GCRFF International Research Challenge on Women's Cardiovascular Health

Frequently Asked Questions - Budget and Finances

August 2025

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Eligibility and Network Makeup

Q: We listed a large number of co-applicants in our LOI. Should all of them remain as co-applicants, or would some be better suited as collaborators?

A: There is no limit to the number of co-applicants in a network, as long as their roles are appropriate for the proposed research activities and reflect the definition of a co-applicant as outlined in *Section A.2.4 Network Team – Roles and Responsibilities* of the Program Description, where co-applicants are expected to lead research within their institutions and contribute significantly to the intellectual direction of the program. In larger teams, it may be more appropriate for some members to be listed as collaborators rather than co-applicants. We encourage you to review the definitions of co-applicants and collaborators in the Program Description to determine the most suitable designation for each team member.

Q: We plan to include six (6) paid institutions in our network as recommended in the Program Description, but would also like to involve additional investigators from institutions that are not among the six. Can these investigators be included, and if so, how would they be funded?

A. Yes, you can include investigators from institutions that are not among the six directly paid institutions. Co-applicants, collaborators, and trainees can be from institutions that are not directly paid *(e.g., as network members unfunded or funded via sub-contract)*. If these additional institutions are expected to receive funding, it must be done through agreements with one of the six paid institutions.

While networks are recommended to keep the number of directly paid institutions to six for ease of financial management, it is also possible to include more. If your network proposes more than six paid institutions, you must provide a clear rationale and management strategy in your application to explain how the funds will be administered effectively. Please see section *A.2.5 Eligibility Criteria* of the Program Description for further information on the number of paid institutions.

Q. Can multiple co-applicants be from the same university? How does this affect the requirement for representation from GCRFF member countries?

A. There is no limit to the number of co-applicants from the same university. However, the team of Research Program Leads and co-applicants in the network must collectively represent at least four (4) different GCRFF member countries:

- If two co-applicants are from the same institution in a GCRFF country, that counts as one GCRFF country represented, and the network must still be include a combination of co-applicants and Research Program Leads from three additional GCRFF countries as a minimum.

- If any co-applicants are from a non-GCRFF country, additional co-applicants must be included from GCRFF member countries to ensure that, collectively, the Research Program Lead and co-applicants for the network represent at least four (4) different GCRFF countries.

Inclusion of Non-GCRFF Countries

Q: Can institutions from non-GCRFF countries be included in the network, and how will they receive funding if selected?

A: Yes, institutions from non-GCRFF countries can be included in the network. However, they cannot receive funding directly from the American Heart Association (AHA), which administers the grant on behalf of GCRFF. Instead, these institutions must be funded through an arrangement (i.e., sub-contract) with any of the paid institutions from a GCRFF country.

Each GCRFF institution designated to receive funds will enter into a funding agreement with AHA and be paid in their local currency. For a non-GCRFF institution, a paid institution from a GCRFF country will be responsible for distributing funds as applicable. When submitting your Full Application, ensure that there is a completed corresponding budget table tab for each *paid institution* in the '**Institutional Budgets***'* section and a clear explanation of any sub-contracted institutions in the **'Budget Justification***'* section. Funding conditions for co-applicants and collaborators can be found in the Program Description, in *section A.3.4 Conditions of Funding*.

Structure of Paid Institutions

Q. How are "paid institutions" counted?

A. Any institution that will receive <u>direct</u> funding from AHA is considered a "paid institution". A paid institution is defined as the host institution of a Program Lead and/or co-applicant that is an eligible institution within a GCRFF member country. Co-applicants from non-GCRFF countries may not receive funds directly from AHA but may receive funds through an agreement (i.e., sub-contract) with a paid institution.

Q. I see in the Program Description that it is generally recommended that the total number of paid institutions participating in the network should be a minimum of four (4) and maximum of six (6). Does this mean that we can only have up to six Research Program Leads and Co-applicants in the network?

A. In general, a network may include up to six (6) directly paid institutions. If the network includes more than six, the application must provide a clear rationale and a management strategy to justify the expanded structure. However, there is no limit on the number of co-applicants who can participate in the network. This is because additional co-applicants can be affiliated with:

- **Institutions from non-GCRFF countries**, which are not eligible to receive direct funding from AHA but are eligible to receive indirect funding from any of the paid institutions, or

- **Institutions from GCRFF countries that receive funding indirectly** through a sub-contract from a directly paid GCRFF institution. For example, a co-applicant at one GCRFF institution could receive funding via a sub-contract from a co-applicant at another GCRFF institution that is directly holding the funds.

- **Institutions from GCRFF or non-GCRFF countries not receiving funds from the Network budget, but contributing to the research program.**

Please ensure that members identified as co-applicants in the network match the criteria of the role, as detailed in *Section A.2.4 Network Team – Roles and Responsibilities* of the Program Description. Co-applicants are defined as independent scientists who participate in the co-creation and execution of the scientific program and contribute to the network administration.

Allowable Costs

Q. What is the maximum allowable amount for indirect costs (IDC), and is the 10% cap based on the total grant budget or just the direct costs?

A. Indirect costs are capped at 10% of the total grant budget - not just the direct costs. For example, if the total requested budget is $10 million USD, the maximum allowable IDC is $1 million USD. If the total budget is $9 million USD, the IDC must not exceed $900,000 USD.

Q. Does the $200,000 salary cap include fringe benefits?

A. Yes, the $200,000 salary cap is inclusive of fringe benefits.

Q. When determining the budget, can we to set aside a portion of the budget as "uncommitted" funds to address unforeseen needs or reallocate resources during the project?

A. No, the network budget must be fully allocated to specific line items as outlined in the Budget Template and Program Instructions. The use of "uncommitted" or unspecified funds is not permitted at the time of submission.

