SHRF

SASKATCHEWAN
HEALTH RESEARCH
FOUNDATION

Funding Guide

SHRF Research Funding Application and
Management Guidelines

Last Updated December 13, 2024

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About This Guide

Overview

This Guide outlines the purposes, processes, and terms and conditions of Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation's (SHRF) research funding. The policies and procedures within apply to individuals who are applying for SHRF funding and to all new and existing recipients of grants and awards, along with their host institutions, unless specifically amended or declared void by SHRF.

This Guide is reviewed regularly, and updates communicated to the research community as needed. The most up-to-date guide is posted online at shrf.ca/resources.

SHRF's funding opportunities and related Application Packages are available at shrf.ca/opportunities.

Our programs and processes evolve and adapt as the research environment in Saskatchewan evolves and grows. SHRF welcomes suggestions that might help us improve this Guide and our funding opportunities.

All applicants, recipients and their host institutions are responsible for being aware of and complying with the requirements outlined in this Guide. If you have any questions about the interpretation or application of any policies contained within this Guide, please contact SHRF.

Contact Information

Email: fundinginfo@shrf.ca

Address: 204 - 111 Research Drive, Saskatoon, SK S7N 3R2

Phone: 1-639-398-8400

Website: shrf.ca

December 2024 Update

The following sections include updated policies. Other areas have been edited for clarity.

- 1.4 Promoting Research
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1. About SHRF

1.1 Mandate

SHRF was established by an act of legislature in 2002. SHRF is governed by a Board of Directors and reports to the Minister Responsible for Innovation. The mandate provided to SHRF by the Government of Saskatchewan is to:

- Seek and receive funding to support health research;
- Encourage and facilitate health research;
- Fund research according to the strategy; and
- Disseminate information about funded research.

1.2 Strategic Alignment and Guiding Principles

Health research is vital to the improved health of Saskatchewan citizens through a high-performing health ecosystem with a robust culture of research and innovation.

SHRF is vital to enabling the best health research that supports Saskatchewan solutions to Saskatchewan health challenges by upholding a rigorous peer review process, measuring and sharing the impact of funded research, and collaborating with partners who can help maximize the impact of this work.

SHRF's purpose is enabled through three strategic goals:

1. Strengthen research capacity and competitiveness.
2. Increase investment in research and innovation.
3. Align research with stakeholders' needs.

Accountability, adaptability, collaboration, excellence and integrity represent a vital part of SHRF's strategic foundation and exemplifies our fundamental beliefs and guiding principles for how we work with each other and all stakeholders.

In achieving our strategic goals, we will adhere to our organization's core values and promote inclusiveness, excellence, creativity, and breadth in health research. Integral to this work is supporting the health and research goals of the Indigenous community and continuing to ensure that sex- and gender-based analysis is incorporated into the research we fund.

1.3 Scope

All SHRF-funded research must have relevance for human health and is intended to support health research in Saskatchewan. SHRF defines human health research broadly as encompassing biomedical science research, clinical research, health services and systems research, and research on the cultural, social, and environmental determinants of population health.

SHRF funds only the research and closely related components of projects. Specifically, SHRF does not pay for overhead or administration of research funding and does not fund any components that aim to develop or deliver programs or services unless they are explicitly tied to the research.

1.4 Promoting Research

Health research and innovation is the cornerstone of a healthier society, and we all have a part to play. SHRF strongly encourages you to promote your research to relevant communities and audiences in a variety of traditional and non-traditional ways. SHRF is available to help you connect with key audiences and employs various tools to share the impact of SHRF-funded research.

SHRF is publicly funded and expects that results of SHRF-funded research be freely accessible to the public. Recipients should adhere to the latest open access policies set forth by the Tri-Agencies.

If you have questions about knowledge mobilization and promoting your research, contact SHRF at fundinginfo@shrf.ca. We encourage you to connect with us and keep up to date on SHRF news by subscribing to our newsletter (sign up at shrf.ca/contact), social media channels and by visiting our website regularly.

1.5 Partnerships

Strong partnerships are essential to innovative health research. SHRF joins with other funding agencies, non-profit organizations, industry, and other health research supporters to maximize efficiencies, reduce duplication and increase the impact of health research investments and activities. SHRF partnerships benefit the Saskatchewan research community by combining resources to support research through opportunities offered by SHRF or the partner and by leveraging each other's strengths, networks and resources.

Where other organizations partner on opportunities offered and administered by SHRF, all policies outlined herein apply, plus any additional stipulations from the funding partner. Any additional requirements for partner funding are outlined in the relevant SHRF Application Package.

Through a limited amount budgeted annually, SHRF also supports Saskatchewan research through competitive peer-reviewed opportunities offered and administered by other organizations, usually at the national level. In these cases, the research funded in partnership is subject to the policies of this Guide and to the funding partner's policies. SHRF may defer to the partner organization's policies in cases where there is misalignment or unnecessary extra work created.

1.6 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy

SHRF is subject to provincial legislation on privacy and access to information, specifically The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. SHRF is committed to openness and transparency and to protecting the private information and intellectual property of our researchers. A copy of our operational policy in this area is available from the SHRF office.

