Frequently Asked Questions

2018-2019

30 June 2017

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1. **Q. What types of research does the Heart & Stroke (H&S) fund?**

   A. The Heart & Stroke supports research that relates to heart disease and stroke across the four health research themes (basic biomedical, clinical, health services/systems, and social, cultural, environmental and population health). All applicants must clearly demonstrate that their research is directly relevant to heart disease and/or stroke.

2. **Q. What funding is available to Canadian researchers outside of Canada?**

   A. The Heart & Stroke currently does not provide funding to Canadian researchers working outside Canada.

3. **Q. When are research grant and award competitions generally launched?**

   A. The research grant and award competitions are typically launched in late June of each year. Please check the H&S research website (http://hsf.ca/research/en/whats-new) at that time for 2018/19 competition details.

   You can keep up to date on the launch of any new H&S funding opportunities along with updates on the research strategy, please make sure to subscribe to our e-newsletter at: http://www.hsf.ca/research/en/hsfc-research-mailing-list.

4. **Q. How are funding decisions made?**

   A. All applications submitted to H&S are assessed by a panel of experts - a process known as peer review. The Heart & Stroke's peer review process engages national and international researchers and includes over 180 members of the Scientific Review Committee (SRC). The SRC reviews all research grant and award applications submitted to H&S.

   There are thirteen SRC peer review sub-committees active in 2017-2018, with varying numbers of members depending on the amount of applications received. Members of the sub-committees are considered "internal reviewers". In addition, "external reviewers" may be sought to provide written reviews for the Grant-in-Aid (GIA) program.

   Applications to the GIA program that are eligible for funding will be ranked by fixed percentile within each research sub-committee by the SRC. These rankings will drive which applications are put forth to the Budget Review Committee (BRC): a sub-panel of the SRC, which works alongside other SRC sub-panels in appraising GIA applications. In some circumstances, research grant applications to non-GIA programs will also be reviewed by the SRC-BRC.

5. **Lay Reviewers and Structured Lay Summaries**

   a. **Q. What is the role of lay reviewers on the Scientific Review Committee?**

   A. The Heart & Stroke includes a lay reviewer on each of its peer review sub-committees as a measure of accountability and transparency to its donors. As a representative of the general public, the lay reviewer, through comments on the lay summary, assists H&S in ensuring that donor dollars are spent on research that fits squarely into the H&S mission, as reflected in the SRC sub-panels.

   The lay reviewer evaluates and comments on: (i) the extent to which the lay summary text can be understood by the general public; (ii) the clarity of expression of the work to be done; and (iii) the clarity of expression of the direct relevance to heart disease and/or stroke. The lay reviewer participates in the Scientific Review Committee meeting and comments on the lay summary. The lay reviewer does not contribute to the scientific scoring of an application but does take part in a vote on relevance. If an application is accepted for funding but its lay summary has been rated unsatisfactory, funds will be encumbered until the lay summary has been amended and declared satisfactory.

Applicants must ensure that all information on the application form is clear and concise and the structured lay summary describes clearly how the proposed research will improve the lives of individuals affected by heart disease and/or stroke.

b. **Q. What is a lay summary? How do you write one?**

A. A lay summary is a clear, plain-language explanation of a research project, its goals, and its desired outcomes. It explains in non-technical terms why the research is important. A lay summary can be understood by the general public as well as researchers in other fields of study. A complete lay summary will address six questions:

1. Statement of health problem or issue
2. Objective of your project.
3. How will you undertake your work?
4. What is unique/innovative about your project?
5. How is the proposed research directly relevant to heart disease and/or stroke?
6. What is the impact of the proposed research to heart disease and/or stroke (e.g. to the health and quality of life of people with heart disease and/or stroke)?

c. **Q. What is plain language?**

A. Plain language is clear, concise language that the reader can understand quickly and completely. It avoids jargon, verbosity, and convoluted sentence constructions. A plain-language description does not take on a patronizing tone or leave out information: it simply presents information clearly to a non-scientific person.

Use this scenario as a guide:

- H&S invites you to a reception to "meet and greet" members of your community who support the work of H&S through gifts of time or money. You approach a trio of supporters. One is a mechanic who works on airplane engines; another is a history professor with a passion for the Punic Wars; the third is a personable stay-at-home mom. Regardless of their level of formal education, each of these people – like you – has a specialty. That specialty is simply not medicine/science. Explain your proposed research to these specialists in appropriate, non-technical language.

