Global Cardiovascular Research Funders Forum (GCRFF) International Research Challenge (IRC) on Women's Cardiovascular Health

Informational Webinar Questions & Answers

GENERAL

Q. Where can I access the recordings of the information webinars?

A. The recordings for both GCRFF webinars can be found on the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada YouTube Channel and on the GCRFF International Research Challenge hub**.** Links are also available below:

- GCRFF Webinar 1
- GCRFF Webinar 2

Q. Can you share the link where I can access the 'Program Description'?

A. A link to the full program description can be found at the GCRFF International Research Challenge hub, or you can access the 'Program Description' directly via this link.

Q. How many different applications will be funded?

A. The GCRFF will fund one (1) research Network grant for up to $10M USD over 5 years.

Q. What is the GCRFF IRC definition of 'woman' for the context of the grant?

A. The definition of "women" for this grant competition will be defined by the applicants using a justified scientific rationale for the described research population of focus.

Q. Leducq has a usual exclusion that you can't be a Program Lead on a Leducq Network grant and participate in another Leducq Network. Will this exclusion carry across to this new opportunity? That is, if I am a Network Coordinator on a Leducq Network, could I be a Research Program lead or Co-applicant on this GCRFF opportunity?

A. Yes, investigators who are receiving funding from a Leducq Network grant are eligible to apply as a Research Program Lead or Co-applicant to this GCRFF opportunity as it is a different program.

Q. When applying for ethics have you encountered problems with single gender applications and how have you handled these questions?

A. Ethical review can vary depending on the institution's policies and the specific context of the research. We suggest speaking to your local ethical review committee regarding any questions related to ethics applications in relation to the GCRFF IRC.

Q. What is the timeframe for the expected deliverables?

A. This competition does not have predefined research deliverables. Each research Network is responsible for establishing its own timeline of deliverables within its proposal addressing the objectives of the GCRFF IRC. Please refer to the Program Description to help determine appropriate timelines and deliverables for the research project over the five-year period of funding.

Q. Can you describe some examples of previously funded applications (e.g., their proposed research, team makeup, etc.)?

A. This GCRFF IRC is the first research funding opportunity of the GCRFF. As such, there are no previously funded applications within this program.

Q. Why is there only one award for such an important health concern affecting half of the population?

A. This program is an international, multi-institutional effort that will bring together a team of experts from around the world to address critical gaps in women's cardiovascular health. By awarding one large-scale grant, we aim to bring together the brightest minds from around the world to create a robust research Network that supports transformative research across multiple continents. This is a first-time funding opportunity from the GCRFF, and we are hopeful for more international funding opportunities in the future, but this is still to be determined.

Q. Are the specific guidelines available for the full application without having to create an account?

A. A brief outline of the full application guidelines is detailed in the Program Description. However, the specific guidelines for the full application are not currently available. Specific guidelines will be provided only to the highest-ranking research Networks invited to advance from the LOI stage to the full application stage.

Q. Please clarify the policy on indirect costs of up to 10% - is that included in the $10M total funding, or added to it?

A. Indirect costs will be included as part of the overall competition funding. For additional information on indirect costs, please see section A.3.3 Budgets and Allowable Costs in the 'Program Description'.

NETWORKS

Q. Are there any requirements in terms of a predetermined number of researchers being part of your research consortium who are affiliated with one of the funding partners listed on the website?

A. The Network must include (i) two Research Program Leads from GCRFF member countries and different continents; (ii) Co-applicants, as appropriate for the research activities; and (iii) Collaborators and Trainees, as appropriate to the research activities. Collectively, the Research Program Leads and Co-applicants must be from a minimum of four (4) different GCRFF member countries. For more information on the Network roles and requirements see section A.2.4 Network Team – Roles and Responsibilities and A.2.5 Eligibility Criteria. To see details on GCRFF member organizations, see section B.16 GCRFF Member Organizations in the 'Program Description' on the GCRFF IRC hub website.

Q. Is there a limit on the number of Co-applicants?

A. There is not a defined limit on the number of Co-applicants, and it is up to each Network to determine what is best suited for their specific research program. As a general recommendation, the total number of paid institutions participating in the Network should be a minimum of four (4) and maximum of six (6) at which point the Network may become more difficult to manage. Networks proposing to include more than six (6) paid institutions should include a rationale and management strategy. For more information on the number of Network members and the eligibility criteria for each Network member see section A.2.5 Eligibility Criteria of the 'Program Description' on the GCRFF IRC hub website..

Q. Would it be seen favourably or unfavourably if the work is carried out in LMIC, as well as in GCRFF countries?

A. The Network's proposed research program must include a clear path to impacting patient outcomes, which have international applicability across GCRFF member countries, and the potential for wider global relevance. The program's overarching goal is to support transformative research in women's cardiovascular health, particularly in areas representing an unmet global medical need. Applications will be evaluated and scored based on the four strategic criteria detailed in section A.5.3 Evaluation Criteria of the 'Program Description'. Research conducted in both LMIC and GCRFF countries will be assessed using the same criteria as all other applications.