1.7 Confidentiality

All applications are submitted to SHRF in confidence with personal and proprietary information used only for the purposes for which it is originally gathered, plus related activities necessary to fulfill SHRF's mandate. Neither SHRF nor its funding partners claim ownership of any Intellectual Property arising from funded research.

Principal Investigators will be given the chance to review any public communications materials SHRF develops involving funded research.

2. Application Process

2.1 Eligible Institutions

The following institutions have presently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SHRF and are eligible to host SHRF grants and awards:

- First Nations University of Canada
- Saskatchewan Health Authority
- Saskatchewan Polytechnic
- St. Thomas More College
- Suncrest College
- University of Regina
- University of Saskatchewan

Only individuals associated with an eligible MOU institution are able to view open funding opportunities and start a new application in the SHRF Research Management System (RMS). Other individuals participating in a research grant application gain access through invitation from the Principal Applicant and can view all open funding opportunities at shrf.ca/opportunities.

Exception: Where stated in an individual Application Package (e.g. Mobilize Grant), non-profit organizations in Saskatchewan are also eligible to apply and can view the relevant open funding opportunities in the RMS. Please see the relevant Application Package for full eligibility details.

2.2 Preparation

In preparation for applying for SHRF funding, applicants, in particular Principal Applicants, should:

- Read the following documents, available on SHRF's website:
    - The current SHRF Funding Guide,
    - The relevant Application Package, which includes program guidelines and application instructions,
    - SHRF RMS User Manual.
- Contact your institution's research office regarding internal requirements and timelines;
- Complete the appropriate SHRF Applicant Profile template found at shrf.ca/resources. Ask other members of your project team to do the same;
- Log in to the SHRF RMS at shrf.smartsimple.ca;

- o Register or update your personal profile and affiliations,
- o Begin a draft eligibility check/application.
- Communicate relevant information, tasks and deadlines to the project team and support individuals in completing required application contribution forms on the SHRF RMS.
  - o The following resources are available to support the project team in completing the required steps:
    - YouTube Videos: RMS How-To
    - shrf.ca/grant-team-support

2.2.1 Accessibility

SHRF strives to make application information and platforms accessible for both applicants and peer reviewers and welcomes feedback and suggested improvements in this regard. Applicants experiencing barriers are encouraged to contact the Program Manager or SHRF's Director of Programs and Partnerships to discuss options to address the specific barrier(s) while also meeting SHRF's requirements.

SHRF is not able to accommodate requests to extend application deadlines in the absence of a compelling and reasonably unforeseeable circumstance.

SHRF acknowledges that there are circumstances where an individual may not have internet access due to their location or living conditions or not have an email account and therefore unable access the emailed invitation to join the application. In this case, the Principal Applicant and the individual who cannot access the invitation will sign/accept the "Signature Page for Individuals Unable to Access Internet" form found on SHRF's website. The Principal Applicant will take on the responsibility of creating an email alias, adding the individual on their behalf to the SHRF RMS application, collaborating with the individual to complete their contribution form and sharing all application correspondence with the individual.

Where an individual has an email address and internet access but needs support in completing the required steps, the individual's own email should be used, and support should be provided per the individual's preference (e.g., entering information while a person dictates).

2.3 Determining Eligibility

SHRF determines eligibility of all applications according to criteria defined in the relevant Application Package, available on SHRF's website. Part of determining eligibility for some SHRF competitions includes completing an Eligibility Check prior to the full application. In all cases, applications are screened for eligibility at the full application deadline.

Eligibility Check submissions are reviewed internally by the SHRF Program Manager. The purpose of the Eligibility Check is to:

- Ensure the application is relevant to the purpose of the funding program
- Ensure the proposed research aligns with the funding opportunity/grant objectives and applicable focus areas
- Confirm the Principal Applicant meets eligibility requirements
- Confirm applicable minimum team requirements are met

Additionally, the Eligibility Check process aids SHRF in the following:

- Creating review committees with appropriate expertise
- Informing funding partners of application interest
- Recording decisions made by SHRF in a transparent manner for applicants and reviewers

If questions arise regarding eligibility, the Program Manager will contact the Principal Applicant for further clarification and may require that revisions be submitted. Multiple revisions can occur until a final decision can be made or the eligibility revisions deadline has passed. Please see the appropriate Application Package for further information regarding minimum team requirements and eligibility check cut-off dates, where relevant.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact SHRF with any questions about eligibility at their earliest convenience prior to the preparation of an application.

If eligibility is no longer met at full application submission or at the review period, SHRF reserves the right to remove the application from the competition.

2.4 Project Roles

Individuals associated with the proposed research project fall into three categories of project roles: **Applicants, Supporters and Personnel**. For practical purposes, an individual can only fulfill one role on a given application. It is important to understand how each of these are defined and what information they must provide for a specific application. See the following role definitions and refer to *Table 1* for more details about the application requirements for each role.

Applicants/Investigators

Applicants/Investigators are individuals who contribute to the intellectual or scientific direction of the proposed work, or who bring perspectives of lived experience or practical applications to the proposed work. These contributions can include research expertise, Traditional knowledge, practical experience or lived experience. These individuals share responsibility for the direction of the proposed activities. Their designated Project Role is either Principal Applicant, Co-Principal Applicant, or Co-Applicant based on their level of leadership responsibilities and involvement (see Section 2.4.1 for definitions). Furthermore, individuals in these Project Roles are designated as researchers, knowledge users, or people with lived experience based on their contributions to the proposed work (see Section 2.4.2 for definitions).