However, there is flexibility to adjust the budget during the grant period if unforeseen needs arise. According to *Section A.2.6 – Governance Expectations* of the Program Description, any changes to the network's research objectives, membership, or budget allocations must be reported to the GCRFF. This means that while all funds must be initially assigned, reallocation is allowed during the grant tenure with appropriate notification and approval by the funders.

Q. We noticed that the salaries of trainees and lab staff are not listed among the eligible salary expenses in the Program Description. Just to be sure, can you please confirm that we are allowed to include trainee and lab staff salaries in the budget?

A. Yes, trainee and lab staff salaries are an eligible expense and can be included in the network budget.

Q. Are we allowed to list trainees in the budget as to-be-determined if we haven't yet identified someone for the role? The application form indicates we must provide the contact information of all network members including trainees.

A. Yes, it's acceptable to list trainees as "to be determined" if they haven't been identified yet. To help the peer review panel understand the context, please indicate in your full proposal that the position is intended for a specific role (e.g., data analyst, lab assistant), but the individual has not yet been assigned.

Disclosure Form

Q. Who is required to complete a Disclosure Form, including in cases involving Early-Stage Investigators or collaborators receiving funds through subcontracts?

A. Any individual or institution that will directly receive and manage GCRFF funds must complete a Disclosure Form. This includes Research Program Leads, co-applicants (including Early-Stage Investigators), and any other team members who will hold an institutional account containing GCRFF funding.

Collaborators or other individuals who are paid indirectly - such as through a service contract, subcontract, or centralized fund - are not required to complete a Disclosure Form, as the paid institution is responsible for management of the funds in accordance with the research grant agreement. In such cases, the Disclosure Form must be completed by the individual or institution that receives and manages the funds on their behalf.

Research Funding Agreement

Q. When does the Research Funding Agreement need to be signed, and does it need to be submitted with the Full Application?

A. At the time of Full Application submission, the Research Funding Agreement is provided for informational purposes only. No signatures or uploads are required for submission. The purpose is to ensure that Research Program Leads and co-applicants have reviewed the agreement and can flag any anticipated issues in the Fluxx application portal. Formal agreement processing and signing will only be for the network that is selected for funding, and will occur at the time of official notice of decision.

Q. Who is required to sign the Research Funding Agreement with the American Heart Association (AHA)?

A. Only Research Program Leads and co-applicants of the successful network who are receiving funding directly from AHA are required to sign the AHA Research Funding Agreement.

Budget Submission Materials and Requirements

Q. What are the different components of the budget submission, and how should institutional budgets, the network budget overview, and the budget justification be prepared and submitted?

A. The budget submission includes three main components: **Institutional Budgets**, the **Network Budget Overview**, and a **Budget Justification PDF**. Here's how each should be prepared:

Institutional Budgets: Each network must complete one GCRFF-IRC Budget Template Excel file, with a separate tab for each institution that will receive funding directly from AHA. Each tab should detail the budget for that paid institution, including any portion of the budget that will be sub-contracted to another institution.

If an institution is receiving funds via a sub-contract from one of the identified directly paid institutions, the breakdown of that sub-contracted budget must be outlined in the Budget Justification PDF.

Example:
If Institution A is receiving funds to support its own research activities and to distribute funds to Institutions B and C via sub-contracts, then:

- Institution A should include the entire budget (including sub-contracted amounts) in its Institutional Budget tab.
- The distribution of funds across Institutions A, B, and C should be clearly explained in the Budget Justification PDF.

All amounts listed in the Institutional Budget tabs must align with the explanations provided in the Budget Justification document.

Network Budget Overview: In addition to the '*Institutional Budgets'* Excel file, the network must also upload a separate copy of the GCRFF-IRC Budget Template with a single tab summarizing the total requested budget for the entire network. This is submitted in the '*Budget Overview'* section of the Fluxx portal.

Budget Justification PDF: This document should provide a narrative explanation and clear breakdown for the budget items listed in both the '*Institutional Budgets'* and the '*Network Budget Overview'* files, including subcontracted items. It should also:

- Confirm that the network understands that non-GCRFF institutions will receive funds via sub-contracts from GCRFF institutions and explicitly describe the distribution of such funds.
- Identify which GCRFF institutions will be responsible for distributing the sub-contracted funds.
- The explanations provided in the Budget Justification document must align with all amounts listed in the Institutional Budget tabs.

Budget submission instructions can also be found in the Full Application Instructions on Fluxx, under *"NETWORK AND INSTITUTIONAL BUDGETS".*

Funding Considerations for Canadian Institutions

Q: What are the additional funding requirements if our network includes more than one Canadian paid institution(s), to satisfy the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) funding administration?

A: If your network includes more than one Canadian paid institution, you must designate one of them as the CIHR-funded institution. This is an administrative requirement, as CIHR can only distribute funds to a single eligible Canadian institution. However, this designation does not affect or restrict the overall network budget - Canadian institutions may still receive additional funds through the American Heart Association (AHA), as applicable.

- You must identify the CIHR-designated institution in the Institutional Budget template when submitting your Full Application via the Fluxx portal.

- The CIHR-designated institution is responsible of distributing CIHR funds to other national or international institutions within the network, if applicable.

- This designation is for administrative purposes only and does not influence the peer review process or the amount of funding each paid institution may receive. It simply ensures compliance with CIHR's funding policies and helps avoid administrative delays post-award.

This requirement does not apply if:

- Your network includes no Canadian paid institutions, or

- Your network includes only one Canadian paid institution *(*see note below)*

**One Canadian Paid Institution Note:*

For proposals with only one Canadian paid institution, your one Canadian paid institution will be the designated institution to receive CIHR funds.