CIHR 2014 Foundation Scheme “live pilot”

Overview
Background and Context
Funding agencies around the world are being challenged to keep pace with a rapidly advancing research frontier and struggle to reduce the burden on applicants and reviewers.

The objectives of the reform to CIHR’s investigator-initiated programs and peer review processes are to:

- Capture excellence across all four research pillars, from knowledge creation to knowledge translation
- Capture innovative, original and breakthrough research
- Integrate new talent to sustain Canada’s pipeline of health researchers
- Improve sustainability of the long-term research enterprise

In meeting these objectives, the reform is also meant to address a number of current operational challenges:

- Workload and costs for applicants
- Peer review burden
- Lack of consistency and efficiency of peer review process
- Growing discrepancy between research evolution and committee structure
- Program complexity

A more detailed overview of why these changes are being proposed can be found on the CIHR Reforms website.
A design document was developed to outline a set of proposed changes to the Open Suite of Programs and peer review processes to address these challenges.

Feedback from the research community on the proposed changes was collected from February 8, 2012 to May 1, 2012:

- Work was completed to assess all of the feedback and enhance the overall design.
- The revised design was released in December of 2012.
New Design

Key elements of the design have been endorsed by CIHR’s Governing Council and Science Council:

1. Two separate, complementary funding schemes will replace the current Open Suite of Programs:
   - Project Scheme
   - Foundation Scheme

2. A peer review process that will include:
   - Application-focused review
   - Multi-stage review
   - Structured review criteria
   - Remote review of applications at the initial stage(s)

3. A College of Reviewers that will support excellent peer review across the spectrum of health research
Design Elements

Multi-stage competition process
- Effective screening of applications
- Decrease applicant burden and reviewer burden
- Focus reviewer attention on specific criteria for each stage of review

Application-Focused Review
- Avoid “force fitting” applications into standing committee structure
- Assign appropriate expertise to each application

Structured Review Criteria
- Minimize inconsistent/inappropriate application of review criteria
- Improve transparency of review process
- Decrease peer review burden

Remote (virtual) Screening/Review
- Facilitate access to expertise, including international
- Improve cost-effectiveness of the process
- Minimize group dynamics and committee culture biases
College of Reviewers

- To deliver on the vision and objectives, CIHR will work with funding partners and peer reviewers to build a College of Reviewers

- It will be a centrally-managed, national resource.

- The College will be made up of faculties of experts from both within and outside Canada.

- Specific roles will be defined to support the peer review processes (e.g. moderators and chairs) and to support the peer review system as a whole (e.g. faculty chair).

- Specific programs will be developed to train and mentor reviewers, and to monitor performance.

- Recruitment will include transitioning existing reviewers to the College (after discussions with Chairs and SOs), conducting targeted recruitment strategies and implementing a nomination process that can be used by institutions and existing reviewers.
The transition to the new Open Suite of Programs and peer review processes will occur over a number of years.

Course corrections and adjustments may be required along the way as we learn from the results of the pilots.

The transition strategy includes three phases:
1. 2012 to 2015: Piloting key peer review design elements
2. 2014 to 2016: Gradually phasing-in the new funding schemes
3. 2014 to 2016: Gradually phasing-out the existing Open funding programs
Pilots

Piloting key elements of the new design is a critical step in the implementation of the Reforms as it will:

- Allow CIHR to adjust and refine processes and systems in order to best support applicants and reviewers;
- Provide a learning opportunity for applicants, reviewers and CIHR staff; and
- Contribute to the key literature on peer review;

CIHR is using a number of existing competitions to run the pilots so that we can properly train applicants, orient reviewers, and monitor outcomes in a managed fashion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fellowships</td>
<td>Second pilot currently underway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge Synthesis</td>
<td>First pilot currently underway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnerships for Health Systems Improvement (PHSI)</td>
<td>Will occur using the 2014 competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundation Scheme</td>
<td>First two competitions will be pilots (2014 and 2015)</td>
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Foundation Scheme
The Foundation Scheme is designed to contribute to a sustainable foundation of health research leaders.

It is expected to:

- Support a broad base of research leaders across career stages, areas and disciplines relevant to health;
- Develop and maintain Canadian capacity;
- Provide flexibility to pursue new, innovative lines of inquiry as part of an overall program of research;
- Contribute to the creation and use of health-related knowledge.

The Foundation Scheme will have one competition a year.
What is the competition Process for the new Foundation Scheme?

The Foundations scheme will be a multi-stage competition with 2 distinct applications and 3 review stages. Only successful Stage 1 applicants will be invited to apply to Stage 2.