Personnel

Personnel (Trainees and Research Staff) are individuals tasked with carrying out aspects of the research project and who will be compensated from the grant funds with a stipend or salary. Personnel, while important contributors, are not considered towards fulfilling minimum team eligibility requirements, where relevant.

Supporters

Supporters are individuals or organizations who provide a specific service in a limited and defined role in the proposed activities, have an interest in the research outcomes (i.e., knowledge user organization). Individuals invited to this Project Role are considered co-applicants and do not count towards fulfilling minimum team eligibility requirements, where relevant.

Grant Writer

Grant Writer is a system level role in SHRF's online grants management system that gives applicants the option to give application access to an individual who is not part of the research team. This can include a variety of individuals who support the Project Team in preparing the application or completing internal review activities. This role is not visible to the peer reviewers.

Table 1: **Application considerations for Project Roles**

Application Considerations	Applicants/ Investigators	Supporters	Personnel
Count towards minimum Project Team eligibility requirements	Yes	No	No
Register in RMS and accept invitation from Principal Applicant to be named on the application	Yes	Yes	Yes
Complete a contribution form for an application on SHRF RMS (See Table 2 for Contribution Form requirements)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Can be compensated from the grant funds	No* **See Section 2.5 for exceptions	Yes* **See Section 2.5 for additional information	Yes

2.4.1 Applicant/Investigator Project Role Designations

When the Principal Applicant invites an individual to an application on the SHRF RMS in the Applicant/Investigator Project Role described in the previous section, the person is designated as a co-principal or co-applicant depending on their level of leadership and involvement. The following are definitions for each of the applicant types.

Principal Applicant

The individual who is responsible for the overall direction of the proposed activities assumes administrative responsibility for the grant and receives all related correspondence from SHRF.

Only the Principal Applicant can start the application on the SHRF RMS and submit it.

To be eligible, the Principal Applicant must:

1. Be self-directed and autonomous regarding their research activities (i.e., not a trainee or contracted employee);
2. Be able to hold peer-reviewed funds as a Principal Applicant and publish research results;
3. Be affiliated with a Saskatchewan institution, which has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SHRF and agrees to administer the funds as the host institution;
4. Be obliged to conform to institutional regulations concerning the conduct of research, supervision of trainees (undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate, as applicable) and the employment conditions of staff paid with SHRF funding; and
5. Be based in Saskatchewan during the funding period of the grant.

Any exceptions will be outlined in the relevant Application Package.

Co-Principal Applicant

An individual who makes a significant contribution to the intellectual or scientific direction of the proposed work, sharing responsibility for the direction of the proposed activities at a level similar to that of the Principal Applicant, but who is not the designated grant administrator.

They must be based in Saskatchewan; however, they do not need to meet the other eligibility requirements of a principal applicant.

Co-Applicant

All applicants who are not the Principal Applicant or Co-Principal Applicant are considered co-applicants. Co-Applicants may be from in or outside Saskatchewan.

Trainees and research associates with expertise to contribute to the research may be co-applicants provided they are not compensated from SHRF grant funds for those activities.

For programs with a minimum team requirement, the individuals required to meet the project team eligibility requirements must be listed as co-applicant or co-principal applicant.

2.4.2 Applicant/Investigator Project Role Designation Descriptors

Applicants (Principal, Co-Principal, and Co-Applicants) must select from one of the following three project role descriptors to indicate the perspectives, expertise, and contributions they bring to the proposed research as a researcher, knowledge user or person with lived experience. The following are definitions for each of these terms.

NOTE: While a person may generally meet the definition for more than one of the following role descriptors, they must select which is most relevant to their role and contributions for the proposed research.

Researcher

An individual with formal research training who holds a position which supports them to pursue research and whose expertise supports the proposed research project.

Knowledge User

An individual with relevant experience receiving and using knowledge to improve health in practical settings. These individuals may represent organizations that are interested in the practical application of knowledge.

A knowledge-user may be a practitioner, health system manager, policymaker, educator, decision-maker, Knowledge Keeper, health care administrator, community leader, industry partner, or an individual from a health institution, patient group, government organization, etc.

Person with Lived Experience

An individual whose contributions to the proposed research are related to their personal experience with a health issue or experience as informal caregivers, including family and friends.

2.4.3 Project Role Contribution Forms

Each individual in the Project Role of Applicant/Investigator, Supporter and Personnel is required to login to the SHRF RMS and complete a contribution form which will be included as part of the application for review. If an individual is on multiple applications, they must complete the appropriate contribution form for each one.

The Principal Applicant must invite the individual to the application in the correct Project Role (Applicant/Investigator, Supporter or Personnel) and should provide direction and support as needed to register in the RMS and complete their contribution form (see shrf.ca/grant-team-support for resources). The invited individual must accept the invite by clicking on the link in the email and, once the application has passed eligibility, find the contribution form on their RMS home page in "Action Required – Contribution Form". Principal Applicants are also able to access the contribution forms of team members they have invited. While individuals may be invited at both eligibility and full application stages, the contribution form must be completed during the full application stage and submitted by the invited individual or Principal Applicant before the application deadline.

