fund Advisory Board (ORFAB) reviews the recommendations of peer review committee and makes a recommendation to the Minister of Colleges and Universities on the portfolio of projects to Fund. The Minister of Colleges and Universities makes the final decisions at his/her sole discretion. Decisions are communicated to institutions by letter to the institution's Vice President of Research or equivalent and the Principal Investigator. This Fund is a discretionary, non- entitlement fund, decisions are final and there is no appeal process.

## Funding

The Fund will pay up to 100% of the requested eligible direct operating costs (including salaries and benefits and limited costs, which include up to 10% for facilities and equipment, and up to 10% for management and administration), as well as a portion of indirect (overhead) costs (up to 40%). The program's contribution is inclusive of both direct and indirect cost support.

The Ministry does not have a maximum funding ask per grant and will consider all funding requests on a case by case basis. This Fund does not have a match component. However, where applicable, applicants should outline whether the proposed project is co-funded by any other funding agency.

## Eligibility

Funding is open, on a competitive basis, to members of the research community and **must** be endorsed by the Vice President of Research, CEO or Scientific Director at the applicant's institution. For-profit organizations and agencies of for-profit entities are **not** considered eligible and cannot apply for, or receive, funding. All decisions regarding eligibility will be made by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities at its sole discretion.

Funds contributed for approved projects are disbursed to the lead applicant institution. In all instances, funding contributed by the Fund for projects must be directed to the eligible research institution(s) in Ontario and expended in Ontario.

*Note: Although Clinical Trials are not an eligible expense under this Fund, funding can be used for costs related to personnel and testing involved in a clinical trial.*

## Adjudication Criteria

Applications will be reviewed against three criteria:
1. Quality of the project:
   - Expected outcomes
   - Likelihood of success
   - Institutional endorsement/commitment
   - Appropriateness of the budget and justification for amount requested
2. Ability of the research team to carry out the proposed research, including:
   - Access to relevant infrastructure, data, computing tools to increase probability of success
   - Track record of team members in fields related to proposed research
   - Ability of team to quickly mobilize necessary resources
3. Immediacy and importance of the proposed research impact:
   - Potential to contribute to Ontario and/or Global response to 2019-nCoV

## Milestones and Deliverables

Using simple, non-technical language, list major milestones, and expected project year (year 1, year 2). Milestones will be used to monitor and determine the project's progress from the date of funding to the project term-end date. A milestone is defined as a significant expected event or accomplishment in the life of the project resulting from research activities or a point at which an important change or resolution occurs.

## Project Budget

Applicants are required to provide a zero-based budget that details all expenses and revenue sources (Ontario Government and other, if applicable) that will support the operating needs of the proposed project in each year of the project.

## Attachments

**CVS**

Short CVs will be required for the Principal Applicant(s) and Collaborators. Maximum of three (3) pages per CV and should outline:

- Significant achievements (peer-reviewed publications from the **last five years only**, patents, significant presentations, awards, honours, membership on committees etc.).

## Application Submission Requirements

- Electronic applications are to be submitted to the Ministry through the institution's research office or equivalent within seven (7) days of having received the application form. The Ministry will confirm this date to the applicant/institution at the time it provides the applicant/institution with the application form for this Fund.
- Electronic applications should be submitted via email to: ORF.Excellence@ontario.ca
- The application cover letter should include the application(s) submitted, title of the project(s) and the name of the Principal Investigator(s). The cover page does not count towards the page limits outlined below.
- The full application should be submitted as 2 separate Microsoft Word files:
  1. Application form
  2. CVs (do not count toward application page limits. Each CV should be only 3 pages).
- Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

**Formatting Requirements:**

- The full application is required to be under 10 MG in size in total, in order to meet Government of Ontario email requirements.
- Application page limits:
  1. General Information: no page limits.
  2. Project Overview: 1,500 character or ½ page limit.
     Linkages to other awards: 1,500 character or ½ page limit.
  3. Research Proposal: maximum of 3 pages.
  4. Project Milestones: maximum 1 page.
  5. Project Budget: no page limits.
  6. Attachments: CVs should be included as an attachment and must be a maximum of 3 pages per CV.
- Applications must be submitted in Microsoft Word format using Arial 12 font.
- Applications **must** be signed by the Vice-President of Research or any other officer of the institutions with the authority to bind the institution. A scanned signed signature page or a picture will be accepted.
- Applicants needing additional information may reach the ministry at: ORF.Excellence@ontario.ca

## Additional Information

Please contact the Ministry at [ORF.Excellence@ontario.ca](mailto:ORF.Excellence@ontario.ca) for a French version of this document and/or in a format that meets current accessibility requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).