THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Support Programs to Advance Research Capacity
VP Research & Innovation

SPARC Guidebook: CIHR Planning & Dissemination Grants

Please always consult the ResearchNet Funding Opportunity for the most up-to-date information about Planning & Dissemination Grant competitions. If there is any discrepancy between the instructions in this guidebook and the ResearchNet Funding Opportunity, follow the instructions in ResearchNet.

Contents

About this Guidebook

This guidebook was created based on a review of submitted proposals to CIHR's Planning and Dissemination Grant (PCS) competitions, and interviews with faculty who successfully applied to a recent PCS competition and also served on a PCS peer review committee. The goal of this guidebook is to provide information, key considerations, and best practices for UBC faculty interested in preparing a PCS application.

This document is a companion to the SPARC-developed Activity Description templates for PCS Grants (separate templates are available for both Planning Grants and Dissemination Grants). These templates have recommended headings and suggested text, and is formatted to align with CIHR's guidelines for attachments; they are available to download from SPARC's CIHR resources webpage (CWL required).

All aspects of this competition may change (timing, objectives, evaluation criteria, application requirements) and the Institutes/Initiatives offering priority announcements are different on a competition-by-competition basis. **Always consult the ResearchNet Funding Opportunity to confirm competition details.**

Advantages of Planning & Dissemination Grants

There are many advantages to applying for, and holding, a PCS. Some of the general benefits and advantages include:

- Relatively high success rates (>60% nationally)
- Historically only a 4-page proposal
- The competitions are regularized, with application deadlines in the Winter and Summer
- For applicants who are early career researchers (ECRs): **(i)** these grants can provide starter funds, and **(ii)** some Institutes/Initiatives have allocations specifically for ECRs
- An opportunity to develop knowledge translation (KT) skills and establish a KT track record

Benefits specific to Planning Grants:

- Excellent for funding the preliminary work required for larger research projects that use integrated KT strategies
- A good mechanism to approach a new research area, although applicants are advised to draw clear linkages to their existing research program
- The application can be re-purposed as a MSHR BC (formerly MSFHR) Convening and Collaborating Grant (C2)
- An application for a major operating grant (e.g., CIHR Project) will be more competitive if the planning process was successfully peer-reviewed and involved substantive engagement with knowledge users
- Establishes the 'proof of concept' for community-based research projects

Benefits specific to Dissemination Grants:

- Large events often have multiple industry and other sponsors, however, those sponsors may have restrictions on how their funds can be used. Although the PCS funds may be only a small amount of the overall event budget, the funds can be used for expenses that the other sponsors do not cover.
- The application can be re-purposed as a MSHR BC (formerly MSFHR) Reach Grant

Situating Planning & Dissemination Grants in the Research Ecosystem

Planning

Securing funds ahead of a major operating grant submission

PCS can be integrated into a PI's research ecosystem by providing "seed" funds towards a new initiative, such as applying for an operating grant or potential commercialization of a discovery. The Activity Description (proposal) should:

1. Build a strong and clear connection between the PI's research program and the proposed PCS project, even if it is for a new foray
2. Clearly articulate the new initiative early in the Activity Description
3. In addition to describing the project benefits to the applicant and the research program, provide a more holistic view of the project benefits for stakeholders and intergenerational research (e.g., capacity-building, networking, partnership development, mentoring)

The length of time between formally beginning planning activities with the research partner and submitting an operating grant (e.g., CIHR Project Grant) based on those activities is approximately one year. The length of time varies depending on the intensity of consultations with research partners and newness of the relationship, with higher-intensity consultations and newer relationships taking more time.

Sample timeline for application to February PCS Competition

December (previous year) – January (current year)	Prepare PCS application
February (current year)	Submit PCS application
June (current year)	PCS funding starts
June – November (current year)	Conduct planning activities
December (current year) – January (following year)	Write Project Grant with Knowledge Users
March (following year)	Submit Project Grant application

Sample timeline for application to July PCS Competition

May – June (current year)	Prepare PCS application
July (current year)	Submit PCS application
January (following year)	PCS funding starts
January – June (following year)	Conduct planning activities
July – August (following year)	Write Project Grant with Knowledge Users
September (following year)	Submit Project Grant application

Caveats and Exceptions

1. PCS planning activities typically include working with research partners to *identify* a major operating grant competition to apply to. In this situation, you cannot work backwards from the operating grant application deadline.
2. If the main planning workshop will be held in conjunction with another major event (e.g., national conference),[1] consider following the timeline outlined in the Dissemination section below.

