



Michael Smith  
**Health  
Research BC**

# 2024 Research Trainee Program

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## GUIDELINES

### DEADLINES

Letter of intent: December 12, 2023, 4:30 p.m. PT

Full application: February 23, 2024, 4:30 p.m. PT

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## Help with your Application

For questions regarding the application and submission process, please contact:

**Asta Jureliaviciute**

Research Competitions Coordinator

[trainee@healthresearchbc.ca](mailto:trainee@healthresearchbc.ca)

For information about the Michael Smith Health Research BC ApplyNet system or help with login information, please contact:

**Michael Smith Health Research BC Help Desk**

[helpdesk@healthresearchbc.ca](mailto:helpdesk@healthresearchbc.ca)

604.730.8322

## 1. Introduction

Michael Smith Health Research BC (Health Research BC), funded by the Province of British Columbia, is BC's health research funding agency. Health Research BC helps develop, retain and recruit the talented people whose research improves the health of British Columbians, addresses health system priorities, creates jobs and adds to the knowledge economy. Learn more at [www.healthresearchbc.ca](http://www.healthresearchbc.ca).

### **Delivering for BC in a changing context**

As BC's health research funding agency, we are committed to helping develop, support, and retain the province's research talent base. The COVID-19 pandemic has created rapid change and uncertainty within BC's health research community.

Health Research BC continues to reach out to stakeholders in BC's health research system to better understand current needs. It's clear that funding for post-doctoral fellows is critically important now, more than ever. Using our program learning and improvement cycle, we continue to grow and evolve our health research funding programs to ensure they meet the needs of BC's health research and life sciences community.

### **Purpose**

Health Research BC's Research Trainee Program is designed to attract, recognize, and support outstanding early career researchers from across BC who have recently completed a PhD, and health professionals eligible for a research fellowship (or equivalent) program. The Research Trainee award protects award recipients' time for health research activities during post-doctoral training by providing funding to support their stipend. These awards support health researchers in training to strengthen near and long-term health research capacity and contribute to the success of BC's health research system.

## Objectives

Health Research BC has a strategic commitment to develop health research talent and strengthen health research capacity across BC. The Research Trainee Program helps develop talent and strengthens provincial health research capacity by investing in health researchers in the post-doctoral training phase of their research careers.

The specific objectives of the program are to:

- Identify and develop talented post-doctoral-level trainees in health research.
- Increase the research productivity of post-doctoral-level trainees, and by extension, their supervisors.
- Prepare post-doctoral-level trainees for successful careers in research, biotechnology, health policy, and other sectors.

## 2. Key Competition Dates

Action	Target Date
Competition launch	Mid November 2023
LOI deadline for applicants	December 12, 2023, 4:30 p.m. PT
Full application deadline (applicants)	February 23, 2024, 4:30 p.m. PT
Full application deadline (host institution)	March 1 , 2024, 4:30 p.m. PT
Anticipated notice of funding decision	July 2024
Anticipated start of funding	September 1, 2024

## 3. Award Amount and Duration

Health Research BC is committed to developing the health research talent BC needs through investments in the Research Trainee Program. Over the past three years, Health Research BC has awarded an average of 46 new Research Trainee awards per year, for an average success rate of 31 percent. These figures include partnered awards. Additional funds contributed by partners (see Section 11) may increase the number of awards Health Research BC is able to offer in a given competition.

The Research Trainee award consists of a stipend valued at \$60,000 per year and a research and travel allowance valued at \$4,500 per year for up to **three years**. Applicants must apply for at least **one year of support**. Research Trainee stipend amounts are inclusive of benefits, i.e. host institutions<sup>1</sup> may use the award stipend to pay benefits to the award holders, according to their respective payroll policies. Eligible expenses for the research and travel allowance can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Research Trainees who hold external stipend awards at the time of application or at the award start

<sup>1</sup> The host institution is typically the institution that provides the majority of resources to support the program of research (e.g. infrastructure, human resources, administration, etc.). The host institution will be responsible for administering the award funds via the recipient's supervisor.

date, or who apply and receive such an award during the period that they hold a Health Research BC Research Trainee award, are eligible to receive incentive funding. See [Appendix B](#) for details on incentive funding.

Health Research BC's financial contributions beyond year one of the awards are subject to future funding of Health Research BC by the provincial government and the annual budgetary approval by Health Research BC's Board of Directors.

## Additional Paid Work

All award recipients, with the approval of their supervisor(s), may earn additional amounts from other sources by engaging in work outside of their research activities. For example, they may engage in and accept remuneration for limited departmental activities that contribute to their development as an independent researcher. This work cannot interfere with their research training progress.

## 4. Eligibility Requirements

At the time of the award start date (**September 1, 2024**), the applicant must:

- Be a Canadian citizen, permanent resident or foreign national<sup>2</sup>. Applicants who are foreign nationals must be sponsored by a supervisor who holds an academic appointment at a BC institution.
- Have a PhD or equivalent<sup>3</sup> OR be a [health professional](#) with a license to practice in BC who is in active clinical service AND be researching in one of the four health research themes<sup>4</sup> as defined by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research: biomedical, clinical, health services, or population health.
- Hold post-doctoral fellowship position, or equivalent, at an eligible BC host institution that holds a memorandum of understanding with Health Research BC. The applicant must be eligible to hold the post-doctoral position for the duration of the Health Research BC award. Research associates are not eligible to apply.
- Be within **six years** from their PhD (or equivalent) degree completion **OR 11 years** from their health professional degree completion as of the start date of the award, September 1, 2024.
- Justified post-degree career interruptions (e.g. parental leave, medical leave, residency training, clinical licensing, etc.) are deducted from the eligibility window calculation.
- Have a written commitment from a supervisor protecting:
  - A minimum of 75 percent time of the PhD (or equivalent) applicant's time for research training. This represents no less than 30 hours per week, **OR**

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<sup>2</sup> A foreign national is a person who is not a citizen or permanent resident of Canada but is legally allowed to study or work in Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Applicants with health professional degrees (e.g. MD) who are not in active clinical service. If you have questions about your eligibility, please contact the competition coordinator ([trainee@healthresearchbc.ca](mailto:trainee@healthresearchbc.ca)).

