



AIHS Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities (CRIO)

Program Guide



Background

“An idea is something an individual comes up with, but putting ideas into testing or practice requires teams. Anybody who tries to take a good idea across the goal line on their own will likely be held up at the one-yard line.”

Dr. Sam Weiss, University of Calgary, 2010 Gairdner Award Recipient

AIHS recognizes the tremendous health research capacity in Alberta based on the ingenuity and dedication of individual researchers, clinicians and entrepreneurs. Building on this foundation of great ideas, AIHS offers a broad portfolio of collaborative research opportunities to bring people together in teams to address health issues that require an interdisciplinary approach.

The AIHS Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities emphasize the collaborative production of new knowledge, coupled with the translation of research findings to knowledge or end users for impact on the health of Albertans and/or the health care system. From a research perspective, evidence demonstrates that quality collaborative research leads to higher quality relationships, increased relative impact factors and better overall outputs in terms of publications. There is also inherent value in linking researchers to end users in collaborative research at the front end of the research process, as this linkage enables new knowledge to be more readily put to use, thus leading to societal outcomes.

Focus on collaborative research

Supporting collaborative research is an important part of the AIHS mandate. Collaborative research is also aligned with key strategies identified in the *Alberta Health Research and Innovation Strategy* (AHRIS) under the enabling actions for Highly Skilled People to: “Enhance cross disciplinary research and innovation in areas of strategic priority.”



The AIHS Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities are focused on addressing health research needs, gaps or opportunities that:

- impact complex health issues;
- are defined with end users engaged in the process;
- are aligned to the AHRIS-defined thematic priority areas;
- achieve results more efficiently and effectively through interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches.

Objectives

The objectives of the AIHS Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities are to:

- catalyze and support collaborative, interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral and/or multi-institutional research with a focus on achieving solutions that address complex health problems or issues;
- support areas of research that are aligned with the thematic priority areas defined in Alberta’s Health Research and Innovation Strategy (see box)
- engage end users in the process to enhance impact on the health of Albertans and/or the health care system;
- provide opportunities for interdisciplinary research training and mentorship;
- encourage the use of the AIHS collaborative opportunities to connect Alberta to national and international initiatives and leverage additional opportunities.

Alberta’s Health Research and Innovation Strategy: Areas of strategic priority

Wellness at Every Age

- Child and maternal health
- Mental health and addiction
- Chronic disease
- Infectious disease
- Health promotion
- Vulnerable populations
- Injury prevention, acute care and rehabilitation
- Environmental health

Innovative Health Service Delivery

- Effectiveness and efficiency
- Innovative delivery models
- Chronic disease management support systems
- Personalized medicine



Description

AIHS is interested in supporting activities under the Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities that can lead to new research approaches to improve human health, including new methodological or technological approaches as well as new intellectual frameworks and perspectives from which to consider the problem. This portfolio focuses on the production of new knowledge, and the translation of research findings to appropriate end-users for impact on the health of Albertans and/or the health care system.

End users play a key role in knowledge translation and the translation of research results into health outcomes. Therefore AIHS encourages active and meaningful partnerships between research teams based in institutions (including universities, hospitals, and affiliated research institutions) and practice-, policy-, private sector- or community-based end user groups. End users can be other researchers, program administrators, caregivers, policy makers, practitioners, health-oriented community organizations, community-based foundations and organizations, local, provincial/territorial and national health charities and non-profit organizations, hospital and research institute foundations, the provincial health authority, contract provider agencies, public health departments, provincial/territorial government agencies, the private sector and patients. The roles of end users should be formally agreed upon to ensure equity and mutual benefit from the partnership.

Knowledge translation is key

AIHS supports the CIHR definition of knowledge translation as “the exchange, synthesis and ethically-sound application of knowledge—within a complex system of interactions among researchers and users—to accelerate the capture of the benefits of research for Canadians through improved health, more effective services and products, and a strengthened health care system.” AIHS recognizes that the approach to translation of research results will vary depending on the type of research being performed, and the likely users of research knowledge.