[1] This strategy of 'piggy-backing' often increases attendance and reduces travel costs. Piggy-backing is formally recommended by CIHR as a practical approach for integrated KT (https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/49505.html).

Dissemination

Securing funds ahead of an event

When possible, apply for PCS funding two cycles ahead of the event. PCS grants are for one year, so you can submit your first PCS application one year ahead of the event and if not successful, you can re-submit during the next PCS cycle.

Sample timeline for applying to February PCS competition

December (previous year) – January (current year)	Prepare PCS application
February (current year)	Submit PCS application
July (current year)	Re-submit PCS application, if necessary
January – May (following year)	Host event

Sample timeline for applying to July PCS competition

May – June (current year)	Prepare PCS application
July (current year)	Submit PCS application
February (following year)	Re-submit PCS application, if necessary
June – November (following year)	Host event

There may not be any timeline concerns if the PCS is to fund activities that do not have a defined time point (e.g., creating a video).

Sex- and Gender-Based Considerations in Research

Although PCS grants do not support the direct costs of research, sex- and gender-based considerations can still be integrated into the application. Here are some examples:

- Planning: include sex- and/or gender-based analyses (SGBA) in the literature review and explore potential sex- and gender-based research considerations at the main planning workshop
- Dissemination: there are numerous ways to include SGBA content in a conference, such as requesting that all speakers include SGBA in their presentation, or including one conference session dedicated to SGBA
- Research team: recruit a sex and gender champion on to the research team or assign this role to an existing team member
- End-of-grant outputs: disaggregate data by sex and/or gender in research reports
- Include information about sex and gender considerations in the mandatory textbox in ResearchNet (Task > Enter Proposal Information > Details) and in the Activity Description.

For more general information about SGBA in research, please consult CIHR’s online resources available here.

Capacity Building

External Stakeholders

Planning activities should integrate external stakeholders as much as possible into the project activities. In addition to consulting with stakeholders, consider inviting research partners into the “pre-planning” process and onto any committees or working groups.

Dissemination activities should also integrate external stakeholders as much as possible, but there may be fewer opportunities to do this. Opportunities for external stakeholders, such as patients and community groups, include:

- Membership on the planning and/or scientific program committee(s)
- Allocations for speaker slots and subsidies/bursaries for attending the event
- Sessions designed for patients and/or community groups at the event, such as information on obtaining funding for research projects, research methods, and experiences working with research teams

Trainees

PCS provide lots of opportunities for trainee involvement, which is reviewed favourably. Trainees can be Nominated Principal Applicants and can be part of the research team. A trainee development strategy could include tasks and activities for masters, PhDs, and post-docs such as:

- Planning: event rapporteur; assisting with literature reviews; writing blog posts, commentaries, and scientific manuscripts
- Dissemination: membership on the planning and/or scientific program committee(s); working as session rapporteurs; trainee allocations for poster presentations, speaker slots, subsidies/bursaries for attending the event, and 'best of' awards; trainee-focused sessions at the event (e.g., hands-on equipment workshops, career exploration, skills development, and networking with other trainees and PIs); assisting with end-of-event outcome reports

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) considerations are becoming increasingly important at CIHR. The PCS ResearchNet Funding Opportunity now includes language about integrating EDI considerations into two dimensions of the grant:

1. *Team* – "Proposals must outline measures for how organizers of planning and dissemination events and activities will meaningfully engage members of groups underrepresented in science"; "The application must clearly describe the research team's continued commitment to engaging a diversity of members, in particular related to how they will address team composition and recruitment processes; research environment; training activities; and/or knowledge translation activities, as applicable" (Description section); and
2. *Event* – "The inclusion of a minimum of **one concrete practice** that will be put in place to ensure that the planning and/or dissemination event is inclusive of groups who have historically faced barriers in the research ecosystem, including but not limited to those marginalized by gender, Indigenous Peoples, racialized minorities, persons with disabilities, and members of 2S LGBTQ+ communities and will ensure that participation is diverse" (Evaluation Criteria section).