<sup>4</sup> Health Research BC has adopted the description of the four themes of CIHR funded health research, but with modified titles for themes 3 and 4, referring to these as health services and population health, respectively.

- A minimum of 50 percent of a health professional applicant's time (those in active clinical service) to health research activities. This represents no less than 20 hours per week.
- Not have previously held a Michael Smith Health Research BC (formerly MSFHR) Research Trainee award<sup>5</sup>.

### Eligibility Window Calculation

Applicants who are within six years from their PhD degree completion or eleven years from their health professional degree completion (excluding any post-degree career interruptions) may apply for between 12 and 36 months of support.

Example:

- Date of PhD degree completion: October 24, 2019
- The applicant had a 6-month long post-degree interruption (parental leave) between September 14, 2020 and February 13, 2021.
- **Number of full calendar months** between the date of degree completion (October 24, 2019) and the award start date (September 1, 2024) = 58
- Deducting the career interruption: 58 months (since degree completion) – 6 months (career interruption) = 52 months
- The applicant is within the eligibility window (72 months) and is eligible to apply for between 12 and 36 months of support at \$64,500/year (stipend + research and travel allowance).

## 5. Supervisors

**Reminder:** Health Research BC encourages supervisors and co-supervisors to use the Supervisor/Co-Supervisor Forms to describe any concrete practices or resources they will provide to support accessibility, diversity and inclusion in their work environment and in mentoring, training and professional development.

The primary supervisor must be an established researcher who holds an academic appointment (at an academic rank of assistant professor or higher) with a BC institution that holds a memorandum of understanding with Health Research BC. Applicants may also have a co-supervisor who is an independent researcher with expertise related to the proposed research area. The co-supervisor may be located outside of BC. The expertise of the supervisor and co-supervisor should be complementary and appropriate for the proposed research project and pathway to impact (KT) activities, and for the professional development of the applicant. Co-supervisors are expected to significantly contribute to the research project and/or knowledge translation activities, and to the professional development of the applicant.

The primary supervisor must complete a Supervisor Form, and the co-supervisor (if applicable) must complete the Co-Supervisor Form. We strongly recommend that supervisors and co-supervisors review and provide feedback on the applicant's full application before it is submitted.

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<sup>5</sup> If you held a MSFHR Research Trainee Award prior to 2011, please contact [trainee@healthresearchbc.ca](mailto:trainee@healthresearchbc.ca) to verify eligibility.

Primary supervisor(s):

- Can support up to a maximum of four fully-funded Health Research BC Research Trainees at any one time.
- Must have a productive health-oriented research record and sufficient resources to ensure the satisfactory conduct of the applicant's research.
- Provide commitment of:
  - For applicants to the PhD (or equivalent) stream, a minimum of 75 percent of the applicant's time for health research activities. This represents no less than 30 hours per week, OR
  - For applicants to the health professional stream, a minimum of 50 percent of the applicant's time for health research activities. This represents no less than 20 hours per week.

The primary supervisor agrees to:

- Supervise the applicant's research and to provide the resources that are necessary for the successful completion of the research project including any knowledge translation (KT) activities, as appropriate.
- Administer the research and travel allowance of the award recipient.
- Respect the obligations described in the Health Research BC Research Trainee competition Guidelines and Conditions of Award, as well as those of the host institution as they relate to the supervision of post-doctoral fellows.
- Meet all reporting requirements of Health Research BC in a timely fashion.
- Ensure the award recipient:
  - Respects and abides by the obligations described in the Research Trainee Guidelines, Conditions of Award, and the host institution's policies and procedures.
  - Uses the Health Research BC award funds only for the purposes intended.
  - Informs Health Research BC and the host institution immediately of any substantive changes such as the trainee's eligibility status, change of host institution or research location, etc.
  - Meets all reporting requirements of Health Research BC in a timely fashion.

## 6. Responsible Conduct of Research

Research Trainee applicants must comply with the ethical and research policies outlined by the host institution and the [Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research](#).

This includes, but is not limited to:

- [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans \(2022\)](#)
- [TCPS 2 – Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada](#) if the research involves Indigenous peoples
- [Canadian Council on Animal Care Policies and Guidelines](#)
- [Canadian Biosafety Standards and Guidelines](#)

**New for 2024: Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in applications** With the latest advancements and rapid uptake in generative AI (such as ChatGPT) to create content, Health Research BC discourages using generative AI tools in application development. Applications submitted to Health Research BC are expected to be the original concepts and ideas generated by the applicant. Applicants should be aware that the content created using generative AI tools may contain the intellectual property of others, false information, or biases. Applicants must ensure that their

applications comply with the Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research, especially pertaining to research integrity. Using AI tools could also result in your original content and ideas being harvested and used without your consent or without crediting you.

## 7. Indigenous Health Research

Health Research BC is on a learning journey towards enacting our organizational commitments to Indigenous cultural safety and Indigenous health research, grounded in respect for Indigenous self-determination and awareness of reconciliation as an active and ongoing process. Our organizational commitments to Indigenous cultural safety and Indigenous health research build on relationships nurtured and work undertaken by the former BC AHSN and former MSFHR. Key among these relationships are the BC Network Environment for Indigenous Health Research (BC NEIHR) and the First Nations Health Authority.

