



OHTN

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

OHTN RESEARCH OPERATING GRANT

The Ontario HIV Treatment Network:

Funding Research with Real-Life Impact

Launch Date: November 1, 2011

Application Deadline: January 6, 2012 (11:59pm)

Fund Start Date: April 1, 2012

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Description

The **OHTN Research Operating Grant** was developed to help realize the mission of the OHTN – to improve the health and well-being of people living with and at risk of HIV in Ontario through a network that promotes research and evidence to drive change. This will be accomplished by funding research that: a) is relevant to one or more of the populations most affected by HIV in Ontario (people living with HIV, gay men and other men who have sex with men, African, Caribbean and Black men and women, Aboriginal men and women, men and women who use drugs, and women who have unprotected sex or share drug equipment with people from these populations); b) has the potential to have a measurable impact in the short to medium term (i.e., in the next 2 to 5 years); and c) is scientifically rigorous.

Funds Available

Up to \$375,000 is available from the OHTN to support at least three (3) OHTN Research Operating Grants up to \$125,000 per year for up to 3 years. This award is renewable once, upon full re-submission.

The annual award amount is allocated as follows:

- Up to \$125,000 towards the direct research, capacity building and knowledge translation and exchange costs of the research

Payments will be made semi-annually based on satisfactory progress and financial reporting (including quarterly teleconferences).

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the OHTN Research Operating Grant, the research team must:

- Have an Ontario-based Nominated Principal Applicant
- Be proposing to conduct research significantly impacting one or more of the populations most affected by HIV in Ontario:
 - people living with HIV
 - gay men and other men who have sex with men
 - African, Caribbean and Black men and women
 - Aboriginal men and women
 - Men and women who use drugs
 - Women who have unprotected sex or share drug equipment with people from the populations listed above

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- Demonstrate how the research proposed will have short- to mid-term impacts (within 2-5 years) on the HIV epidemic in Ontario
- As a condition of OHTN funding researchers and all members of their research team are expected to adhere to the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for the Research Involving Humans \(Version 2\)](#)

The OHTN will not fund:

- Prevention initiatives aimed at the general public
- Clinical research that ought to be funded by industry and pharmaceutical companies
- Research that is already being funded by others, or that is in process or has already been conducted by others

How to Apply

Applicants will complete and submit their application using the OHTN's web-based Grants Application Manager.

****NOTE****

1. OHTN Research Operating Grant applications must be accessed for the first time at https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_920?SA=SNA&FID=35028
2. Once created, applications must be re-accessed using https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_920/ and entering a user-unique ID and password
3. The application does not need to be completed in order, or all at once. Incomplete applications may be saved (click 'Save & Finish Later') and returned to at a later date
4. Print a copy of the application for your records *prior* to electronic submission

Eligibility Questionnaire

Upon entering the application form, applicants will be prompted by a series of questions intended to ensure the applicant's eligibility for this funding opportunity and with respect to the **Funding Research with Real-Life Impact Policy**. If applicants are uncertain about their eligibility they should consult with the [Manager, Research Funding & Development](#) before submitting a proposal.

Relevance of Research

Describe the relevance of the proposed research project to the HIV community in Ontario, specifically those populations most affected by HIV. What gaps in existing knowledge will the proposed research fill, and what is the intended impact of the research? How might the proposed research improve the lives of those living with and at risk of HIV in Ontario? (*maximum 250 words, entered directly into application form*)

Plain Language Summary

Provide a lay language summary of the research project and the anticipated impact it will have on the epidemic in Ontario. Describe the overall vision of the research and its pathway to impact. Describe the knowledge translation and exchange approaches to be utilized to facilitate the desired outcomes. (*maximum 500 words, entered directly into application form*)

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Community Engagement Plan

Community engagement in HIV research is viewed by the OHTN as an essential mechanism to ensuring that research is relevant to community needs. The funding policy **Funding Research with Real-Life Impact** reinvigorates the OHTN's commitment to meaningfully engage community members throughout the research process.

