

Grants-in-Aid of Research Application Guidelines

1. Our Promise

Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Promise is to cure Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis and improve the lives of everyone affected by these chronic diseases. We aspire to reach our Promise through four mission and four mission-enabling strategic objectives:

Mission

1. Accelerate the impact of research;
2. Reach further;
3. Boost awareness and understanding of IBD;
4. Drive system change;

Mission enablers

5. Scale fundraising;
6. Deepen our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion;
7. Modernize how we engage employees & volunteers; and
8. Go digital.

2. General Information

Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Grants-in-Aid of Research Program (GIA) is committed to supporting a range of research on inflammatory bowel disease. Funds are dedicated to supporting research conducted by qualified investigators with academic appointments at Canadian universities, with research conducted at not-for-profit research or academic facilities in Canada.

The guidelines below are designed to help applicants apply for a GIA grant. *Please review these guidelines carefully, as changes have been introduced for the 2024 grant competition.* Applications that do not conform to these guidelines and eligibility criteria will not be reviewed.

3. Grants-in-Aid of Research (GIA) Grants

GIA support research projects with a defined objective, conducted by an investigator working alone or in collaboration. GIAs support research projects related to IBD aligned with Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Promise and strategic directions.

There are several diseases and conditions that are associated with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis (e.g., liver, intestinal cancer, arthritis, ophthalmologic) that can impact the lives of patients with IBD. Crohn's and Colitis Canada will consider applications focusing on IBD-associated diseases and conditions. However, applicants submitting an application focused on IBD-associated diseases and conditions must provide a strong rationale for how their project aligns with the Crohn's and Colitis Canada Promise.

Funding is limited to a maximum of \$125,000 annually for up to three years. These funds may be used to:

- Pay technician and/or student salaries;
- Purchase materials, supplies, and items of equipment (maximum \$5,000 annually);
- Buy and maintain animals and;
- Support travel costs (maximum \$2,500 annually).

Within three years of their first faculty appointment at a Canadian institution, applicants may use up to \$25,000 in Year One of the \$125,000 maximum to purchase materials, supplies, and equipment needed to start a new laboratory. Justification must support the need for and cost estimates of such materials and equipment.

4. Grant Eligibility

Principal Investigator Eligibility

Investigators who hold an academic appointment at a Canadian University in a Faculty of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine, or other Graduate Faculty are eligible to apply to Crohn's and Colitis Canada as principal investigators for grant support of their research.

The Principal Investigator's proposed research must connect to [Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Promise](#). Principal Investigators must reside in Canada to apply for funding.

If an applicant does not hold an academic appointment at the time of submitting an application, a cover letter from the Dean of the Faculty must be uploaded to the application, indicating the planned position and the date it will take effect. Investigators in faculties other than the health sciences may apply if the proposed research is deemed relevant to Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Promise and strategic directions. If the research is to be done in a hospital or other healthcare facility, the signature of that institution's officer certifies that appropriate space and resources are available and will be provided to the applicant.

In any given year, a researcher may apply as a Principal Investigator on one GIA and a Co-Principal Investigator on another GIA grant application. Funding under other specific Crohn's and Colitis Canada programs (for example, Innovations in IBD, GEM Project, or personnel award) do not restrict eligibility for GIAs.

To be eligible to receive funding for a GIA from Crohn's and Colitis Canada, recipients must be members of the [Crohn's and Colitis Canada IBD Research Institute](#).

Support of Early Career Researchers (ECRs)

Crohn's and Colitis Canada is committed to supporting early career researchers. As part of this commitment, ~20% of the GIA funds will be reserved for early-career researchers. While funding decisions will remain based on the final scores submitted by the peer reviewers, some of the top-ranked applicants may not be funded in favour of ECRs. For example, if ten proposals are to be funded and none of the top ten ranked submissions are from ECRs, submissions ranked 8th to 10th will be dropped, and the top three submissions from ECRs will be funded. Proposals from ECRs must receive a minimum mean score of 3.5 out of 5 from the grant review panel to be considered for funding.

Definition of an Early Career Researcher

Crohn's and Colitis Canada follows the CIHR's definition of an Early Career Researcher.

