



RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

New Investigator Fund (NIF)

## **Guidelines for Submitting Research Grant Applications**

### **Purpose**

Hamilton Health Sciences' commitment to "first stage" research led to the creation of the New Investigator Fund (NIF). The fund is an integration of the former HHS Foundation Young Investigator Grants and the HHS Research Development Fund, and provides a unique opportunity to foster and support a culture of inquiry for novice investigators under the mentorship of senior staff. The NIF provides project funding to front-line staff (healthcare professionals and medical staff) toward research initiatives directly relevant to the clinical mission and research strategic direction of HHS. Priority areas for funding include the following:

1. Consistent with, and likely to enhance, the main clinical programs/priorities at HHS.
2. Enhances research that aims to improve virtual clinical care pathways at HHS during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Multidisciplinary and collaborative (involving more than one department or program or healthcare discipline and institution). Priority will be given to NIF proposals that engage team members from diverse backgrounds and/or address healthcare disparities experienced by Indigenous and/or systematically underserved communities.
4. Builds on existing research strengths.
5. Advances and creates new knowledge that informs patient care by bringing evidence into practice through, innovative solutions, translation and application.
6. Conduct of pilot or feasibility studies which could facilitate obtaining funding for full scale studies through independent peer review or other mechanisms.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

1. The proposed research project must be entirely, or largely based at one or more of the following HHS sites:
  - ❖ Hamilton General Hospital
  - ❖ Juravinski Hospital & Cancer Centre
  - ❖ McMaster's Children's Hospital
  - ❖ McMaster University Medical Centre
  - ❖ St. Peter's Hospital
  - ❖ West Lincoln Memorial Hospital
  - ❖ West End Clinic & Urgent Care Centre
2. Applicants must be members of the medical or clinical health professional staff of Hamilton Health Sciences, or members of affiliated research institutes/centres (Research Fellows and Clinical Scholars are eligible). Example: Are you employed by HHS or are you credentialed with HHS as a primary facility?
3. Applicants must be within the first 5 years of their first academic faculty appointment (physicians must hold full-time appointments but members of other health professions with part-time appointments will also be considered).
4. Grants will be awarded based on the excellence exhibited by the research and a maximum of \$50,000 awarded per project. Where a research project exceeds the maximum available award amount, the application must include a detailed explanation and budget of what

will be completed with the NIF funds and explain a plan for obtaining additional funding to complete the full project.

5. Grants are limited to novice investigators who are:
  - within five years of their first academic faculty appointment with any academic institution (physicians must hold full-time appointments but members of other health professions with part-time appointments will also be considered).
  - conducting independent research as a principal investigator, or
  - within first five years of obtaining their healthcare professional degree/certificate conducting independent research as a principal investigator, or
  - within the first five years of completing research training and leading independent investigation as a principal investigator (e.g. someone who holds a faculty appointment or a healthcare profession appointment for more than 5 years, **BUT** is within the first five years of completing research training and conducting/leading research as a principal investigator) Example: RN, PT or MD with profession/faculty appointment beyond 5 years; however, more recently possesses research training and is now demonstrating research activities within the first 5-year window of applying to NIF.
6. Residents are only eligible when the research is conducted within the sites of the Hamilton Health Sciences.
7. An experienced researcher, who is an active full-time HHS senior staff member or has a joint appointment with Hamilton Health Sciences, must mentor applicants and agree to be a co-investigator on the proposed project. The senior staff mentorship role will include a commitment to project oversight and guidance on good clinical practice principles. This person must also currently (or within the last 3 yrs.) hold external peer-reviewed grants as a principal investigator.
8. Grants are intended as seed money for a duration of 18 months to 2 years, with the expectation that the researcher will leverage additional support from external funding sources to build a program of research. Support is available for research personnel and project operating expenses.
9. Only one submission per principal applicant for each competition will be considered.
10. Applicants will be allowed a maximum of 2 New Investigator Fund grants awards throughout his/her research career.

