



RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

New Investigator Fund (NIF)

## Guidelines for Submitting Research Grant Applications

### **Purpose**

The 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 enterprise/profile at HHS
3. Multidisciplinary and collaborative (involving more than one department or program or healthcare discipline and institution).
4. Builds on existing research strengths.
5. Advances and creates new knowledge that informs patient care by bringing evidence into practice through 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
  - ❖ Chedoke
  - ❖ Juravinski Hospital & Cancer Centre
  - ❖ McMaster's Children's Hospital
  - ❖ McMaster University Medical Centre
  - ❖ St. Peter's Hospital
  - ❖ West Lincoln Memorial Hospital
  - ❖ Urgent Care Centre
2. 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.
3. Applicants must be members of the medical or clinical health professional staff of the Hamilton Health Sciences, or members of affiliated research institutes (Research Fellows and Clinical Scholars are eligible). Example: Are you employed by HHS or are you credentialed with HHS as a primary facility?
4. Residents are only eligible when the research is conducted within the sites of the Hamilton Health Sciences.
5. 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.

6. Grants are limited to novice investigators who are:
  - within five years of his/her first faculty appointment (with any academic institution) conducting independent research as principal investigator, or
  - within first five years of obtaining his/her healthcare profession (degree/certificate) conducting independent research as a principal investigator, or
  - within the first five years of leading or conducting independent investigation as 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 conducting/leading research as a principal investigator) Example: RN, PT or MD with profession/faculty appointment beyond 5 years; however, is now demonstrating research activities within the 5-year window of applying to NIF
7. Grants are intended as seed money for a duration of 1 year to 18 months, with the expectation that the researcher will obtain additional support from external funding sources. Support is available for research personnel and operating grants.
8. Only one submission per principal applicant for each competition will be considered.
9. 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 only, 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). All incomplete submissions will be returned. 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@hhsc.ca](mailto:catherwood@hhsc.ca). For McMaster University positions, evidence of costing through consultation with McMaster HR and/or Faculty Department Manager is required (email will suffice). **Hiring HHS staff, whenever possible, is highly encouraged and recommended through Research Administration. 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 that 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 for a complete e-submission as 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. [Completed NIF Application Form](#) (pages 1-3)
2. [Completed NIF Budget Form & Justification](#) (2 pages) **include original MS Excel file**
3. Role Description of Principal Investigator (1 page)
4. Role of Scientific Mentor (1 page)
5. Scientific Summary (1 page)
6. [Completed NIF Lay Summary Template](#)(2 pages) evaluated by Patient Advisors for Research
7. **NIF resubmissions MUST provide a detailed response to reviewers' concerns**
8. Research Outline (5 pages) – **excludes references/appendices/collaboration letters etc.** 
  - References – limited to 2 pages
  - up to 3 Appendices may be included, each limited to 2 pages in length
9. Up-to-date Canadian Common CV (CCV) of Applicant **Select CIHR draft form**

**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: Dr. Jeff Ginsberg, NIF Chairperson - Scientific Review Board, Professor – Department of Medicine, McMaster University.**

10. Up-to-date Canadian Common CV (CCV) of Scientific Mentor
11. Letter of Assessment from Scientific Mentor
12. Two letters of support: 
  - (from Research Program Director **AND** Academic Dept. Chair or Dean)

## **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.**

- a) Achievements and Activities of the Candidate
  - publication activity
  - other research activity
- b) Characteristics and Abilities of the

- Candidate (mentor's assessments)
  - Background preparation
  - Motivation/initiative
  - Skill at research
  - Intellectual ability
  - Originality
- c) Research Project
  - Independent project that can be completed with the NIF award. Research contribution can be made in the absence of additional external funds
  - In line with research strategic direction of program/hospital
  - Scientific merit and feasibility
  - Potential impact of research on practice and health services delivery
- d) Achievements and Activities of the Mentor
  - Demonstrated commitment to the project theme
- Scientific Activity (publications & funding held)
- Supervisory Record
- e) Research Training Environment
  - Training program for the candidate provided by the senior staff mentor
  - Research resources committed
- f) Lay Summary Evaluation
  - Readability for general public at a grade 8 level
  - Clearly ties to NIF purpose and priorities
  - Advances and creates new knowledge that informs patient care

### **Deliverables**

1. Applicants have 1 year from the award letter date to claim funding awarded. Unclaimed funds will be returned to the granting source resulting in the applicant requiring to reapply 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 within **Research Financial Services** at Hamilton Health Sciences. Only expenses outlined in the approved budget will be processed.
4. An annual progress report (that describes research accomplishments and funding status) must be submitted 1-year post competition award (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.
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.
7. The Hamilton Health Sciences and Foundation must be acknowledged on all publications.
8. The office of Research Administration must be notified of any changes in budget, completion date or employment status of applicants.

### **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 Executive Committee of Research and the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation.