



Michael Smith
**Health
Research BC**

Request for Proposals

Evaluation of Scholar and Research Trainee Talent
Development



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Research BC**

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Evaluation of Scholar and Research Trainee Talent Development

Closing time and date: 5:00pm, on May 25, 2023

Proposals must be received via email to
Rebecca (Becky) Gormley, Research & Evaluation Specialist
Evaluation & Impact Analysis
rgormley@healthresearchbc.ca
by 5:00pm PST on May 25, 2023

Issue date: April 3, 2023

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1. Context

1.1. About Michael Smith Health Research BC

Michael Smith Health Research BC (Health Research BC), funded by the government of British Columbia, is BC's health research agency. Health Research BC strengthens the province's health research system by supporting the people, institutions and activities that generate and use research-based knowledge to promote, restore and maintain the health of British Columbians. Committed to deep collaboration in improving the health of British Columbians, the health system and the economy, Health Research BC:

- Builds research talent for BC's future,
- Catalyzes change for a stronger health research system, and;
- Mobilizes communities for research impact.

You can learn more at www.healthresearchbc.ca.

1.2. Project Description

Health Research BC invites proposals from organizations and/or individuals with demonstrated experience and sector knowledge, to undertake a review of the impact of the past 20 years of research talent funding by the former Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research and the current Michael Smith Health Research BC. This review will include a synthesis of the current landscape of health research talent including the strengths, gaps, and needs to inform future decisions about program design.

1.2.1. Background

Attracting, retaining, training, and growing a diverse workforce is critical for a strong knowledge economy, a well-functioning health care system and resilient communities. The case for creating the former Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research stemmed from data demonstrating that BC underperformed in receiving federal health research funding as compared to other provinces. In the late 1990s, BC's share of funding from the Medical Research Council of Canada (predecessor to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)) was in decline. Alberta's share was steadily increasing during this time, while Ontario and Quebec received the majority of federal funding.¹ To advance BC's ability to secure federal funding, Health Research BC established a portfolio of salary award programs in 2001 supporting a range of talent – from trainees and early career scholars to more senior researchers. As a result of these investments, CIHR funding to BC health researchers grew more than three-fold, rising from \$35 million in 2000/01 to \$116 million in 2014/15.²

While programmatic changes have occurred over the years, the Scholar and Research Trainee awards remain two foundational salary award programs. These award programs help BC researchers build leading-edge health research programs, train the next generation of researchers, and make significant contributions to their field. Scholar awards provide salary support to early career researchers, allowing them to dedicate 75 percent of their time to health research activities, including attracting additional

¹ Evaluating British Columbia's Performance in Health Research: Technical Report 1996 – 2006 (MSFHR, 2007).

² Canadian Research Information System – <http://webapps.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/funding/search>.

research funding and helping develop the research and innovation talent pool in BC. Research Trainee awards support the training of new health researchers to build health research capacity and contribute to the long-term success of BC's health research system. Talented researchers in the training phase of their career, including post-doctoral fellows and health professional researchers, are provided with salary support to gain health research experience and prepare for successful careers in research, policy, life sciences and more.

Since 2001, Health Research BC (and former Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research) has supported approximately 520 scholars and 1,488 trainees through the Scholar and Research Trainee award programs worth over \$280 million. In 2022, the BC Government confirmed three years of funding for Health Research BC to advance research across the province. It is recognized that academic career paths are changing, and the pandemic has stalled research careers and programs, revealed talent gaps, and exacerbated inequities in research jobs. To understand the performance and impact of our salary awards as well as support future decisions on research competitions offerings and design, we are calling for proposals to support this review of our research talent funding.

1.2.2. Objectives

We seek an external organization or individual(s) to undertake a review of the past 20 years of research talent funding and a synthesis of the current landscape of health research talent including the strengths, gaps, and needs to inform future decisions about program design.