Q. Are there any opportunities to connect with international research partners and build a Network for this competition?

A. This GCRFF competition currently does not provide a platform for researchers to partner and form their Network teams. It will be the responsibility of the research community to identify their Network.

Q. Collaborations among the US, Japan and two developing countries - is this design eligible?

A. Researchers outside of GCRFF countries are eligible to participate, the Network at a minimum will be required to include researchers from at least 2 continents, and 4 GCRFF countries. The list of GCRFF member countries are as follows:

- Australia
- Bahamas
- Canada
- Denmark
- Germany
- Great Britain
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Switzerland
- United States of America (USA)

Additional information on Network members can be found in the 'Program Description' under section A.2.5 Eligibility Criteria.

Q. Can the same country be represented in both the team leads and Co-applicants?

A. A Network can include multiple members from the same country (e.g., two members from different institutions within the same country or two members from the same institution); however, the Network must still meet all eligibility criteria. This includes, but is not limited to, the requirement that the two Research Program Leads be from GCRFF countries on two different continents, and that the Research Program Leads and Co-applicants together represent at least four different GCRFF member organization countries.

Q. Priorities and perspectives of women with lived experience are not mandated for in team members. In the international Big Beat Challenge by the British Heart Foundation "Clear Patient Relevance" was one of the six main areas. Why is it not mandatory to have women with lived experience on the research team?

A. While it is not mandatory to include women with lived experience on the research team, they can participate as Collaborators within the Network. Research proposals are encouraged to incorporate patients and people with lived and living experience (PWLLE) and to engage with them meaningfully, depending on the proposed research program. Engagement with PWLLE is considered in the Research Excellence section of the evaluation criteria and will be assessed alongside the engagement of other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate for the proposed research.

APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY

Q. Is there a limit on the number of applications a researcher can be involved in?

A. A researcher can participate in two (2) research proposal applications but with specific roles. A Network member may be a Research Program Lead on only one (1) application. A Network member may participate in up to two (2) applications as i) Research Program Lead on one (1) application and Co-applicant on one (1) application; or ii) as Co-applicant on both applications. Collaborators can be on more than two applications.

Q. Can Research Associates (i.e., completed post-doc but pre faculty appointment) be Co-applicants?

A. Co-applicants must be independent scientists affiliated with an academic research institute and can be from any career stage, and at least one early-stage independent research investigator who is within five (5) years of their first independent research

investigator appointment must be included. Early-stage investigators must meet the eligibility criteria of having an academic appointment as an independent scientist at the time of applying (January 15, 2025). Trainees are eligible to participate as members of the Network but not as Co-applicants.

Q. I believe I heard that Co-applicants in early stage should be independent. Would you please define an early-stage independent researcher in this context?

A. An early-stage independent research investigator is a researcher within five (5) years of their first independent research investigator appointment (minus eligible delays such as illness, maternity leave and parental leave). At the time of Letter of Intent submission (January 15 2025) researchers must meet the eligibility criteria. The investigator must have an academic appointment where they are eligible to receive and hold grant funding at their institution.

Q. Can Collaborators be identified as organizations (e.g., NGOs) and/or industry Collaborators, and are they allowed to lead part of the planned work?

A. Collaborators can include organizations (e.g., NGOs), industry companies or other relevant stakeholders to help carry out the research as described in the research proposal. However, Collaborators cannot act as Research Program Leads or Co-applicants, as these roles must be affiliated with an academic or research institution. The level of engagement for Collaborators should be defined by the Network within the research proposal. Please note the GCRFF will not fund or partner with anyone associated with the tobacco industry or any other health harm related organizations. Additional information can be found in the 'Program Description' under section A.3.4 Conditions of Funding.

LETTER OF INTENT (LOI)

Q. Can the account for the LOI be created any time before the 15th of January?

A. The designated Research Program Lead can create an account on Fluxx for LOI submission anytime from September 25, 2024 until January 15, 2025. Applicants are strongly encouraged to begin this process **as early as possible**, **and well in advance** of the LOI submission deadline to ensure timely completion.

Q. How extensive is the Research Proposal component of the LOI and what are the requirements?

A. Please review the *Evaluation Criteria* in the *GCRFF IRC Program Description* and *Instructions for Attachments* prior to completing the Research Proposal. The research proposal section of the Letter of Intent (LOI) must be a maximum of 7-pages in length (including figures and tables and excluding references) and be a single PDF attachment. The LOI must contain 5 separate sub-sections:

- Transformative Impact (2 pages maximum)
- Research Methodology and Design (2 pages maximum)
- Network Team (2 pages maximum)
- Governance (1 page maximum)
- References (2 pages maximum – not included in 7-page maximum count)

Full instructions for the LOI research proposal can be reviewed and downloaded through the Fluxx portal.

