



Health Research Grant Guidelines

The Physicians' Services Incorporated (PSI) Foundation was established in 1970 by the physicians of Ontario with the original capital of Physicians Services Incorporated, the doctor-sponsored prepaid medical care plan. The Foundation was established with the mission of improving the "health of Ontarians". Physicians from across Ontario remain involved as members of the Foundation's House of Delegates as well as part of the governing board of directors for the Foundation.

The Foundation's granting interests are in two areas: education of practising physicians and health research with an emphasis on research relevant to patient care. The Foundation's support of health research is offered in the following four areas, in order of priority:

1. Clinical research
2. Medical education research and development at the post M.D. level
3. Health systems research
4. Healthcare research by community physicians *see separate guidelines and application*

This document serves as the funding guidelines for the Health Research Grants offered by the Foundation in the areas of Clinical, Medical Education and Health Systems. For the funding guidelines and applications for the Healthcare Research by Community Physicians or Resident Research Grants, please visit the Foundation website at www.psifoundation.org.

Eligible Types of Research

- i. **Clinical Research** which is of direct relevance to patient care. Studies involving animals will be considered only if the animals are required as an immediate patient surrogate, which must be demonstrated in the written application.
- ii. **Medical Education Research & Development** which focuses on projects designed to assess through research the post M.D. educational environment, such as curricula, methods and teaching resources. The Foundation recognizes that research within this area may involve teams that include non-medical researchers and consultants. Please note that proposals in this stream of health research must demonstrate a strong original research component. Proposals without a sufficiently robust original research component in addition to a proposed development of program/initiative will not be considered by the Foundation.
- iii. **Health Systems Research** which focuses on projects of a special nature within the healthcare system, such as preventative medicine, care of the elderly, communications within the system, underserved regions and ways of enhancing the effectiveness of medical practice.

Areas of Non-Support

The Foundation will not consider applications that focus on problems associated with cancer, heart & stroke, mental health, and drug and alcohol abuse or pharmaceutical drug studies.

Rather, the Foundation allocates research funding to areas that may not have funding opportunities to the same extent as the areas listed above. *Please note that applications submitted under the Medical Education and Health Systems Research streams are not exempt from this policy*

Eligibility of Principal Investigators

The principal investigator/applicant for a research grant in one of the above three areas must be either:

- i. A practising physician having direct patient care responsibilities and an academic appointment and therefore eligible to apply for her/his own research grants as an independent investigator.

OR

- ii. As a fellow who is a practising physician having direct patient care responsibilities and who has a supervising co-Principal Investigator for the research project. The supervising co-Principal Investigator must have an academic appointment and will therefore provide the necessary research supervision and infrastructure (including administering the grant at their sponsoring institution). Fellows must include with their application a letter of support from this supervising co-Principal Investigator.

New Investigators: in establishing priorities among applications submitted, when scientific merit and clinical relevance are equal, preference will be given to the new investigator over the established investigator.

Ineligible Principal Investigators/Applicants: Research Grant applications will not be considered from:

- Residents may not be named as the PI, Applicant, Co-Investigator, nor Collaborator (*must apply through the Foundation's Resident Research Grant stream*)
- Principal Investigators who hold a Ph.D but not an M.D.;
- Graduate students or trainees
- Investigators based outside of Ontario

The Foundation will consider and support only one project per Principal Investigator at any given time. If an investigator is currently being supported by the Foundation as the principal investigator, the Foundation will not consider an application for a new project until the end of the current granting period as agreed to by the PI and the Foundation. Also, applicants must not submit more than one application as Principal Investigator per grant cycle.

Recognizing that physicians wishing to undertake research may not have the necessary skills to design a research study, the Foundation will consider applications from such physicians for a grant to design the study and prepare a full proposal for funding. To inquire about how to apply for this support, please contact the Foundation at psif@psifoundation.org.

Sponsoring Institution

All applications must have a sponsoring institution which is registered with Revenue Canada as carrying on charitable activities and be one of the academic health sciences centres in the province of Ontario. **Exception:** Applicants from within Toronto may have as their sponsoring

institution the hospital at which they have their clinical practice. This exception is made given the research accounting and administration resources available at institutions within Toronto.