We have four broad objectives for this review:

1. Conceptualize and execute a detailed analysis of **who** has been funded and **research topics addressed** by awardees over the past 20 years through the Scholar and Research Trainee award offerings. Apply a gender and an equity, diversity and inclusion lens to the data, as well as analyzing the geographic distribution.
 - Additionally, develop a picture of **who** has not been funded over the past 20 years (or has been funded to a lesser extent), with a particular eye to gender differences, equity-denied communities/issues and geographic and institutional distribution.
2. "Follow the talent" to understand and map the career paths (e.g. academia, policy, industry, etc.) of those who have received funding, incorporating data such as where talent is now (both what is their job and where are they geographically), additional funding received (i.e. Health Research BC funding, provincial, national, and international funding) and publications since their funding from Health Research BC (and former Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research).
 - Assess how talent is 'networked' or connected with other awardees through a social network analysis.
3. Assess the contribution and impact that funding from Health Research BC (and former Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research) has made towards supporting and retaining research talent. This assessment should take the current landscape of health research talent including the strengths, gaps, and needs to inform future decisions about program design into account.
4. Based on data collected and synthesized, make recommendations for improving Health Research BC salary funding programs to better meet the current and anticipated future needs of

the health research ecosystem, with an eye towards Indigenous-led research and equity, diversity and inclusion.

1.2.3. Time Frame

The project time frame is eight months.

2. Scope of Work

2.1. Activities

To undertake a review of the past 20 years of research talent funding, we anticipate the following activities being necessary:

Phase 1: Review of Existing Data

Michael Smith Health Research BC and the former Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research have robust historical data, including applications, peer reviewer scores and comments, CCVs, applicant self-identification questionnaire (since 2020), and progress and end of award reports related to funding research talent over the years. All existing data will be made available to the contractor and orientation to the data will be provided by Health Research BC staff. Staff will be available for questions during the review and analysis process. This initial review will allow the contractor to understand the scope of data available as well as gaps and any missing data. We recognize the challenges of sourcing data from early in the 20-year period, and we will work with the successful proponent to maximize resource leads where feasible.

As part of this initial activity, the contractor will identify existing data sources that can support the identification of applicants who were unsuccessful in receiving funding. Based on the review of existing data, the contractors will identify additional data to be collected in order to meet the objectives of the review.

Phase 2: Data Collection & Analysis

We anticipate the need for administrative data as well as methods such as interviews and possibly surveys to be necessary in order to collect the information and are open to other data collection methods suggestions by the contractor that support a robust evaluation. Data collection activities should account for understanding the current landscape of health research talent in BC including the strengths, gaps, and needs to inform future decisions about program design.

Phase 3: Report Writing and Recommendations

Following the collection and analysis of all data, and in consultation with Health Research BC, the contractor will produce a report containing all findings and recommendations. An opportunity to report the evaluation findings to Health Research BC staff will be coordinated.

2.2. Deliverables

The following must be produced by the contractor on a timetable agreed upon with Health Research BC at the inception of the contract:

Deliverables	Time period
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phase 1 Inception stage report summarizing findings of review of existing data. 2. Phase 2 protocol. Proposed methods, data collection and analysis plan.* 	Not to exceed 3 months*
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Phase 2 Implementation of protocol. 	Not to exceed 4 months
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Phase 3 Final presentation and report summarizing methods, key findings, and results. 	Not to exceed 1 month

* Agree on scope, timeline and methods between contractor and Health Research BC before commencing data collection.

2.3. Accountability

Valerie To, Director Research Competitions will be the primary contact person for this contract.

2.3.1. Progress Reporting

Project management includes monthly written progress reports and regular meetings with Health Research BC representatives. The progress reports should include a dashboard summary of the status of the key deliverables, a brief progress summary and a list of any identified issues/concerns that will impact the timely completion of the deliverables as well as appropriate mitigation strategies.

3. Letter of Interest

Interested parties are requested to first submit a letter of interest identifying the lead and key team members, and describing how they demonstrate key criteria as identified, by **April 18, 2023**. Up to three Proponents will then be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be due **May 25, 2023**.

In the letter of interest, interested parties should specify the name of the lead and other key collaborators and describe how they meet the following key criteria:

- Demonstrated knowledge of the research talent landscape in BC.
- Demonstrated experience with research impact assessment.
- Demonstrated experience with qualitative or mixed methods research.
- Demonstrated experience with completed projects of similar size and complexity.
- Demonstrated experience working with equity frameworks or an equity lens in evaluation activities.
- Demonstrated experience working with large, complex datasets and integrating multiple sources of data.
- Demonstrated knowledge of research talent funding in healthcare, including standard metrics and appropriate disaggregation.
- Demonstrated knowledge of and familiarity with the BC health research system.

- Demonstrated experience with methods appropriate for assessing strengths, gaps and needs in a jurisdictional talent pool.

4. Proposal Content and Format

4.1. Executive Summary

Describe the Proponent's understanding of the desired results (please do not copy and paste from previous sections of this RFP). Note any challenges and opportunities that may exist and state the Proponent's positioning for leading this work.

