



Réseau de  
cancérologie  
Rossy

Rossy  
Cancer  
Network



## Cancer Care Quality and Innovation Program

RCN Research Fund

2023 Edition

Reference Document



## Summary

The RCN Research Fund was established by the RCN Cancer Care Quality & Innovation (CQI) program to support advancements in cancer care quality research. This initiative builds on the exceptional pool of expertise across the partner institutions that make up the Rossy Cancer Network (RCN): the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC), the Jewish General Hospital (JGH), St. Mary's Hospital Center (SMHC), and the McGill University Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, through the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology (GBDO).

This fund helps to support the unprecedented collaboration among the McGill-affiliated cancer missions which is at the heart of the RCN: promoting continuous improvement projects, sharing best practices and developing research and training platforms for the rapid generation of scientific knowledge related to cancer care quality.

The Research Fund is accessible to all health professionals directly or indirectly involved in the provision of cancer care and promotes collaboration among the network's partner hospitals.

Since 2014, the RCN Research Fund has invested over \$3.3 million to enable the completion of 40 projects targeting various aspects of the cancer care trajectory. This exciting initiative has empowered health care teams to continually improve cancer care delivery and enhance patient experience and outcomes across the network, while advancing knowledge in cancer quality and strengthening McGill's leadership in this field.



## Purpose

- Support the RCN CQI program's mandate of academic advancement in cancer care quality and safety;
- Assist McGill's oncology community in becoming a recognized leader in the field of cancer care quality research and innovation;
- Facilitate the deployment and execution of RCN strategic priorities and vision.
- Assist McGill's oncology community in ensuring regional leadership in establishing high standards in cancer care quality and clinical effectiveness; and optimizing the patient trajectory (diagnosis, treatment planning, treatment delivery, survivorship, supportive care and end of life);
- Develop research and training platforms for the rapid generation of scientific knowledge relevant to the domains of cancer care;
- Facilitate the academic career development of faculty members within the McGill oncology community involved in research in the field of cancer care quality.

# Strategic Pillars

The RCN Research Fund will only support proposals that are aligned with one or more of the following 5 priority pillars:

1. **Access to Specialized Care:**

The RCN will develop & implement a mechanism to allow patients to have timely access to the McGill health network, no matter where their initial point of entry is.

2. **Harmonized Tumour Boards:**

The care that is prescribed and the standard of care that a patient would receive should be at the same high level at all McGill-affiliated hospitals within the RCN with treatment and management decisions based on integrated and cooperative tumour boards.

3. **Access to clinical trials:**

Expanded access to clinical trials across all the RCN facilities improves the quality of care by allowing access to novel treatments, better disease management, and enhanced prognostic surveillance.

4. **Trajectories of Care:**

Improved case management assures continuity of care for all the patients' health needs via inter-team and inter-hospital coordination with seamless integration of clinical data among RCN's institutions.

5. **Proximity of treatment of care:**

Whenever possible, the best cancer treatment and care beginning with early diagnosis through to recovery and/or palliative care, as well as perioperative care, should be delivered primarily close to the patient's home.

## Eligibility

RCN Research Grants are open to **all health care professionals** actively involved in the delivery of care to cancer patients or **cancer researchers** affiliated with McGill University whose research program can have clear and direct benefits for the delivery of cancer care within the RCN network of hospitals. They are available **to all** with an interest in the development of new knowledge and advancement in cancer care optimization. The list of eligible professionals includes, but is not limited to:

- Physicians
- Nurses and all nursing-affiliated personnel
- Rehabilitation experts (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, kinesiology, speech therapy, etc.)
- Psychosocial health experts
- Epidemiologists and health economists
- Other professionals that participate in the delivery of care to cancer patients

The budget proposal for each application must not exceed \$100,000. All applications must be submitted online at <https://www.mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn/funding/cancer-care-quality-innovation-program-cqi/research/submit> by Tuesday January 16, 2024 (The complete submission must be received **no later than 12:01 AM** on January 16, 2024). Applications submitted by email in whole or in part, will not be considered.

**Note:** The RCN Executive Committee has approved the following measures to minimize the potential for conflict of interest: 1) The RCN Clinical Lead/hospital Oncology Lead is not eligible for funding. 2) The other hospital Oncology Leads at the JGH and SMHC are eligible to participate as co-applicants only. 3) The Chair of the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology is not eligible to compete for funding.

