



Accelerating Innovations into Care (AICE)

AIHS Funding and Support Guidelines

Background

"The sustainability of Canada's public health-care system will depend in large part on innovations that can enhance the efficiency, safety, quality, and productivity of health and health-care services"¹.

In Alberta, the [Strategic Clinical Networks \(SCNs\)](#) are the engines for research and innovation in the provincial health system, and part of their stated role in the ecosystem is to accelerate innovations into care. Important drivers of innovation include small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that develop new technologies with the potential to substantially improve patient outcomes, care quality, and efficiency within the health care system. Publicly-funded health systems and commercially-driven entities, however, face many challenges introducing new innovative health technologies into the health system. These challenges can in part be attributed to limited resources available to test the impact of innovative technologies developed by SMEs. To address this issue, Alberta Innovates – Health Solutions (AIHS) and TEC Edmonton through their [TEC Health Accelerator program \(TEC-HA\)](#) have developed a program for Accelerating Innovations into Care (AICE).

The AICE program provides the SCNs, and by extension the health system, with a lever to generate evidence required to support adoption of technologies

Strategic Clinical Networks (SCNs)

- Addiction & Mental Health
- Bone & Joint Health
- Cancer
- Cardiovascular Health and Stroke
- Critical Care
- Diabetes, Obesity and Nutrition
- Emergency
- Kidney
- Maternal, Newborn, Child and Youth
- Primary Health Care
- Respiratory Health
- Seniors' Health
- Surgery

¹ Canadian Conference Board of Canada's Council for Innovation Procurement in Health Care:
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/networks/cip/default.aspx>



developed by SME innovators. The funding program enables SCNs to test and validate the impacts of new technology on the burden of disease, particularly on disease pathways or workflow, with the intent of improving the health system and overall health of Albertans.

Objectives

The overarching goal of the AICE program is to support demonstration projects that test, validate and evaluate technological innovations aimed at improving the quality of health and healthcare for Albertans.

The program's objectives are to:

- Foster collaborative relationships between the SCNs and SMEs to address priority health related challenges in Alberta;
- Accelerate testing and advancement of innovations through demonstration projects to generate evidence within Alberta's health system with a view towards technology adoption;
- Build capacity within the SCNs to develop and implement industry-related projects that lead to health, social and economic gains for Albertans; and,
- Promote the entry of competitive health technologies into the Alberta and global market.

Description

The AICE program provides support for the SCNs and SMEs to collaborate in testing innovations that address significant Alberta-specific health problems.

The AICE program will support activities that:

- Align with the strategic priorities of at least one SCN and focus on solving health-related problems that affect Albertans along any part of the continuum of their care or disease pathway;
- Involve implementing, testing, and evaluating SME-based technologies, including medical devices, information technology (IT) and health informatics products, within the health system and led by at least one SCN;



- Include innovative technologies that address an Alberta health system “pull” (i.e. the product or technology must address an existing health related need in Alberta’s health system) and have a clearly articulated plan to commercialization and market entry.

Level of Funding: AIHS contribution for the AICE opportunity will be a maximum of \$150,000 per project. A minimum of 50% of total project costs must be provided from other sources (in-kind or cash contributions), with the SME contributing at least 25% of the total value of the project budget. Applications for the program will be accepted throughout the year but acceptance is contingent on availability of AIHS funding for this program.

Project Term: Maximum of 18 months.

Eligibility: Each demonstration project must be led by one SCN but may involve multiple SCNs. Projects are to be co-developed and co-delivered by the SCN(s) involved and the SME that owns the technology to be tested. In order to be considered for funding, a project proposal must be submitted on behalf of a SCN with the Lead and/or Co-Lead based at an Alberta public institution or organization. Involvement of Alberta-based SMEs is strongly encouraged.

Each eligible proposal will include:

- A project lead who is affiliated with a SCN and an Alberta-based public institution/organization;
- A SME² partner who is providing the innovation or technology. The relationship between the SCN and SME must be at arm’s length (i.e. there can be no legal relationship between any members of the SCN project team conducting the project and the SME);
- Endorsement of the full application by the leadership of each SCN involved; and
- A project protocol and study design, including expected outcomes and specific indicators that will be used to monitor and measure the success of the project.

² For the purposes of the AICE, an SME is defined as a private company with fewer than 500 full time employees and less than \$50,000,000 annual gross revenues.



Allowable Costs

The guiding principle is that AICE funding will be used within Alberta's health system to test the technology in a real world health care setting. Funding can be used for costs associated with the proposed activities; however, purchases of product or technology from the SME or costs incurred by the SME are considered ineligible. In-kind resources will only be recognized as an eligible contribution where the costs incurred are directly attributable to the project and easily auditable. More detailed information related to this will be provided in the application instructions.

Costs associated with the following will NOT be supported:

- Equipment (>\$500);
- Overhead/in-direct costs;
- Local programs or projects in one zone or one hospital that are not generalizable to other zones, hospitals or sectors;
- Purchases from SME providing the technology;
- Costs incurred by SME;
- General administrative and travel costs greater than 5% of total project budget;
- Salary support for physicians and academic faculty members involved, including the Leads and Co-Leads; and
- Costs associated with development and protection of intellectual property.