Describe how the community has previously been engaged in research conducted by the applicants, including decision-making processes, advisory roles, capacity-building, dissemination, uptake and other activities as appropriate. Describe the engagement process to be applied in the current proposal, and any progress to date. The OHTN requires investigators to meaningfully engage the HIV community in all stages of the research process beginning with conception and development through to dissemination and uptake of the research results. Applicants are strongly encouraged to partner with community-based organizations, people living with or at risk of HIV, and government decision-makers during development stages, to encourage maximal relevance and uptake of research results. *(maximum 500 words, entered directly into application form)*

Proposal

The proposal (up to 13 pages) should illustrate a clear rationale for the support being requested:

Research Plan (5-6 pages):

- a list of clear objectives of the proposed research project
- a description of the proposed research project (methods, analyses)
- a description of complementary or conflicting research being pursued by others, and how that research is positioned within this work
- anticipated challenges and proposed solutions and limitations
- a discussion of the ethical implications of the research proposed, including risks to individuals and communities, and how those risks are/will be mitigated

Capacity Building Activities (1-2 pages):

- describe the capacity building activities to be undertaken with members of the research team

Impacts (2-3 pages):

- a description of the envisioned impact, how the research is positioned to have an impact, and the steps required to achieve that impact

Knowledge Translation & Exchange Plan (1-2 pages):

- evidence of previous success in moving research results into action at the practice, program or policy levels
- knowledge translation and exchange methods and approaches for the current proposal

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Research Team (1-2 pages):

- a description of the roles of all team members (principal and co-investigators), and collaborators, where applicable

More on Impact

The OHTN is adopting the impact framework developed by the [Canadian Academy of Health Sciences](#) for the measurement of returns on investment in health research.

Applications are expected to fulfill those categories that are appropriate to the research being proposed. There are 5 possible categories of impact:

- Advancing Knowledge - includes new discoveries and breakthroughs from health research, and contributions to the scientific literature
- Research Capacity-Building - includes the development and enhancement of research skills in individuals and teams (personnel, activity funding, infrastructure)
- Informing Decision-Making - includes the impacts of research in the areas of science, public, clinical, and managerial decision-making practice and policy
- Health-Impact - encompasses advances in prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and palliation when related to research (in groupings of health status, determinants of health, and health system performance)
- Broad Economic and Social Impacts - commercialization of discoveries, direct cost savings, and human capital gains

Applicants should refer to these categories and indicators when describing the impact of their proposal.

Note: Generating knowledge and contributing to the scientific literature (Advancing Knowledge) is important but it is not enough of an impact on its own to qualify for funding. Proposals must also demonstrate impact in at least one of the other categories. Ideally, the OHTN will fund research that, taken with other evidence, will lead to a new or improved intervention, program, service, treatment or policy.

Proposals (not including references) should be no more than 13 pages, single spaced, minimum 11 point font, with 1" margins. Proposals, including references, must be converted to PDF prior to uploading into the application form.

Timeline

A separate year by year plan for the proposed activities, including proposed/anticipated impacts, should be included.

Impact

Using bullet points, per the categories outlined above, list the top 2-3 impacts per (relevant) category anticipated from the successful achievement of the proposal. This information will be tracked to enhance our research accountability and reporting. *(maximum 100 words per category, entered directly into application form)*

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Appendices

1. Applicants may upload up to three (3) manuscripts (submitted, accepted for publication or published) that are relevant to the proposal (*manuscripts should be compressed to ensure easy upload*)
2. Applicants may upload up to three (3) products (presentations, testimonials, summaries) that demonstrate the dissemination and uptake of their research results
3. Questionnaires, surveys, or other tools related to the current proposal should be uploaded

Ethics Approval and Consent Forms

Upload a copy of related ethics board approvals, as well as a copy of a consent form (draft form is encouraged if final approved version is not available) to be signed by prospective participants or other explanatory material (draft is acceptable) to be given out.