4.2. Key Team Members

Identify the lead and the key team members, including any specialized sub-consultants. For each, describe their role, relevant skill, experience and availability for this project. Provide a profile for the lead and key team members.

This section should also include references (two or three) for work completed of a similar scope and within a similar content area.

4.3. Approach & Methodology

Describe the tailored approach and methodology that will be utilized to achieve the desired results. This should include:

- Proposed methods for analysis of existing data.
- Initial thinking on identification of the data sources for those who have not been funded.
- Approach to additional data collection, including both the types of data the Proponent anticipates being necessary as well as the methods proposed to collect the information.
- Approach to report writing and the creation of recommendations.

4.4. Work Plan

Based on your Approach, provide a work breakdown and target schedule, including a breakdown of major tasks, delivery dates (milestones), and expected level of effort (i.e., proportion of time) required by the individual team members in sufficient detail to, (1) allow a complete understanding of how and by whom the work will be carried out, and (2) to demonstrate sufficient availability of individual team members throughout the course of the work to ensure its successful completion.

4.5. Risk Mitigation

Specify a reasonable analysis of significant risks to the project's development and implementation, and the mitigation strategies to address them. Include per risk the probability of occurrence (H/M/L), severity of damage (H/M/L) and mitigation strategy.

4.6 Financial Plan

Based upon your work plan, provide professional fees and expenses as well as a proposed payment schedule. A Financial Plan template has been provided as Appendix A.

Pricing for proposed work should not exceed \$C150,000.

4.6.1 Ineligible Expenses

The following expenses will be ineligible and should not be included:

- Rent of office premises and other related overheads (e.g. utilities).
- Capital expenses (e.g. office equipment, computer equipment and associated software).
- Travel and accommodation expenses in excess of rates approved by Health Research BC according to the terms of its current Travel Policy.

4.6.2 Health Research BC Supplied Resources

Health Research BC reserves the right to supply certain services or supports where direct supply of such services can be arranged by Health Research BC at a lower cost than that proposed by the Proponent. Examples include the costs of printing, photocopying services, long distance, travel, etc.

4.7 Proposal Format

To be eligible for review, all applications must adhere to the instructions for presentation and content and must use the numbering system provided. Except for the appendices, applications must be presented as follows:

- All materials, except appendices, must be a minimum 11-point size, Calibri or Arial (regular), single spaced, on one side of a letter-sized (21.25 x 27.5 cm / 8.5" x 11") page, with a one-inch margin on all sides.
- All pages should be consecutively numbered.
- All print must be black, of letter quality and easy to read.
- A header with the RFP name on the top left-hand corner, and footer with the page number on the lower right-hand corner of each page.

4.7.1 Page Count

The suggested page limit for full proposals for this RFP is 15 pages, not including the cover letter or appendices.

4.7.2 Appendices

References and charts, tables, diagrams or other materials to support the full proposals may be attached as appendices. In total, appendices must not exceed 8 pages, excluding the table of contents.

5. RFP Process

The following are the conditions under which responses will be accepted from Proponents. Up to three Proponents will be invited to submit a full proposal.

5.1. Submissions

Up to three Proponents will be invited to submit a full proposal by **April 25, 2023**. Proposals should be submitted by email to **rgormley@healthresearchbc.ca** by **5pm PST on May 25, 2023** with the subject line “Evaluation of Scholar and Research Trainee Talent Development Proposal”. Proposals received after this time and date will not be considered. All received RFP submissions will receive a confirmation email within one business day. In addition, the proposal must include the signature of an authorized official of the Proponent.

5.1.1. Inquiries

Proponents who are invited to submit a full proposal will meet with Health Research BC staff to address any inquiries about the proposal.

5.2. Selection Process

Complete submissions will be reviewed as outlined below.

5.2.1. Selection Criteria

These criteria will be scored in relation to the available percentages as stipulated.

Criteria	Points
Experience and qualifications of the Proponent & Key Team Members	20%
Approach & Methodology	25%
Quality of the work plan	25%
Risk Mitigation	10%
Financial plan	20%

5.3. RFP Timeline

The RFP timeline is summarized as follows.