Useful links for more information on writing a text in plain language:

- http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tcdnstyl-chap?lang=eng&lettr=chapsect13&info0=13
- http://www.nih.gov/clearcommunication/plainlanguage/index.htm

d. **Q. How do you write a lay summary in plain language?**

A. Here are some recommendations for writing at an appropriate lay level (*note that you can view examples of each recommendation by clicking 'example'*):

- **Simplify vocabulary** by using simpler, shorter words. Example.
- **Get rid of extraneous words**. For example: "Heart failure is characterized by the inability of the heart to pump …" could read "Heart failure is the inability of the heart to pump …"
- **Use shorter sentences**. Readers get lost in run-on sentences. Example.
- **Avoid convoluted phrasing** using a noun plus "of". Use a gerund or an infinitive instead. Example.
- **Write out in full an abbreviated term or acronym** the first time it appears in the text. Example.
- **Explain complicated concepts or specialized procedures** in broad terms. Example.
- **Use analogies** to compare a scientific concept to an ordinary-life situation. Example.

- **Write out in words math, science, or similar symbols:** Example.
- **Numbers less than 10 should be written in words**: 1-year intervention → one-year intervention
- **Be careful of terminology that has a different meaning** (or no meaning) outside the medical domain. Example.
- **Use jargon or other technical words judiciously** and as needed. Example.
- **Use the active voice** where possible. Example.
- To **test or gauge the readability** of your lay summary, ask a handy lay person – a parent, a neighbour, an assistant in another department – to read the text prior to submission to H&S.

e. **Q. What tool is available to help determine readability?**

A. Microsoft Word © uses the Flesch-Kincaid grade formula and Flesch Reading ease formula to assess writing level. The Flesch-Kincaid grade formula calculates an overall reading grade level while the Flesch reading ease formula calculates a reading ease score from 0-100, with 100 being easier to read. Both formulae use average sentence length and average syllables per word. Note that Microsoft Word© readability statistics will not display a grade level greater than Grade 12 (American). The Flesch-Kincaid grade formula may be used as a guide, but is not used by H&S in determining acceptable lay summaries.

Follow these instructions for displaying readability statistics from Microsoft Word©:

- Click the Microsoft Office Button (upper left corner of screen)
- Select "Word Options"
- Select "Proofing"
- Check off "spelling with grammar", as well as "readability statistics" options
- Click the "OK" button

f. **Examples of Lay Summaries that follow H&S's required format from Foundation funded researchers:**

Anonymous: *The anti-inflammatory role of a low molecular weight heparin lacking anticoagulant activity.*

Dr. Kathryn Todd: *Investigations of novel strategies to improve cellular and behavioral outcomes after focal embolic cerebral ischemia*.

Dr. J. Weitz: *Improving the effectiveness of thrombolytic therapy.*

6. **Q. What does the phrase "unable to continue" mean?**

A. The phrase "unable to continue" refers to any reason why a researcher would not be able to finish his/her research project. Examples of these situations are serious illness, death of researcher or Principal Investigator, or other personal circumstances, which would prevent a researcher from continuing their project.

7. **Q. When I move my research within Canada from one location (e.g. institution) to another, how is my funding affected?**

A. Please refer to the Award Administration webpage for guidance: http://hsf.ca/research/en/award-administration. The Grant Management Guidelines associated with an H&S-funded research grant/award will accompany the Official Notification of Offer.

The onus is on the applicant to notify the Heart & Stroke as soon as there is a change or considering a change.

8. **Q. Under which circumstances would an award be terminated?**

   A. Awards may be terminated for a number of reasons including, but not limited to: misuse of funds, plagiarism, insufficient progress, or a lack of available funds.