An early career researcher is a researcher within five years from the date of their first research-related appointment, minus eligible delays in research, where:

- research-related appointments are defined as those where the individual has the autonomy to conduct research independently;
- all eligible leaves (e.g., maternity, parental, medical, bereavement) are credited as twice the amount of time taken;
- professional leaves (e.g., training, sabbatical, administrative) are not credited.
- All time spent in research appointments/positions will be considered when determining eligibility, irrespective of time spent in a clinical component or other duties (i.e., administrative, academic, etc.). Should an applicant hold or have held a part-time appointment/position, CIHR will count that time as 50% (e.g., a one-year part-time appointment/position will count for six months towards the maximum).

Additionally, to account for the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on research productivity, March 1, 2020, to February 28, 2021, will not be counted towards years as faculty appointment.

Co-Principal Investigators and Collaborators

A *Co-Principal Investigator* is an individual who is expected to participate in the proposed activities actively but not to direct them.

A *Collaborator* is an individual whose role in the proposed activities is to provide a specific service (e.g. access to equipment, provision of specific reagents, training in a specialized technique, statistical analysis, access to a patient population, etc.).

While Principal Investigators must reside in Canada to apply for funding, Co-Principal Investigators and Collaborators based outside Canada are acceptable.

5. Level of Funding

The amount funded will be established based on the grant proposal's requirements and significance to Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Promise. Grants will range from \$5,000 to a maximum of \$125,000 CDN annually. Support for qualified undergraduate and graduate students within the operating budget is permissible. *Crohn's and Colitis Canada forbids using funds to cover institutional overhead.*

6. Period of Support

Grants may be awarded for up to three years, contingent upon available funds. All funding periods begin in *April* each year, with the first quarterly payments being made in *April 2024*.

7. Application Deadlines and Procedure

Applications must be submitted through a two-stage application process. Applicants must submit a Notice of Intent to Apply via [Proposal Central](#) by the deadline specified. The completed Notice of Intent to Apply (NOI) is used by Crohn's and Colitis Canada to identify suitable peer reviewers to review full applications and to triage applications that are not Crohn's and/or Colitis related. Applicants who submit a NOI are invited to submit a Full Application by the deadline specified.

Applicants must submit a NOI to be eligible to submit a Full Application.

2024 Deadlines:

- Online grant portal opens: Tuesday, July 4, 2023
- NOI deadline: Tuesday, August 1, 2023, 5:00 PM ET
- Full application deadline: Monday, October 2, 2023, 5:00 PM ET

Applicants are encouraged to submit their NOI as early as possible. NOIs will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. If the application complies with the grant guidelines, the applicant will receive access to the full grant application online form in two (2) business days.

It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure their applications are complete. Incomplete applications will be disqualified from the competition. Applicants must complete the online application forms available via Proposal Central. Applications submitted via email or other modes will not be accepted.

8. Assessment of Full Applications

Each full application is assessed by a Grant Review Panel for its scientific merit, relevancy, and translatability potential.

Crohn's and Colitis Canada incorporates lay reviewers on its Grant Review Panel to increase the review process's accountability and transparency and ensure the research is aligned with its promises, goals, and strategic priorities. Lay reviewers help shed light on the relevancy of the proposal to Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Promise Statement. Crohn's and Colitis Canada prioritizes ensuring appropriate, lay summaries are submitted as part of each application.

In 2017, Crohn's and Colitis Canada also introduced IBD nurse reviewers to the grant review process. Nurse reviewers provide expertise as professionals with a strong understanding of both the healthcare system and patient need. As such, each grant application is reviewed by three scientific reviewers (Primary, Secondary, and Reader), one lay reviewer, and one nurse reviewer.

In advance of the grant review meeting, Grant Review Panel members review the grant applications they have been assigned based on their expertise and lack of conflicts of interest. Scientific reviewers assign an overall score (using the rubric below) and provide written answers to evaluation questions. Both lay, and nurse reviewers provide written answers to a series of evaluation questions. The Chair reviews the pre-meeting scores provided by scientific reviewers and written reviews from lay and nurse reviewers. Applications that receive triage scores (under 3.5) from 2 or more scientific reviewers are triaged and will not be reviewed at the grant review meeting.