We recognize that we are still learning how to respectfully support reconciliation efforts and develop meaningful relationships and partnerships with Indigenous people in British Columbia. Our work continues to be guided by our Indigenous partners.

Health Research BC expects applicants to approach their research and knowledge translation activities with culturally safe practices that demonstrate humility, integrity, accountability and respect for Indigenous self-determination. Applicants must comply with the ethical and research policies outlined in [Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada](#) of the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans \(2022\)](#). When appropriate, applicants must also describe their data management plan in accordance with the First Nations principles of [OCAP®: ownership, control, access and possession](#).

Additional resources:

- [First Nations Health Authority](#)
- Health Research BC's [Indigenous Research Ethics Resources](#)

## 8. Integrating Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Considerations in Research

Health Research BC has a [strategic commitment](#) to fostering equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the health research system. Diversity in research is important to cultivating talent and promoting inclusive excellence, which in turn drives discovery and helps build a more equitable health research system.

Data from Canada and around the world show a lack of diversity in the research system, as well as systemic inequities in access to research jobs, funding and other resources. These inequities disproportionately and negatively affect groups who have been historically underrepresented among researchers and in academia, including those who are Indigenous, Black and people of colour, LGBTQ2S+ people, and people with disabilities.

As BC's health research agency, we have an important role in leading and supporting efforts to address systemic racism and other forms of bias and discrimination that create and exacerbate inequities in the health research system. We are doing this in a few ways including continuing to seek ways to improve



the design and implementation of our funding programs and peer review processes, requiring all Health Research BC's peer reviewers to participate in unconscious bias training and being a strategic partner on an international consortium undertaking empirical research studies to advance evidence-informed research funding. We are in a continuous mode of listening and learning with our stakeholders and international and national partners.

**Note:** A section in the application form has been provided for applicants to describe how they will meaningfully and appropriately account for EDI in the design of their research projects, in the analysis and interpretation of the findings, and in their KT activities.

Health Research BC recognizes that meaningful approaches to support EDI in research and KT will vary depending on the research topic, discipline, methods, etc. Health Research BC also encourages supervisors and co-supervisors to use the supervisor/co-supervisor forms to describe any concrete practices or resources they will provide to support accessibility, diversity and inclusion in their work environment and in mentoring, training and professional development.

Where guidance is needed, applicants are encouraged to consult appropriate resources, access additional training and professional development, and seek input from more experienced mentors. Some resources include:

- [NSERC Guide on Integrating Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations in Research](#)
- [SSHRC Guide to Addressing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Partnership Grant Applications](#)
- [CIHR Resources on Integrating Sex and Gender Considerations into Research](#)

## 9. Assessment of Research Outputs

Health Research BC is a signatory of the [Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA). In keeping with the principles of DORA, Health Research BC no longer allows the use of journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factor, as surrogate measures of research quality. In keeping with best practices for responsible research assessment, Health Research BC no longer allows the use of article citation counts, or H-index, as surrogate measures of research quality or researcher excellence. Please do not include Journal Impact Factors, article citation counts or H-index in your application.

Applicants are encouraged to use the Significant Contributions section in the application form to highlight research and KT achievements, *including how their research has contributed to their field and/or influenced the activities of research users*. Outputs that applicants may wish to highlight in their Significant Contributions section may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Peer reviewed publications, pre-print articles, or other publications
- Datasets or software
- Presentations or speaking engagements
- Contributions to intellectual property, patents or commercial output
- Contributions to a public policy or change in practice
- Success in obtaining peer reviewed grants
- Contributions to mentoring or leadership
- Prizes or awards
- Engagement with patient, public and/or community partners

The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate the quality and impact of their contribution. Applicants should provide context for their achievements such that peer reviewers from outside of their field can assess their contributions relative to other applicants. Applicants should provide supporting documentation appropriate to the contribution being described (e.g., publications/pre-prints; invitations to speaking engagements; documentation of datasets or contribution to intellectual property, a letter of collaboration from a community representative, or a patient, public or community partner).

Peer reviewers will assess the Significant Contributions while taking into consideration information in the Career Timeline and Career Trajectory sections.

## 10. Pathway to Impact (Knowledge Translation)

Health Research BC requires applicants to undertake activities to improve the use of health research evidence in practice, policy, and further research. These important enabling activities are the “pathway to impact” for health research. Health Research BC uses the term “knowledge translation (KT)” to describe these activities which include synthesis of research evidence, exchange of knowledge between researchers and research users, targeted dissemination, and implementation of research evidence. KT activities should be chosen based on appropriateness for your type of research, your expected findings, and your intended audience(s), including the people most likely to use and/or benefit from your research.

### Including Research User Engagement in your Knowledge Translation Activities

Engaging research users — including people with lived/living experience (PWLE)<sup>6</sup> — as partners throughout the research process and KT activities increases the relevance, usefulness, and useability of research evidence. Examples of approaches that engage research users throughout the research process include integrated knowledge translation (IKT) and patient-oriented research (POR).

Both IKT and POR bring together researchers with research users such as health professionals, health system decision-makers, PWLE, and/or researchers from other disciplines. IKT aims to answer priority research questions of importance to any or all research users relevant to the specific research project while POR aims to answer priority research questions of patients, public and/or community by engaging with ‘patient partners’ throughout the research process. With the growing recognition over the years of the importance of engaging PWLE in health research<sup>7</sup> to improve health care and health outcomes, PWLE partners have become an important additional dimension of IKT. Both IKT and POR also include

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<sup>6</sup> People with lived/living experience (PWLE) include patient, public and community partners who have knowledge or experience with a problem or topic.