9. **Grant-in-Aid**

   a. **Q. Who is eligible to apply for a GIA?**

   A. Principal Investigators must have a full-time academic or institutional teaching appointment in Canada as of 31 August 2017, the submission deadline. Any applicant in an adjunct position must submit a letter from their Dean/Chair/Division Director to clarify their specific appointment, including the amount of protected time available and local infrastructure in place to carry out the research proposal.

   b. **Q. How do I apply for a GIA?**

   A. Applications for Grant-in-Aid must be submitted by 16:00 (EDT) 31 Thursday August 2017 using the H&S's online system (CIRCUlink). CIRCUlink will not accept submission after this deadline. Any applications attempted or submitted after the deadline will NOT be accepted.

   c. **Q. If I am unable to submit my GIA application by the deadline, do I have any options?**

   A. There will be no appeals process for late submissions. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that a complete application is submitted online via CIRCUlink prior to the deadline.

   d. **Q. How many Grant-in-Aid (GIA) applications can be submitted in one year and how many funded GIAs can be held at one time?**

   A. GIA applicants may submit only one grant application (new or renewal) to the 2018/19 GIA competition as either Principal or Co-Principal Investigator.

   Applicants may hold up to two H&S funded GIAs as Principal and/or Co-Principal Investigator at any time. If an applicant holds ongoing GIA funding as Principal and/or Co-Principal Investigator continuing into the 2018/19 funding year (01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019), no new application can be submitted.

   e. **Q. What are the different categories of applicants on a GIA application?**

   A. There are three categories of applicants on a Heart & Stroke Grant-in-Aid application.

   - A ***Principal Investigator*** is responsible for the intellectual direction of the proposed research, and assumes administrative and financial responsibility for the grant. A ***Co-Principal Investigator*** shares the responsibilities for the intellectual direction of the proposed research with the Principal Investigator, however administrative and financial responsibility for the grant lies with the Principal Investigator. Principal and Co-Principal Investigators are considered the same when it comes to application submission limits (see 9d). The Principal Investigator and/or Co-Principal Investigator cannot receive salary support through a GIA.

   - A ***Co-Applicant(s)*** (or Co-Investigator(s)) is a researcher who contributes substantially to the intellectual content of the research. He/she/they cannot receive salary support through a GIA.

   - A ***Collaborator*** provides a special service (such as access to equipment, provision of specific reagents, training in a specialized technique, statistical analysis, access to a patient population, etc.) but who is not involved in the overall intellectual direction of the research.

f. **Q. Can a Postdoctoral Fellow apply for a GIA as a Principal or Co-Principal Investigator?**

A. No. Postdoctoral Fellows are ineligible to apply for a GIA as a Principal or Co-Principal Investigator (see question 9a), but may be included as Co-Applicants. Please refer to question 9e for clarification on the different categories of applicants on a GIA application.

g. **Q. What is the difference between research equipment and materials/supplies? What is maintenance and facility?**

A. Research equipment is defined as any item (or interrelated collection of items comprising a system) that meets all three (3) of these conditions: non-expendable tangible property, useful life of more than one (1) year, and a cost of $2,000 or more. Materials/supplies are items that cost under $2,000. Laboratory equipment such as thermocyclers, centrifuges, spectrophotometers, computers etc. would be research equipment. Supplies such as test tubes, palm pilots, and sample tubes would be classified as materials/supplies.

Maintenance and facility refers to costs associated with purchasing new equipment. Examples would include small renovations such as installation of shelving to facilitate new equipment, plugs required for new computers, and installation contracts.

h. **Q. Can a Grant-in-Aid be used to fund centres outside of Canada?**

A. No. Funds from a Grant-in-Aid must be used to fund research centres in Canadian institutions.

i. **Q. Can participants who are part of a study be paid out of a Grant-in-Aid budget?**

A. The H&S allows well-justified and reasonable reimbursements for required travel, parking, childcare, honoraria, or other items that would reduce barriers to participation.

j. **Q. What is the maximum amount that can be requested from H&S for the Grant-In-Aid program?**

A. The maximum dollar amount is $100K/year for a maximum duration of three years.

k. **Q. Does a Grant-in-Aid application need to be registered before submission?**

A. There is no pre-registration required; you can apply for a GIA as of July 1, 2017, using CIRCUlink.

l. **Q. Can a currently active Grant-in-Aid be renewed?**

A. Yes, it can be renewed by applying to the annual Grant-in-Aid competition. A grantee wishing to renew an active grant typically makes an application for renewal during the final year of the active grant. If a grantee applies for a renewal earlier than this, he/she immediately forfeits all remaining years of the active grant, except the current year.