At the grant review meeting, the reviewers review and discuss each application that has not been triaged. By consensus (or by majority vote if necessary), the scientific reviewers assign each application a score between 0 and 5. These scores represent the following categories:

- 4.5 to 5.0 – Outstanding
- 4.0 to 4.4 – Excellent
- 3.5 to 3.9 – Very good
- Under 3.5 – Triage, application not fundable

This assignment is based on the review panel's assessments of the application in light of the discussion and the reviewers' reports. Relevance to Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Promise and prospect for translatability are also considered. The overall rating also considers relevance to Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Promise and the prospect for translatability in the overall rating. Those deemed not relevant or translatable would be unacceptable and therefore rejected. Each panel member who has participated in the discussion (excluding those in conflict of interest who are excused from the discussion) then assigns a score within a range of +0.5 of the consensus score to the application. The mean of these submitted scores then determines the final score and rank. Those that fall below a score of 3.5 are triaged and not considered fundable.

The Grant Review Panel is also required to recommend a budget or appropriate level of funding for each application. This is decided by consensus. In arriving at a recommended budget, the Crohn's and Colitis Canada National Board of Directors expects the Grants Review Panel to bring its collective judgment and knowledge of research requirements and costs. It should consider closely the budget submitted by the applicant and recommend funding that will permit the applicant(s) to make reasonable progress over the grant period. This budget recommendation is separate and distinct from the assessment of scientific merit and is made after that assessment.

In accordance with Board direction, Crohn's and Colitis Canada considers the ratings and the recommended budgets by the Grants Review Panel along with its program priorities and budgetary constraints and announces the final decision. There will be no appeals of these decisions.

9. Notification

Applicants will be notified of Crohn's and Colitis Canada's decision. The Finance office of the University or Institution concerned is also notified of grants awarded.

10. Evaluation Reports

Copies of all evaluations made by reviewers will be forwarded to applicants without the identification of authors. A summary of the panel discussion summarized by the Scientific Officer will also be included for those applications discussed, scored, and ranked by the Grant Review Panel.

11. Applicant

The applicant(s) is/are recognized by Crohn's and Colitis Canada as the author(s) of the intellectual content of the application submitted. Regarding multi-authored applications, Crohn's and Colitis Canada will correspond with the first (principal) applicant listed. Principal applicants must be affiliated with a not-for-profit Canadian research institution.

Applications with Co-Principal Investigator(s) or Collaborator(s) must submit the information requested for each Co-Principal Investigator and Collaborator through the online full application.

12. Institution

The Institution is considered by Crohn's and Colitis Canada to be responsible for providing space, facilities, furniture, and general services required for the research project described.

13. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval and standard assurance for animal and human experimentation and/or biological and chemical hazards must be obtained within six months of notification of funding. Documentation should be completed and returned immediately after granting funds and no later than six months after the first payment. Subsequent funding may be delayed or denied if required documentation is not received.

14. Language

Crohn's and Colitis Canada is prepared to serve the scientific community and the public in either of Canada's official languages where feasible. Please indicate your preferred language of correspondence on the online form.

Crohn's and Colitis Canada does not accept French applications. All applications must be submitted in English. This change is in effect as of 2018 due to the significant costs incurred by Crohn's and Colitis Canada to translate applications from French into English and our inability to guarantee the fidelity of translations. Crohn's and Colitis Canada prioritizes scientific expertise when selecting reviewers. Crohn's and Colitis Canada cannot guarantee French-speaking reviewers because of the challenges in identifying reviewers with the appropriate scientific expertise and French language skills.

15. Payment and Administration of Grant Funds

If the funds will not be spent during the specified grant period, a no-cost extension may be requested by submitting a letter on official letterhead from the Principal Investigator outlining the commitment to complete the Crohn's and Colitis Canada approved grant and the reason for the no-cost extension to the Vice President, Research and Patient Programs of Crohn's and Colitis Canada (VP). The NCE must be submitted at least three (3) months before the end of the funding period of the grant.

If the NCE letter is not submitted to the VP at least three (3) months before the end of the grant term, then unspent funds for the Crohn's and Colitis Canada approved grant must be returned to Crohn's and Colitis Canada.