<sup>7</sup> When research is done in partnership with research users, their valuable experiences can improve care. For example, meaningful patient, public or community partner engagement promotes active collaboration in research governance and throughout the research process, from the planning and conduct of research through the dissemination, implementation and evaluation of research evidence. Patient, public and community partner engagement brings the unique lived experiences, perspectives and voices to the research process to ensure the work is relevant and that it addresses priorities, questions and outcomes that matter to the people of British Columbia. Domecq, J.P. et al. Patient engagement in research: a systematic review. *BMC Health Serv Res* 14, 89 (2014); <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-14-89>; accessed Aug 9, 2023)

KT activities such as synthesis, exchange, and dissemination of research evidence - all of which can occur at different stages throughout the research cycle - and implementation of research evidence and knowledge. As appropriate for your type of research and expected audiences, applicants are strongly encouraged to engage research users, including PWLE, throughout the research process.

## Knowledge Translation Science

Applicants may submit a program of research that is fully focused on KT science. KT science explores the theories, mechanisms, concepts, and/or methods by which evidence is used in health care practice and policy. While the practice of KT covers activities to encourage and enable evidence use, for example synthesis, dissemination, exchange and implementation of evidence, KT science is the study of those activities, including implementation science. KT science applications will be evaluated by a peer review panel that includes expertise in KT science.

## Pathway to Impact Resources

In addition to the resources below, Health Research BC's [Knowledge Translation, Patient-Oriented Research and Implementation Science – by Research Theme and Resources](#) guide provides examples by research theme of KT and Patient-Oriented Research as well as implementation science activities and resources to support development and implementation of your pathway to impact activities.

### Knowledge Translation

- [Health Research BC Knowledge Translation](#)
- [REACH BC](#)
- [A Guide to Researcher and Knowledge-User Collaboration in Health Research](#)
- [Moving into action: We know what practices we want to change, now what? An implementation guide for health care practitioners](#)

### Engaging with People with lived/living experience Partners and Patient Oriented Research

- [BC SUPPORT Unit Information for Researchers](#)
- [CIHR Patient Engagement Training course](#)
- [A Journey Through Public & Patient Engagement in Health Research: A Road Map](#)
- [BC SUPPORT Unit: How patient oriented is your research?](#)
- [Workbook to guide the development of a patient engagement in research \(PEIR\) plan](#)

## 11. Partnerships

Health Research BC partners with other funders to build capacity and fill strategic gaps in health research in BC. Partnering on competitions enables Health Research BC and partners to increase the total number of Research Trainee awards funded. Partnered awards have the added benefit of offering researchers the opportunity to develop relationships with partners and their community of stakeholders. Details regarding potential partners will be available on our [website](#) and in [Health Research BC ApplyNet](#), Health Research BC's online application portal, in the coming weeks.

There are two ways for applicants to be considered for partnered awards:

- Applicants interested in being considered for partnered awards are encouraged to indicate this preference in Health Research BC ApplyNet when completing their full application. Please indicate the partner(s) of interest and how your research aligns with their funding priorities.
- Health Research BC uses keywords provided by partners to identify applications that may be relevant to and align with partners' areas of interest. Applicants are encouraged to review the list of partner keywords that will be available on our [website](#) and in [Health Research BC ApplyNet](#), and ensure that the lay and scientific summaries within the application capture at least one of the keywords.

Applications that fulfill the funding criteria for both Health Research BC and a partner organization are eligible for a partnered Research Trainee award. However, only those applications that receive a Health Research BC peer review rating of 3.8 or above will be considered. Funding decisions on partnered awards are based on existing Health Research BC policies, confirmed partnership support, and available funding. Financial contributions from Health Research BC and its partners are subject to availability of funds and the annual budgetary approvals by both Health Research BC's Board of Directors and the partner organization beyond year one of the award.

Note: New partners may come on board after the competition launch date. The research priorities and keywords for these partners may not appear on Health Research BC ApplyNet, but they will be added to the website. Applicants are encouraged to give careful thought to keywords and their description as they will be used to assess alignment with partners' areas of interest.

## 12. How to Apply

The application process for the Health Research BC Research Trainee competition is composed of two mandatory stages: A letter of intent (LOI) stage where applicants are screened for eligibility by Health Research BC Research Competitions staff and a full application stage. Applicants with eligible LOIs are invited to submit a full application.

Applicants are encouraged to refer to the evaluation criteria when completing their applications. We recommend that applicants seek feedback on their full applications from their supervisors and co-supervisors before submission.

**Note: Letters of Collaboration** - Health Research BC cannot accept letters of collaboration from any department within Health Research BC (including Clinical Trials BC, Knowledge Translation, Research Ethics BC, and BC SUPPORT Unit). Health Research BC has implemented a verification process for applicants who plan to collaborate with departments within Health Research BC.

1. Letter of intent (LOI)
  - Deadline: December 12, 2023, 4:30 p.m. PT
  - Consists of:
    - The short LOI form in Health Research BC ApplyNet
2. Full application
  - Deadline: February 23, 2024, 4:30 p.m. PT
  - Reminder: As Health Research BC is now a signatory of the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), we no longer allow the use of journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factor, as surrogate measures of research quality. In keeping with best practices for

responsible research assessment<sup>8</sup>, we will no longer allow the use of article citation counts or H-index. Please do not include Journal Impact Factors, article citation counts or H-index in your application.