The sponsoring institution must provide the necessary infrastructure for the research project including, but not limited to, accounting and reporting of grant funds as well as ensuring the research is carried out according to the institution's policies and procedures as well as accepted research standards in Canada.

Amount and Duration of Funding

Up to a maximum of \$85,000 per year is available, for a maximum of two years. See further in the guidelines for use of funding and budget requirements.

If a grant is awarded, the study must commence within six months of notification. In conjunction with the Principal Investigator, the Foundation will establish a granting period for every award. This granting period represents the timeframe for which the grantee has to complete the study. Within three months of the end of the granting period, the research account must be closed and all unused funds remaining in the account must be returned to the Foundation along with a final accounting statement for how funds were used.

The institution to which a grant is paid must immediately notify and return unused funds to the Foundation if a grantee is unable, for any reason, to carry out or complete the research for which the grant is given.

How to Apply

All requests for funding from PSI Foundation must be submitted by the deadline dates using the Foundation's application package.

The application forms are posted on the Foundation website at www.psifoundation.org.

To be eligible for consideration, applications must contain all requested information in full, including the required signatures on the paper/hard copy submitted to the Foundation. Signatures are not required on the electronic copy. The Foundation is unable to consider incomplete or late applications.

Applications are to be submitted to the Foundation by 5:00 pm EST on the deadline date. The submission must be sent to the Foundation in two parts:

Step One: Mail or courier one paper copy of the signed complete application package. This must be received no later than 5:00 pm EST on the deadline date at the Foundation's office (address below):

Physicians' Services Inc Foundation
5160 Yonge Street, Suite 1006
Toronto, ON M2N 6L9

Telephone: 416.226.6323

AND

Step Two: Email one PDF file format attachment of the complete application package to psif@psifoundation.org no later than 5:00 pm EST on the deadline date. The file attachment must not be a scanned copy and signatures are not requested on the electronic copy of the application. Please note the file attachment in PDF format must be less than 5 MB in size

Funding Criteria

Research applications will be assessed on an equal weighting basis of scientific merit and clinical relevance. Please note that when all other considerations are equal, the research types will be funded in the following order of priority:

1. Clinical research
2. Medical education research and development at the post M.D. level
3. Health systems research

The following questions represent the criteria that will be considered by the Grants Committee in assessing an application (as applicable to the specifics of the research). Please consider these questions with respect to your research proposal fully before completing an application for funding to the Foundation:

1. Is the proposal within the interests and objectives of the Foundation, or is it a proposal which is more appropriate for support by another granting agency?
2. Does the proposed study represent truly innovative work?
3. Will the proposal add significantly to the state of knowledge?
4. Is the investigator fully aware of the present state of knowledge in the area to be investigated? Does the application demonstrate a comprehensive literature review was carried out?
5. To what extent could the research project findings strengthen clinical care and improve the health outcomes of patients in Ontario?
6. Are the aims of the project feasible and can they be achieved realistically within the time frame outlined in the application? Are the objectives of the project testable and, if the objectives are stated in the form of a hypothesis, is the time reference reasonable with respect to the realization of the testing of this hypothesis?
7. Are the research methods appropriate for the objectives of the study? Is the methodology of the proposal sound? The application must include sufficient detail to provide a full understanding of the steps / protocols. Is the sample size statistically justified and feasible?
8. Is the principal investigator qualified and the environment in which he or she works satisfactory to carry out the project?
9. Are the personnel and equipment proposed adequate to carry out the project? Are all budget items sufficiently justified in the application? Is the budget feasible in relation to the objectives of the study?
10. Will the project have any impact on reducing health costs?
11. What is the relevance of the project to the provincial health context?

12. Are there alternative ways to address the clinical problem being addressed by the research?

Project Budget - Use of Funding

The total amount of requested funding may not exceed \$85,000 per year and \$170,000 over two years. The proposed budget must include a detailed budget narrative within the application (including quantities and rates/prices) to explain how amounts were determined. Ineligible or unjustified budget items will be removed from the budget. The eligible budget items are outlined as below:

Eligible Budget Items

Personnel

- Salaries for technicians, technologists, research assistants and other similar persons required for the successful completion of the project and who are not assigned to the project for the purpose of receiving training.
- Salaries for personnel must be in accordance with those paid to similarly qualified persons at the institution where the project is undertaken.
- The Foundation will not provide salary support at a level greater than the experience required for the work to be undertaken on a project.
- The employer's cost of project staff benefits may be included in the budget proportional to hours of employee time directed to project.
- Personnel costs may not include salaries/stipends for research fellows, residents, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.
- Secretarial assistance is also excluded.