It is expected that end-user partners will contribute in a number of areas which include but are not limited to:

- helping formulate the research agenda(s) and the research questions;
- providing input into the development of research and training projects;



- advising on the need for the synthesis and dissemination of the research findings (if appropriate);
- influencing the application of the research findings to inform policies, programs and/or practices;
- funding a portion of the knowledge exchange/translation activities;
- supporting the conduct of the research.

Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities Portfolio

The portfolio of AIHS Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities recognizes the need for flexibility to optimize the value of various types and sizes of collaborations required to meet defined health outcomes. AIHS is offering support of a broad portfolio of opportunities for high quality, interdisciplinary groups of collaborators to engage in research and innovation initiatives. The Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities will initially encompass the Collaborative Project, Collaborative Program, and Collaborative Team. Applications can be submitted for any one of the opportunities; there is no requirement for, or expectation of, a staged progression through these opportunities.

Collaborative Project

Objective: To allow a small group of collaborators (approximately three) to come together to complete a defined project that requires the collaboration to exist. The focus is on a particular project, with a defined set of deliverables. There is no expectation that the collaboration will necessarily continue beyond the duration of this non-renewable grant, but this opportunity may also provide a framework for collaborators who may want to evolve their project into a more complex Collaborative Program or Collaborative Team.

Level of funding: Up to a maximum of \$250,000 per year.

Term: Up to three years, non-renewable.

Who can be a collaborator?

The term “collaborators” refers broadly to individuals working together towards a common goal and may include researchers, clinicians, practitioners, decision makers, industry partners, entrepreneurs, knowledge translation experts, and other knowledge or end users interested in conducting health research to improve health or enhance the health system.



Collaborative Program

Objective: To support a group of collaborators (three to five principal collaborators) who may already have an informal arrangement or shared funding to support interdisciplinary work, or have specific plans to develop such arrangements. The focus is on a more complex program of health research and innovation, than that of a single project.

Level of funding: Up to a maximum of \$500,000 per year.

Term: Up to five years. May be considered for one-time renewal based on successful achievement of agreed-upon deliverables defined in the management plan for years 1 to 5.

Collaborative Team

Objective: To foster and support a large interdisciplinary collaborative team or network with national or international stature. The complexity of the health issues of interest will require the involvement of many stakeholder groups.

Level of funding: Up to \$1,000,000 per year.

Term: Five years. May be considered for one-time renewal based on successful achievement of agreed-upon deliverables defined in the management plan for years 1 to 5.

Eligibility

Each eligible Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunity application will include:

- **Collaborative Lead:** The Collaborative Lead must be an individual with an established career and proven Leadership skills and experience. The Collaborative Lead will act as program director and will (in collaboration with their organization) assume administrative responsibility for the grant. It is expected that the Collaborative Lead will devote a significant and appropriate portion of her/his time to these tasks. There can be more than one Collaborative Lead. At least one of the Collaborative Leads will have their primary appointment at an Alberta-based organization.



- Collaborative leads can lead more than one CRIO project, Program and/or Team simultaneously.
- There are no limits on the number of applications a Collaborative lead can submit.
- Membership must include at least two additional appropriate collaborators with established track records in their field.
- Collaborative members will have an extensive record of success, be creative and original in their approach to research and its translation, and have experience working in teams. The specific contribution of each collaborative member, where applicable, must be described in the application.
- Collaborative groups with a nucleus of experienced investigators are encouraged to include promising new investigators as part of their group.
- End users and decision makers for the knowledge translation of the resulting research must be identified as part of the collaboration.
- Multi-institutional, multi-sectoral, and multi-jurisdictional collaborations are all strongly encouraged.
- Collaborative Programs and Collaborative Teams will be required to have the direct involvement of a project manager.
- Collaborative Programs and Collaborative Teams will be required to have an appropriate governance structure including arm's length Scientific Advisory Councils and defined approaches to conflict resolution.
- Collaborators from outside of Alberta who make a substantial intellectual contribution to the program must be listed as collaborators.
- Specific and justified requests that AIHS funding be used for work performed outside of Alberta will be considered. However, it is expected that the great majority of the funds will remain in Alberta.
- Co-funding from philanthropic, national or international organizations is encouraged and should be declared as part of the submission.