- Complete the full application form in Health Research BC [ApplyNet](#), which includes the following:
  - Research project and appendices<sup>9</sup>
  - Canadian Common CV – Health Research BC Trainee Version
  - List of Publications, Patents & Intellectual Property Rights
  - Supervisor (and Co-Supervisor, if applicable) Form (submitted by supervisor(s) through Health Research BC ApplyNet)
  - At least 2 (max 3) letters of reference from previous supervisors and/or senior mentors or previous collaborators who can comment on the applicant’s potential as an independent researcher. Individuals cannot submit both a letter of reference and a supervisor form or a letter of collaboration. Letters of reference must be submitted by the referees through Health Research BC ApplyNet.
  - Letters of collaboration<sup>10,11</sup> (if applicable)
  - Doctoral degree (or equivalent) certificate or health professional degree certificate<sup>12</sup>

To complete your application, create a [Health Research BC ApplyNet](#) account and follow the instructions in the Health Research BC ApplyNet online application. Ensure that applications are complete and submitted by the Health Research BC application deadline, including Supervisor and Referee forms. Incomplete or late applications cannot be considered.

## Submission Requirements

- All steps of the application must be submitted using Health Research BC ApplyNet, the organization’s online application submission system.
- All documents uploaded into Health Research BC ApplyNet must be in PDF format.
- It is the applicant’s responsibility to review the PDF copy of the application prior to submission to ensure that all data entered are complete and accurate. Once an application is submitted, it cannot be modified in any way.
- As an applicant, you will be able to access a PDF copy of the full application to review the information you have entered.

Health Research BC reserves the right to declare applications ineligible based on the established criteria.

**Note:** Applicants using Health Research BC ApplyNet for the first time will need to register and create a system account. Supervisors and referees will also need a system account in order to submit the Supervisor Form and letters of reference.

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<sup>8</sup> See [Bibliometrics: The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics](#).

<sup>9</sup> References, charts, figures, tables and photographs only.

<sup>10</sup> A collaborator is an individual who significantly contributes to the conduct and/or direction of the research or knowledge translation activities.

<sup>11</sup> Information on how to write a letter of collaboration can be found on the [CIHR website](#).

<sup>12</sup> Successful applicants must provide proof of degree completion by the award start date of September 1, 2024, if not complete at the time of application. Health professional applicants must provide proof of active engagement in clinical service. If proof of degree completion or active engagement in clinical service is not provided by the award start date, the award offer will be withdrawn.

## 13. Review Process

Letters of intent (LOIs) for this program are not adjudicated but are screened for eligibility by Health Research BC Research Competitions staff. Applicants with eligible LOIs are invited to submit a full application. Eligible full applications will undergo review by an external panel for funding recommendations.

Applications will be evaluated via a process that incorporates six principles of peer review: **integrity, accountability, transparency, balance, confidentiality and impartiality**. For more details, please see the [overview of Health Research BC's peer review process](#).

The information presented in the **Evaluation Criteria** and **Rating Scale** sections below will be used for the review process. All applications will be assessed against a defined set of criteria in three categories: 1) applicant expertise and experience, 2) research project, and 3) environment and support. To be **considered** for funding, the application must receive a minimum score of **3.8**.

Health Research BC recognizes each BC region brings strengths to the provincial health research system and that there is variation in the infrastructure, resources, and supports available to health researchers at different institutions. Health Research BC's commitment to rigorous peer review includes ensuring applications from across BC are reviewed fairly and equitably.

### Evaluation Criteria

Applications are assessed against the criteria and weightings below. A full description of the evaluation criteria will be posted on our [website](#). **It is highly recommended that applicants refer to the evaluation criteria when completing their applications.**

Criterion	Weighting
Applicant expertise and experience	30%
Research project	50%
Environment and support	20%

### Rating Scale

Descriptor	Range	Outcome
Outstanding	4.5 – 4.9	May be funded (min. score of 3.8)
Excellent	4.0 – 4.4	
Very good	3.5 – 3.9	
Fair	3.0 – 3.4	Not fundable
Less than adequate	0 – 2.9	



## Funding Decisions

Following peer review, the highest rated applications are identified. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the peer review process after the review panel meetings and the subsequent approval of the results. There is no appeal process.

Applicants will receive notification of the funding decisions, as well as the reviewers' comments. A list of successful applicants will be published on Health Research BC's website.

## 14. Award Start Date and Deferral

Unless otherwise indicated, funding for Research Trainee awards begins September 1, 2024. Successful applicants must confirm their acceptance of the award within the stipulated time indicated in the award notification package.

The start may be deferred up to a maximum of 12 months; if a deferral is required, award recipients must contact Health Research BC with the deferral request and obtain approval. The start date must be on the first day of any month and no later than September 1, 2025. Deferred start dates, once confirmed by Health Research BC, cannot be revised.

## 15. Reporting Requirements

Research Trainee award recipients, and their supervisors and co-supervisors, are required to complete annual progress reports. Health Research BC will provide reporting information for these purposes in advance. The information gathered in progress reports is used for administration, evaluation, government reporting, and communication purposes, and helps improve our award programs. Recipients of partner funds may be required to complete additional requests for information from partners.

In addition to annual reporting requirements, Research Trainee award recipients must submit a final report in the last year of their award and a final financial statement within **three months** following completion of the award. Any unexpended funds must be returned to Health Research BC. Health Research BC will provide reporting information for these purposes in advance of the award end date.

Health Research BC and its funding partners reserve the right to contact award recipients after the award end date to determine the short and middle-term outcomes and/or impacts of the Research Trainee award.

Additionally, to inform evaluation and continued improvement of our award programs, award recipients will be invited to provide feedback to Health Research BC staff to determine areas of improvement for this funding opportunity.

## 16. Applicant Updates

If an applicant's project and/or research environment changes significantly after the application has been submitted, the applicant must notify Health Research BC immediately. Health Research BC will accept updates regarding new salary awards received following the full application deadline (February 14, 2024) until April 5, 2024.

Please email all relevant information, including confirmation of award, to [trainee@healthresearchbc.ca](mailto:trainee@healthresearchbc.ca).