m. **Q. What is the maximum number of pages allowed for the Research Proposal and Appendix?**

A. The number of pages should reflect the size and scope of the proposed research. The Research Proposal should be predominantly text and is limited to eleven (11) pages. The Appendix (i.e. figures, charts, tables, etc,) must not exceed five (5) pages.

n. **Q. Does H&S allow top-up funding if a grant is received from another agency?**

A. H&S does not allow top-up funding for applications that have had their budgets reduced by another funding agency.

o. **Partnered Funding**

i. **Q. Do I have to inform H&S of funding from other sources that impact the proposed research application?**

   A. The applicant is required to declare all secured and proposed (i.e. submitted in the same funding cycle) partnered funding at the time of submission. There can be no overlap/duplication in expenses or activities with partnered funding.

ii. **Q. How do we go about informing H&S of our partnered funding (including identification of partner(s)), secured and/or proposed?**

   A. Submit a letter that includes partner identification, the specific role and a detailed breakdown of each partner's (secured and/or proposed) contribution, as it relates to the GIA submission.

iii. **Q. To whom should the partner funding letter be submitted?**

   A. The letter should be attached to the GIA application (i.e. upload the letter on the attachment page of the GIA application on CIRCUlink).

iv. **Q. What will happen if the proposed funding partners are not secured by the start of the award?**

   A. All proposed partnered funding must be secured by 31 July 2018. Otherwise, the H&S funds will be released to the next highest-ranking application (i.e. no deferrals or extensions to accept a GIA offer will be permitted).

p. **Q. How is ethics approval obtained?**

A. Proof of ethics approval (i.e. documents from your institution) must be provided if applicable to the project. Please see your institution for the appropriate documents.

q. **Q. Are there guidelines available for student stipends?**

A. The H&S encourages junior trainees (particularly doctoral students) to be included in the proposed research with a defined and clearly written role, as well as properly justified in the budget notes should there be financial implication(s). Stipend levels cannot exceed the maximum stipend levels from the chart below. The H&S does not provide additional support for benefits towards summer students, undergraduate students, graduate students, and/or post-doctoral fellows.

Position	Max Annual rate (inclusive of benefits)
Graduate/PhD Student	$24,000
Post-Doc Fellow, PhD	$45,000
Post-Doc Fellow, MD	$55,000
Summer Studentships	$5,000 (summer)

r .**Q. What is the responsibility of the Budget Review Committee (BRC)?**

A. The prime responsibility of the BRC is to evaluate each GIA application's budget based on H&S guidelines, in order to determine a budgetary recommendation for the grant. The goal is to ensure equity between the researcher/application being reviewed and H&S's use of donor dollars. H&S strives to allocate the funds necessary to complete the project in a manner that is both effective and economical.

s. **Q. Why was a Budget Review Committee formed?**

A. A single Budget Review Committee (BRC) was established to undertake the budget review of GIA applications for H&S funding and to provide support and advice on budgetary items rather than adopting across the board cuts to GIA budgets.

t. **Q. How does the Budget Review Committee relate to scientific review?**

A. The BRC is a sub-panel of the SRC and works alongside other SRC sub-panels in appraising GIA projects.

The BRC consists of a Chair and Deputy Chair, appointed by nomination and approved by the SRC Chair and Vice-Chair. Budget peer reviewers (15-18 members) are selected for their level of expertise related to the mandate of the review committees and their experience in reviewing and evaluating research-funding applications. As with membership on all SRC committees, the BRC balances geographical representation and ensures that each committee has the capacity to review applications submitted in English or French.

u. **Q. I cannot find a step in CIRCUlink (ie. Reviewers Comments).**

A. If you do not see a certain step within CIRCUlink, click on the [Clear Filters] button located at the top left side of your window. Once you click on the [Clear Filters] button the step should appear.

v. **Q. I want to start my GIA application within CIRCUlink but when I arrive at the "Funding Opportunities" page, nothing appears.**

A. An application cannot be made until the funding opportunity is launched. Refer to question 3.

10. Improving Heart and Brain Health for Women initiative

a. **Q. What is the Improving Heart and Brain Health for Women initiative?**

A. Heart disease and stroke are a leading cause of death among Canadian women. In fact, most Canadian women have at least one risk factor for heart disease and stroke – yet many women are not aware of this threat and do not know how to recognize the symptoms until it is too late. The Canadian Federal Budget 2016 provides for an investment of $5 million over five years to the Heart & Stroke to support targeted research on women's heart health and to promote collaboration between research institutions across the country.