Depending on the Project Role, the information required for the contribution form is different. Please see the following table for a preview of the information required on the SHRF RMS for each Project Role.

Table 2: Contribution Form Overview for Project Roles

Contribution Form Requirement	**Applicants/ Investigators**	**Supporters**	**Personnel**
Organizational Affiliation or Individual	Pulled from the individual's profile on the SHRF RMS		
Select Project Role Descriptor	Select from dropdown: • Researcher • Knowledge-user • Person with lived experience	Select from dropdown: • Community • Private industry • Institutional support • Government • Not-for-profit • Health care system • Individual	Select from dropdown: • Undergraduate student • Graduate student • Research fellow • Research staff
Indicate planned time commitment to proposed research	Yes	Yes	Yes
Describe role in proposed project (100 words)	Yes	No	Yes
Provide information on relevant experience and expertise	<u>Researchers:</u> SHRF Researcher Profile <u>Knowledge-Users:</u> SHRF Knowledge User Profile <u>People with Lived Experience:</u> Testimonial (written or recorded)	Letter of Support	Brief description of how the project builds on your current training and career development

2.4.5 SHRF Funding Partner Conflict of Interest

Individuals who are affiliated with an organization partnering with SHRF on a funding opportunity must not do anything that creates an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

Specifically, individuals involved in an application to SHRF (in any project role), who are also employed or otherwise affiliated with an organization partnering on the SHRF funding opportunity, must not make claims about their own or their organization's general support for the importance or quality of the proposed research. Per application instructions, they may provide the relevant information about their role and contributions to the proposed research.

2.5 Allowable Expenses

Included here are general principles that apply across all programs unless specifically voided in an Application Package. Additional program-specific guidelines and restrictions may apply.

1) Allowable expenses are those necessary and justified to carry out the proposed activities and not provided through other means.

2) **SHRF funding supports research activities in Saskatchewan**. Funds may not be transferred to institutions out of province and may not support trainees or research staff based at institutions outside of Saskatchewan.

    a. If part of the research takes place outside of Saskatchewan, funds required to complete this work should be shown in the budget from sources besides SHRF.

    b. If necessary, you may seek approval from SHRF prior to the deadline for limited expenses budgeted outside Saskatchewan.

3) SHRF is publicly funded, and grantees should choose economical and **fiscally responsible** options whenever possible.

4) **Equipment** is:

    a. defined by SHRF as any item (or collection of items comprising a system) of nonexpendable tangible property used for research having a useful life <u>for the research team or their institution</u> beyond the original term of the project, no matter the cost;

    b. also called non-consumables; and

    c. not an eligible expense in some programs. <u>Where eligible:</u>

        i. applicants are encouraged to seek access to existing equipment where possible, and

        ii. maintenance and operating costs are eligible expenses.

5) **All purchases, reimbursements for services, travel costs and personnel support** must follow guidelines and rates set by the Principal Applicant's host institution where the grant is held and must be undertaken according to the host institution's standard procedures.

6) When the proposed research includes **industry partners** (i.e., for-profit organization having a vested interest in the results and applications of the proposed research), it is expected the industry partner provides some cash or in-kind contributions in the form of goods, services or staff time. **SHRF funds should not flow to industry partners** who stand to benefit from the research funded by SHRF.

7) **Compensation of individuals** working on the funded research/activities must comply with the host institution's policies and procedures as well as the following:

    a. Individuals compensated from SHRF grant funds are not considered SHRF employees.

    b. SHRF funds may <u>not</u> be used to pay compensation to:

        i. Individuals who conduct research independently as part of the terms and conditions of their employment

ii. Individuals expected to work on the funded research activities free of charge as a collaboration

iii. Individuals already being compensated by their employer for research activities

iv. Employees of a for-profit organization having a vested interest in the results and applications of the proposed research

c. **Subject to all the above restrictions, compensation to <u>co-applicants</u> may be provided as follows:**

i. Individuals employed and compensated by another organization for the time spent on the funded research activities cannot be compensated directly from the grant funds. However, where justified, grant funds can be used to reimburse the organization for costs incurred in compensating the individual for time spent on activities directly attributable to the grant.

ii. In addition to reimbursement for expenses, applicants participating on the project team as a **person with lived experience** are eligible to receive compensation in the form of honoraria or income. Rates should follow applicable guidelines, such as those set by the Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research (SCPOR) and be consistent with local, cultural and customary practice.

   Note: If compensation is **not** being provided, the reason should be given in the budget justification (e.g., declined by individual).

iii. In addition to reimbursement for expenses, **Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers** may be compensated for their involvement in grant activities.

iv. In some cases, it may be justified that other co-applicants with distinctive expertise and perspectives directly applicable to the proposed research may be compensated for their contributions to the grant activities. Potential conflicts of interest and potential for personal gain for that individual should be clearly addressed in the budget justification and any mitigation strategies explained.

8) Participant gifts or honoraria are eligible where ethical and appropriate and clearly justified in the research proposal.

9) Hospitality costs are **not** permitted for internal and/or regular team meetings (i.e., with students, staff and research team).