## Appendix A – Research and Travel Allowance

### Payments and Usage

The research and travel allowance funds (\$4,500 per year) will be paid on a quarterly basis to the recipient's primary supervisor's research account<sup>13</sup>. All expenses must be approved by the primary supervisor and are subject to the travel and expenses reimbursement policies of both Health Research BC and their host institution. Award recipients should review Health Research BC's eligible expenses (below) and discuss the eligibility of expenses with their supervisor before expenses are incurred.

**Award recipients must submit receipts to the primary supervisor.** Research and travel allowance funds that remain unused at year-end can be carried over into the subsequent year of the award. Research and travel allowance funds may not be used while the award is on hold.

Please note that when an award recipient holds or receives an external stipend award that includes a research and travel allowance during the term of the Research Trainee award, the Incentive funding policy applies (see [Appendix B](#)).

All receipts must be submitted to the primary supervisor within three months following the award end date. Funds not used by the award end date must be returned to Health Research BC. No-cost extension requests for the research and travel allowance may be approved on a case-by-case basis. Award recipients must contact the competition coordinator ([trainee@healthresearchbc.ca](mailto:trainee@healthresearchbc.ca)) to request a no-cost extension at least 30 days before the award end date.

### Eligible Expenses

**The research and travel allowance may only be used for expenses that are directly related to an award recipient's research project.** All expenses must be approved by the primary supervisor and are subject to the travel and expenses reimbursement policies of the host institution. Award recipients should discuss the eligibility of expenses with their supervisor before expenses are incurred.

Eligible expenses may include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Costs associated with knowledge translation, including dissemination of research results (e.g. costs of attending a conference to present the research, page charges and the costs of preparing a research manuscript for publication, development and maintenance of web-based information, videos, toolkits, translation, etc.).
- Costs of attending career development events and activities, including training to accommodate diverse populations (e.g. cultural safety training for religious or ethnic minority populations).
- Costs of membership in professional associations or scientific societies, or those required to maintain compliance with provincial regulations when directly related to the research project.
- Purchase/lease and extended warranty of home office furniture, cell phones, tablets, computers, and other hardware and software required for the research (the host institution's policy on ownership of equipment will apply).

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<sup>13</sup> The research and travel allowance is normally set up through the Office of Research Services, or equivalent, in an account under the award recipient's primary supervisor's name. Check with your host institution's Office of Research Services, or equivalent for details about setting up an account.

- Monthly charges for the use of the internet from the institution or home when this service is required for the purpose of research and not normally provided by the institution free of charge.
- Safety-related expenses related to the research project, such as protective gear, immunizations, etc.
- Costs related to improving workplace accessibility and/or career support for applicants who have a disability.
- In accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (TCPS 2 - Chapter 9 Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada), Health Research BC recognizes the importance of respecting the culture and traditions of Indigenous Peoples. Expenses related to the conduct of research and knowledge translation with Indigenous communities, including, but not limited to the following are eligible for reimbursement:
  - Costs related to community mobilization and engagement, including culturally relevant promotional items such as tobacco, cloth, feasting and gift giving for honouring ceremonies, and cash reimbursements (in a method acceptable to the individual or community being reimbursed) to compensate community participation.
  - Contracts and/or consultant fees for knowledge translation and communication activities for Indigenous Elders, community members, and Indigenous Knowledge Holders involved in activities related to the Indigenous community.

**Some examples of ineligible expenses include:**

- Salaries for research or administrative personnel.
- Commuting costs between the residence and host institution or research location, or between two places of employment.
- Immigration and work permit fees.

## Appendix B – Incentive Funding

Research Trainees who hold external stipend awards at the time of application or at the award start date, or who apply and receive such an award during the period that they hold a Health Research BC Research Trainee award, are eligible to receive incentive funding. Health Research BC considers a stipend award to be external if the award meets **all four** conditions below:

1. Is external to BC
2. Is granted through an open competition
3. Is peer-reviewed
4. Has a total value<sup>14</sup> of 50 percent or more of the value of the Health Research BC Research Trainee award

Incentive funding is available for the duration of the Health Research BC Research Trainee award, or to the end of the external stipend award, whichever comes first.

Award recipients who receive incentive funding are still required to complete the reporting requirements stated in Section 15.

### Incentive Funding Scenarios

When the external stipend award is **less than** the Health Research BC Research Trainee award, then Health Research BC will provide funds to raise the annual stipend so that it equals the Research Trainee award plus \$7,000 per year.

When the external stipend award is **equal to or more than** the Health Research BC Research Trainee award, then Health Research BC will provide an additional \$7,000 per year.

External award annual stipend	Effect on award recipient's annual stipend
\$30,000 or greater, but less than \$60,000	Health Research BC will provide additional funds to raise the award recipient's stipend to \$60,000, plus \$7,000.
Greater than or equal to \$60,000	Health Research BC will provide \$7,000

### Research and Travel Allowance

If the external stipend award includes a research and travel allowance<sup>15</sup> that totals less than \$4,500 per year, then Health Research BC will provide funds to bring the research and travel allowance to \$4,500

<sup>14</sup> Inclusive of match funding from other funding sources, if applicable. Total award value applies to the portion used for salary/stipend, i.e. it is not inclusive of other components above and beyond, such as research and/or travel allowances.

<sup>15</sup> In order to qualify for the research and travel allowance incentive funding, the applicant must receive an external stipend award that includes a research and travel allowance. If the external award does not have a research and travel allowance, the applicant will receive the full \$4,500 research and travel allowance with their Research Trainee award.

per year. If the external stipend award includes a research and travel allowance that is equal to or greater than \$4,500 per year, then no additional funds will be provided. The research and travel allowance incentive funding is available for the duration of the Health Research BC Research Trainee award, or to the end of the external stipend award, whichever comes first.

