

Research Challenge 2025 Competition Guidelines

The Research Challenge supports health care professionals, staff and clinicians who are new to research to learn about conducting a clinical practice project to improve patient care across Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH).

Purpose

The Research Challenge supports applied health, community based, and/or patient-oriented research that improves clinical practice within VCH. VCH health care providers partner with experienced researchers who will mentor them through the entire research process, from proposal to project completion.

Funding Partners

Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute (VCHRI) partners with Richmond Hospital Foundation (RHF), Transplant Research Foundation of BC (TRFBC), and VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation. TRFBC is partnering with VCHRI to fund one highly ranked award related to patient identified research priorities in solid organ transplantation.

Deadlines

Registration is mandatory for this competition.

- Registration deadline: Tuesday November 12, 2024 by 4:00pm (PST)
- Grant Development 1-on-1 session (20 minutes, recommended): December 2- December 6, 2024
- Patient-Oriented Research Workshop (recommended): Date - TBD
- Application submission deadline: Monday February 10, 2025 by 4:00pm (PST)

Complete applications must be received via online submission link by the times specified or they will not be accepted. Notification of results will be available in spring 2025.

Research Team Eligibility Criteria

Please contact the VCHRI Internal Awards team if you are unsure if you meet the eligibility requirements.

Principal Investigator (PI): You are eligible to be the PI on an application if you meet all of the following criteria. The PI:

- must be a regular part-time or full-time (>0.5 FTE) VCH clinician and/or health care professional (e.g. physician, nurse, OT, PT, dietician, SLP, counsellor, mental health worker, etc.) in a permanent position for at least one year. Medical residents, clinical/academic research fellows, academic researchers are **not** eligible for this competition. Casual, contract or consulting staff are **not** eligible for this competition.
- conducts the majority of their clinical work at a VCH site. This does **not** include BCCA, BCCDC, PHC or PHSA sites or medical offices not on a VCH site.
- has **not** held (or currently holds) external peer-reviewed research funding as the PI or co-PI. Funding from VCH, UBC, other health authorities, educational institutions or affiliated research institutes/centres are **not** considered external research funding.
- does **not** hold any of the following university appointments at any academic institution: assistant professor, associate professor, professor, clinical associate professor or clinical professor. Clinical assistant professor, clinical instructor, and lesser appointments are acceptable.

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- has identified an experienced researcher who agrees to be your co-PI and actively mentors you throughout the course of the project from proposal development and application submission to implementation and completion of the project.
- does **not** have an outstanding final report from past VCHRI internal award competitions.
- is **not** the PI on a currently funded Research Challenge project.

Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI): The Co-PI must be an experienced researcher who is actively conducting their own research. The Co-PI is not only part of the research team, they also agree to contribute as a mentor to the PI for the duration of the project, from registration and application to project completion. The Co-PI:

- must have appropriate research experience. The Co-PI must have active research funding within the last 2 years, and a track record of holding external peer-reviewed funding. This research experience will be evaluated by the review committee based on the information contained in the Biographical Sketch and Research Module.
- can only be a Co-PI on one application per competition cycle.
- can be from any organization. The expectation is that the PI and Co-PI will work together to design and implement the project.

Co-Investigators: Co-investigators should include other individuals as appropriate for the particular project being proposed. There is no set number of co-investigators for a project. However, it is expected that individuals listed as co-investigators will also contribute to the intellectual content of the research project.

Research Project Eligibility Criteria

- Projects must address important practice-based research questions and/or patient-oriented research, so the results will be directly applicable to the provision of care/service at VCH.
- The intent of this competition is to support new projects, and not to provide additional funding for existing and/or larger projects. For that reason, all successful projects must have a separate REB approval. **Adding the project as an amendment to another existing REB approval is not acceptable.**
- Multi-organizational projects, where VCH is one 'site' on the project are not eligible.
- **Note:** to be eligible for the TRFBC grant, these practice-based research questions must; 1) adopt a patient-oriented research lens with meaningful engagement, 2) be formulated with a clear focus on the patient identified research priorities as defined by the Canadian National Transplant Research Program, (see appendix), and 3) complete the patient engagement module.

Funding and Eligible Expenses

- Proposals will be considered for a maximum of \$10,000 for operating expenses, plus a top up of \$1,000 for patient-family partner honorariums (if applicable). Projects must be able to be completed within 18 months of receiving the funds. Unused funds are to be returned to VCHRI. Awards are non-renewable.
- Projects must be completed within the \$10,000 maximum budget as matching/partner funding is not allowed; however, the maximum budget amount does not include in-kind contributions (e.g. staff support, use of space and other resources etc.).
- Teams can request an additional \$1,000 to cover patient-family partner honorariums. These funds will be held in a separate cost centre managed by VCHRI.
- This project must not be started yet as funding is to support new projects.
- Please refer to the application instructions for detailed description of eligible expenses.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary selection committee, including patients. Applicants should therefore explain the proposed research clearly, and define discipline specific terms used. Assume that the topic of your project is completely new to the person reviewing your grant.

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Applications will be assessed based on:

- strength of the PI/Co-PI's research and healthcare practice experience to guide the project; the appropriateness of each team member and their roles; key collaborations outlined and letters of support included (if applicable); the team's capacity to do the proposed work.
- rigour of the research proposal (see section 4 of Application Instructions); importance and applicability of the project to the provision of healthcare/service at VCH; feasibility of the project within the timeframe/budget.

Approvals

Notification of awards will occur in spring 2025. Funding will be made available as of July 1, 2025. After July 1, 2025, funds will be released to the successful applicants as soon as the required ethics and VCH approvals have been obtained. Applicants are urged to request ethics approval as soon as they have received notice of funding, since projects must be initiated before December 31, 2025. **Funding will not be available after this date.**

Outcomes and Reporting

Annual and project end financial reporting is required. As well, a final project report is required at the end of the grant. VCHRI and its funding partners use the project reports to publicize research activities and to evaluate the impact of the program.

Contact Information

Krista Glowacki
Research Awards Lead
VCH Research Institute
education.award@vch.ca

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Appendix

Table 1: Patient identified priorities for TRFBC grant.

Post-transplant care research priorities	Research priorities in organ donation
1. How to improve graft survival.	1. How to educate the public and raise awareness about donation.
2. How to achieve personalized use of anti-rejection drugs; better immune monitoring and decreased use.	2. How to improve donor management and graft quality.
3. How to reduce adverse effects and long-term medical complications of anti-rejection drugs.	3. How to foster a culture of donation in hospitals and in society at large; appropriate funding for programs (coordination, social, work, etc.).
4. How to improve psychological support and the management of complications such as anxiety.	4. How to support living donors and families; understand long term impact and psychological care.
5. How to improve quality of life.	5. How to increase the number of donors (deceased and living).

F. Ballesteros, J. Allard, L. Wright, S. Anthony, D. Hartell, V. Dumez, M. Josée Hébert, L. West, G. Knoll, & M. Chantal Fortin, *Patient priorities in research and perspective on patient engagement: The results of a national workshop*, *Transplantation Direct*, 2018;4: e360.

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