The SCN COVID-19 Rapid Response Initiative

Guidelines

SCN will provide funding to support rapid response research that uses a stem cell or regenerative medicine approach for addressing COVID-19.

The total budget for the Initiative is $500,000.

About the Stem Cell Network:
Supporting and building Canada’s stem cell and regenerative medicine research sector has been the raison d’être of the Stem Cell Network (SCN) since its inception in 2001. Its work has been supported by the Government of Canada from the beginning, and most recently with an $18 million commitment to fund research and training through 2019-22.

SCN’s mandate is to act as a catalyst for the translation of stem cell research into clinical applications, commercial products and public policy. In just over 18 years SCN has forged a national community that has transformed stem cell research and moved it to the point where regenerative medicine is changing clinical practice. SCN has supported 170 research groups nationally; invested over $100 million for translational research, leveraging nearly $100M in partner contributions; catalyzed 19 clinical trials and 21 biotech start-ups. In addition, SCN established the annual Till & McCulloch Meetings and has provided training for more than 3,000 individual trainees.

The SCN COVID-19 Rapid Response Initiative:
SCN is pleased to invite brief proposals under the COVID-19 Rapid Response Initiative for peer reviewed funding. The initiative will support research projects that use a stem cell or regenerative medicine approach for addressing COVID-19. This initiative will also support Ethical Legal and Social Implications (ELSI) research associated with COVID-19.

The overall value for this initiative is $500,000, and the funding time frame will be 12 months, starting April 17, 2020. Project proposals can be submitted with a budget between $50,000 to $500,000. Please note, SCN’s Research Management Committee may recommend funding several projects, so revised budgets and deliverables may be requested to accommodate this recommendation. The application will require a 12-month plan and a corresponding budget justification. Confirmed or potential partnerships with foundations, research institutions, health...
charities or industry are an important component of project proposals. Partnerships and leveraged funding (in-kind and/or cash) will increase the application’s ranking. All project applications will be subject to expedited peer review and assessment by the Stem Cell Network. Successful projects will provide the SCN office with project reports as requested and will be reviewed by SCN’s Research Management Committee.

Specific Criteria:

- Projects can focus on pre-clinical & toxicity tests, technology development & scale up, manufacturing requirements, validation research, proof of principle experiments in small or large animal models using novel cells, compounds/drugs, or novel transplantation approaches. Small molecule or biologic (e.g. monoclonal antibodies) candidates are eligible if they meet the following criteria: A small molecule or biologic that acts on or is dependent on endogenous stem cells for its therapeutic effect, that modifies a stem cell product, OR where a stem cell is necessary to manufacture the therapy.

- In the case of projects focused on an early stage clinical trial, funds from the project budget can also be directed towards methodological support for clinical study design and anticipated outcomes; data collection & management; data safety monitoring and oversight; amendments of regulatory documents (e.g. Pre-CTA, CTA, REB docs); pre-clinical and clinical systematic reviews; early economic analysis; protocol development. Support can also be used for conducting patient consultations and strategies to support clinical trial study design.

- Projects must clearly articulate deliverables that will be of value in the fight against COVID-19, and a plan for communicating and sharing research outputs to the scientific community and others.

- Projects are encouraged to include non-federal partnerships that provide in-kind and cash contributions.

General Requirements:

- Projects must be relevant to stem cells and regenerative medicine with an aim to increasing our understanding and knowledge of COVID-19 and how to respond to the SARS-CoV2 virus.

- Projects must demonstrate research excellence, Canadian leadership and innovation.

- Projects must have a translational path.

- Projects should integrate sex and gender considerations into the research methodology, when appropriate.
• Project milestones and deliverables must be realistic and reasonable based on the supporting budget and 12-month funding timeframe. Projects must include at least one clear deliverable that will be achieved within 6-months of the project start date to demonstrate progress towards the final deliverables.
• Projects should be collaborative in nature - supported by teams that are diverse in expertise and career stage.
• For early stage clinical trial projects an ELSI (Ethical, Legal and Social Implications) component is required to ensure translational issues specific to the research (patient engagement and privacy, health economics, regulatory issues etc.) are appropriately considered.
• A risk mitigation strategy must be submitted for early stage clinical trial applications.
• A knowledge mobilization plan must be submitted with funding applications, and adhere to the Tri-Council Open Access Policy to ensure research results are made publicly accessible.
• Investigators requesting funds from SCN must be based at a Tri-Council eligible institution and must themselves be eligible to receive Tri-Council funding.
• Funded projects must be ready to initiate work within 30 days of approval.
• A letter from the research institution must be provided to confirm their approval for the proposed research project to take place.
• If applicable, a letter from the manufacturing partner must be submitted to confirm their ability and agreement to develop the manufactured product based on the available timelines.

The full application package for the COVID-19 Rapid Response Initiative consists of:

1. The application form (document 1)
2. Investigator CVs (document 2)
3. Letters of support (document 3)
4. Project budget for requested SCN funds (document 4)
5. Supporting documents such as an approved Animal Utilization Protocol, Stem Cell Oversight Committee (SCOC) approvals for the use of human cells and tissues, approval to use biohazard agents and provisional patent filing should be submitted if applicable (document 5)
6. Institution and investigator signatures form (document 6)
The deadline to submit the full application package to info@stemcellnetwork.ca is Wednesday, April 8, 2020 at 5:00PM Eastern Time.

A confirmation email will be sent within 24 hours of SCN receiving the submitted application package. If a confirmation email is NOT received from SCN within 24 hours of submission it is the responsibility of the lead applicant to contact SCN and ensure that the application package has been received by SCN.