## Appendix C – Frequently Asked Questions

### Eligibility Questions

#### Can research associates apply?

No. By definition, research associates are full-time or part-time appointees who primarily conduct research with no formal teaching duties and are not considered part of a formalized research training program.

#### Can PhD candidates apply?

Yes, you may apply if you are completing your PhD, however, you must meet all the eligibility requirements by the award start date (September 1, 2024), including having completed your PhD, and holding a postdoctoral fellowship position (or equivalent) at an [eligible host institution](#).

#### Am I eligible to apply for a Research Trainee award if I am a health professional?

You are eligible to apply in the health professional stream if you are active in clinical service and have not held your health professional degree for more than 11 years as of September 1, 2024. You are eligible to apply in the PhD (or equivalent) stream if you are not active in clinical service and you have not held your PhD or equivalent (i.e. your health professional degree) for more than 6 years as of September 1, 2024. (Please see Section 4 for instructions on how to calculate your eligibility.)

Applicants must also be eligible to hold a post-doctoral fellowship position (or equivalent) at an eligible BC host institution for the duration of the award. Please contact us if you have questions about your eligibility ([trainee@healthresearchbc.ca](mailto:trainee@healthresearchbc.ca)).

#### I have a health professional degree but am not in active clinical practice. Am I eligible for 50 percent protected time for research?

No. A health professional who is not in active clinical practice must apply through the PhD or equivalent stream and commit to 75 percent protected time for research.

#### Am I eligible to apply for a Research Trainee award if my post-doctoral fellowship appointment at a BC institution is dependent on my getting the funding from Health Research BC?

Yes, you are eligible to apply.

#### I've had my PhD (or equivalent degree) for more than six years. Am I eligible to apply for a Research Trainee award?

You are not eligible to apply if you have held your PhD degree (or equivalent) for more than six years and do not have any justified post-degree career interruptions.

#### Will interruptions in my career be considered when determining my eligibility?

Career interruptions will be accounted for in the eligibility window calculation for the RT award. This information is also used by peer reviewers when assessing productivity. Applicants are advised to clearly describe any interruptions that occurred after the completion of your PhD degree in the "Career

Interruptions” section of the letter of intent (LOI). For more details on how RT award eligibility is calculated, see Section 4.

## Application Questions

### Can my post-doctoral supervisor and/or co-supervisor also provide a letter of reference?

No. Your current supervisor and co-supervisor (if applicable) will have to complete supervisor/co-supervisor forms in ApplyNet as part of your application. Your current supervisor(s) are not allowed to submit a letter of reference. Applicants may consider asking former supervisors, former mentors, or former collaborators to provide letters of reference. Referees should know the applicant well enough to be able to comment on their potential to become an independent researcher.

### There is someone I want to work with who is an expert in my area of research. Should I add them as a co-supervisor or a collaborator?

Applications can have only one co-supervisor but there is no limit on the number of collaborators. A collaborator is an individual who significantly contributes to the conduct and/or direction of the research or knowledge translation activities. Collaborators may contribute to the professional development of the applicant, but to a lesser degree than would be expected by a supervisor or co-supervisor. Like collaborators, co-supervisors are expected to significantly contribute to the research project and/or knowledge translation activities, but they also commit to the professional development of the applicant.

### What is a host institution? How do I select my host institution?

The host institution is the institution that administers funds for the duration of the award, and where the majority of resources to support the project is provided (e.g. infrastructure, human resources, administration, etc.). Host institutions **must** have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Health Research BC. View a complete list of [eligible host institutions](#). Applicants should work with their supervisor to determine their host institution. The host institution may be different from the research location.

### How will the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic be considered in my application?

Starting in the 2024 competition, applicants will be able to describe the impacts of the pandemic in questions in the Career Timeline section of the application form. These questions also allow applicants to describe the impacts of other life events on the applicant’s career, research activities, and research outputs. Review panels will receive guidance from Health Research BC to appropriately consider the impacts of factors beyond the applicant’s control when assessing applications.

### Why does Health Research BC refer to knowledge translation (KT) activities as “pathway to impact”?

Health Research BC defines knowledge translation as “the broad range of activities and initiatives meant to improve the use of health research evidence in health planning, practice, policy and further research.” The set of KT activities undertaken for a specific research project or program of research can be thought of more generally as a pathway to impact for the use of health research evidence. That is, they are the unique steps embedded in the design, conduct, and use of research that aim to

increase its impact, such as synthesis, dissemination, knowledge exchange, and/or implementation of research evidence.

### **What are the requirements for embedding pathway to impact activities within the research project?**

Health Research BC requires Research Trainee applicants from all disciplines to include proposed pathway to impact activities, as appropriate, as part of the proposed research project. These activities are embedded at multiple stages of research, including at the beginning, integrated throughout the program of research, and at the end of funding. For more information, refer to the document [Knowledge Translation, Patient-Oriented Research and Implementation Science – by Research Theme and Resources](#).

### **What is a mentorship and training program?**

Supervisors are asked to describe the mentorship and training program for the applicant during the completion of the Supervisor Form. The mentorship and training program should facilitate the development of the applicant's research, technical and professional skills and networks. Mentoring provides a network of support and resources to help postdoctoral fellows navigate their research and future career development. Supervisors are strongly encouraged to describe the mentorship available to the applicant in the Supervisor Form, including the role of co-supervisors, where applicable. Mentorship and collaboration activities can exist in research networks both within and external to the host institution.