10) Academic knowledge sharing costs are limited in most grants (i.e. journal publications, academic conferences), as specified in the funding opportunity guidelines.

a. Non-academic knowledge sharing (i.e. knowledge mobilization) and integrated knowledge translation costs are budgeted separately from academic knowledge sharing costs.

b. Costs for non-academic team members to participate in academic knowledge sharing activities (e.g. conferences, presentations) are considered non-academic knowledge sharing costs.

2.6 Formatting Rules

After submission of the application, SHRF checks components of the application, including attachments, to ensure formatting rules are adhered to. To facilitate review and ensure fairness, all application attachments, with the exception of a visual timeline attachment, must adhere to the following formatting rules:

Header: For each attachment include the Principal Applicant last name, title/label (e.g. 'Research Proposal' title of data collection tool, etc.)

Footer: Page X of X (for the particular attachment)

Margins: minimum one inch (1") all around

Page size: 8.5 x 11

Font: **Calibri, Ariel or Times New Roman ONLY**, black type, 11 point minimum

Line Spacing: 1.0 single-spaced minimum

Attachments not adhering to these formatting guidelines will be reformatted by SHRF staff and the content over the maximum page limit will be removed before sending the application for peer review. SHRF is not required to notify applicants when this occurs.

2.7 Approvals

Required applicant and institutional signatures are indicated on the signature page provided for download from the 'Approvals' section of your application in the SHRF RMS. The Principal Applicant is required to print this page/generate the PDF, sign and upload the completed document prior to electronic submission.

Other applicants (i.e. co-principal, co-applicant, etc.) added to the application are not required to sign the signature page.

The Principal Applicant is responsible for ensuring that all co-principal and co-applicants accept the invitation to be added to the application on the SHRF RMS and are aware of and agree to their role in the proposed project as described in the submitted application.

Research office representative approval signature must be obtained from the eligible institution that will be responsible for hosting the SHRF grant or award, if funded. It is the Principal Applicant's responsibility to comply with institutional policies for obtaining signatures prior to the SHRF application deadline.

SHRF accepts scanned pen-to-paper signatures as well as electronic signatures.

2.8 Pre- or Internal Review

Collegial review prior to submission improves the quality of proposals. SHRF encourages applicants to have their applications reviewed prior to submission with special consideration of the feasibility and quality of the research plan and overall grantsmanship. The research office at your institution may help in this regard.

2.9 Timely Submission

Applications must be submitted electronically by the deadline (date and time of day) indicated in the relevant Application Package. Late applications will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of the Principal Applicant to submit the application by the deadline.

2.10 Complete Applications

Applications will only be accepted according to requirements at the time of submission for that competition, by completing the current online application available on the SHRF RMS. Applicants must provide all requested information by the application deadline. All information is entered into the SHRF RMS and submitted electronically; no other materials should be sent to SHRF.

Applications received in any other format, exceeding page limits or incomplete, may be declared ineligible. Material extraneous to that requested in the application will be removed before the application is sent for review.

The Principal Applicant is responsible for ensuring:

- All components of the application are complete by the deadline and in accordance with application requirements;
- All invited applicants, supporters and personnel log in to the SHRF RMS to complete the required information in the application contribution form by the submission deadline. See Section 2.4.3 for more information; and
- All information is completed, properly formatted and all supporting documents (letters, testimonials, CVs, etc.) are included before the deadline.

Failure to comply with program requirements, guidelines and/or deadlines can negatively impact the status and evaluation of your application in a competition.

SHRF assumes no responsibility to notify applicants or follow-up with respect to particulars of incomplete or non-compliant applications, including improperly formatted attachments.

2.11 Screening

After the application deadline and prior to applications being sent for review, SHRF undertakes a screening process to:

1. Confirm applicant and/or team eligibility, and
2. Ensure the application is complete.

Applications that do not meet the requirements stated in the application package and/or are not complete as stated under Section 2.10 may be declared ineligible.

The SHRF Program Manager may at their discretion provide the Principal Applicant an opportunity to correct minor errors made in good faith. These corrections must be completed within the timeline provided by SHRF so as to not delay the application review process.

2.12 Sharing Information with Funding Partners

By applying for research funding from SHRF, applicants agree to allow SHRF to share only essential components of the application (i.e. title, research summary) of their application with current and potential funding partners for their consideration. Partners agree to follow SHRF's confidentiality and conflict of interest policies.

3. Funding Decision Process

3.1 Review

Applications to SHRF's competitive research funding opportunities are assessed by experts, who follow peer-review principles and SHRF-established criteria which address both the quality and merit of the applications in relation to the funding opportunity. Committees are constituted appropriately to suit the nature of applications under review and can include active health researchers, health professionals and other experts. Each committee is chaired by a respected researcher from a relevant field. Committee members may be from within or outside Saskatchewan depending on the nature of the program, but all are from within Canada. Grants may also be evaluated by external reviewers selected for their expertise in the proposed field of study. Applications to a program or funding opportunity may be divided into groupings at SHRF's discretion to facilitate effective peer review.

SHRF's review policies and procedures are transparent, and details can be found in **SHRF's Peer Review Guidelines**, available at shrf.ca.

Names and affiliations of all reviewers are published in SHRF's Annual Report, available on our website at shrf.ca.

In the case where SHRF is partnering on programs administered by another funding agency, peer review may be done by the other agency, so long as SHRF's requirements are met.