**Stage 1 – Caliber of the Applicant(s)**
- Submit Stage 1 Application
- Complete Stage 1 Remote Review
- Match application to reviewers
- Results

**Stage 2 - Quality of the Program, Expertise, Experience and Resources**
- Submit Stage 2 Application
- Complete Stage 2 Remote Review
- Match application to reviewers
- Results

**Stage 3 – Final Assessment**
- Separate Interdisciplinary Committee
- Complete Final Assessment
- Selection
What are the adjudication criteria for the Foundation Scheme?

A structured adjudication process will be used to help reviewers assess applications.

**Stage 1 Adjudication**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Caliber of the Applicant(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>A B C D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significance of Contributions</td>
<td>A B C D</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>A B C D</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vision and Program Direction</td>
<td>A B C D</td>
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**Stage 2 Adjudication**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the Program</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Concept</td>
<td>A B C D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Approach</td>
<td>A B C D</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of the Expertise, Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Resources</td>
<td>A B C D</td>
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<td>Expertise</td>
<td>A B C D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentorship/Training</td>
<td>A B C D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of Support Environment</td>
<td>A B C D</td>
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The budget requested will not be factored into the scientific assessment of the application; however, reviewers will be asked to provide a recommendation on the appropriateness of the requested amount.
What are the application requirements for the Foundation Scheme?

Applicants will submit a structured application and CV to the Foundation Scheme.

**Stage 1**

- **Summary** (~1 page)
- **Caliber of the Applicant(s)**
  1. Leadership (~ ½ page)
  2. Significance of Contributions (~ ½ page)
  3. Productivity (~ ½ page)
- **Vision and Program Direction** (~1 page)

**Stage 2**

- **Summary** (~1 page)
- **Quality of the Program**
  1. Research Concept (~ 3 pages)
  2. Research Approach (~ 2 pages)
- **Quality of the Expertise, Experience, and Resources**
  1. Expertise (~ 3 pages)
  2. Mentorship and Training (~ 2 pages)
  3. Quality of Support Environment (~ 1 page)
- **Budget** (~ ½ page)

Application requirements are now available on the web. These will be updated if any substantive changes are required as a result of the ongoing pilots.
What are the requirements for the budget request in the Foundation scheme?

- Applicants must:
  - demonstrate that the amount requested is appropriate to support the proposed program of research
  - ensure the budget is realistic and well-justified

- For existing CIHR grantees, budget requests should be consistent with the applicant's previous CIHR open grant research funding history. Applicants will be required to justify requests that are significantly higher than their historical grant levels.

- Successful Foundation Scheme applicants will have all existing Open grants (held as the NPI) terminated and replaced by a Foundation grant to support their program of research.

- A budget module is currently being developed and will be communicated when available.

- Grants will be awarded to Program Leader(s). Distribution of grant funds will be at their discretion within the guidelines and policies of their institution.
How will the ranking process work with 5 reviewers?

Reviewers will assess applications through a multi-stage process and submit a ranked list.

Each application will be matched to five reviewers with each reviewer assessing approx. 15-20 applications. Structured assessments will be conducted by individual reviewers using established review criteria.

Face-to-face meetings will be held in Stage 3. The discussion will focus on applications with a high variance in reviewer rankings.

Preliminary reviews will be shared with other reviewers assigned to a specific application. Reviewers can only see the other reviews once their prelim. reviews are submitted. After discussions reviewers will submit their final ranked list.

Each application will have 5 rankings (one from each reviewer), a consolidated ranking and variance (std. dev.).
What is the requirement for Institutional Support?

- Institutional support for the Foundation Scheme will be the same as with all other CIHR grants.

- This includes a formal sign-off from institutions.

- Early design considerations had contemplated enhanced institutional support but it was determined that current requirements are sufficient.
How many Foundation grants will be funded in the first competition?

- Approximately $500M will be available for the 2014-15 Transitional OOGP and 2014 Foundation Scheme “Live Pilot”.

- Modeling assumptions based on historical data estimate 120 to 250 Foundation grants will be supported in the first pilot.

- Once fully implemented, the Foundation Scheme will fund approximately 114 grants a year.

- An investment at this level assumes a robust application pressure therefore, the actual number of grants awarded may vary.
What are the competition timelines?

• The 2014 Foundation Scheme “live pilot” funding opportunity was published in November 2013.

• Key dates include:

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Registration Date</td>
<td>June 23, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application Stage 1 Deadline</td>
<td>September 15, 2014</td>
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<td>Anticipated Stage 1 Notice of Decision Date</td>
<td>December 1, 2014</td>
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<td>Application Stage 2 Deadline</td>
<td>February 5, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anticipated Stage 2 Notice of Decision Date</td>
<td>May 15, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anticipated Stage 3 Notice of Decision Date</td>
<td>July 2, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding Start Date</td>
<td>July 1, 2015</td>
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• Application requirements and Q&A’s were developed to help researchers prepare

• Application templates will be available through ResearchNet in June 2014
What are the eligibility requirements for the Live Pilot competitions?

