CANCER QUALITY INNOVATION PROGRAM

RCN Research Fund

2017 Edition

Reference Document
Rossy Cancer Network Research Grant Summary

The RCN Research Fund was established to support advancements in quality of care research in adults with cancer. 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, the Jewish General Hospital, St. Mary’s Hospital Center, and the McGill Faculty of Medicine.

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 Grant is open to all health professionals directly involved in the provision of cancer care and promote collaboration among the network’s partner hospitals. An external peer review process is used to assess proposals, relying on internationally recognized experts to ensure the highest quality of scientific advancement.

Since 2014, the RCN Research Fund has invested over $1 million to enable the completion of 17 projects targeting various aspects of the cancer care trajectory. We are confident that this exciting initiative will empower 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’s mandate of research in the development of knowledge centered on cancer care quality and safety;
- Assist McGill 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. [https://www.mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn/strategic-direction](https://www.mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn/strategic-direction)
- Assist McGill 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.

Eligibility

RCN Research Grants are open to all health care professionals actively involved in the delivery of care to adult cancer patients 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
- 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 by Friday, June 2nd 2017 via the RCN website: [www.mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn](http://www.mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn)

*Note:* The RCN Executive Committee has approved the following measures to minimize the potential for conflict of interest: 1) hospital Oncology Leads (Drs. Aprikian, Batist & Langleben) are eligible to participate as co-applicants only. They will not be involved in ranking applications; 2) The Program Lead for Cancer Quality & Innovation (Dr. Ari Meguerditchian) and the Clinical Lead for the RCN (Dr. Wilson Miller) are not eligible for funding.
Application Terms and Conditions

- The number of research proposals submitted by one individual (as a principal investigator, co-applicant or collaborator) is not limited; however the same individual can only receive one research award as a principal applicant per year.

- All applicants and co-applicants must hold an academic or clinical appointment in at least one of the RCN-partner institutions: The McGill University Health Centre (MUHC), the Jewish General Hospital (JGH) and St-Mary’s Hospital (SMH). External collaborations can be sought, however, budget expenditures to non-RCN institutions require specific justification and approval.

- Research proposals must reflect a collaborative effort from at least 2 RCN-partner institutions. The participation of each collaborating partner must be proportionally equivalent (development and deployment of the research project, data analysis and interpretation) and cannot be limited to patient accrual.

- Research proposals must contain a knowledge transfer component (there are no restrictions on the type, level and professional affiliation of the targeted audience).

- Only original proposals will be considered. The 2017 cycle will not award funds if overlapping or comparable support for the same project has been obtained (even partially) from another funding source.

- Research proposals having received funding through previous cycles are not eligible for funding. This also applies to new proposals that represent the continuation of projects funded through previous cycles of RCN research funding or funding from the RCN’s Quality Improvement Initiatives program.

- Research funds cannot be used for indirect expenditures such as leasing or maintenance, reimbursement of indirect costs assumed by host institution(s).

- Research funds cannot be used to support clinical trials of investigational drugs (e.g. targeted therapy in the treatment of cancer).

- Research funds cannot be used to supplement or replace institutional / clinical operating budgets.

- Research funds cannot be used as salary support for the principal applicant, main applicant or collaborators.

- Funding is not recurrent. The RCN reserves the right to re-claim any unused funds at the end of the research project.

- After the signature of the contract Research funds are attributed in 2 installments of 50% of the total granted amount, upon receipt of invoices from the PI/RI. The first
transfer of funds will count as T0 of the 12-month period to complete the research project.

- A 12-month no-cost extension can be requested upon submission of the first 6-month progress report. A written official letter and new timeline with action plan is required. As a consequence, the RCN leadership acknowledges the carry-over of assigned funds to the following fiscal year, without penalty to the CQI budget.

- The grantee agrees to acknowledge the RCN in all written or oral forms of communications stemming from funded proposal.

- The grantee agrees that the RCN will manage media and communications related to the funded proposal.

- The principal investigator is responsible for producing all relevant ethics approvals from his/her institution and will provide documentation of such to the RCN within 6 months of proposal approval.

- “Legacy” projects reviewed by the RCN prior to the establishment of CQI will be evaluated by a separate mechanism, independent of this granting mechanism.

- While the reviewers may choose to consider matching contributions from the host Departments or Institutions (e.g. in kind resources, funds, space, equipment, dedicated personnel, etc.) in their scoring, this is not a mandatory requirement.

- All proposals must comply with the application requirements set forth by the RCN (application, budget proposal, letter of support, etc.). Proposals that fail to do so will be excluded despite potential scientific merit.
Acceptance Terms and Conditions

- **Principal Investigator (PI):** the PI named on the original proposal submitted cannot be modified for the duration of the fund (12-month period or accordingly to extension approved).

- **RCN Research Fund representative:** The Program Lead for Cancer Quality & Innovation (CQI) will act as the only official representative of the RCN Research Fund.

- **Correspondence:** 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 representative 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 principal investigator. Confirmation of ethics clearance must be presented before first release of funds.

- **Transfer of funds:** the RCN Finance office will manage the transfer of funds to the official financial representative of the host institution, based on the parameters of the RCN gift agreement. Funding must be intra-institution, triggered by an invoice from the host institution to RCN. It is the responsibility of the official local financial representative to disburse the funds to the PI. The PI cannot modify or redirect this process.