Letters of Collaboration

If your research involves the collaboration of external organizations or individuals please include letters of support indicating their affirmation of, role in, and benefit from, your proposed research project. (*collate prior to uploading*)

Letters of Support

If your research involves the support of external organizations or individuals please include letters of support for your proposed research project. Letters of support from decision-makers (i.e. people who have or will use the results of your research) are particularly significant. (*maximum 4 letters – collate prior to uploading*)

Applicant CVs

All Principal and Co-Applicants should include a completed [Common CV](#) finalized for CIHR. The OHTN intends to become a member of the Common CV network in the future, and will personalize the Common CV for its purposes for subsequent funding calls. All relevant attachments (Most Significant Contributions, Activities & Contributions, and Publications) should be included. For collaborators who will play a significant role in the research (for example, who provide specialized training or knowledge, such as motivational interviewing), a CV (not a Common CV) should also be included.

Budget

Download and complete the [detailed budget template](#) for each year of the award being requested.

In a separate document, include a justification for the requested budget using the following guidelines:

- a. **Personnel/Salaries** – provide details on the rates of remuneration requested for research staff, including fringe benefits. The OHTN will allow a portion of salary support for principal or co-investigators who are independent community researchers who are not undertaking the work as part of a paid position, and as described below (see Note).
- b. **Equipment** – Research Operating Grant budgets may include a request of no more than \$20,000 for the purchase of research equipment (or items of equipment). Equipment expenditures in excess of

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this amount will be considered only in exceptional circumstances, and only where the principal investigator has discussed the matter with The OHTN prior to submitting the grant application. The need for equipment should be explained in the “Budget Justification.” Where a piece of equipment is approved, title to it will be vested with the sponsoring institution.

- c. **Supplies** – Funds for the purchase of supplies are not intended for the purchase of furniture, office equipment or supplies normally supplied by the institution.
- d. **Knowledge Transfer & Exchange** – Please itemize all requests for KTE, including publication costs in open access journals.
- e. **Other Expenses** – The OHTN will consider requests for computing costs, local travel for data collection, transportation of participants, etc.
- f. **Travel to Scientific Meetings/Conferences** – Applicants must indicate on the budget sheet travel funds requested to attend scientific meetings and conferences. Except in exceptional circumstances, the maximum amount that may be granted for travel in any one year will be \$2000. This amount is not transferable between fiscal years of an award, unless previously approved by OHTN Research Development staff.

NOTE

For Researchers who qualify, up to \$15,000 may be requested per ½ course release, to a maximum of \$30,000 total over the course of the grant. Insert requested amount in the Personnel/Salaries section of the budget template and provide appropriate justification.

Eligibility:

- Nominated Principal Investigator status
- Full-time faculty member
- Minimum three (3) course teaching load per term (from September – May)
 - A separate letter from the institution should be submitted, verifying the applicant’s teaching load, lack of a salary award, and approval of a course release if the grant is funded
- Fully justified rationale for course release
- Not eligible if on leave or if concurrent with a salary award

Submitting the Proposal

Applications for the OHTN Research Operating Grant must be submitted electronically by the application deadline. Where electronic copies (including scans, which are acceptable) of documents are not available, applicants may submit in unstapled hard copy only, via trackable courier; however these documents must be received by the deadline.

Documents of the same nature should be collated together before uploading and submitting. For example, please submit all support letters in one electronic document.

No changes can be made to a grant application after the submission deadline. Applicants may update the OHTN about developments that arise after the submission deadline which may impact on the reviewer judgments, but cannot in any way alter the proposal submitted. For instance, applicants may alert the

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OHTN about manuscript submissions/acceptances and successes in obtaining grant funds, but cannot alter any aspect of the proposal submitted.

Please be advised that all application materials and information provided to the OHTN, including personal information such as sexual orientation or HIV status is kept strictly confidential and only forwarded to the members of the Scientific Review Committee and external grant reviewers. It may also be referenced in the review of your application. Please omit any personal information from your application that you do not want shared with members of the Scientific Review Committee or external reviewers. Contact Jennifer Major if you have any questions.

Note: Allow a sufficient amount of time to ensure successful electronic submission. File limits have been imposed to ensure your application is accessible to reviewers. If you experience any difficulty with the online process, please notify Research Development staff at least 24 hours prior to the deadline so that any issues may be resolved.