EDI considerations for these two dimensions can be conceptualized as:

	Team	Event
Equity	All qualified individuals have an equal (or equitable) opportunity to join the team (recruitment).	All relevant stakeholders have an equal (or equitable) opportunity to participate (pre-event promotion and outreach).
Diversity	Project responsibilities are distributed based on interest and qualification, and training opportunities are available to interested and qualified team members (access to opportunities).	Diversity of event attendees and speakers (participation during the event) has been maximized.
Inclusion	Team personnel and the environment fully support and integrate all members (operations).	The venue has been selected and/or the plan developed to maximize accessibility (operations during the event).

Important! There are special considerations in the Evaluation Criteria section for events that involve First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. Consult the ResearchNet Funding Opportunity for more information.

General strategies

- Consider appointing an EDI Champion on the team. This person can serve as an *ex officio* member on a planning committee/working group and ensure that EDI considerations are integrated into the project.
- Large conferences often have a planning and/or scientific programming committee. Commit to multiple kinds of diversity on the committee(s), such as academic and non-academic, career stage (including trainees), and geography.
- Research teams can mitigate unconscious bias in the team composition and recruitment, research environment, and training activities by taking CIHR's free course on unconscious bias (available here).
- If there is a competition or selection process for granting subsidies or awards (often to trainees), ensure that the selection process accounts for EDI-related issues. For example, form a selection committee with decision-making by more than one person to prevent potential bias. The New Frontiers in Research Fund guide to EDI has helpful tips that can be adapted for competition selection criteria (see the Team Composition and Recruitment section here) and the Canada Research Chairs program has a guide on EDI considerations related to evaluating productivity (available here). Subsidies and/or awards may also be allocated specifically to individuals from communities or backgrounds that are underrepresented in the discipline.
- UBC's Equity and Inclusion Office has a guide for accessible and inclusive in-person event planning (available here). This guide touches on aspects of EDI for people who have a disability.

The following recommendations encourage participation across multiple diversities:

Equity	• If event participation is open to any interested stakeholders, ensure that the event is widely advertised with specific outreach to underrepresented groups. • Events should not be held on cultural or religious days of significance.

Diversity	• In addition to proposing a project that benefits stakeholders from multiple regions across BC and/or Canada, include people from different regions as much as possible. Geographic diversity can be reflected in non-academic research partners, committee membership, event attendees, and rosters of speakers. • If the event includes more than a few speakers, aim for gender parity and include the speakers list as an attachment. Note that requests for event funding from the Institute of Gender and Health must include a speaker list with gender parity or a stated commitment to gender parity; consult the ResearchNet Funding Opportunity for instructions.
Inclusion	• **In-person meetings**: Gender-neutral bathrooms should be available. Where possible, provide nursing and multi-faith prayer rooms along with accommodations for childcare (onsite or through a subsidy). • **Virtual meetings**: Virtual meetings should be hosted on a platform that is compatible with assistive technologies for people with disabilities and accommodate participants using low-cost technologies (e.g., landline phone). For more ideas, there are numerous online resources designed to increase accessibility of virtual meetings.

Budget Tips

The budget maximum is set by the Institute/Initiative (or 'priority announcement') that you are applying to. You can only apply to one Institute/Initiative per application (per ResearchNet Funding Opportunity instructions), and you cannot have multiple applications that are identical or essentially identical under review with CIHR at the same time (per Section 5.2 here). Consult the ResearchNet Funding Opportunity for allowable costs, ineligible expenses, and special budgetary considerations for projects involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples.

Planning

Budget expenses for planning activities typically focus on expenses related to a main planning event, such as travel for the PI and/or stakeholders and event costs:

- Travel: transportation (economy flights + ground transportation; mileage; train tickets), accommodations, per diems
- Event: catering, A/V, venue rental, stipends for key stakeholders, printed materials (agenda, booklets, etc.)