  The RCN will transfer 50% of the total awarded amount upon reception of the first invoice and the remainder at 6 months upon reception of the 2nd invoice released after receipt and approval of financial and scientific report.

- **Amount:** the amount specified on the acceptance letter will not be modified under any circumstance. The PI is encouraged to leverage this financial support from the RCN to apply for external sources of funding.

- **Reporting requirement (financial):** the PI is required to produce a financial report at 6 months, detailing expenses according to the standard RCN format provided on the RCN website. Expenses not justified in the original proposal will be subject to review and potential rejection. A final financial report is required at 18 months for project completion. 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 6 months, detailing progress of the project, according to the standard RCN format provided. The CQI Program Lead can hold subsequent payment of funds if the progress is judged non-satisfactory, after submission to the Executive Committee. The final scientific report is required maximum 6 months after the project completion.

- **Communications:** the RCN reserves the right to use any portion of the summary and lay term abstract provided at application for visibility purposes. In addition, it may ask the PI and his/her team for photographs or interviews or any other material deemed necessary for RCN visibility purposes both within the McGill community and the
general public. 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 RCN must be acknowledged on all presented material (poster, oral, digital, print). Please refer to the Communications Policy for CQI projects available online at mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn/rcn-initiatives/team-tools.

- **RCN-related events:** The PI is expected to attend RCN-related scientific and clinical events during the 24 months corresponding to the funding start to present work accomplished upon request of the RCN.
Review Process

- Applications will be reviewed by an external scientific peer-review committee chaired by the CQI Program Lead, using a standardized scoring grid.

- The role of Chair of the scientific peer-review committee will be to advise the committee members on issues such as scoring criteria, terms and conditions and eligibility of proposals.

- The three committee members will independently score each application, followed by a discussion by the committee to finalize the rank list.

- Scientific merit will be the sole criterion; the RCN does not have the obligation to ensure parity of funding between sites, professionals and teams.

- The scientific committee’s rank list will be presented by the CQI Program Lead along with his recommendations for discussion at the Executive Committee, to ensure that funding decisions are concordant to RCN goals and values.

- The Executive Committee is responsible for determining the final budget and therefore the maximum number of awards distributed.
## Assessment Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Quality and originality of proposal:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- The project proposed is original and innovative</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The project targets cancer care quality improvement</td>
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<td>- The project includes an objective assessment component</td>
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<td>- Clarity of the proposal (problem statement well documented, research questions clearly stated, objectives measurable and tangible outcomes)</td>
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<td>- The objectives correspond to the hypothesis and are realistically attainable within the timeline and methods proposed</td>
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<td><strong>2. Feasibility of the proposal within proposed teams and environments:</strong></td>
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<td>- 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.)</td>
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<td>- Technical Capacity: Team composition covers all relevant clinical / scientific skills required</td>
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<td>- The clinical / scientific activity of the proposed sites is able to support the proposed research activity</td>
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<td><strong>3. Relevance of project to cancer care quality &amp; research:</strong></td>
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<td>- The project targets an unanswered question in the science</td>
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<td>- The project builds on currently existing knowledge</td>
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<td>- The research question is relevant</td>
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<td>- The proposed research is likely to have an impact by leading to ground-breaking advances in cancer care quality improvement</td>
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<td>- Results from the proposed project will support larger research initiatives</td>
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<td>- Results from the proposed project has the potential to be rapidly translated into practice and/or guidelines</td>
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<td><strong>4. Budget relevance:</strong></td>
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<td>- The proposed budget realistically reflects the requirements to successfully complete the project (sufficiency)</td>
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<td>- The proposed budget covers all aspects to successfully complete the project (comprehensiveness)</td>
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<td>- The proposed budget does not contain elements corresponding to institutional operating expenses</td>
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<td>- The proposed budget is in compliance with the terms and conditions</td>
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<td>- The proposed project could realistically persist beyond research activities with reasonable, minimal support (sustainability)</td>
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<td><strong>5. Relevance to the RCN goals and objectives:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- The proposal is relevant and align with RCN objectives and strategic priorities (Patient Experience, Evidence based-care, Access to care, Leading-Edge treatments, Research and Education)</td>
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<td>- The project involves more than one site as proportionally equal partners (clinical and scientific collaboration, patients recruitment...etc)</td>
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<td>- The project will generate knowledge / know-how or opportunities that can be exported to other RCN sites, priorities or initiatives</td>
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<td>- The project has the potential for eventual alignment with disease site group activities</td>
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Reporting Process for Recipients

- Financial and scientific progress reports are required at 6 months, for internal assessment.

- The PI is expected to document planned carryovers (of funds or data collection) and provide an update within 1 year.

- In the case of a one-year extension has been granted, a financial and scientific report is required every 6 month until the end of the project.

- Financial and scientific final reports are required 6 months (maximum) after the project ends, for both internal and external communications.

- PI should use standardized templates for progress and final reports provided on the RCN website.

- Recognizing the unique financial interplay between the Faculty and RCN-partner hospitals which may result in awards being disbursed at variable dates, the day funds are transferred to the host institution will represent day 0 and not the day on which notification of award was made to the grantee.
Additional Information

For questions regarding eligibility, please contact:

- Dr Ari Meguerditchian, Program Lead, Cancer Quality & Innovation (CQI) program: ari.meguerditchian@mcgill.ca

- Paola Gardère, CQI Program Manager: paola.gardere@muhc.mcgill.ca