# Application Terms and Conditions

- There is no limit on the number of research proposals submitted by one individual (as a principal investigator, co-applicant or collaborator); however, the same individual can only receive one research award as a principal applicant per year.
- Proposed projects can be from 1 to 3 years in duration; however, the maximum amount of the grant is \$100,000 independent of duration.
- All applicants and co-applicants must hold a professional, academic, or clinical appointment in at least one of the RCN-partner institutions, i.e., MUHC, JGH, and SMHC. External collaborations can be sought; however, budget expenditures to non-RCN-partner institutions require specific justification and approval. McGill-affiliated faculty members are also eligible.
- Research proposals must reflect a collaborative effort from **at least 2 RCN-partner institutions**. The contribution of each collaborating partner must be proportionally equivalent (development and deployment of the research project, data collection, analysis, and interpretation) and cannot be limited to patient accrual.
- Research proposals must contain a knowledge transfer component.
- Only original proposals will be considered. The RCN will not award funds if overlapping or comparable support for the same project has been obtained (even partially) from another funding source. Award recipients are expected to inform the RCN promptly should a new funding mechanism become available for the same project. Should the proposal subsequently get funding from another source, the corresponding amount will be withheld.
- Research proposals having received funding through previous RCN funding cycles are not eligible for funding. This also applies to new proposals that represent the continuation of projects funded through previous cycles of RCN funding (Research Fund or Quality Improvement Initiatives program).
- The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for producing all relevant ethics approvals from participating institutions and will provide documentation of such to the RCN within 6 months of proposal approval.
- Matching contributions from host Departments or Institutions (e.g. in-kind resources, funds, space, equipment, dedicated personnel, etc.) are not mandatory.
- Proposals must comply with the application requirements set forth by the RCN CQI program (application form, budget proposal, letter of support, etc.). Proposals that fail to do so will be excluded and not assessed for scientific merit.
- Research funds cannot be used to: (i) support travel or meetings, (ii) support indirect expenditures (e.g. leasing or maintenance, indirect costs by host institutions), (iii) supplement or replace institutional / clinical operating budgets, (iv) provide salary support for any of the applicants or collaborators.

# Review Process

- Applications will be reviewed by a **scientific review committee** that may include external experts and/or previous recipients of the RCN Research Fund. The committee will be chaired by the GBDO Chair (or delegate). A standardized scoring grid will be used (provided in this document).
- The role of Chair of the scientific review committee will be to advise the committee members on issues such as scoring criteria, terms and conditions and eligibility of proposals.
- Three committee members will independently score each application and submit scores and reviews to CQI coordination for final adjudication.
- Scientific merit will be the sole criterion; the RCN does not have any obligation to ensure parity of funding between sites, professionals and teams.
- The scientific committee's rank list will be presented by the GBDO Chair (or delegate) along with the recommendations for discussion at the Executive Committee, to ensure that funding decisions are aligned to RCN goals and values.
- The Executive Committee is responsible for determining the RCN Research Fund's annual budget, maximum number of awards distributed and proposals selected.

# Reporting Process for Recipients

- Recognizing the unique financial interplay between the Faculty and RCN-partner hospitals which may result in awards being disbursed at variable dates, the day that the 1<sup>st</sup> installment is made to the host institution will be considered as the start date of the research project and not the day on which notification of award was made to the grant recipient.

**The first invoice must be received within 45 days of notification of the award. Failure to do so will lead to immediate termination of the award, with no funds disbursed.**

**Award recipients must notify the official representatives of the RCN Research Fund in writing once they have received the funds for the first invoice. This should include the letter or email notifying the recipient that the funds have been released to them.**

- Grant recipients must submit mid-term and final reports using templates provided by the CQI Program. The templates include both a scientific report and a financial report. The table below outlines when reports are due.

Duration of Grant	Mid-Term Report Due	Final Report Due
1 Year	6 months after start date	12-13 months after start date
2 Years	12 months after start date	24-25 months after start date
3 Years	18 months after start date	36-37 months after start date

- A 12-month **no-cost** extension can be requested one month before the final report is due. A written official letter and new timeline with action plan is required. Consequently, the RCN leadership acknowledges the carry-over of assigned funds to the following fiscal year, without penalty to the CQI budget. Candidates who have been granted a one-year extension would submit the final report (which would now be considered a progress report) as outlined above. At the termination of the extension (12 months) a final report will be due. All reports will include both the scientific and financial reports.
- The PI is expected to document planned carryovers (of funds or data collection) and provide an update within 1 year.