Through this new commitment, in the 2018/19 research programs, H&S will be offering funding opportunities as part of the GIA program and a Seed/Catalyst Program, as part of the National New Investigator (NNI) program..

b. **Q. What are the "Seed/Catalyst Grants" being offered under this initiative?**

A. H&S will be offering Seed/Catalyst Grants, specifically targeted towards the improvement of the heart and brain health for women for applicants to the 2018/19 National New Investigator (NNI) program.

Seed/Catalyst Grants will provide funding support to NNI applicants to conduct research to lay the groundwork for a new grant application. The Seed/Catalyst grants offer NIs the opportunity to explore new and innovative ideas with high potential to create impact on the health of Canadian women. Seed/Catalyst grants could support knowledge translation and implementation of knowledge into practice.

Funds are available for up to four (4) Seed/Catalyst Grants and are valued at up to $50K/year for a maximum duration of up to two years. Offers will be made to the top rated in this category, within the cut-point of the overall Seed/Catalyst Grant opportunity. Applicants wishing to be considered for this opportunity MUST check the appropriate box in the NNI application form and complete the additional 1-page found on page 14 of the NNI application form.

11. Q. Do I need to complete the Sex (biological) and Gender (socio-cultural) considerations questions?

A. Yes. These are mandatory questions. All applicants (irrespective of proposal focus) to the GIA and NNI programs are required to include a sex and gender-based analysis in their research design (or provide rationale as to why it would not be relevant to their project).

12. Emerging Research Leaders Initiative (ERLI)

a. Q. Why hasn't ERLI been launched as part of the 2018/19 research funding competitions?

A. As part of the Foundation's annual review of programs, the ERLI program will not be re-launched at this time due to a reduced number of participating networks. We will however be reviewing this on an ongoing basis for additional opportunities at partnerships and to maintain H&S' commitment to supporting emerging research leaders.

13. Personnel Awards

a**. Q. Are there any 2018/19 Personnel Awards being offered by H&S?**

A. Yes. H&S will be offering a limited number of awards in the following programs:

- National New Investigator;
- Alberta New Investigator;
- Ontario Clinician Scientist Phase I and II; and
- Ontario Mid-Career Investigator Award.

b. **Q. Can a basic scientist apply for an Ontario Clinician Scientist award?**

A. No, only clinicians based in Ontario are eligible to apply for the Ontario clinician scientist award. Please refer to the Ontario Clinician Scientist award guidelines for eligibility criteria, found here: http://hsf.ca/research/en/personnel-award-programs-1

c. **Q. Can a clinician scientist apply to the New Investigator award?**

A. Yes, provided that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria outlined in the New Investigator award submission guidelines, found here: http://hsf.ca/research/en/personnel-award-programs-1

d. **Q. Have there been any changes to the eligibility criteria for applicants to the Clinician-Scientist Phase I and II programs?**

A. Yes. At the time of submission, no more than **five years** will have elapsed since the date of the Phase I applicant's first full-time academic appointment at an Assistant Professor level (or equivalent).

For Phase II applicants, at the time of submission, no fewer than five, and no more than eight years have elapsed since their first academic appointment (at the Assistant Professor level or equivalent).

At the time of submission, the applicant must have a full-time appointment at the Assistant Professor level or above;

Have the guarantee of the Dean and Department Head (or institutional equivalents) that at least 75% of the applicant's time will be allocated to the proposed research program.

e. **Q. Have there been any changes to the eligibility criteria for applicants to the Mid-Career Investigator program?**

A. Yes, applicants must, <u>at the time of submission</u>:

- have a full-time appointment at the Associate Professor level or above;
- demonstrate that no fewer than eight years, and no more than eighteen years have elapsed since the applicant's first full-time academic appointment at an Assistant Professor level (or equivalent);