Grants with values of **$25,000 and under** may undergo internal review by SHRF staff, who will assess alignment with the opportunity's purpose and objectives and subsequently provide funding recommendations to the CEO.

3.2 Criteria

The criteria used in the peer review process are specified in the relevant Application Package. Generally, reviewers will consider the following criteria when assessing applications alongside additional program specific criteria:

- Fit with purpose and requirements of the funding opportunity, as described in the application package;
- Originality of the proposed research;
- Quality and feasibility of the research design;
- Importance and potential impact;
- Suitability of the research environment;
- Potential of the applicant(s) to carry out the work;
- General soundness of the overall research plan;
- Appropriateness of the budget; and
- Adherence to principles of ethical research.

3.2.1 Review of Application Budgets

Budgets are reviewed very carefully and must include only allowable expenses, as outlined in this Guide and the relevant Application Package and necessary for the proposed research. Committee members may recommend a budget reduction based on the fit between a proposed budget and proposed activities.

It is important that applicants submit the requested information regarding any budgetary overlap that may exist or be perceived to exist. Should it be determined there is overlap with another source of funding, the SHRF Program Manager will work with the applicant, if successful, to resolve the matter.

3.3 Rating

SHRF is committed to excellence and will fund only proposals that achieve an overall committee rating of 3.5 or higher on the SHRF Rating Scale, indicating very good to outstanding research.

SHRF Rating Scale

4.5 - 4.9	Outstanding; May be Funded, Discussed by Committee
4.0 - 4.4	Excellent; May be Funded, Discussed by Committee
3.5 - 3.9	Very good; May be Funded, Discussed by Committee

3.0 - 3.4	Fair: Not Fundable, May or May Not be Discussed by Committee
<2.9	Needs Major Revision: Not Fundable, No Committee Discussion

3.4 Funding Allocations

SHRF aims to fund as many applications as possible given available resources, including partner funding if relevant. When applications to a funding opportunity are reviewed by more than one committee, the funding envelope is divided based on demand (i.e., total eligible amount requested by applications under review on that committee) so that an equal success rate is achieved across committees.

Criteria to allocate funding are as follows:

- Only applications rating 3.5 or higher on SHRF's 5-point scale are eligible for funding; and
- Where SHRF partners with another agency, unless otherwise stated in the Application Package, the highest ranked relevant applications scoring 3.5 or higher will be funded;
- Funding will be allocated by score from highest to lowest until funds for the competition are exhausted; and
- To ensure applicants have sufficient resources to complete their research as planned, SHRF will only fund whole grants as recommended by the review committee.

Funding is offered for as many grants as possible given available resources.

3.4.1 Allocation of Partner Funding and Focus Areas

When there is funding dedicated to a specific sub-set of applications (e.g., partnered funding pool)this will be outlined in the Application Package. The applications that have been identified as eligible for this funding will be extracted and ranked in order of the overall score achieved through the peer review process. Funding allocation steps will then be followed until that portion of funding is fully spent or all applications rating 3.5 or higher are funded. Any applications remaining with a score 3.5 or higher will be returned to the ranked list for their respective committees and be considered for other funding pools or the open competition, as relevant.

3.5 Notification

All applicants are notified electronically in writing of the outcome (i.e., offered, recommended but not funded, or not funded), along with anonymous feedback from the peer reviewers at the final stage in the competition. This information is made available on the SHRF RMS. Successful applicants receive an Award Letter outlining any outstanding terms and conditions of funding. SHRF does not provide competition results over the telephone.

SHRF does not have an appeal process.

3.6 Acceptance

Once an offer has been made, successful applicants must accept the grant or award by signing the Notice of Acceptance (NOA) form provided on the SHRF RMS, constituting an acceptance of the terms and conditions for funding. SHRF funds are not released until SHRF receives the signed acceptance and confirmation that all terms and conditions have been met.

NOTE: SHRF is aware that there sometime may be a scenario where a start date may be postponed (i.e. illness, parental leave, etc.). SHRF will work with applicants on a case-by-case basis when this occurs to determine the best route. It is up to the applicant to contact the Program Manager as soon as the need for a postponement to the start date is known.

4. Grant Management Process

4.1 Releasing Funds

SHRF funds will only be issued to an eligible Saskatchewan-based institution that has a current Memorandum of Understanding with SHRF or is an eligible non-profit, where applicable. Terms and conditions of SHRF Funding are outlined in the Notice of Acceptance (NOA) and agreed upon by the Principal Applicant. Any special terms and conditions are outlined in the Award Letter. All conditions must be fulfilled before funds are released.

Once any outstanding terms and conditions have been met, SHRF sends an Authorization for Funding form (AFF) to the institution where the funds will be held and managed in a separate research fund, according to accepted accounting practices for research funds.

SHRF pays research funds to the host institution as follows:

- Grant amounts under $15,000 are paid in a lump sum at the beginning of the grant term
- Grants $15,001 and over are sent on a monthly basis; however, the recipient has access to the yearly authorized amount according to the AFF .

Continued funding authorization for SHRF grants and awards is based on researchers' progress reports and financial statements from host institutions, ensuring that terms and conditions continue to be met. These monitoring and authorization procedures apply to all funded SHRF grants and awards.

