
Guidelines for Submission to the 2018 RFA Competition

RFA Program Description

HHS has supported the development of high quality and productive teams of researchers through a number of mechanisms over the last decade. This RFA is a competitive call to fund new collaborations between existing established groups or institutes/centres **to build sustainable emerging research programmes at Hamilton Health Sciences**. This strategy will expand the existing base of research at Hamilton Health Sciences, with the goal to invest and support new emerging areas with emphasis on sustainable research programmes that will achieve national or international stature within the next 5 to 10 years.

RFA Funding

The total amount of funds available for this competition is \$900,000 allocated over 3 years. **The maximum funding available to individual applicants is up to \$100,000 per year for 3 years (total of \$300K)**. As a result, up to three separate applications, recommended by a peer-review committee, will likely be funded for the period FY2019-2021.

RFA Priority Areas

There is a need to strengthen research at each of the six major Hospitals (General, Juravinski and Cancer Centre, McMaster University Medical Centre and McMaster Children's Hospital/Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre, St. Peter's, West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, and West End Clinic). A significant catalyst involves leveraging the strengths of existing, established groups to support/develop new emerging and sustainable research programmes.

Theme-Based Request for Applications

The 2018 Research Strategic Initiatives – Request for Applicants Competition is focused on a theme-based call in the area of digital health that harnesses the potential of artificial intelligence through machine learning models to advance delivery of health care that improves patient care outcomes and builds strategic partnerships using a hospital-to-home approach through innovative virtualization of care.

Submissions are encouraged from all areas. Consideration will be given to sustainable **new** emerging research programmes that align, integrate or collaborate with strong established groups, or institutes/centres **in the field of Digital Health as described above**. Preference will be given to Research Programmes leveraging external collaborations/partnerships that strengthen existing research activities and critical mass. The primary criteria for selection will be based on scientific excellence and sustainability beyond the three-year period of the RFA grant.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. The RFA Lead must be a HHS investigator, defined as either an independent researcher who is a member of the medical or health professional staff, **and/or** a member of a joint HHS/McMaster Research Institute/Centre (ECRI, GERAS, Offord/MacART, PHRI, TaARI; **or** member of staff within a clinical research group (e.g., GI, ID, Peds etc.).
2. The proposed RFA Programme of Research is under the HHS research enterprise and impacts patient care outcomes that addresses hospital to home care models within the family of hospitals/facilities of HHS, as well as broader community.
3. **Only theme-based proposals in the area of Digital Health will be accepted and considered for this competition call as referenced in the above.**
4. **New Programmes of Research must strengthen and/or build strategic partnerships and focus on population health.**

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5. Investigators and/or team members from previously funded theme areas/programmes, through RFA, are eligible to apply for a new research programme within the Digital Health theme-based 2018 Competition Call .

Not Eligible:

1. Theme areas/programmes previously funded by RFA are not eligible to apply for top-up/extended funding.
2. Grants to support specific projects or specific individuals are not eligible. RFA is a programmatic grant.

RFA Criteria and e-Submission Requirements:

Programmes/themes should meet the following criteria:

1. High chance of success – must demonstrate sufficient activity/critical mass already exists
2. Aligned or complementary to the strengths and needs of clinical priorities at HHS: Patients, People, Sustainability, Research Innovation and Learning.
3. Aligned or complementary to Hamilton Health Sciences' Corporate Strategic Plan: Operational Excellence, Enterprise Approach, Strategic Partnerships and Population Health.
4. Can leverage the strengths of existing established research groups and has a high likelihood of receiving sustainable independent funding after the 3-year period RFA Grant term.

The goal is to invest in research programmes that meet the above theme-based priority area and criteria. The expectation of this 3-year investment is for successful applications to lead to self-sustaining programmes that will be able to generate sufficient external funding to self-support their research activities beyond the 3-year RFA investment funds ending.

RFA Key Principles – a narrative is required that includes the following:

- Identify existing strengths, areas for development and current sources of funding.
- Identify approaches to leveraging existing programmes to achieve national recognition within 3 years.
- Identify a sustainability plan for generating sufficient funds to sustain and support further growth after the 3-year investment funding ends.
- Demonstrate that the proposed research will lead to new areas of research or an enhanced level of activity, or recruitment of new researchers to HHS that will ultimately lead to a research programme of excellence that will be nationally or internationally recognized.
- Collaborate with strong research institutes/centres and departments to develop new themes or bring together researchers working in a common field but in different institutes or departments.

e-Submission

Requirements:

1) Letter of Intent (LOI) – due midnight on January 7, 2019

Applicants will be notified of the outcome by February 11, 2019. A two-page LOI is required to facilitate a review process for those invited to submit a full proposal. The letter of intent needs to provide a summary that meets the RFA Priority Areas, Digital Health Theme-based Call, Criteria and Key Principles described in these guidelines (above) and a list of team members/key collaborators. LOIs are to be submitted via email to the Research Administration Office at researchnetwork@hhsc.ca. The email subject line needs to read “RFA-LOI – surname of applicant”. LOI format is MS Word file, single space, Arial size 10 font with 1 inch margins

2) RFA Full Proposal – due 12midnight on April 8, 2019

Invited applicants are responsible for submitting a full application via email to the Research Administration Office at researchnetwork@hhsc.ca. The email subject line needs to read “RFA – surname of applicant”.

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3) RFA Proposal Outline – Applicants are asked to include the sections below in the proposal not to exceed the maximum 12 pages, single spaced using Arial size 10 font with 1 inch boarder margins. In addition, a one-page summary is required and up to 4 additional pages for tables and figures are allowed, excluding references. The RFA Lead Applicant is required to include an updated copy of his/her Canadian Common CV.

Digital Health Research Area/Theme

Names and expertise of key researchers: The team should consist of at least 3 independent researchers with diverse and complementary skills. One individual should be named as the Lead investigator of the overall proposal and must be a HHS investigator defined under criteria. Ideally, a proposal should include researchers at various levels of advancement in their careers, so that the programme has longevity well beyond the 3-year duration of the proposed grant. *(10% of score)*

Summary of the Proposed Research Programme: Provide a description of the research that is proposed, how it relates to existing strengths, and how it will target areas for future development. Also, identify sources of current and potential future funding that can complement the potential award from HHS. Several related projects can be proposed with different PIs but they should all follow a common theme and the links between projects should be described. It is expected that the projects would be complementary and each contribute to advancing major fields of research through innovative and integrated project that collectively will improve patient health or prevention. *(60% of score)*

Value Proposition: Describe the value proposition to the strategic vision for new research initiatives at Hamilton Health Sciences. What impact would this new initiative have with respect to new recruits, collaborations, development of new themes, strengthening of existing/emerging programmes? *(10% of score)*

Training and mentorship of emerging researchers: Each proposal should describe how young investigators would be trained and developed through a programme of ongoing mentorship. *(10% of score)*

Implementation and Sustainability Plan: Provide a description of the implementation and sustainability plans, including how additional resources could be generated to sustain the research programme for 3 years. Also, identify challenges anticipated with respect to implementation and sustainability and potential solutions to address the perceived challenges. *(10% of score)*

Budget Template and Justification: Complete the RFA Programme excel template and accompany with a narrative justification to support the proposed programme budget.

RFA Peer-Review Committee

The VP, Research and Manager of Research Development/Relations will jointly identify members representing the Executive Council of Research, senior research leaders from Hamilton Health Sciences and McMaster University, and heads of clinical programmes to form a committee to prioritize areas for investment.

RFA Review Process:

The Review committee will evaluate and rank proposals that best fulfill the above RFA guidelines, themed area, criteria and principles. Review, evaluation and selection of successful LOIs and subsequent invited full applications will occur from April 12 to May 15, 2019. Notification of the outcome of applications will be communicated to lead investigators by May 31, 2019.

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Important Dates:

<i>LOI submission deadline</i>	<i>January 7, 2019</i>
Invitation to submit full proposal	February 11, 2019
<i>Full Proposal submission deadline</i>	<i>April 8, 2019</i>
Review/Evaluation/Selection	early to mid May 2019
<i>Outcome/Funds Available</i>	<i>May 31, 2019</i>

Deliverables:

1. All publications must acknowledge funding from HHS, and append pdf copies of all publication arising from the grant with the completion report.
2. Submission of a comprehensive final report within 4 months of the completion of the funding (September 30, 2021), along with a draft or completed manuscript that will be submitted /published in a peer reviewed journal. Annual Progress Reports after the first and second year will also be required to assess productivity and sustainability (to be submitted within one month after the anniversary of the funding). Funding for second and third-year is conditional on evidence of satisfactory progress described in each respective report. Executive members of the RFA Peer-Review Committee will review annual progress and completion reports.
3. The progress of funded programmes will be monitored through annual reporting requirements and direct discussion. Renewal approvals for years 2 and 3 are contingent upon satisfactory evidence of how the investment has been used, leveraged and what foundations have been put in place for a sustainable research programme beyond the initial 3-year funding investment from HHS.
4. 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.