Also, applicants must have the guarantee of the Dean and Department Head (or institutional equivalents) that at least 75% of the applicant's time will be allocated to the proposed research program (*new criterion*).

f. **Q. How many years of support is the New Investigator award?**

A. The award will be for a period of four (4) years. The award cannot be renewed for a second term.

g .**Q. Can an applicant apply to both national and provincial H&S Personnel Awards?**

A. Applicants may apply to both a national and provincial H&S Personnel Award; however, if successful in both competitions, the applicant may only accept one award.

h .**Q. Can an applicant hold a National New Investigator Award AND seed/catalyst grant (as offered under the Improving Heart and Brain Health for Women Initiative)?**

A. Yes. An applicant can hold a National New Investigator Award, and a seed/catalyst grant, given they have applied to the 2018/19 NNI competition (i.e. applications for seed/catalyst grants MUST be made in conjunction with a 2018/19 NNI application).

14. Q. What are the 4 pillars of health research?

A. The 4 pillars of health research, as defined by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research are:

<u>Basic Biomedical (I)</u>
Research with the goal of understanding normal and abnormal human function, at the molecular, cellular, organ system, and whole body levels, including the development of tools and techniques to be applied for this purpose; developing new therapies or devices with improve health or the quality of life of individuals, up to the point where they are tested on human subjects: studies on human subjects that do not have a diagnostic or therapeutic orientation.

<u>Clinical (II)</u>
Research with the goal of improving the diagnosis and treatment (including rehabilitation and palliation) of disease and injury; improving the health and quality of life of individuals as they pass through normal life stages. Research on, or for, the treatment of patients.

<u>Health Services/Systems (III)</u>

Research with the goal of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of health professionals and the health care system, through changes to practice and policy. Health services research is a multidisciplinary field of scientific investigation that studies how social factors, financing systems, organizational structures and processes, health technologies, and personal behaviours affect access to health care, the quality and cost of health care, and ultimately Canadians' health and well-being.

Social, cultural, environmental and population health (IV)
Research with the goal of improving the health of the Canadian population, or of defined sub-populations, through a better understanding of the ways in which social, cultural, environmental, occupational, and economic factors determine health status.

15. Q. Where can I find application deadlines on your website?

A. Deadlines for grants/awards are located under Funding Opportunities / Deadlines.

16. Q. Where can I find the research classification list on your website?

A. The research classification list is located under Funding Opportunities / Application Forms, and is the fifth item listed.

17. Q. What would be considered an incomplete or unacceptable application?

A. Examples of unacceptable or incomplete applications include, but are not limited to:

- Missing appropriate number of copies of full applications (where applicable).
- Missing sections of the applications (e.g. research proposal, structured lay summaries, signatures, supervisors/mentor sections, etc).
- Missing reference/institutional support letters (award dependant).
- Missing any CVs (e.g. principal investigator, co-applicants – anyone identified on co-applicant signature page, mentor, supervisor, co supervisor).
- Submitting on old application form.
- Not adhering to the font, margin and page limits.
- Un-collated applications.
- Faxed / Emailed applications.
- Handwritten applications.
- Failure to successfully submit an application by the deadline.
- Not following instructions for electronic submission.

18. Q. Will the H&S accept a scanned copy of an original signature?

A. H&S will accept a scanned copy of the original signature or electronic signatures for all research competitions. For the GIA program, the scanned copy of the original or electronic signature page must be uploaded into CIRCUlink. Applicants need not send an original copy of the signature page to H&S.
Note: The expectation is that an electronic signature will hold the same weight as an original (wet) signature.

19. Q. Does H&S provide funding for workshops or international conferences?

A. Currently, programs that are specifically dedicated to support general workshops and conferences are not available. However, as a funded H&S researcher, you may be able to use grant funds towards conferences and workshops, as per the specific award's guidelines.

20.Q. What is H&S's policy relating to indirect costs of research/overhead?

A. The H&S supports only the direct costs of research. No funding is to be used for indirect costs of research. The definition of indirect costs of research for the purposes of this policy is, costs which cannot be directly associated with a particular research program or operating grant including costs associated with the general operation and maintenance of facilities (from laboratories to libraries); the management of the research process (from grant management to commercialization); and regulation and safety compliance (including human ethics, animal care and environmental assessment).