The following health researchers are eligible to apply to the 2014 Foundation Scheme "live pilot" competition:

1. On July 30th 2013, the Program Leader is the Nominated Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator of a CIHR Open program grant expiry date no earlier than October 1, 2014 and no later than September 30, 2015.

2. On July 30th 2013, the Program Leader has never held Open CIHR funding as a Nominated Principal Investigator or a Co-Principal Investigator.

3. The Program Leader is considered to be a new/early-career investigator, as defined by CIHR, at the Stage 1 application deadline, September 15, 2014.

Note: If an eligible researcher chooses to submit their application to the 2014 OOGP for early renewal, they can still register for the 2014 Foundation Scheme “live pilot” competition. If their OOGP renewal is successful they will be required to withdraw from the Foundation competition unless they hold another eligible grant or are a new investigator.

Institutions were provided with lists of researchers who, as of July 30, 2013, have Open grants ending within the eligible timeframes. Please contact your research office or Roadmap-Plan.Strategique@cihr-irsc.gc.ca if you have any questions regarding your eligibility.
What kind of researchers should be applying to the Foundation Scheme?

Researchers that:

- are widely recognized in their field and community, demonstrating a history of influential roles
- have the ability to establish, resource, and direct major projects or programs of research
- have significantly advanced knowledge and/or its translation into improved health care, health systems, and/or health outcomes
- have engaged, trained, and/or launched the career paths of promising individuals in research and/or other health-related non-academic fields
- can demonstrate an outstanding level of research outputs based on prior work
- previous work has generated high quality research outputs

Applicants will be evaluated based on what is expected for their career stage and area of research.
Is there a separate stream for new investigators?

- New/early-career investigators are eligible to apply to the Foundation Scheme competition as a Program Leader.

- CIHR defines a new/early career investigator as:

  Someone who, at the Stage 1 application deadline, has assumed his/her first independent academic position (e.g., faculty appointment) within the last 5 years (60 months).

- New investigators will be assessed with other applicants in Stages 1 and 2. Reviewers will be asked to consider career stage when assessing the application against the specified criteria.

- At Stage 3, new/early-career investigators will be assessed and ranked against other new/early career investigators.
Are the terms Nominated Principal Applicant and Co-applicant being used in the Foundation Scheme?

• The program is designed to contribute to a sustainable foundation of health research leaders.

• As part of the new scheme some new terms are being introduced. The applicant(s) is/are the Program Leader(s)

• No differentiation will be made between multiple Program Leaders on a single Foundation grant, all are equally responsible for overseeing the direction of the research program.

- Nominated Principal Investigator
- Co-Principal Investigator

- Co-Investigator
- Collaborator
- Partner
- Knowledge User

Program Leader(s) ➔ Expert
Why is CIHR launching the Transitional OOGP Competition in parallel to the Foundation Scheme?

- The last OOGP competition (i.e. Transitional OOGP) and the 2014 Foundation Scheme “live pilot” will be run in parallel.
- Launching the two funding opportunities at the same time will allow the community to understand how the two programs relate to each other.
- Applicants who are unsuccessful in Stage 1 of the 2014 Foundation Scheme “live pilot” competition will have the opportunity to apply to the Transitional OOGP competition.
- Principal Applicants must not have submitted a Stage 2 application as a Program Leader to the 2014 Foundation Scheme “live pilot” competition.
- The application requirements and processes for the Transitional OOGP will remain the same as the current OOGP.
What strategies are being implemented to manage the funding gaps during the transition?

- Science Council looked at many options for transitioning to the new schemes.

- Unfortunately the transition plan that has been put in place does not work for everyone and there are a few gaps in funding.

- Originally, the first gap in funding for some researchers was for a 6 month period (between the funding decision date for Foundation scheme and the date their Open grant expires.)

- CIHR explored options and was able to reduce this gap to 3 months.

- As a result, funding for the 2014 Foundation Scheme and Transitional OOGP will begin July 1, 2015.

- For researchers that do not see themselves as Foundation grant holders, there is an 11 month gap between the last OOGP (Transitional OOGP) and the first Project Scheme. To address this gap CIHR is temporarily allowing early renewals without penalties.
Questions regarding the Foundation Scheme Competition can be directed to:
Roadmap-Plan.Strategique@cihr-irsc.gc.ca