Q. Can you elaborate on the difference between research proposal at the LOI stage vs. the full application stage?

A. At the LOI stage, the research proposal is intended to give an overview of the Network's research proposal including areas such as, but not limited to, transformative impact of the research program, Network structure, and alignment with GCRFF IRC program objectives. The proposal will outline the feasibility and anticipated impact of the proposed research, identify key team members, and confirm the multi-institutional, multidisciplinary and international nature of the Network.

The full application is similar to that of the LOI but will request greater detail on all elements of the proposed research program The full application will be a maximum of 17 pages and applicants will be required to submit a Network budget allocation. The full application stage requires invited applicants to provide a detailed description of the research plan including specific objectives, methodology, and expected outcomes. In-depth information on Network governance, data management, budget allocation, and additional supporting documents are also required at the full application stage.

Q. How many LOIs will be invited to submit a full application?

A. The ISRP will assess, score and rank all eligible LOI applications and will make a recommendation to the GCRFF for up to six (6) LOIs to be invited to submit a Full Application.

Q. Is there going to be feedback from reviewers at the LOI stage for those proposals that make it to the second stage?

A. Yes, written feedback will be provided at the LOI stage for all LOIs submitted, including those invited to submit a full application. The designated Research Program Lead for the LOI will receive a notification of outcome and feedback on their application on April 30, 2025.

Q. Is there any institutional sign off required at LOI stage?

A. There is no institutional sign off required at the LOI stage.

Q. Once the LOI is submitted, will the committee consider making recommendations for suggesting different LOI authors to consider creating a multidisciplinary international framework that has not previously been considered?

A. The International Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) or the GCRFF will not make recommendations or suggest combining different LOIs to create a new Network. The review process focuses on assessing, scoring, and ranking each LOI individually based on eligibility and alignment with the program's objectives. It will be the responsibility of the research community to identify their Network for the application.

FLUXX PORTAL

Q. Do Research Offices have visibility of the application in Fluxx?

A. Only the designated Research Program Lead has access to Fluxx to submit the application on behalf of the Network. As such, it is recommended that Research Program Leads provide a record of the application in a separate format (e.g., PDF, Word document) if reviewal of the application is required by institutional research offices.

Q. Can researchers start a test or "dummy" application so that we have visibility of the application questions/fields to best support our researchers who are applying?

A. Researchers can start a dummy application to view the portal and LOI instructions. An individual's email address can only be used for one portal application, so please ensure that the email address used for a "dummy" application will not be intended for use again for a formal application.

RESEARCH PROGRAM LEAD

Q. Is the lead the same person as the Chair?

A. One designated Research Program Lead will act as the Chair of the Administrative Core of the Network. It is expected that the designated Research Program Lead who is Chair of the Administrative Core will be an experienced researcher with a demonstrated track record of leading international research teams.

Q. What is the definition of an “experienced" Research Program Lead?

A. The GCRFF eligibility criteria provides flexibility by not setting a strict definition for 'experienced' Research Program Leads. However, the role generally requires individuals who have a proven track record in leading international research teams, as well as demonstrated expertise relevant to the proposed Network’s research activities. This allows applicants to define and justify the level of experience they consider appropriate for their project, ensuring the leadership is well-suited to oversee a complex international research program and distributed team structure.

Q. Is there a specific requirement or definition for international team experience required for the Chair? What if the Research Project Lead has no direct international leading experience but has multisite experience on national projects with international consortia experience?

A. There is no strict requirement for 'international team experience' for the Chair (Research Program Lead). This allows Networks to assess and highlight the experience they believe best qualifies their proposed Research Program Leads. The Network is encouraged to demonstrate how the Chair’s (Research Program Lead’s) experience – whether primarily national or international – will foster effective collaboration across continents to support impactful, internationally relevant research.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA

Q. Is the proposal limited to preclinical research (basic science), clinical studies or translational research? Do you accept pilot, feasibility clinical studies or does it need to span across preclinical and clinical work?

A. The research proposal is not limited to a specific medical research pillar or research area or study design. The GCRFF IRC will accept applications that propose research programs in areas of women's cardiovascular health that are under-researched and/or require greater understanding. The Network's proposed research program must include a clear path to impacting patient outcomes, which have international applicability across GCRFF member countries, and the potential for wider global relevance. Applicants must demonstrate how their research proposal aligns with the program's goals and objectives. Further information on research areas of interest can be found within the 'Program Description' under section A.2.3 Areas of Interest.

Q. Is an application focused on stroke eligible for the competition?

A. Yes, an application focused on stroke is eligible for the GCRFF IRC competition. It is the responsibility of the applicants to demonstrate how their research proposal aligns with the program's goals and objectives. Further information on research areas of interest can be found within the 'Program Description' under section A.2.3 Areas of Interest.