Address hard copy documents (if applicable) to:

Ontario HIV Treatment Network
c/o Jennifer Major, Manager, Research Funding & Development
1300 Yonge Street, Suite 600
Toronto ON M4T 1X3

Evaluation Criteria & Review Process

If applicants are uncertain about their eligibility they should consult with the [Manager, Research Funding & Development](#) before submitting a proposal.

All proposals submitted to the OHTN for research grants or awards are evaluated for their relevance and potential impact, as well as their scientific and technical merit. All submissions will go through the following two-stage review process.

Stage 1: Administrative Review

All submitted proposals will be subject to an administrative review by the Manager, Research Funding & Development, and the Chair, Scientific Review Committee to ensure that only proposals that meet the eligibility criteria for both the award and are consistent with the Funding Research with Real-Life Impact Policy, are considered for funding. If applicants are uncertain about their eligibility they should consult with the Manager, Research Funding & Development before submitting a proposal.

Stage 2: Scientific and Community Review

Eligible proposals will then be assigned to scientific and community or research/knowledge user reviewers with appropriate expertise in the areas in the proposal. Each application will be independently reviewed by: (a) two scientific reviewers (primary / secondary) to evaluate the scientific and methodological aspects of the proposal (see scientific review criteria below), and (b) two community or research/knowledge user reviewers (primary / secondary) who will evaluate the relevance and impact to the community (see overall

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impact criteria below). Each reviewer will rate five key elements (see below) and then provide an overall scientific or impact score.

At the scientific review meeting, the review will begin with each of the four reviewers announcing their preliminary overall scores. The scientific review will then proceed, with the primary reviewer presenting the proposal and his/her overall scientific assessment (strengths and weaknesses) followed by the 2nd scientific review. The community or research/knowledge user reviewers will then present their assessment of impact, with the primary reviewer presenting his/her overall assessment of the impact of the proposal (strengths and weaknesses) followed by the 2nd community or research/knowledge user review. After both the scientific and impact reviews have been presented, the Chair will lead an open discussion with the larger committee about the relative merits of the team and the overall proposal. Following this discussion, the Chair will then re-poll the reviewers to see if they want to make any final adjustments to their scores. The scientific reviewers will come to consensus about the range of scores for the overall scientific review within which the other committee members will vote. The community or research/knowledge user reviewers will go through the same process.

Once the assigned reviewers have reached the range of scores for the overall science and impact, each member of the review committee will then vote within this range. In the event that a committee member feels that he/she must vote outside of the agreed-upon range, he/she should make this known to the Chair and committee. Each proposal will receive final scientific and impact scores based on the average of all scores cast by the committee.

For funding decisions, the final two scientific and impact scores for each proposal will be summed and averaged, and then the scores for all proposals will be ranked from highest to lowest. Only proposals scoring less than or equal to 3 for their final score will be considered for funding.

Scientific Review Criteria: Scientific Reviewers will assess assigned proposals based on each of the five review criteria below to determine scientific and health / technical merit, and give a separate score for each (using the scoring chart below).

1. **Significance/Relevance:** Does the proposal address an *important* and *relevant* problem or critical barrier to progress in the HIV research field in Ontario? Is the proposal relevant to the priority population(s)? How will the successful completion of the project/program of research improve treatments, services, or prevention interventions for those infected and at risk of HIV? Will the knowledge exchange approaches put research evidence into the hands of people who will use it? (Score out of 9)
2. **Investigator(s):** Are the investigators and collaborators (if applicable) well suited to the proposal? If new investigators, do they have appropriate experience and training? If established investigators, do they have an ongoing record of accomplishments that have had a tangible impact? Have the applicants demonstrated and described a clear commitment to mentor, be mentored, work collaboratively and build capacity in the Ontario HIV sector? (Score out of 9)
3. **Innovation:** Does the proposal challenge and seek to shift current research, clinical practice, or service paradigms by exploring novel theoretical concepts, approaches, methodologies, or

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interventions? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches, methodologies, or interventions warranted? *(Score out of 9)*