4.2 Orientation

Newly awarded grantees are expected to attend an orientation session where SHRF staff present information about SHRF, managing research funds and general expectations. Recipients will also have an opportunity to ask questions of SHRF staff. Recipients will be informed of the date, time and location of the Orientation following their notification of funding.

4.3 Fund Management

Research and financial offices at host institutions are responsible for managing the disbursement of research funds, ensuring timely flow of funds to researchers and access to the yearly authorized amounts. They are also responsible for ensuring expenditures from grants and awards stay within approved budgets and SHRF guidelines included in this Guide along with any program-specific guidelines.

Researchers are responsible for providing documentation to the financial office at their institution so that annual and final statements may be prepared for SHRF on a timely basis and according to the SHRF financial statement template categories.

4.4 Expenditures

SHRF and partner funds (as applicable) contribute to the direct costs of research and knowledge translation according to budgets approved during the review and decision process. SHRF does not pay for overhead or administration of research funding.

Refer also to Section 2.5 in this Guide as well as the relevant funding Application Package for details on any specific policies related to allowable expenses.

The following policies on grant expenditures apply to all SHRF's programs:

- Equipment (see 2.5 for definition) purchased with grant funds becomes the property of the original institution administering funds.
- SHRF funds are to be used to support health research activities in Saskatchewan. Through SHRF's budget change request process, the Program Manager will consider requests for a limited portion of the grant funds to be used outside the province should this be deemed necessary to complete the research approved for funding by SHRF and all other options have been exhausted.

SHRF funding may be used only for expenses incurred during the term of the grant or award. In particular:

- Researchers are to limit spending to the authorized amounts within the identified grant year, as outlined in the Authorization for Funding (AFF). Unspent yearly amounts are carried over into the following grant year.
- Funds may not be spent or encumbered prior to the commencement of the grant or award, reflected in the start date identified on SHRF's AFF; and
- Funds not spent or encumbered by a project's conclusion will revert to SHRF and the funding partner, when applicable, after the final financial statement prepared by the host institution and signed by the Principal Applicant is approved by SHRF.

It may be necessary to reallocate grant funds between approved budget categories if the needs or circumstances of the research project have changed. Grantees should contact SHRF for approval if they anticipate significant or meaningful changes to their objectives and/or research activities that may result in significant changes to their budget and/or if such reallocation involves 10% or more of the grant's total.

Researchers should also contact SHRF if they anticipate substantial under-spending and/or prolonged inactivity due to research delays, leaves of absence etc.

For SHRF grants of $100,000/year or more, SHRF will act if 25% of a yearly budget is carried over to the next grant year without sufficient explanation provided to SHRF. This includes contacting the grant or award holder to explore the matter and, if warranted, taking appropriate financial action.

4.5 Reporting to SHRF

Grant recipients are required to provide annual and final progress reports to SHRF. These reports are an important tool for SHRF's accountability to the Provincial Government and funding partners, and in evaluating and communicating the impact of our funding programs.

Continued funding depends on submission of satisfactory annual progress reports. A satisfactory annual progress report is one that:

- Is provided by the anniversary of a grant's start date;
- Confirms the terms and conditions of funding continues to be met; and
- Confirms research is being carried out as described in the application and budget approved for funding by SHRF; or
- Describes any changes in timelines or objectives for the next year, indicating whether the following grant-year will proceed as outlined in the application, and explaining any changes that would materially affect the research plan set out in the application.
- Provides information to SHRF about the ongoing outcomes and impacts of the grant in key areas such as employment, knowledge mobilization activities, and collaborations.

NOTE: SHRF funding partners may require additional reporting to meet their specific needs.

SHRF reserves the right to delay release of funds for subsequent grants if previous reporting requirements, including post-grant follow up requests, are outstanding.

Financial statements (Statements of Account) are prepared by the host institution's financial office on an annual basis, and when the research has been completed. Researchers must review and sign their Statements of Account in a timely manner before they are forwarded to SHRF. The financial office must provide the statements using SHRF's template withing two months following the anniversary of the funding start date and as indicated on the AFF.

SHRF is committed to evaluating the long-term impact of our programs in order to assess the extent to which program goals are achieved and to understand their contribution to Saskatchewan's health research ecosystem and health of Saskatchewan citizens. SHRF uses the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS) Framework for measuring the impact of health research and may follow-up to assess how the recipient has built capacity, advanced knowledge, informed decision making, and provided health, economic and social impacts in Saskatchewan.

4.6 Grant Changes

SHRF is committed to ensuring funded projects are able to meet their proposed objectives and impacts. It may be necessary for teams to make changes as new information and contexts arise. Any changes to grant timelines, budget or research team should be approved through SHRF and the application record updated accordingly. Changes are documented through Change Requests in the Research Management System (RMS) and approved by the Program Manager. The requirements depend on the extent and nature of change, detailed below.

4.6.1 Timeline Changes

SHRF grantees may request to extend the availability of grant funds beyond the original end date. SHRF will consider requests for extensions due to:

- Professional or personal delays, including, but not exclusive to, parental responsibility, family responsibility or illness;
- Administrative delays, including, but not exclusive to, delays in research ethics board review or hiring;
- Collaboration and relationship delays to accommodate the involvement of research team members and collaborators.