*Disclaimer: These are meant to be guidelines, and the Review Committee reserves the right to declare a candidate as ineligible at their discretion. For example, someone who has many publications and external peer-reviewed grants might meet the criteria otherwise, but in the judgment of the Committee is clearly not a novice investigator.*

### **e-Submission Requirements**

Only complete applications will be accepted (refer to specifications listed under Item #2 and #3 below). Incomplete submissions will not be accepted. Applications are to be submitted no later than **midnight** on either **March 31<sup>st</sup>** or **October 1<sup>st</sup>** of each year. **NOTE: Should either of these dates fall on a recognized holiday and/or weekend day, the deadline is extended to the next business day.**

Applicants are responsible for:

- Ensuring a complete submission is provided per the specifications and order that is listed below.
  - Following up with authors who are providing letters of assessment and support letters and ensuring they are received by the respective deadline date.
1. Budget Form and Budget Justification – research **personnel costs MUST BE reviewed and approved by Research Administration at HHS** to validate role and appropriate salary scale. **This process requires 3-4 weeks lead-time.** Please contact Donna Catherwood at [catherwood@hpsc.ca](mailto:catherwood@hpsc.ca). **For either HHS or McMaster University positions, evidence of costing through consultation with McMaster HR and/or Faculty Department Manager is**

required. Confirmation of their current position job classification, step level, and hourly rate from their respective manager and/or HR staff is needed for existing staff (email will suffice). **Hiring HHS staff, whenever possible, is highly encouraged/recommended. Please contact Sasha Eskandarian, Manager Research Compliance and Support Services at [eskandars@hhsc.ca](mailto:eskandars@hhsc.ca).**

2. **A complete application must include documents 1 through 9 as per below, formatted as ONE pdf file** (requiring all documents be individually converted to pdf and then merged into one pdf file) **AND** include **original MS Excel format of Budget Form**. Both files (all-inclusive pdf and MS Excel Budget) are to be sent as **TWO** email attachments to [NIF@hhsc.ca](mailto:NIF@hhsc.ca). Applicants are restricted to sending ONE email (with the two attachments) with the subject line marked "NIF – surname of applicant".
3. Checklist and order of documents for a complete PDF file e-submission is outlined below. All documents listed below **MUST BE** typed **single space in Arial 10 font with 1-inch margins**; converted into pdf format and merged as **ONE pdf file** and submitted electronically via email to [NIF@hhsc.ca](mailto:NIF@hhsc.ca)

**Applicants are RESPONSIBLE for sending the following documents 1 through 9 (in the order specified below) as ONE pdf file PLUS original MS Excel Budget file:**

1	<a href="#">Completed NIF Application Form</a> (pages 1-3)	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<a href="#">Completed NIF Budget Form &amp; Justification</a> (2 pages) include original MS Excel file	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Role Description of Principal Investigator (1 page)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Role of Scientific Mentor (1 page)	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Scientific Summary (1 page)	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	<a href="#">Completed NIF Lay Summary Template</a> (2 pages) evaluated by Patient Advisors for Research	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	<b>NIF resubmissions MUST provide a detailed response to reviewers' concerns</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Research Outline (6 pages) – <b>excludes references/appendices/collaboration letters etc.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Proposal should include: 1) Purpose and Background; 2) Objectives; 3) Design and Methods; 4) Analysis Plan (including sex and gender-based analyses; and 5) Proposed Timeline</li> <li>• References – limited to 2 pages <i>Note: format for references has changed to the Vancouver style. To help you frame your references please see <a href="#">here</a>.</i></li> <li>• Appendices may include up to a maximum of 4 pages</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Up-to-date full Canadian Common CV (CCV) of Principal Investigator <b>Select CIHR draft form</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Mentor and Support Letters MUST BE sent by each individual author, as a pdf file, via email to [NIF@hhsc.ca](mailto:NIF@hhsc.ca) with the subject line marked "NIF – surname of applicant", addressed to the attention of: Drs. Michelle Ghert and Fred Spencer, NIF Co-Chairpersons - Scientific Review Board**

10	Up-to-date BioSketch Canadian Common CV (CCV) of Scientific Mentor	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Letter of Assessment from Scientific Mentor	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Two letters of support: (from Research Program Director <b>AND</b> Academic Dept. Chair or Dean)	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Review Process

### 1. Scientific Peer-Review Board –*addition of Patient Advisors for Research*

An internal scientific peer-review board will review applications. The Chairperson will be jointly appointed by the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation President & CEO and Vice President (Research) at Hamilton Health Sciences. An established, experienced researcher will chair the committee, and the membership will include representation from (1) both the medical and healthcare professions; and (2) patient/family advisors for research. The panel is comprised of: (1)HHS staff members, affiliated with McMaster University, who are career investigators possessing extensive experience and expertise in bio-ethics, research methodology and statistics; and (2)A patient advisor who is a current or former patient

(or family member/caregiver of a patient) involved in patient care and/or research. The membership of the review board may be increased at the discretion of the Chair.