Equipment

- Equipment necessary for carrying out the project activities is to be included in this budget category
- The Foundation is unable to support items such as the cost of computers, furniture, tape recorders, photographic equipment and calculators. Service contracts on equipment will also not be covered
- Ineligible costs also include fees charged by the investigator's institution for IT support (internet/web connections, software licenses, network components, etc.)

Material and Supplies

- Direct project related material and supplies
- The cost of purchasing animals and the maintenance thereof is an allowable expense.

Knowledge Translation Activities (conference presentations, publications etc)

- Travel funds are acceptable when necessary in carrying out knowledge translation of the project results. A maximum of \$1,000 *per project* may be allowed for travel to attend scientific meetings to present papers on a project.
- Publication costs and the cost to purchase a reasonable number of reprints may be included, to a maximum of \$500 *per project*.

Other Expenses

- Direct project related items that may not fit within the categories above (such as research activity travel costs) that are necessary for completion of the project activities and requested with detailed justification is provided.

Additional Project Budget Requirements

- It is expected that the institution at which the project will be undertaken will provide research and office space.
- Grant funds must be used according to the approved project budget. However, the Foundation understands that the Principal Investigator is the best judge of the use of the funds awarded and may propose a change in the use of the grant funds, except where the Foundation has specifically excluded an expense item from its funding.
- Funds awarded will be deposited with the institution where the project will be undertaken, to be administered by the appropriate officer.
- A statement of disbursement of the funds awarded must be submitted to the Foundation at the completion of the project. In projects that exceed a year in duration the Foundation expects to receive an accounting at the end of each twelve month period, as well as the final accounting at the end of the granting period.
- At the time grant payment is sent by the Foundation to the institution, a copy of the payment letter is sent to the applicant.
- When work is completed, or cannot be continued for any reason unused funds must be immediately returned to the Foundation.

Funding Exclusions

Listed below are the items and areas which will not be accepted for consideration by the Foundation:

- Clinical Research Grant applications will not be accepted for research in the areas of cancer, heart and stroke and mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, pharmaceutical drug studies or where there is relatively more funding available through other agencies. If you are unsure if a potential project falls into one of the above areas of non-support, please contact the Foundation for guidance on how to proceed.
- Fund-raising campaigns
- Building funds or other capital cost campaigns
- Operating costs of any organization or department
- Budget deficits
- Membership fees
- Entertainment / hospitality costs
- Service programs
- Ongoing research previously supported by another funding agency
- Major equipment, unless required for a research project being supported by the Foundation
- Projects outside the province of Ontario
- Films, books and journals

Decision Process

Each application submitted will be acknowledged within 15 - 20 business days of the application deadline date to allow Foundation staff to complete the intake and recording of all submissions. If you do not receive a confirmation of receipt email after 20 business days please contact the Foundation at psif@psifoundation.org.

Applications submitted will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility. Once completeness and eligibility are confirmed the application will be sent for external peer review by experts in the research focus area. Applicants will receive unattributed external reviewer comments once a funding decision has been made by the Grants Committee.

The Grants Committee will review the full applications and external reviews prior to their meeting. At the Grants Committee meeting each application will be discussed and a consensus funding decision will be reached based on overall scientific merit and clinical relevance. All applicants will be notified of the Committee's funding decisions within 15 business days.

External Peer Review Process

Applicants are asked to suggest potential reviewers with appropriate expertise to assess their proposal. Suggested reviewers must not have a potential real or perceived conflict of interest in reviewing the proposal. As such, applicants must not suggest the following as potential expert peer reviewers:

- A person who has a family / personal relationship with any member of the research team (including co-investigators)
- colleagues at any member of the research team's clinical and/or academic institution
- current and former supervisors, students or trainees of the research team
- anyone the research team (PI or co-I) is currently collaborating with or has collaborated with in the last two years.

Resubmission of previously declined applications

Declined applications may be resubmitted to the Foundation one time only and must include a letter detailing how the external reviewer comments to the previously declined application have been responded to in the revised resubmission.