Review of NCE Request

All NCE requests will be reviewed by the VP, the Chair of Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Scientific & Medical Advisory Council (SMAC), and the Chair of Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Grant Review Panel. An NCE request is approved by a majority decision determined by an anonymous vote of the reviewers.

A Principal Investigator denied their no-cost extension may appeal the decision and submit additional written information for the appeal. The appeal will be reviewed by the VP, the Chair of SMAC, and the Chair of the Grant Review Panel. The outcome of the majority vote (conducted anonymously) will be presented to Crohn's and Colitis Canada's Research Committee of the Board for decision. The Research Committee of the Board's decision will be final.

Period of NCE

A no-cost extension may be granted for up to one year. Under exceptional circumstances, an NCE may be extended for another year for a maximum of two (years) for each research project. To request a subsequent one-year no-cost extension, the Principal Investigator must submit a new letter on official letterhead outlining the commitment to complete the Crohn's and Colitis Canada-approved grant and the reason for another one-year no-cost extension to the VP.

The decision to approval or deny the request will follow the Review of the NCE Request process outlined above.

16. Changes to the Research Protocol

For research proposals funded by Crohn's and Colitis Canada, any substantial change to the research protocol after grant funding must be approved by the Research Committee of Crohn's and Colitis Canada. A substantial change may be defined as but is not limited to a change to the scientific methodology, research objectives, principal investigator or funded centre, and/or budget re-allocation for different major categories.

The Principal Investigator must submit a detailed description of the protocol change with budget allocation changes to the Vice President, Research and Patient Programs.

The proposed changes to the research protocol will be reviewed by the Vice President, Research and Patient Programs, the Chair and Vice-Chair (Research) of the Scientific and Medical Advisory Council, and the Chair of the Grants-in-Aid Committee.

A recommendation will be made to the Research Committee of the Board, which will approve/deny the request. Crohn's and Colitis Canada reserves the right to withdraw funding for the project if the request is denied.

17. Grant Reporting

Annual progress and financial reports must be submitted via Proposal Central and ResearchFish at the end of each funding year by April 30th. The research and financial reports must use the forms provided on the grant portal. The report must be certified by the grantee and a finance officer designated by the receiving institution.

Subsequent year payments will be withheld until annual research and financial progress reports have been received by Crohn's and Colitis Canada.

Funds must be used during the period of the grant: Should the annual financial report indicate that less than 70% ("minimum spend") of the disbursed funds have been spent, Crohn's and Colitis Canada will withhold the next scheduled disbursement until the institute sends an updated financial statement demonstrating that the minimum spend requirement has been met. Any remaining funds at the end of the grant period must be returned to Crohn's and Colitis Canada.

End of grant reports

In the final year of the grant, the financial report is due by June 30th to allow transactions to clear. An end-of-grant research report is also due one (1) year after the grant's end date.

Grantees who do not submit end-of-grant progress reports will be ineligible to apply to future Crohn's and Colitis Canada grant competitions until progress reports have been received.

18. Signatures

The signatures on the application commit both the applicant(s) and the Institution to specific responsibilities. Signatures of Principal Investigators and Co-Principal Investigators are required. The applicant(s) and the Institution are jointly responsible for adherence to the general conditions governing the award of a research grant as outlined in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Grants and Awards Guide, including the:

- Guidelines of the Canadian Council on Animal Care to animal experimentation;
- Review for ethical propriety of all proposals relating to human experimentation;
- CIHR guidelines that may apply for handling recombinant DNA molecules and animal viruses and cells, and;
- Administration according to accepted accounting practices of the funds provided.

19. Grant Application Sections

The Grants-in-Aid of Research application form includes the following sections. Please see the application instructions [HERE](#) for a COMPLETE LIST of the questions asked in both the Notice of Intent to Apply and the Full Application forms.

I. Project Summary Abstract

This should be written in non-scientific language in a style suitable for the lay members of the Crohn's and Colitis Canada community or a press release. It must not exceed 1,500 characters (approx. 250 words).

