

POLICIES & GUIDE

2023 New Investigator Seed Grant Competition

The Critical Care Strategic Clinical Network (CC SCN) is pleased to announce a competition for biomedical, clinical, population health, and health services research proposals that are designed to provide critically ill patients with better care and better health outcomes. Proposals can target science and innovation in any part of the continuum: from improved understanding of the biologic aspects of a particular disease, to the application of a new therapy or supportive care, to improvement of the quality of life for patients, their families, or both, to enhancing the quality of survivorship or bereavement and to strengthen the training of critical care providers.

This competition is designed to advance the Critical Care SCN's long-term research goals,

1. To increase capacity for scientific work within the Alberta critical care community,
2. To enhance the culture of science and innovation within the Alberta critical care community,
3. To improve the health and health care delivered to critically ill patients through knowledge creation and knowledge translation.

To facilitate these goals, the CC SCN™ is pleased to announce its 2023 New Investigator Seed Grant funding opportunity. Funding is being made available for up to **THREE Seed Grants of up to \$15,000 each** to support research focused on **innovative approaches to improve health outcomes in Alberta's critical care population. Priority will be given to research that aligns closely with the Critical Care SCN's Transformational Roadmap (<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/about/scn/ahs-scn-cc-trm-2019-2024.pdf>)**. A new priority of interest to the CC SCN™ and the critical care community focuses on supporting critical care teams facing moral distress/injury and burnout, that in some instances are leading to individuals leaving critical care to work in other areas. Funds must be expended within 1 year from the time they are made available.

Important Dates

November 1, 2022	Call for CC SCN™ Seed Grant applications
January 5, 2024	Register Intention to Submit
February 14, 2024	Applications Due
April 8, 2024	Notification of Awards

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants:

- Principal investigator (PI) must have a university appointment at one of Alberta's academic institutions (e.g., clinical faculty or academic faculty such as adjunct/assistant/associate/full professors) and be eligible to hold funding at their institution.

- The **money must be held** in a research account under the PI's name **at the academic institution**.
- PIs may only hold a single active grant from the 2023 CC SCN™ Seed Grant competition, but may be co-investigators on multiple awards.
- A member of the research team must be affiliated with AHS.
- PIs must be a **New Investigator** and be within 7 years of initial faculty appointment (i.e. clinical or academic) in order to be eligible for the 2023 CC SCN Seed Grant competition.
- Successful applicants must submit proof of relevant **ethics** approvals **BEFORE** funds will be released.

Project:

Funding will be considered for any of the following activities:

- **Priority will be given to research that aligns closely with the Critical Care SCN's Transformational Roadmap Strategic Priorities of System Transformation, Clinical Best Practices, and Maturing as a Learning Health System** (<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/about/scn/ahs-scnc-trm-2019-2024.pdf>). A priority area of interest to the CC SCN™ are seed grant proposals that look at supporting critical care staff facing moral distress/injury and burnout (i.e. consistent with the quadruple aims of improving patient and caregiver experience and improving critical care provider satisfaction).
- Research focused on improving health outcomes of critically ill populations in Alberta.
- Pilot research projects, with intent to use the results to pursue later funding for a larger grant application to agencies such as Alberta Innovates (PRIHS, HIIS), CIHR, or other external research funding agencies.
- Pilot or small studies that conduct new research, are feasibility studies, test new approaches, or develop a new idea.
- Pilot or small research projects/activities that are realistic in terms of scope and goals within the grant timelines. Projects should have clear and measurable goals.
- Important changes to the study design, including study population, recruitment or intervention, must be reported to the CC SCN™ immediately. If changes are substantial deviances from the original application, the grant may be closed and the funds returned.

Funding Eligibility

Use of funding shall follow the Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide. Some eligible and ineligible expenses are listed below. Questions about specific items can be answered using the [Tri-Agency Guide](#) and/or contacting the Assistant Scientific Director of the CC SCN™.

a. Funding may be requested for:

- Stipend support for trainees or salary support for research associates and technical/professional assistants.
- Research operating expenses, including general office supplies.