## Acceptance Terms and Conditions

- **Principal Investigator (PI):** The PI named on the original proposal submitted cannot be modified throughout the duration of the grant including during an approved no-cost extension.
- **RCN Research Fund representative:** The RCN Research Fund is managed by the GBDO. The Department Chair and the Chair's Senior Advisor for Academic Programs will act as the official representatives of the RCN Research Fund. However, disbursement of funds will be handled by the RCN.
- **Correspondence:** the RCN Research Fund representatives and the RCN will communicate only with the PI for any matter related to the attribution and use of the research grant. Reciprocally, all communications with the RCN Research Fund representatives or the RCN shall be performed exclusively by the PI.
- **Ethics clearance:** the RCN is not responsible for securing ethics clearance for any funded project. This is the exclusive responsibility of the PI.
- **Transfer of funds:** the RCN Financial Officer will manage the transfer of funds to the local research institute, based on the parameters of the RCN gift agreement. Funding must be intra-institution, triggered by an invoice from the research institute to RCN. It is the responsibility of the local financial representative to disburse the funds to the PI. The PI cannot modify or redirect this process.
- Once the contract has been signed, research funds are attributed in 2 installments of 50% of the total granted amount. The date of receipt of the first installment will be considered as the start date (T0) of the research project. **The first invoice must be received within 45 days of notification of the award or else the award recipient will forfeit the award.** The second installment will be made upon reception and approval of the mid-term progress report.
- Funding is not recurrent. The RCN reserves the right to re-claim any unused funds at the end of the research project.
- **Amount:** the amount specified on the acceptance letter will not be modified under any circumstance. If applicable, the PI is encouraged to leverage the financial support from the RCN to apply for external sources of funding.
- **Reporting requirement (financial):** A financial report is required at mid-term, detailing expenses according to the standard RCN format provided. Expenses not justified in the original proposal will be subject to review and potential rejection. A final financial report is required at the end of the term of the grant. The RCN reserves the right to re-claim any unused funds at that time.
- **Reporting requirement (scientific):** the PI is required to produce a scientific report at mid-term, detailing progress of the project, according to the standard RCN format provided. Subsequent payment of funds can be withheld if the progress is judged non-satisfactory, after discussion with the Executive Committee. A final scientific report is required at the end of the term of the grant.

- **Communications:** the RCN reserves the right to use any portion of the summary and lay term abstract provided at application for promotion purposes. In addition, it may ask the PI and his/her team for photographs or interviews or any other material deemed necessary for RCN promotion purposes both within the McGill community and the general public. The grantee also agrees that the RCN will manage media and communications related to the funded proposal. Communications outside of the PI's immediate team (intra- or inter-institution, outside media, etc.) must be reviewed by the RCN communications Manager.
- **Acknowledgement:** The grantee agrees to acknowledge the RCN in all written or oral forms of communications stemming from the funded proposal.
- **RCN-related events:** Upon request of the RCN, the PI is expected to attend RCN-related scientific and clinical events throughout the duration of the grant and up to 12 months following the end of the term of the grant, to present work accomplished.

## Additional Information

For questions regarding eligibility, please contact:

Gayle A. Shinder, PhD  
Chair's Senior Advisor for Academic Programs  
Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology

**Email:** [gayle.shinder@mcgill.ca](mailto:gayle.shinder@mcgill.ca)

# Assessment Grid

CRITERIA	SCORE
<p><b>1. Quality and originality of proposal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The project proposed is original and innovative and targets an unanswered question in science</li> <li>-The project builds on currently existing knowledge</li> <li>- The objectives correspond to the hypothesis and are realistically attainable within the timeline and with the methods proposed</li> <li>- The methodological approach proposed is appropriate, realistic and feasible according to the research goals (e.g. number of participants, accessibility of participants, ethics considerations etc.)</li> <li>-The project includes an objective assessment component</li> <li>- Clarity of the proposal (problem statement well documented, research questions clearly stated, objectives measurable and tangible outcomes)</li> </ul>	/5
<p><b>2. Credentials and Experience of the Investigators:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team composition covers all relevant clinical / scientific skills required</li> </ul>	/5
<p><b>3. Relevance of project to RCN Goals and Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The proposal is relevant and aligns with RCN objectives and strategic priorities (patient experience, evidence-based care, access to care, leading-edge treatments, research and education)</li> <li>- The project involves more than one site as proportionally equal partners (clinical and scientific collaboration, patient recruitment etc.)</li> <li>- The project will generate knowledge / know-how or opportunities that can be exported to other RCN sites, priorities or initiatives</li> <li>- Results from the proposed project have the potential to be rapidly translated into practice and/or guidelines</li> </ul>	/5
<p><b>4. Appropriateness of Budget:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The proposed budget realistically reflects the requirements to successfully complete the project (sufficiency)</li> <li>-The proposed budget covers all aspects to successfully complete the project (comprehensiveness)</li> <li>-The proposed budget does not contain elements corresponding to institutional operating expenses</li> <li>-The proposed budget is in compliance with the terms and conditions</li> <li>-The proposed project could realistically persist beyond research activities with reasonable, minimal support (sustainability)</li> </ul>	/5