Assessment Criteria

The proposals will be assessed using the following criteria:

- **Alberta Health System Pull:** The technology being utilized in the project proposal must provide a solution to a significant, existing health-related problem in Alberta. There should be clear indication from the SCNs of interest in adopting the technology if the project is successful and endorsement by key operational leaders and decision makers is made;
- **Alberta Health System Impact:** The project proposal should demonstrate how the technology is anticipated to improve disease pathways or workflow in comparison to existing standards of care. The proposal should provide a summary of the evidence surrounding existing practices and identify clear quantitative measures to demonstrate



the technology's expected impact on patient outcomes, quality of care, and operations, including other technology that could be displaced, and budget implications;

- **Methodology & Deliverables:** The project proposal must demonstrate clear, measurable deliverables. The deliverables should include what the improvements in health and quality of care are in comparison to the standard of care or comparator product, as well as the anticipated operational impact within the health system of the product or technology. Applicants should engage with relevant operational decision makers to ensure the deliverables will provide the required evidence needed for decision making;
- **Feasibility & Partnerships:** The SCNs must have appropriate resources and capabilities, including any required operational approvals, to conduct the project testing in a relevant operational environment. SME(s) involved must have capabilities related to financing, governance, manufacturing, and providing the technology tested in-kind, and provide a high level business plan overview. The proposal must demonstrate ability to obtain the required matching funding and have a robust plan for subsequent steps of the technology development and health system adoption process.

Guiding questions are listed below to support applicants in formulating an approach. The list is presented as a guide and not all questions below are relevant since different proposals will emphasize different approaches.

Alberta Health System Pull

- What health-related problem in Alberta is the technology potentially able to reduce and what is the extent of the problem burden in Alberta (prevalence, incidence, associated health care costs, etc.)?
- Does the technology have the potential to reduce a health related problem in Alberta?
- How well does this proposal align with the priorities of the SCN(s) involved?
- Have relevant operational stakeholders been included in the proposal development (including, for example, procurement and health technology assessment groups, etc.)

Health System Impact

- Has the SCN mapped the anticipated impact that use of the technology will have on a disease pathway or workflow? Does this solution address key intervention points?
- Does the technology have a clearly defined value proposition relative to the current standard of care? Are there specific current technologies or practices that could be replaced?



- What would be required for broader implementation in the health system, including sustainability?
- What is the health, economic and social benefits for Albertans as a result of investing in this proposal?

Methodology & Deliverables

- Does the proposal clearly outline the scope, project plan, timelines and key deliverables that are measurable?
- How will success for the demonstration project be evaluated? What data will be used? How will the data be collected and by whom?
- What evidence is required to validate the stated value proposition for the technology?
- Is the project designed to validate the value proposition by measuring health outcomes and costs relative to the standard of care or comparator technology? Is quantitative evidence about the current value of the standard of care or comparator technology provided in the proposal?
- Will validation of the value proposition support system adoption? What additional dissemination/knowledge transfer strategies are required?
- Is the approach to implementing and testing the technology valid and based on sound scientific reasoning?

Feasibility & Partnerships

- Is the technology at a developmental stage to enable appropriate testing in a real operational health setting in Alberta?
- Is the proposal feasible given the available resources and timelines?
- Does the SCN have the resources to deploy the demonstration project?
- Does the SCN have additional funds to leverage towards the project and is the requirement of matching funds fulfilled?
- Is the company incorporated and does the company have an appropriate board /management in place?
- Is the company in a financial position to deliver on the project?
- Are there any potential perceived or real conflicts of interest between the SME and the SCN/applicants?
- Does the company have a reasonable business plan for the technology tested?
- How well are the decision makers in the health system engaged in the proposal?



Review Process

Proposals submitted to AIHS will be reviewed by a group of independent professionals with expertise in health care implementation, including industry experts, healthcare professionals and administrators, clinicians and/or others subject matter experts from not-for-profit organizations. The reviewer(s) will evaluate and make recommendations for funding to AIHS based on the assessment criteria outlined above. Funding decisions will be based on these reviews, acquisition of matching funds and alignment with the objectives of the AICE program.

Management, Reporting and Evaluation

AIHS and TEC, through the TEC-HA program will work with successful applicants to produce an approved Project Plan, which will be used to monitor the progress of the projects funded. Release of funds is pending confirmation of securing matching funding. An award may be cancelled if progress is delayed, inadequate and/or reporting requirements are incomplete.

The AICE program will be monitored and evaluated using the [AIHS Performance Management and Evaluation Framework](#). The framework includes a program evaluation strategy, logic model and related performance indicators. Reports submitted by the awardees will be used to determine the overall return on investment including, but not limited to, compliance with the Terms & Conditions document, program performance, evaluating value for money, potential for future programs, and awareness among relevant stakeholders and the general public in Alberta.

Contact Information

All interested applicants are to contact TEC Edmonton's TEC-HA consultants as the first step in the process to apply. These consultants will act as a broker between the SCNs and SMEs to ensure alignment of proposed projects with objectives of the AICE program and assist SCNs in finding technology solutions to fit health system needs.

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