- Expenses for travel that is essential for the conduct of the study (such as data collection or to attend study training).
- Other expenses will be considered, but must be justified.

b. Funding will NOT be provided for:

- Previously incurred expenses: funding will not be provided for expenses incurred prior to implementation of the grant.
- Investigator salaries.
- Tuition or scholarships for project staff.
- Publication costs, legal or patent fees, membership fees, academic fees, secretarial support.
- Travel to conferences, symposiums, presentations or meetings.
- University, facility, or institute overhead or indirect costs.

****NOTE: Any unspent funds at the end of the award term must be returned to the CC SCN for use towards other research applications.**

Evaluation of Applications

Applications considered eligible for funding will be evaluated on pre-established criteria. The Review Panel will include a diverse group of stakeholders, which may include administrators, researchers, clinicians, research scientists, patients, and members of other SCNs. The Review Panel will make funding recommendations to the CC SCN Leadership team, who will have the final say on seed grant funding decisions.

The following criteria will be provided to reviewers who will assess proposals for scientific excellence and alignment with the funding competition. Each criterion will be scored on a scale of 0-8 (see rubric below) unless otherwise noted:

1. Background:
 - Have the applicants provided enough background information?
 - If applicable, are preliminary data and/or information from a demonstration project included?
2. Research question/objectives:
 - Are they clearly written?
 - Are the objectives realistic and achievable?
 - Are the research questions answerable?
3. Study Design and Methodology:
 - Is the study design appropriate to the research questions/objectives?
 - Is the project design appropriate to the population(s) involved?
 - Are the methods described in sufficient detail? Were any key pieces of information missing?
 - Are the approaches to data gathering, storage, analysis and interpretation described and appropriate?
 - Are the outcomes clearly linked to the research questions/objectives and rationale?
 - Does the application provide evidence that the proposed activities can be completed within the term of the grant (1 year)?

4. Relevance:

- Does the project align with one or more of the Critical Care SCN's Transformational Roadmap Strategic Priorities of System Transformation, Clinical Best Practices, and Maturing as a Learning Health System?
- Is there a gap in knowledge related to the critical care population in Alberta that this study will fill, or contribute to filling?
- Does the project description demonstrate a real need for carrying out research in this topic area in Alberta?
- Will the research generate knowledge that can potentially inform a larger health services research project relevant to health care and/or health services (e.g., policies and/or practices) of critically ill patients in Alberta?

5. Anticipated impact of the project:

Likelihood that the study will develop evidence which may generate knowledge to inform policy and practice (including quality of care), and contribute to improving the health and/or health care of critically ill patients in Alberta. The following may be considered:

- Significance of issue (e.g., burden of disease)
- Likely significance of the project in generating beneficial results beyond the project participants
- Potential for impact within and beyond the local institution/jurisdiction and the academic community
- Likely significance of the project in transferring new knowledge – this includes development of pilot data

6. Integrated Knowledge Sharing/Translation (iKT) Plan:

- Is the iKT plan appropriate to the quality and generalizability of the information to be created?
- Does the iKT plan use methods appropriate to non-academic stakeholder groups (which may include community organizations, service providers, and/or decision/policy-makers)?
- Does the iKT plan include effective sharing of information with other researchers?

7. Team Composition and qualifications:

- Does the team have the necessary qualifications, expertise and experience to undertake this study?
- If applicable, does the team engage academics from more than one discipline, faculty or department?
- Are patient and family advisors included as part of the research team (i.e., development of the proposal/plan) and/or is patient and family engagement included as part the methodology?
- Has the team engaged and described the role of other partners and stakeholders, including any of the following: community partners, service providers, policy-makers, decision-makers, patients?
- Is there evidence that existing or proposed stakeholder linkages will provide meaningful input to the study, and that the outcomes of the work will be meaningful to these stakeholders (including patients)?
- If applicable, does the team engage students and/or junior investigators, and support research capacity-building in Alberta?