Requests to extend the grant should be provided to SHRF in the requested format at least one month before funds are due to expire, and no more than 6 months before funds are due to expire. The request should describe the reason for, and length of, the extension requested (up to one year at a time). There is no pre-determined limit on the number of times a grant can be extended, but the reasons for extension described above should be considered, and further conversation with SHRF may be required for grants that continue to face delays.

4.6.2 Budget Changes

Budget change requests are accommodated to best support progress of the grant while also supporting the grant objectives as described in the original proposal.

Changes to the budget that involve 10% or more of the total budget, or that alter the activities originally proposed in the application, require SHRF approval prior to expenditure.

Teams are encouraged to contact SHRF should they face unforeseen obstacles that may be remedied by expenditures that are not typically allowable. SHRF will consider these situations on a case-by-case basis. Budget changes that involve expenses that are not allowable require discussion with SHRF to justify why the grant is unable to proceed as originally planned and are approved on a case-by-case basis.

Budget changes are submitted as required throughout the grant term and should describe the reason for the change and provide a new budget using SHRF's budget change template found on shrf.ca/resources.

4.6.3 Team Changes

Changes to the research team membership should be communicated to SHRF in cases where the team member was a part of the minimum team requirement of the original application, or when the Principal Investigator eligibility to hold grant has changed.

In cases where the change relates to a team member who was fulfilling minimum team requirements in the original application, the PI must submit a change request detailing the reason for the change, the team member affected, and the new team member who will satisfy the minimum team requirement referencing the relevant application requirement.

4.6.4 Principal Investigator Changes

In cases where the eligibility of the PI has changed (e.g., re-location outside of Saskatchewan) or a situation arises that affects their ability to manage the grant fund and impacts progress of the grant (e.g., prolonged medical absence, death), a signed agreement between the original PI, the new PI, and the Department Head and/or Dean of new PI supporting the proposed change is required. If written agreement from the original PI is not possible, an appropriate designate, such as their Department Head or Dean, should acknowledge the change in writing. This agreement is to be submitted to SHRF by email to fundinginfo@shrf.ca, and must outline:

- Reason for change;
- Progress to date on planned objectives and activities;
- Identification of trainees and other personnel supported by the grant;
- Remaining funds and work to be completed, including any changes to original plans;
- Identification of a current team member or new team member who will take over as PI and description of their qualifications to carry out research as originally planned;
- Agreement of the new PI to proceed as proposed and to assume administrative responsibility for the grant, including submitting reports to SHRF;
- Description of the nature of continued involvement of original PI, if relevant.

Changes of Principal Investigator approved by SHRF will be updated in the RMS and the new PI given access to all application information and reporting tasks. A revised AFF will be provided to all affected parties and their institution indicating the new PI is accepting all administrative responsibility of the grant.

4.7 Compliance

SHRF expects researchers to carry out their work responsibly and to make sound decisions on resource allocation. Researchers must operate in compliance with local, national and international ethical and legal standards, and all applicable policies of their host institution that govern:

- Management and conduct of research, including safety;
- The financial management of research; and
- The management of research personnel and students involved in research.

Research undertaken for SHRF grants is also subject to all policies laid out in this Guide and the relevant Application Package. Where there is neither an existing SHRF policy nor an existing host-institutional policy, researchers are to seek, through their institution's research administration, appropriate advice and/or a ruling from SHRF.

4.7.1 Non-Compliance

SHRF reserves the right to stop funding and/or research activity (see 4.8) at any time if it determines that researchers are in breach of terms and conditions of funding, as outlined in the NOA signed by the grant holder and the Award Letter. Examples of a breach include, but are not limited to:

- Changes in eligibility to hold funds or conduct research; and/or
- Failure to provide satisfactory annual reports (see 4.5).

4.8 Changing or Stopping Funding

Financial actions that may be taken if a grant or award holder is determined by SHRF to be significantly under spent, inactive or in breach of terms and conditions include:

- Stopping payments temporarily or permanently;
- Stopping access to the research funds;
- Asking the employing institution to stop all research activity; and/or
- Rescinding all or part of the grant or award.

If at any time it is determined that any representation or warranty made by the grantee/supervisor/award holder in the grant application is not true or accurate, or is materially misleading, SHRF may at its discretion terminate the grant.

SHRF continued funding depends on whether, in the fiscal year in which an anniversary date of a grant/award falls, the provincial government shall have provided sufficient funding for SHRF to cover all its budgeted operating expenditures and grants and similar commitments for such fiscal year. Where the funding provided to SHRF is not sufficient to cover such amounts, it is within the discretion of SHRF to determine what funds it might allocate to grants and awards.

4.9 Sharing with Partnering Agencies

Grant recipients who receive funding from partnering agencies agree via the NOA to allow SHRF share annual and final progress reports and financial statements with the partnering

agency, and to allow the partnering agency to contact the recipient directly for the purposes of knowledge exchange and promotion.

4.10 Acknowledgement of Funding

Researchers should acknowledge SHRF support in all study materials (i.e. recruitment materials and consent forms), resulting publications, abstracts, posters, presentations, events, media coverage and other dissemination avenues and applications of their research. In the case of partnership awards, awardees shall acknowledge the financial support provided by SHRF and the partner(s).

The most current SHRF logo files, along with our **Visual Identity Guide**, can be downloaded from shrf.ca/logos.