Allowable Costs

AIHS funding can be used for a broad range of collaboration-related costs including research infrastructure, research operating costs, core administrative/management costs, scientific support for the team, collaborative/linkage activity, knowledge exchange/translation activity, and training support.



The following costs are allowable:

- Research operating costs for the proposed collaborative activity. These costs must be distinct in their objectives from those for which team members currently receive other sources of funding. Operating costs could include the costs of developing and applying intervention projects as part of the research program.
- Support for research infrastructure including the purchase of equipment and maintenance contracts for common services and shared/core facilities.
- Costs of data collection, database and maintenance of information holdings directly related to the collaborative research activities.
- Costs of regional, national and international networking activities, including collaboration, planning, and knowledge exchange activities. Such activities must be directly related to the collaborative research activities.
- Salaries of research assistants, coordinators, technicians, administrative staff, knowledge exchange/translation coordinator, and other personnel who will enhance the collaborative research productivity of the team.
- Release-time payments to enable employees of practice-, policy- or community-based partners to participate in the research program. These payments are limited to 50% of salary costs, up to a maximum of \$100,000 per Collaborative Research Opportunity per year.
- A maximum of \$25,000 annually for a release-time stipend for the Collaborative Lead(s).
- Only participants who are trainees or research staff or associates may receive a salary, stipend, or honorarium from a Collaborative Research Opportunities Grant. The only exception to this rule is for the release-time stipends for the Collaborative Lead and employees of community partners as described.
- Collaborative Research Opportunities are expected to provide a superior interdisciplinary training environment. Support can be requested for all levels of trainees as long as the interdisciplinary nature of their training is emphasized.
- Costs involved in linkage with and dissemination of research findings to those who would use the results, as appropriate for the program. This may include any end-user groups such as other researchers, the public, practitioners, policy makers, community partners, and the private sector.



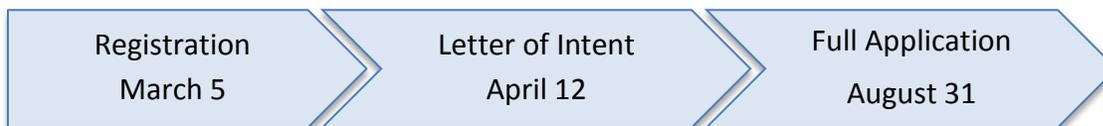
Application and Peer Review Process

The application process for a Collaborative Project is a three-stage submission process: registration, Letter of Intent (LOI) and full application. The application process for a Collaborative Program and Collaborative Team is a three-stage submission process: registration, letter of intent (LOI) and full application. Successful applicants at the LOI stage will be provided with advice from the expert scientific review panel and up to \$10,000 to complete the final submission for Collaborative Programs and up to \$25,000 to complete the final submission for Collaborative Teams.

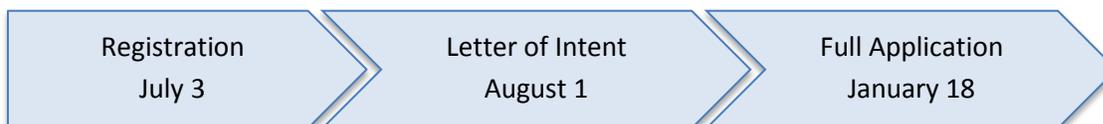
The LOIs and full applications will be evaluated by an expert review committee. The committee will be interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral. The committee will be broad-based with representation across the research continuum. It will include senior investigators with excellent track records of either fostering or conducting interdisciplinary research and/or in leading interdisciplinary research teams from academic and industry sectors, as well as individuals that can provide end-user perspectives.