Action	Target Date
Release of RFP	April 3, 2023

Deadline to submit a letter of intent	April 18, 2023
Top three Proponents will receive invitation to submit proposal	April 25, 2023
Full proposals due	May 25, 2023
Successful Proponent will be identified	June 5, 2023
Project begins	Mid-June, 2023
Final report to be submitted	March 2024

6. Terms and Conditions

6.1. Reject Proposals

Health Research BC may, in their absolute discretion, reject in whole or in part any and/or all proposals for any reason, or after taking into account factors considered relevant.

6.2. Liability for Errors

While Health Research BC has used considerable effort to ensure an accurate presentation of information in this RFP, the information contained in this RFP is supplied solely as a guideline for Proponents. The information is not guaranteed or warranted to be accurate by Health Research BC, nor is it necessarily comprehensive or exhaustive. Nothing in this RFP is intended to relieve Proponents from forming their own opinions and conclusions with respect to the matters addressed in this RFP.

6.3. Errors in Proposals

The Proponent has the responsibility, at all times, to request any instruction, decision, or direction which may be required to prepare its proposal, or to notify the designated Health Research BC contact person in writing of any ambiguity, divergence, error, omission, oversight, or contradiction contained in its proposal as it is discovered.

Health Research BC reserves the right to request clarification of the contents of any proposal. Health Research BC may require Proponents to submit supplementary documentation clarifying any matters contained in their proposals and may seek the Proponent’s acknowledgement of that interpretation. This is not an opportunity for the Proponent to submit new information modifying the proposal. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Health Research BC is not obliged to seek clarification of any aspect of a proposal.

6.4. Limitation of Liability and Indemnity

Health Research BC will not be obligated or liable in any way whatsoever to a Proponent except where Health Research BC has awarded and entered into a written contract with that Proponent for the performance of the work contemplated by this RFP, and in which case that contract shall govern all such obligations and liabilities.

It is a fundamental condition of this RFP and the receipt and consideration of proposals by Health Research BC, that Health Research BC, and its respective employees, consultants and agents, will not and shall not under any circumstances, including without limitation whether pursuant to contract, tort, statutory duty, law, equity, any actual or implied duty of fairness, or otherwise, be responsible or liable for any costs, expenses, claims, losses, damages or liabilities (collectively and individually all of the foregoing referred to as "Claims") incurred or suffered by any Proponent or the Proponent's sub-contractors as a result of or related to any one or more of the RFP, the preparation, negotiation, acceptance or rejection of any conforming or non-conforming proposal, the rejection of any Proponent, or the cancellation, suspension or termination of the RFP process, and by submitting a proposal each Proponent shall be conclusively deemed to waive and release Health Research BC and its employees, contractors, consultants and agents, from and against any and all such Claims.

Each Proponent shall indemnify and hold Health Research BC and its employees, contractors, consultants and agents, harmless from and against any and all Claims brought against them arising out of any act or omission of the Proponent, the Proponent's sub-contractors, or by third parties arising out of or relating to the Proponent's receipt of this RFP, or the preparation, submission and negotiation of any proposal submitted by the Proponent, where such third parties were directly or indirectly engaged by or through the Proponent in connection with any of the foregoing, or where personal injury, bodily damage or property damage is caused by the negligent acts or omissions of the Proponent. Such indemnification shall survive completion of the goods or services provided under the contract and the termination of the contract.

6.5. Confidentiality of Information

This document, or any portion thereof, may not be used for any purpose other than the submission of proposals. Information pertaining to Health Research BC or related parties obtained by a Proponent as a result of participation in this process is confidential and must not be disclosed except for the purpose of responding to this RFP or as required by law.

6.6. Ownership of Proposals

All documents, including proposals, submitted to Health Research BC become the property of Health Research BC. They will be received and held in confidence, subject to the provisions of BC Personal Information Protection Act.

6.7. Proponents' Expenses

Proponents are solely responsible for their own expenses in preparing a proposal. If Health Research BC elects to reject all proposals, Health Research BC will not be liable to any Proponent for any Claims, whether for costs or damages incurred by the Proponent in preparing the proposal, loss of anticipated profit in connection with any final agreement, or any other matter whatsoever.

6.8. Irrevocability of Proposal

By submission of a clear and detailed written notice, a Proponent may amend or withdraw his/her proposal prior to the closing date and time. At closing, all proposals become irrevocable. Proposals must be open for acceptance for at least 90 days after the closing. In the event that Health Research BC requires more than 90 days to evaluate proposals, additional time will be requested of all Proponents.