## 2. Review Criteria – *includes formal evaluation of Lay Summary, new form to complete*

An internal scientific peer-review board assesses each application based on the criteria set out below. Applications are assigned a primary and secondary reviewer. Patient advisor for research representative(s) will review and evaluate the Lay Summary that will be included in the overall evaluation and scoring process. Grants are awarded based on the recommendation of each reviewer, including input from the patient advisor representative(s), and the overall rating (score weighted out of 10). Projects involving human or animal subjects must obtain Research Ethics Board (REB) approval upon application for a New Investigator Fund Award. **Funds are not released until the REB Board final approval letter is issued to the Principal Investigator.**

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| <p>a) Achievements and Activities of the Candidate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• publication activity</li><li>• other research activity</li></ul> <p>b) Characteristics and Abilities of the Candidate (mentor's assessments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Background preparation</li><li>• Motivation/initiative</li><li>• Skill at research</li><li>• Intellectual ability</li><li>• Originality</li></ul> <p>c) Research Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Independent project that can be completed with the NIF award. Research contribution can be made in the absence of additional external funds</li><li>• In line with research strategic direction of program/hospital</li><li>• Scientific merit and feasibility</li><li>• Potential impact of research on practice and health services delivery</li></ul> | <p>d) Achievements and Activities of the Mentor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrated commitment to the project theme</li><li>• Scientific Activity (publications &amp; funding held)</li><li>• Supervisory Record</li></ul> <p>e) Research Training Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training program for the candidate provided by the senior staff mentor</li><li>• Research resources committed</li></ul> <p>f) Lay Summary Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Readability for general public at a grade 8 level</li><li>• Clearly ties to NIF purpose and priorities</li><li>• Advances and creates new knowledge that informs patient care</li></ul> |
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### **Deliverables**

1. Applicants have 3 months from the award letter date to claim funding awarded. Unclaimed funds will be returned to the granting source resulting in the applicant reapplying to the next competitive call for applications.
2. Residuals from completed research studies and/or research accounts that have been inactive for a 2-year period will be returned to the granting source.
3. Applicants are restricted to holding awarded funds in a research account at Hamilton Health Sciences. Only expenses outlined in the approved NIF budget will be processed.
4. An annual progress report (that describes research progress, accomplishments, and funding status) must be submitted each year on the anniversary post competition (March 31<sup>st</sup> or October 1<sup>st</sup>).
5. A final completion report (that summarizes research findings and lists all publications and/or conference presentations resulting from the research) is required within 6 months of completing the study. **IMPORTANT NOTE: all approved study expenses need to be processed/paid prior to submission of the Final NIF Completion Report. Receipt of an NIF Final Completion Report will result in closing out the NIF study account with residual funding returned to the principal source account.**

6. Applicant is responsible for the storage of research related documents and materials in accordance to the following SOP: [RCQA-SOP006 \(Investigator Study Files and Essential Documents\)](#), which includes budgeting and paying for long-term storage upon study completion. Storage can be facilitated by Research Administration by contacting Korinne Hamilton at [researchstoragerequest@hhsc.ca](mailto:researchstoragerequest@hhsc.ca) to request assistance. HHS Guide on Document Storage/Archiving research study files can be found on the Research HUB and RA SharePoint Drive.
7. The Hamilton Health Sciences and Foundation must be acknowledged on all publications. (E.g., This research work was supported by Hamilton Health Sciences and Foundation New Investigator Grant).
8. The office of Research Administration must be notified of any revisions to the original approved NIF budget; changes to the study completion date or employment status of the principal investigator, mentor and co-investigator team.

### **Funding Source and Use**

Hamilton Health Sciences has committed financial support to sustain the New Investigator Fund. Source of funding comes from annual investment allocations from the HHS Research and the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation.

Revised – January 2022