2012 Competition Opportunities

Collaborative Project



Collaborative Program and Collaborative Team





Application Assessment Criteria

While separate research components may be included in the application, each Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunity application will be evaluated as a single, integrated entity. Applicants must demonstrate that the Collaborative Research Opportunities Grant not only brings added value but is essential to the group's approach to the complex research question and the health issue being addressed, as well as the group's ability to generate new knowledge and translate it into improvements in health or in the health care system.

General criteria for assessing applications are listed below. As different Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities will emphasize different interdisciplinary approaches to research, knowledge exchange and translation, it is understood that reviewers and committees may weigh the importance of questions differently for the Collaborative Projects, Collaborative Programs and Collaborative Teams.

Significance and Innovation

- How important is the health issue/question being addressed? Will the anticipated findings be of broad interest and applicability?
- How original are the hypotheses or the questions to be addressed, and how clearly are they formulated? Does the Collaborative Research Opportunity challenge existing paradigms? Does it use novel concepts, approaches, methodologies or tools?
- How well will the Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunity enhance the understanding and accelerate the resolution of the health question, problem or issue identified in the research proposed?
- How important and original are the contributions expected from the research proposed? What is the potential for important new knowledge or impact on health, health research or the health care system?
- Which specific end-user group would have a particular interest in the results of the proposed research? How is that end-user group being engaged and targeted for specific knowledge transfer and exchange activities?
- Is the relevance to the stated research priority area clear?



Approach

- How will the proposed research address the hypotheses or research questions?
- Why have previous discipline-focused approaches not been successful in solving the problem?
- Does the proposed program of research bring together, in a meaningful collaboration, researchers from different disciplines?
- Why is the interdisciplinary approach of the collaborative group necessary in addressing these hypotheses or questions?
- Is more than one research “pillar” represented in a meaningful way in the team members and the proposed research?
- Where applicable to the type of research proposed, does the proposal take into account the social, cultural and environmental factors surrounding the research problem?
- Has the relevant literature been appraised and evaluated in a critical fashion?
- Is the health question, problem or issue approached through an original, cohesive/integrated and feasible research plan that will generate valid, reliable and useful knowledge?
- How does the collaborative group have a plan for linking with, and dissemination of research findings to end-user groups who will utilize and apply the results?
- Has the collaborative group identified the roles and contributions of all the parties in planning, execution, and evaluation as well as management activities?
- What is the likelihood that the collaborative group can do the work proposed?

Collaborators

- How appropriate is the training or track record of the team members to the research proposed? Has the role of the individual team members been clearly defined ?
- How significant is the recent productivity of the applicants?
- What is the experience of the Collaborative Lead in leading a large research team? Does he/she have experience in leading interdisciplinary research teams?
- How does the expertise and experience of the co-principal investigators complement and augment that of the Collaborative Lead?
- What contributions are the multiple disciplines bringing to the pursuit of the stated research goals?



- Will processes be put into place to encourage development and ongoing success of collaborative interactions?
- Does the team include junior and senior investigators?

Environment

- Will the research training and mentoring environment provide a superior, interdisciplinary experience for trainees, including those with a health professional background?
- Does the research environment contribute to the probability of success?
- What is the degree of institutional support for the collaborative group? Is there evidence of a discrete process for inter-institutional support?

Engagement with end-user collaborators and/or partners

- Are governance and management structures in place to ensure the meaningful integration of end-user partner groups?
- How are partners involved and committed to the research program? What aspect of the research are end-users going to be involved in: formulating the research agenda, providing input into the development of research and training projects, disseminating findings or otherwise supporting knowledge translation?
- Does the proposal demonstrate the involvement of the necessary local, regional, provincial/territorial, national and/or international partners in the planning and execution of the research plan, and the application of the research results? Will this involvement facilitate research activities and outcomes that would not otherwise be possible?
- Overall is the knowledge translation plan appropriate to the research being undertaken and is it feasible?



Contact Information

For further information on the portfolio of Collaborative Research and Innovation Opportunities, please contact:

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