

HHS Research EARLY CAREER AWARDS Guidelines – Revised August 2024

ECA Program Description

The **Hamilton Health Sciences Research Early Career Awards (ECA)** are research awards of up to \$50,000 annually. Successful awardees will have the opportunity to renew their funding for up to three years, contingent on productivity and impact. The emphasis is on building a multidisciplinary and collaborative research program. This program is intended to enhance the recipient's ability to be more competitive for research grants from other funding sources.

Purpose of Funds

These awards are intended to support the applicant by purchasing a portion of their time to dedicate to research in their specialty area, providing funding for supplies or research staff to help with their projects, or both.

Any one or combination of the intended uses of the funds is acceptable, provided there is adequate budget justification.

*Funding is contingent upon the availability of funds from Hamilton Health Sciences Research and the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation.

Eligibility Criteria

1. Applicants **MUST** be active HHS staff members or members of HHS Research institutes/centres and have a faculty appointment at McMaster University (physicians must hold full-time appointments, but members of other clinical health professions with part-time appointments may also be considered).
2. Applicants must be within the first **FOUR (4)** years of their **FIRST** faculty appointment and have completed a formal research training program or courses within the past four (4) years, except if there is a recognized break in their research career.

3. Applicants must have a Ph.D. plus credentials in a regulated accredited health discipline, an MD, or both. Applicants must provide evidence of successful completion of a formal research training program or courses. *(Undergraduate or graduate students, residents, clinical scholars, and research or post-doctoral fellows are not eligible).*
4. Candidates must be mentored by a researcher who is a full-time, active staff member of HHS/McMaster University and member of one of HHS's research Institutes/Centres and has a demonstrated track record of success in research and mentoring trainees.

If you doubt your status as an early career researcher, please contact Andrea Lee (leeand@hhsc.ca). HHSR reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to make the final determination as to whether an applicant will be considered an early career researcher for the purposes of eligibility.

Conditions for Grant

1. Applicants cannot concurrently hold any other internal career award. If an internal career award is secured while holding an HHS Early Career Award, the Research Administration Office needs to be notified immediately – please contact Andrea Lee (leeand@hhsc.ca). Failure to do so may result in termination of the grant agreement, and return of any funds disbursed through this program.
2. To best address the diverse range of research expertise represented by the review committee's evaluation process, all applicants are required to complete the provided Lay Summary form using accessible language geared to laypersons.
3. Hamilton Health Sciences Research and the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation has a goal to develop and implement a strategic framework that builds diversity in the workforce, creates a respectful and inclusive work environment, and weaves Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) practices into policies, business plans, practices, performance expectations, programs and services. Addressing EDI strengthens the scientific community as well as the quality, social relevance and impact of the research. Applicants are encouraged to consider EDI principles

when building their team and developing their application. Applicants should consider approaches to promote an inclusive research and work environment, such as efforts to increase participation from underrepresented groups, consideration of meaningful and culturally safe practices and any considerations of equity, diversity and inclusion in the recruitment practices and training/mentorship activities. Information to help integrate best practices and a guide for applicants in EDI into research can be found here: [Best Practices in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research \(sshrc-crsh.gc.ca\)](https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/best-practices-in-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-research)

4. Projects must adhere to ethical standards of Hamilton Health Sciences Research, and CIHR. Grantees are responsible for making sure that their Research Ethics Approval (REB) and/or Animal Care Approval are up to date, and Health Canada approval, if required, is in place by the project start date. In addition:
 - If a project involves research on humans it must be in accord with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (for more information please visit the following website: https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2018.html)
 - If a project involves research handling biological and chemical hazards it must meet CIHR "Guidelines for the Handling of Recombinant DNA Molecules and Animal Viruses and Cells".
 - If a project involves research on animals it must be comply with guidelines of the Canadian Council on Animal Care.
5. To formally receive the grant award, the applicant must sign and adhere to the conditions of the ECA Grant Agreement, provided by Hamilton Health Sciences Research, in its sole discretion.
6. Investigators must acknowledge ECA funding supported by Hamilton Health Sciences on all of their research-related publications, presentations, abstracts, articles, press and showcases (i.e. *Funding provided by Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS) Research and HHS Foundation through the HHS Early Career Awards funding program*). Append copies of all journal publications in PDF format as appendices to your Renewal Progress Report.

7. On occasion, the grant recipient will be requested to complete a survey to help measure the impact of the ECA program.
8. Any unexpended funds are to be returned to Hamilton Health Sciences Research.

Submission Requirements

Electronic submissions will only be accepted through the REDCap platform, late submissions will not be considered.

For the 2024 Competition, the deadline is 11:59PM on Friday, November 29th, 2024 by electronic submission.

1	<p>Completed ECA Application Form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ All required questions must be completed, applicants have the opportunity to save and return later on their RedCap profile➤ Budget Proposal – upload with excel template provided➤ ECA Lay Summary – upload with template provided
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Assessment and Evaluation Criteria

We are seeking applications from across research methodologies (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods) and research sectors (biomedical, clinical, health systems and services, and population and public health sectors). Applicants are encouraged to show a high degree of innovation and incorporate a multi-disciplinary approach, including consideration of equity, diversity and inclusion

Projects must be relevant to both Hamilton Health Science and HHS Research strategic priorities, to invest in health and scientific advances to improve the lives of patients in Canada and around the world.

Funding decisions will be based on scientific merit and assessed on the following criteria by the Scientific Review Committee (SRC):

a) Achievements and Activities of the Candidate

- Publication Record
- Additional Research Activity
- Grant Funding

b) Characteristics and Abilities of the Candidate (from sponsors' assessments)

- Background Preparation
- Motivation/initiative/ Perseverance
- Research Skills / Scientific Integrity
- Judgment/Critical sense
- Originality / Innovation

c) Achievements and Activities of the Mentor

- Scientific Productivity & Record

d) Research Training Environment

- Training Program for the Candidate
- Research Resources

e) Lay Summary

- Readability for a broad audience
- Advances the researcher's career pathway and/or program of research
- Proposed research work advances/creates new knowledge that will inform patient care

f) Alignment with strategic directions of HHS

Resubmissions

An early research career applicant who did not receive funding may submit a revised application in a future competition, providing they still meet the eligibility criteria. A maximum of one resubmission is permitted per project. Early research career applicants of a resubmission should provide a letter (no longer than two pages) to the Grant Review Committee addressing itemized concerns raised by reviewers. Resubmissions will be assessed under the same criteria as first-time applications but with special attention to the responses to reviewers' comments.

Appendix

***Recognition of a break in the research career**

Individuals who have taken time off for personal reasons or for other reasons (such as to establish a private clinical practice, family or health reasons, or parental leave) within the first four years of their research career may be considered a new investigator. These individuals must include a letter documenting the duration of the interruptions and indicating whether or not there was any research productivity during that time. This time off will not count towards the four years. Please note that time spent doing industry or government research will count towards the four years. Hamilton Health Sciences Research reserves the right to make the final determination as to whether an individual is eligible to apply.