II. Detailed Research Report

Applicants should upload a clear, concise research proposal description with their online application. A *maximum of 13 pages may be submitted*. The page limit INCLUDES tables, charts, figures, and photographs, which should be embedded throughout the proposal. Applicants can submit figures and/or tables describing preliminary data and relevant legends. Legends should be succinct. Bibliographic references are EXCLUDED from the 13-page limit.

The detailed proposal must include the following:

- Current state of knowledge related to proposed work;
- Relevant work by the principal investigator;
- A clear and concise outline of the research proposal;
- Rationale for choice of methods and approaches; and
- The objectives and research plan are clearly described.

Detailed descriptions of methods and discussion of results should be included in the body of the proposal; they should not be in the legends or included as an appendix. Questionnaires and consent forms may be attached as appendices, where applicable.

No other additions or appendices are permitted. Excess data will be returned to the applicant, who will have 48 hours for re-submission.

Detailed Research Report Formatting:

- Text must be single-spaced, 11-point Arial font size (including labels and descriptions accompanying figures, tables, charts, photographs, etc.), with $\frac{3}{4}$ inch margins on all sides.
- Header: "Grants-in-Aid Research Proposal" in the left corner with the applicant's name in the right corner.
- Footer: Number pages consecutively with page numbers centered.

III. Budget

Applicants must provide estimates of expenditures for an entire year regardless of when the work proposed will begin.

Itemize by category and justify funds requested for each year of support. *Include in the first year of the budget funds requested for all equipment purchases and other nonrecurring items even though these expenditures may be anticipated in other years during the tenure of the grant (travel costs are limited to \$2,500 annually).* The amount requested must be quoted in Canadian dollars. Applicants must complete the budget sections of the online application.

IV. Personal Information

Both Principal Investigators and Co-Principal Investigators are asked to provide as part of the online application a biosketch using the Biographical Sketch template provided. It includes personal information, including education, research training, academic positions, distinctions and awards, and publications. The current Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) CV format (or Common CV) will not be accepted.

The Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigators must provide a publication list from the last five years. The Principal Investigator can either complete the online section of the application form titled "Publications" or add their publications to the Biographical Sketch form. Co-Principal Investigators should include this information in the Biographical Sketch template provided if awarded.

When completing the Professional Profile sections of the Notice of Intent to Apply and Full Application, *only provide the personal information requested by Crohn's and Colitis Canada.* The Professional Profile in Proposal Central defaults to asking private questions, including date of birth, passport number, and social security number. **DO NOT PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION.**

V. Other Funds

All applicants must list all research projects proposed to other agencies concurrently with this application and those intended for submission in the next twelve months. List all projects for which funding has been received for all applicants in the past three years. State the nature and percentage of any overlap with this application. The title, summary, budget, agency, precise dates, and tenure of these award(s) must be provided.

The applicant **MUST UPLOAD** the summary and budget pages for every other grant currently held by the Principal Investigator or applied for concurrently with this application, whether perceived as relevant or not. If an application on the same subject is pending from another agency, the applicant should immediately notify Crohn's and Colitis Canada of the results as soon as they are known.

Summary and budget pages for other grants held by Co-Principal Investigators are not required.

If the PI holds operating grants totaling \$250,000, please provide additional information on how these grants do not overlap with this application.

VI. Reviewer Comments

If this proposal is a resubmission of a previously unsuccessful Crohn's and Colitis Canada application, the reviewers' and, if available, the Scientific Officer's comments on the unsuccessful application must be uploaded as an attachment.

This attachment must also include how the revised proposal has addressed the reviewers' and SO's feedback (maximum two pages).

20. For Assistance with your Application

For instructions on how to complete your Crohn's and Colitis Canada grant application through Proposal Central, click [HERE](#).

For technical support with your online application, contact Proposal Central:

pcsupport@altum.com
1-800-875-2562 (Toll-free)
Weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (EST)

For program information or application content questions, contact Crohn's and Colitis Canada:

Crohn's and Colitis Canada
439 University Ave, Suite 2110
Toronto, ON M5G 1Y8
Attn: Coordinator, Research Grants
Tel. 416-920-5035 Ext.251
Em. research@crohnsandcolitis.ca