McGill | M[i]⁴ Interdisciplinary Initiative in Infection and Immunity

MI4 Emergency COVID-19 Research Funding

1. Background and Description of Funding Opportunity

1.1. Background

The overarching goal of the McGill Interdisciplinary Initiative in Infection and Immunity (MI4) is to foster interdisciplinary research to discover, develop and implement innovative solutions for infectious and immune threats to human health. The COVID-19 pandemic forces us to confront an infectious disease for which no treatment is known and no preventive vaccine is available. At present, our best and only tool appears to be social distancing, to flatten the curve. However, this approach comes at significant economic and social cost and is not sustainable over the long term.

The MI4 Emergency COVID-19 Research Funding (ECRF) opportunity is seeking bold and innovative proposals, spanning two broad areas of research:

- Biomedical studies focusing on the development of new diagnostic, therapeutic and preventive measures to mitigate the threat from COVID-19, and/or;

- Population health, health system and policy studies focusing on protecting at-risk communities from infection, accelerating and enhancing the impact of control measures, and minimizing the indirect consequences of the pandemic itself.

The MI4 ECRF opportunity provides one-time funding for 6-month projects that can provide immediate answers, in preparation for sustained transmission or resurgence of the pandemic after initial control.

1.2. Key Dates
- MI4 ECRF call for funding launched: March 20, 2020
- Round 1 - Deadline to submit proposals: Friday, March 27, 2020, 12:00 PM EST
- Round 2 - Deadline to submit proposals: Upon receipt of the next 40 applications, or as of Friday, April 17, 2020 at 12:00 PM EST (whichever occurs first)

    Subsequent Rounds of ECRF are to be determined based on availability of funds. Check the MI4 website for the latest updates.

2. MI4 ECRF Funding Available and Funding Cycles

2.1. Objectives of the ECRF Program

To rapidly provide answers and solutions for biomedical and non-biomedical questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2. Scope

MI4 ECRF program will support innovative approaches that will provide answers within a 6-month timeframe. Previously unsuccessful submissions may only be resubmitted if invited to do so in the Notice of Review.

2.3. Team composition

MI4 ECRF grants can be held at any McGill University Department or McGill University-affiliated Research institute. **Subcontracts to investigators outside McGill University and its affiliated institutions must be clearly justified.**

2.4. Eligibility

The Principal Investigators must hold a McGill appointment.

2.5. Available funds

Currently an envelope of up to $1.2 million has been reserved for Round 2 and future rounds of this program. Further funds may be allocated to this program as they become available.

2.6. Grant term

MI4 ECRF grants will be for a period of 6 months and will be non-renewable. Unspent funds must be returned to MI4 at the end of this period, or if other external support for the project is obtained.

3. Submission Deadline

The MI4 ECRF applications can be sent at any time, until the announced changes in the program, as a PDF to grantsmcgilli4.med@mcgill.ca

4. Additional Information

If additional information is required to complete the MI4 ECRF submission, please contact admincoordmcgilli4.med@mcgill.ca . Generally, a response will be provided within 1 business day.

5. MI4 ECRF Package

Free-Form Project Description (2-pages max to cover 5.1 to 5.3, extra material will not be reviewed).

Use the same headers for each section as shown below and respect the required page length per section.

5.1 Project Summary

- **5.1.1 Project Title**
- **5.1.2 Lay Summary (a single short paragraph written for a non-scientific audience)**
- **5.1.3 Collaborators**

5.2 Project Description

5.2.1 Research Rationale and Background

Explain the research question and concept behind the research and justify the novelty of your idea. State how your research will help to address coronavirus outbreaks.

5.2.2 Proposed research activities
- Briefly, describe the proposed study and timeline for the proposed experiments. Employ language that is comprehensible to an interdisciplinary scientific audience.

- Describe the specific research outputs and their impact in the context of informing and controlling coronavirus infections and outbreaks, provide metrics where possible. Avoid general outcomes such as new knowledge, better understanding, or highly qualified personnel (HQP) training.

5.3 Budget

Provide a brief budget, not to exceed $100,000 over the 6-month period (See Section 7 - Eligible Costs).

Exception: clinical trials application budgets can exceed $100,000 to a maximum of $250,000. However, budgets for clinical trial applications will be subject to detailed reviewed and approval by the MI4 Clinical Research Platform.

5.4 References (1 page max)

5.5 CVs

Using the NIH Bio-Sketch format (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm), attach to the main package the CV of the applicant and a maximum of two other key project team members. Please limit each CV to 5 pages and only PDF format is acceptable.

6. Submission Format and Procedure

The free form section of the application must adhere to the following format:

- Page size: 8½ x 11 inches
- Margins: no less than 2.54 cm (1 inch) on all sides
- Font: Times New Roman (no smaller than 12 pts) or Arial (no smaller than 11 pts).
- Assemble the Free-Form and CVs into one PDF package with bookmarks; each page to be consecutively numbered. Please do not submit more than one document.
- Graphs and illustrations may be included, and may be in colour if they are of high enough quality to be legible upon printing, but will count as part of the set page limits for each section
- If the Free-Form Project Description exceeds the maximum page limit it will not be reviewed.

7. Eligible Costs

Funds for successful MI4 ECRF awards will be disbursed in one installment.

Eligible Costs: Only the following are eligible costs:
- Salary support for trainees and research personnel (including benefits).
- Materials and supplies (consumables)
- Core or platform fees for project related samples or data
- Data evaluation costs by appropriate research experts
- Small equipment up to $5,000 total

Overhead: There is no overhead component to the MI4 ECRF award. All the awarded funds are to be directed towards eligible costs.

8. Review

8.1. Assessment Criteria

MI4 ECRF submissions will be evaluated by an internal committee comprised of directors of MI4 not applying to the competition and representatives of the McGill Research Community. Proposals will be adjudicated based on their degree of innovation, feasibility, and impact.

8.2. Review Process and Funding Approval Time Frame

Proposals deemed important and immediate will be funded within 5 working days of review.

Conflict of Interest (COI): MI4 will adopt a COI policy to ensure that anyone participating in the review process does not have a COI. Any person declaring a COI, or a potential COI, will be required to recuse themselves from the review process. COIs will be defined using the CIHR definition that can be found at: http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/46378.html.

9. Approval Agreement

MI4 will contact the PI with the funding decision following grant review. A fund release agreement will be sent to the awarded PI outlining the terms and conditions of the award. Awardees are asked to sign and return the award agreement as a proof that they accept the award and its terms. Documentation of appropriate biohazard, radioactive, animal use and ethics approvals will be required for the use of funds.

10. Reporting Requirements and Evaluation of Progress

All approved MI4 ECRF awards will be required to provide a final report (template format) at the end of the 6-month funding period. At the discretion of MI4 leadership, investigators will be required to provide progress updates by teleconference at up to 6-week intervals.