4. **Approach:** Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the proposal? Does the proposal present potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? Does the proposal discuss and address any ethical risks and strategies to mitigate those risks? Has the investigator sought community input to develop the proposal, and will community feedback be an integral component of the research as it unfolds? Is capacity building an essential element of the proposal? Are the KTE methods and approaches proposed appropriate? *(Score out of 9)*
5. **Environment:** Will the research environment in which the work will be conducted contribute to the probability of success? Are the organizational support, equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the proposed activities? *(Score out of 9)*

Overall Impact Criteria: Community or Research/Knowledge User Reviewers will briefly describe and provide an *overall impact score (Score out of 9)* to reflect their assessment of:

1. **Relevance and Potential Impact to Priority Population:** Rate the relevance of the proposed research proposal to address key issues in one or more of the populations most affected by HIV in Ontario *(Score out of 9)*
2. **What is the Potential Need for Change and Influence:** What is the relative need for achieving the desired impact (i.e. will the proposed research have a substantial impact on a population that has unmet needs)? *(Score out of 9)*
3. **Timing for Potential Influence and Impact:** What is the likelihood of the proposal having a short or medium term (i.e. in 2-5 years), sustained, tangible impact on the health and well-being of people living with and at risk of HIV in Ontario? *(Score out of 9)*
4. **How will the Potential Influence and Impact be Achieved:** Are the proposed pathways to impact, the role of the proposed research in achieving impact and the proposed KTE methods clear and feasible? Are they likely to realize the expected impact and get research into the hands of those who need it most? *(Score out of 9)*
5. **How will the Potential Influence and Impact be Measured and Evaluated:** Does the project team clearly describe how they will measure the potential for change and influence? How will they know it had the planned impact? How will they measure whether the information got into the hands of the targeted users and was used? *(Score out of 9)*

More on Impact

The OHTN is adopting the impact framework and five categories developed by the [Canadian Academy of Health Sciences](#) to measure returns on investment in health research.

Applications are expected to fulfill those categories that are appropriate to the research being proposed:

1. Advancing Knowledge - includes new discoveries and breakthroughs from health research, and contributions to the scientific literature

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2. Research Capacity-Building - includes the development and enhancement of research skills in individuals and teams (personnel, activity funding, infrastructure)
3. Informing Decision-Making - includes the impacts of research in the areas of science, public, clinical, and managerial decision-making practice and policy
4. Health-Impact - encompasses advances in prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and palliation when related to research (in groupings of health status, determinants of health, and health system performance)
5. Broad Economic and Social Impacts - commercialization of discoveries, direct cost savings, and human capital gains

Note: *Generating knowledge and contributing to the scientific literature is important but it is not enough of an impact on its own to qualify for funding. Proposals must also demonstrate impact in at least one of the other four categories. Ideally, the OHTN will fund research that, taken with other evidence, will lead to a new or improved intervention, program, service, treatment or policy.*

Scoring Chart

Impact	Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
High	1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
	2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
	3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
Medium	4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
	5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
	6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
Low	7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
	8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
	9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses
Additional Information for Scoring Guidance Table			
Non-numeric score options: NR = Not Recommended for Further Consideration, DF = Deferred, AB = Abstention, CF = Conflict, NP = Not Present, ND = Not Discussed			
Minor Weakness: An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen impact			
Moderate Weakness: A weakness that lessens impact			
Major Weakness: A weakness that severely limits impact			

Adapted from the U.S. National Institutes of Health [Enhanced Review Criteria](#) (NOT-OD-09-025)

Additional Review Criteria. All reviewers will pay special attention to **the following additional items when assessing a proposal and its overall impact:**

- a) **Protections for Human Participants:** For research that involves human participants, the committee will evaluate the proposal in accordance with the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – Version 2](#). In particular, the committee should highlight any issues relating to: 1) vulnerability of participants, 2) potential risks to participants, 3) adequacy of protection against risks, 4) potential benefits to the participants and others, 5) importance of the knowledge to be gained, and 6) data and safety monitoring for clinical trials.