6.9. Conflict of Interest

Proponents are responsible for disclosing to Health Research BC any and all real or perceived conflicts of interest. Proposals will not be evaluated if the Proponent's current or past corporate or other interests are, in the opinion of Health Research BC, deemed to be a conflict of interest in connection with this RFP or the activities or mandate of its facilities. Health Research BC reserves the right to disqualify and reject a proposal in whole or in part where the Proponent or directors, officers, shareholders or any other person associated with the Proponent has a Claim or has initiated a Claim or legal proceeding against Health Research BC or against whom Health Research BC has a Claim or has instituted a legal proceeding with respect to any previous contracts, tenders or business transactions.

Proponents shall not engage in any form of lobbying whatsoever to influence the outcome of this RFP. Further, Proponents shall not attempt to communicate or make any representation or solicitation to any director, officer or employee of Health Research BC except to the designated Health Research BC contact person.

6.10. Verification

Health Research BC reserves the right to verify any statement or claim contained in any proposal or made subsequently in any interview or negotiation. That verification may be made by whatever means Health Research BC deems appropriate and may include contacting the references provided by the Proponent. In submitting a proposal, the Proponent is deemed to consent to Health Research BC verifying any information from third parties including the Proponent's bank references, and receiving additional information regarding the Proponent, its directors, officers, shareholders or owners and any other person associated with the Proponent as Health Research BC may require.

6.11. Request for Proposal Cancellation

Health Research BC is not bound to accept any proposal and reserves the right in its sole and absolute discretion to postpone or cancel this RFP at any time for any reason. Further and without limiting the foregoing, Health Research BC will not be bound to accept the lowest or any bid and reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal in whole or in part, to discuss with any Proponent different or additional items and terms to those described in this RFP or received in any proposal, or to amend or modify any term of this RFP. Health Research BC, in its sole discretion, may invalidate and cancel this RFP entirely and may issue a new RFP if considered in the best interests of Health Research BC. No Proponent will acquire any legal or equitable rights or privileges relative to the services prior to full execution of a written agreement for the services required.

6.12. Contract Terms

By submitting a proposal to Health Research BC, Proponents shall be conclusively deemed to have accepted and to have agreed to be bound by each and every term, condition, and provision of this RFP, and any services, specifications, warranties, guarantees or representations stated in the accepted proposal or made during the RFP and selection process.

6.13. Contract Award

By submission of its proposal, the Proponent agrees to negotiate in good faith and execute a contract with Health Research BC incorporating the terms and conditions of this RFP, the Proponent's proposal,

and such other terms and conditions as Health Research BC may reasonably require. Health Research BC may negotiate modifications, additions or variations to such terms and conditions or to the goods or services set out in a proposal in order to satisfy its operational or administrative requirements. The RFP and the contract, if any, entered into subsequently shall take precedence over any and all documents submitted by the Proponent. Health Research BC will not accept a Proponent's standard purchase agreement.

6.14. Sub-Contracting

All sub-contractors and/or partner(s) must be identified in the proposal. No sub-contracting or assignment of any contract or of any services to be provided is permitted without the prior written consent of Health Research BC. Proponents are to identify all proposed sub-contractors including the company name, contact name, phone number, fax number, email address, type of service the sub-contractor will be performing or providing, and the length of time the Proponent has been using the services of the sub-contractor. No additional sub-contractors will be added nor will other changes be made to this list without the written consent of Health Research BC.

6.15. Governing Law

Proponents must comply with all applicable laws. This RFP will be governed exclusively by, and construed and enforced in accordance with, the laws of the Province of British Columbia. The Proponent agrees to attorn to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of the Province of British Columbia in the event of any dispute concerning this RFP or any matters arising out of this RFP.

6.16. Appendices

All appendices to this RFP are deemed to be incorporated herein and form part of the RFP.

6.17. Copyright

Health Research BC shall have sole and full ownership of copyrights to and all materials produced by the successful Proponent, including a waiver of moral rights, under the contract arising from this RFP. Reproduction of any documents or other data for use by anyone is forbidden without express permission in writing by Health Research BC.

Appendix A: Financial Plan Template

Item	Rate	# Hours	Total
1. Professional fees			
a) Role / describe			
b) Role / describe			
<i>Subtotal 1</i>			
2. Sub-contractors			

a) Role / describe			
a) Role / describe			
<i>Subtotal 2</i>			
3. Disbursements at cost			
a) Travel			
b) Long distance			
c) Etc.			
<i>Subtotal 3</i>			
TOTAL PRICE*			

* Subject to applicable federal and provincial taxes as required.