- Does the team composition contribute to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion?

8. Feasibility and Environment:

- Timeline is feasible
- Budget is appropriate
- Is there evidence of institutional support?
- Are the facilities, equipment, access to databases or services and personnel described adequate?
- Required signatures

9. Work with Indigenous Populations (if applicable):

If projects include work with Indigenous populations the team must abide by Tri-Council Guidelines for Research involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada (see: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/29339.html>). This criterion is not scored, but if not met by applicable studies, the **study is automatically removed from eligibility for funding**.

- Does the team appropriately address these guidelines?

10. Additional criteria:

These criteria **need to be addressed** by applicants but are **not scored**; comments are provided by reviewers to support the further development of the project.

Ease of Review:

- Is the application well written and easy to follow?
- Is the application complete according to the required formatting standards (font size, page length, etc)?
- Is the application free of spelling and grammatical errors?

Scoring Rubric

The review committee will use a 9-point scale (0-8) for evaluation. Proposals scoring 6 or higher may be eligible for funding.

Impact	Descriptor	Score	Additional Guidance on Strengths and Weaknesses	Outcome
High	Exceptional	8	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses	May be funded
	Outstanding	7	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses	
	Excellent	6	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses	
Medium	Very Good	5	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses	Not Funded
	Good	4	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness	Not Funded
	Satisfactory	3	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses	
Low	Fair	2	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness	
	Marginal	1	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses	
	Poor	0	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses	

Reporting Requirements

Each successful Principal Investigator (PI) must submit a **final report**. The final report must be submitted **within 3 months** of completing the project or ending the funding term, whichever is first. A template will be provided for the final report. **Failure to submit a final report may disqualify the applicant from future funding competitions.**

Successful PIs will be invited to present their findings to the CC SCN™ Core Committee and/or Annual Quality, Innovation, and Research Forum. This is an opportunity for dissemination of findings and provides an opportunity to identify potential future collaborations.

Reporting Activity	Due date
Final report	3 months after study completion or end of funding (whichever is first).
Presentation(s)	Required during study period and/or after completion of funding.

Other Terms of Reference

- Awardees are required to notify the Scientific Office of the CC SCN™ about any publications or presentations derived from the work supported by the CC SCN™ Seed Grant Funding
- All publications, including public messages, arising from the CC SCN™ Seed Grant program must acknowledge the support of Alberta Health Services and the CC SCN™. It is expected that CC SCN™ Seed Grant awardees include the following statement under the Acknowledgements section of any publication:

“Research reported in this publication was supported by the Alberta Health Services Critical Care Strategic Clinical Network (CC SCN). The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the views of the CC SCN Scientific Office or Alberta Health Services”.

- All terms will be superseded by the terms outlined in the Research Grant Agreement between Alberta Health Services and The Governors of the University of Alberta.

Application Process

Please refer to the registration and application instructions.

The 2023 Seed Grant **REGISTRATION** must be **emailed in PDF format** to the CC SCN™ Assistant Scientific Director (samantha.bowker@ahs.ca) by **4 pm (MST) on FRIDAY JANUARY 5, 2024**. **Late registrations will NOT be accepted. Failure to register by the deadline will preclude eligibility for the full application process.**

The **FULL APPLICATION** must be submitted to the same email by **4 pm (MST) on WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 14, 2024**.

Late or incomplete registrations/applications will not be accepted. Applications will NOT be accepted from any 'unregistered' applicants.

We hope that the seed grant funding will allow New Investigators to develop innovative ideas and/or grants for larger provincial, national, or international competitions.

Contact Information

For questions please contact Dr. Samantha Bowker, Assistant Scientific Director of the CC SCN™ by email at: samantha.bowker@ahs.ca.