Grant Recipient Requirements

If funding is awarded, the following requirements are a condition of funding:

1. The Principal Investigator and/or the sponsoring institution are responsible for notifying the Foundation of any significant changes to the project, including but not limited to methodology, budget or personnel prior to the changes being implemented to ensure all aspects of the project continue to meet the Foundation's funding criteria.
2. The Principal Investigator (PI) is to provide a start date and end for the project, which will also represent the start and end date of the granting period. *Please note:* the Foundation will use this date to determine when the sponsoring institution will close

the research account and when to expect interim and final reports from the grant recipient.

3. The project must start within six months of the date of the letter from the Foundation offering funding and be completed within the approved time period.
4. If the project is delayed for any reason that will result in the project duration exceeding beyond the scheduled end date, please email your request for a extension to the Foundation before the original scheduled project end date. The request for extension must explain in detail the reason for the project timeline extension, a budget update and the state of the progress of the project to date and a revised project end date. Please note that such extension requests cannot contain a request for additional funding of the same project.
5. The Foundation requires that all funded research projects adhere to the sponsoring institution's policies and procedures as well as accepted research standards. Grant recipients must provide evidence of all applicable ethics and research standard approvals and registrations with the same title as that of the application approved by the Foundation
6. Please note that the first payment of funding and subsequent payments are conditional upon receipt of all applicable approval certificates and registrations. Upon expiry, approval certificates must be renewed and provided promptly to the Foundation for funding to continue.
7. Projects of duration longer than twelve months are to provide an annual report of 1 – 2 pages on the progress to date of research activities as well as an accounting report. Scheduled payments will be subject to receipt and satisfactory review of both annual research progress and accounting reports.
8. The PI is responsible for submitting a final report on the project outcomes and use of grant dollars to the Foundation within *three months* of the project end date. This report should clearly state the findings of the research as carried out according to the methodology approved in the original application.
9. The principal investigator has a responsibility to report on the results of the project so the Foundation can track the outcomes of all funded projects. Subsequent applications will not be considered unless the previously funded research project has met all reporting requirements.
10. Where papers are published or presented, reprints or copies must be submitted to the Foundation. Please note that you may send via electronic copies by email rather than paper copies.
11. If during the research study, questions emerge that are potentially best answered as part of the same research study, the Foundation will consider a request from grant recipients for a third year of funding up to \$85,000. This request will only be made after the research project is underway. Note: Applicants may only initially apply for up to two years of funding.

12. Grant funds must be used according to the approved project budget. However, the Foundation understands that the Principal Investigator is the best judge of the use of the funds awarded and may propose a change in the use of the grant funds, except where the Foundation has specifically excluded an expense item from its funding.
Please note: the PI must notify the Foundation of any significant changes in the project budget before the change is made to ensure the proposed changes meet the Foundation's eligibility criteria.
13. A statement of disbursement of the funds awarded must be submitted to the Foundation at the completion of the project. In projects that exceed a year in duration an accounting at the end of each twelve month period is required as well as the final accounting at the end of the granting period.
14. When work is completed, or cannot be continued for any reason unused funds must be immediately returned to the Foundation.
15. The principal investigator must notify the Foundation of any leave to be taken, apart from ordinary vacation, in order to make adjustments as applicable to the status of the study and to the payment of the funds. The Foundation must be notified before the leave starts. In the case of maternity/paternity leaves, the PI may request an extension to the granting period of up to one year. The request for an extension must be endorsed by the appropriate institution officials, in order for adjustments to be made to the granting period and reporting and payment schedule. During the absence of the principal investigator, another investigator with an academic appointment at the same university (or institute) as the principal investigator may be given the responsibility of monitoring the project, supervising the personnel working on the project, as well as act as signing authority for the grant. Please note that the arrangement must be outlined in writing to the Foundation from the original PI, the replacement PI and the sponsoring institution.
16. All publications and presentations arising from the funded project are to include acknowledgement of funding from "The Physicians' Services Inc. Foundation". Furthermore, the Foundation's logo should be included whenever possible. An electronic file of the logo will be provided to grant recipients.

Contact Us

Please contact us at 416.226.6323 or by email at psif@psifoundation.org to discuss any questions you may have about submitting an application for funding.