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- b) ***Inclusion of participants of all genders, ages and ethno-racial backgrounds:*** The committee will evaluate the proposed research with respect to the appropriate inclusion of participants from groups that have historically been under-represented, such as racialized people, women, transgender people and children.
- c) ***Research involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada:*** For proposals involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada, the committee will evaluate the proposal in terms of its adherence to Tri-Council Policy Statement Version 2, [Chapter 9](#), and to the [Ownership, Control, Access and Possession \(OCAP\) Principles](#), which have been developed as an expression of self-determination in research. The key notions of those principles relate to the collective ownership of group information, control over research and information, management of access to their data, and physical possession of the data.
- d) ***Resubmissions:*** When reviewing a resubmitted proposal, the committee will evaluate the proposal as now presented, taking into consideration the responses to comments from the previous scientific review group and the resulting changes to the project.
- e) ***Renewals:*** When reviewing a proposal to renew funding, the committee will consider the progress made in the last funding period, and the short- and medium-term impacts achieved.
- f) ***Biohazards:*** Reviewers will assess whether materials or procedures proposed are potentially hazardous to research personnel and/or the environment, and if needed, determine whether adequate protection is proposed.

Reporting Requirements

Continued release of funds is contingent upon timely receipt of satisfactory progress and financial reports. Failure to submit a report of any kind will preclude the awardee from receiving further financial support from the OHTN.

In addition to engaging in the activities related to their proposal, OHTN Research Operating Grant teams will be expected to:

- Actively participate in meeting(s) that bring researchers and others together to share learning
- Participate in the OHTN Annual Research Conference and other activities aimed at research knowledge translation and exchange

The following reporting requirements will be implemented to help demonstrate progress and success of the OHTN Research Operating Grant program:

- Quarterly progress conversations with principal investigators via teleconference (15-20 minutes in most cases)
- Annual written Progress Reports (2-3 pages)
- Annual Financial Reports detailing how funds were spent
- A Final Report that includes a clear assessment of the anticipated and actual impacts of the research (5-6 pages)
- Dissemination of knowledge through publications in peer-reviewed and grey literature
- Knowledge translation and exchange activities (as outlined in funding proposal)
- A Report 1 year past the end date of the award that describes successes and challenges with respect to actual and anticipated impacts

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OHTN staff will work closely with funded researchers to: understand the context for their work; assist with managing challenges; help them meet their objectives; and understand and help disseminate their findings.

Instructions for reporting will be provided to successful grant recipients.

Communication Requirements

1. As a condition of funding, researchers are required to submit abstracts of OHTN-supported research for presentation at the OHTN's Annual Research Conference.
2. Significant deviations from the original objectives of the proposal, methodologies, budget or other significant changes (such as mentees) must receive written authorization from the OHTN prior to implementation. Failure to notify the OHTN in a timely manner may result in termination of funding.
3. The OHTN expects investigators to publish their work in peer-reviewed publications and other appropriate formats. The OHTN expects to be notified when OHTN-supported research is published, and requests copies of all publications arising from work supported through this award to assist the OHTN in its evaluation of this program.
4. The OHTN assumes responsibility for disseminating the information contained within submitted reports via the OHTN website. However, OHTN affirms that the results are the intellectual property of the grant recipient and recognizes the need for teams to pursue publication in peer-reviewed publications or other appropriate formats. OHTN staff will work with grant recipients to ensure that its own dissemination efforts do not conflict with the teams' publication plans.
5. Funding recipients are also expected to contribute to the OHTN's monitoring and evaluation activities, including but not limited to: participating in evaluation activities (quarterly progress teleconferences, progress and final written reports, surveys, interviews, etc.), workshops, and providing data or reports as required for the purpose of assessing progress and results.

Dissemination of results through these methods ensures the OHTN is able to demonstrate accountability and impact to its various stakeholders.

Contact Information

For questions regarding this Request for Proposals, please contact:

Jennifer Major
Manager, Research Funding & Development
jmajor@ohln.on.ca
416.642.6486 x2249

For technical support using the electronic Grants Application Manager, please contact:

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Research Development Administrative Assistant
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