Additional notes and considerations:

- In addition to the main planning event, budgets can cover networking expenses for the research team and its partners to conduct ongoing consultations; these expenses should be fully justified.
- Consider hiring a large-group facilitator for the main planning event. Large-group facilitators typically charge for pre-event preparations and their activities on the day. They may also draft a report with the event's findings and outcomes. PIs often facilitate the planning event themselves, but a large-group facilitator can free up the PI to engage more fully alongside stakeholders.
- International travel is scrutinized closely (notwithstanding specific parameters of a priority announcement) and should be justified with evidence of a strong and preferably well-established research partnership. A strong and detailed letter of support from the research partner is very important.

Dissemination

The following tips relate to large conferences or symposia:

- Large symposia/conferences typically have large budgets and the maximum amount that can be requested from the PCS competition is a relatively small proportion of the overall budget. However, it is worth considering applying for PCS grant as an opportunity for CIHR to be listed as a sponsor of the event.
- Be specific about what the CIHR funds will be used for (e.g., trainee support, travel costs for select speakers) and how these expenses are particularly useful or relevant to CIHR. For example, using PCS funds to subsidize registration fees for community members is clearly aligned with CIHR's Citizen Engagement Framework, and providing bursaries to trainees aligns with CIHR's commitment to health research training.
- Include the full conference budget in the application with clear demarcations noting how funds from CIHR and other sources will be used.

Activity Description (Proposal)

The "Activity Description" attachment describes the research activities related to the grant, similar to the Proposal for other competitions. Please consult the relevant SPARC Activity Description template, available for both a Planning Grant and a Dissemination Grant on the SPARC website (CWL required).

Other Application Materials

Consult the ResearchNet Funding Opportunity for instructions about other application materials, as there are attachments (some mandatory and others optional) depending on the activity proposed and who is involved. ResearchNet allows for two different kinds of attachments: 'Other' and 'Letters of Support'.

July 2023 Update:

- If applicable, an Applicant Partner Conflict of Interest (COI) document is required to describe the role of all applicant partners. Describe how/if they will contribute to the project's activities, along with any consideration of risk and/or conflict of interest.

Some additional considerations include:

- Some applications may have quite lengthy attachments, especially applications for dissemination events which require the program and/or agenda to be attached. For these applications, consider making a table of contents that lists all the different items in the file. If you have Adobe Acrobat Pro, you can use the header function to label the top of each page in accordance with the table of contents
- Letters of Support (LoS): In general, LoS are optional but highly recommended. The LoS should describe the partner's contributions to the project (specific cash or in-kind contributions), role on the project, rationale for participating, and plans to use the project's outcomes. These letters should be as specific as possible; do not append general or generic LoS.
- A Letter of Support is mandatory for Early Career Researcher (ECR) requesting funds reserved to them, a letter from their Institution confirming the date and title of their first academic appointment, labelled as "Early Career Researcher Confirmation".
- For in-person events or meetings, consider attaching information about the venue to communicate feasibility, commitment to the project, and possibly EDI considerations (e.g., accessibility). Venue

information could include maps (relation to city, airport, etc.), floorplan, and pictures of key session locations (e.g., poster session, keynote lecture hall, seminar room, etc.).

Relevant attachments for dissemination activities include:

- Speakers list (name, affiliation, role, confirmed or potential, topic of talk)
- Draft program booklet including agenda (topic and the speaker), speaker biographies, timetables, coffee breaks, receptions and networking time, poster viewing sessions, wayfinding maps, venue information, and anything else that is relevant

Reviewers understand that information and plans will change, but it is important to show strong organization in advance of the meeting and clarity of vision.

Relevance Form

When filling out the mandatory Relevance Form for the selected priority announcement, describe how your application meets the criteria for your selected Institute/Initiative. Consider linking to the goals and/or aims listed in your Activity Description, then showing how they align with the selected Institute/Initiative.

Check the Sponsor Description section to see if there are any EDI-specific and/or sex- and gender-based requirements specified for the priority announcement you have selected. This information should be provided in the Relevance Form.

Reminders:

- In the dropdown list of "Priority Announcement/Funding Pool Title", select only **one** Institute or Initiative
- Early Career Researchers (ECRs): indicate your status here to be eligible for ECR funds