### **How do I indicate interest in a partnered award?**

Applicants interested in being considered for partnered awards are encouraged to indicate this preference in [Health Research BC ApplyNet](#) when completing their full application. Please indicate the partner(s) of interest and how your research aligns with their funding priorities. All applicants are assessed on potential partnership matches and may be eligible for partnership opportunities whether or not interest is expressed at the application stage. If partners are confirmed after the full application deadline, Health Research BC staff will match the keywords of the applicants with those provided by the partner, and if there is a match, they will inform the respective applicant.

### **For partnered awards, is the funding shared evenly between Health Research BC and the partner?**

Normally it is a 50-50 funding share between Health Research BC and the co-funding partner. However, it is possible that a Health Research BC Research Trainee award may be funded by more than one partner, or that Health Research BC and a single partner may decide to contribute unequal portions to one particular award.

### **If I don't match with a partner, will that affect my chances of receiving a regular Research Trainee award?**

No. Your chances of receiving a regular Research Trainee award are not affected by your interest in a partnered award.

### **My research project includes work relevant to Indigenous health. What ethical and research policies am I expected to comply with?**



Health Research BC expects applicants to approach their research and knowledge translation activities with culturally safe practices that demonstrate humility, integrity, accountability and respect for Indigenous self-determination. Applicants must comply with the ethical and research policies outlined in [Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada](#) of the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans \(2022\)](#). When appropriate, applicants must also describe their data management plan in accordance with the First Nations principles of [OCAP®: ownership, control, access and possession](#).

### **What is the difference between a reference letter and a letter of collaboration?**

Reference letters are typically written by former supervisors or mentors who are familiar with your work. Letters of collaboration are written by collaborators or partners who are expected to make a significant contribution to your program of research and are confirming their enthusiasm to participate in the manner indicated. Guidance on how to write a letter of collaboration can be found [on CIHR's website](#).

### **Can I still reference work that I am doing with Health Research BC departments (including: Clinical Trials BC, Knowledge Translation, Research Ethics BC, BC SUPPORT Unit) in my application form?**

Work with or supported by one of Health Research BC's departments may be described or referenced in your application (e.g. in the description of knowledge translation activities, in the description of the proposed work section, etc.). However, applicants must not include the name of employees of Health Research BC in their application form except where specifically requested in the "Collaboration or Support by Health Research BC Department" section (see below). Applicants may not submit Letters of Collaboration from Health Research BC departments.

### **My research project includes collaborative work with a Health Research BC department (including: Clinical Trials BC, Knowledge Translation, Research Ethics BC, BC SUPPORT Unit). What can I do to verify to peer reviewers that I have developed a working relationship with this Health Research BC department?**

Applicants may not submit Letters of Collaboration from Health Research BC departments. Health Research BC has implemented a verification process for applicants who plan to collaborate with departments within Health Research BC. This process will replace having a Letter of Collaboration from a department of Health Research BC. Applicants will be asked for information on collaborations with Health Research BC departments in the application form. Health Research BC staff will verify the relationship between the applicant and the staff person and provide a statement verifying this relationship in the application form that is provided to peer reviewers. The verification process is not an endorsement of the application, only a verification of the collaboration between the applicant and the Health Research BC department.

## **Administrative Questions**

### **Will the stipend levels change during the term of the award?**

No changes will be made to the stipend amount during the term of the award. The stipend for the award is valued at \$60,000 per year. The research and travel allowance is valued at \$4,500 per



year. Health Research BC's financial contributions beyond year one of the awards are subject to future funding of Health Research BC by the provincial government and the annual budgetary approval by Health Research BC's Board of Directors.

### How often does Health Research BC review the stipend levels for the Research Trainee award?

Health Research BC reviewed and increased the stipend levels for the 2024 Research Trainee award. Stipend levels will be reviewed periodically going forward.

### Can I defer the start date of my Research Trainee award?

Deferral requests related to relocation, medical, parental or caregiving leave are generally granted. Deferrals requests for other reasons will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If a deferral is required, award recipients **must indicate the requested award start date and the reason for deferral on the Award Acceptance Form and obtain approval from Health Research BC**. The deferred start date must be on the first day of any month and be no later than September 1, 2025. Deferred start dates, once confirmed by Health Research BC, cannot be revised.

### What documents will I need to provide before I can start my award?

A copy of the Award Acceptance Form signed by you and your supervisor (and co-supervisor, if applicable) must be uploaded in PDF format to [Health Research BC ApplyNet](#).

If not provided in your full application at time of submission, successful applicants must provide proof of doctoral degree completion by the award start date. The same applies for the corresponding documentation for proof of active clinical service from health professional applicants who did not provide this at the time of application. If proof of degree completion or active engagement in clinical service is not provided by the award start date, the award offer will be withdrawn.

If you hold other external funding, you will also be required to upload official documents that show (1) that the award has been offered and accepted, and (2) the award duration and amount, including start and end dates.

### How much time does the applicant have to respond to an offer of the Research Trainee award?

Successful award recipients have a minimum of five business days to accept or decline the award as of the date on the funding notification letter.

### Why does Health Research BC require Research Trainee awardees to apply for external salary awards?

The Research Trainee Conditions of Award states: "Within the first twelve (12) months of a Research Trainee award, award recipients are required to apply for and accept, when offered, external salary awards from major national or international funding agencies." Applying for salary support awards from a competitive major national or international funding agency supports the development of important skills that benefit early career researchers (e.g. grant writing skills). Moreover, attaining such a salary support award is an achievement that can aid success when applying to future research funding opportunities. To further incentivize awardees to apply for external salary awards, Health Research BC has instituted an Incentives policy to reward awardees who are successful in obtaining an external salary award. See [Appendix B](#) for details.

**Can the Research Trainee award be used as match funding?**

No, the Research Trainee award is not suitable to be used as match funding.