

AHSC AFP Innovation Fund

PROVINCIAL INNOVATION FUND GUIDELINES

Ontario AHSC AFP Innovation Fund:

The Innovation Fund was created by the Alternative Funding Plan (AFP) agreement between the Academic Physicians, the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). Over \$10 million annually was made available to Academic Physicians to support *the development of new and innovative approaches to health care delivery* and to provide *leadership in the dissemination of new knowledge across the healthcare system*.

All participating academic physicians are eligible to apply and a competitive peer review process selects the most deserving projects proposed at each Academic Health Sciences Centre (AHSC).

The Innovation Fund provides short-term (one or two year) seed funding to support innovative projects and to enable academic physicians to develop programs sufficiently to qualify for additional support and evaluate novel strategies to transform health care delivery in Ontario.

In the most recent Provincial Framework & Guidelines the Innovation Fund Provincial Oversight Committee (IFPOC) indicated that; **projects that have definite potential to impact health care delivery; projects that are implementable and have realistic project goals; projects that have clear measurable metrics for success; projects that offer opportunities to translate new knowledge into medical practice; and projects that are transferable to other institutions or regions of the province** would be considered innovative.

In addition, locally, projects that **“generate value in terms of quality and safety of care, administrative efficiency, the patient experience, and patient outcomes”** will be considered innovative (Health Canada Report 2015).

The IFPOC has also provided some examples of projects that were considered less innovative, such as; stand-alone databases; drug or other industry related projects; and projects designed to evaluate a new device/drug in which there is significant industry sponsorship.

Oversight and Administration of the Innovation Fund:

The Provincial Academic Medicine Steering Committee, with the support of the AHSC AFP Governance Organizations, established the Innovation Fund Provincial Oversight Committee (IFPOC) to oversee the AHSC AFP Innovation Fund. The IFPOC includes representation from the research and innovation sector, academic medicine, government as well as the AFP Governance Organizations. Dr. Richard Weisel chairs the Committee.

To support the dissemination of new knowledge across the healthcare system, the IFPOC sponsored an Innovation Fund Showcase in November 2010, and again in November 2013. Planning has begun for a November 2016 Showcase that will once again provide an opportunity for dissemination of knowledge among participants, and highlight some of the most successful Innovation Fund projects to date. Additionally, beginning in 2015, the Innovation Fund awards are being added as an annual feature in November of each year.

Scope of Projects Eligible for Funding

Innovative, promising and deserving projects are eligible to receive funding through the Innovation Fund across a wide scope of areas of focus including but not limited to:

- Patient education and enablement
- Continuity of care
- Process improvement models to improve efficiencies, patient safety and quality of care
- Support/collaboration from AHSCs to community hospitals, LHINs and other services in their region
- Remote access to care
- Knowledge transfer across AHSCs and the broader health care system

In order to facilitate IFPOC's ability to provide "leadership in the dissemination of new knowledge," the Innovation Fund particularly encourages projects that address health system priorities such as: patient safety; effectiveness of health care delivery; home and community care; quality improvement; sustainability; social determinants of health; health system funding reform; better care pathways for pregnant women; and, cost–benefit comparisons.

Eligibility Criteria

- The "Project Lead" for each proposal must be a Participating Physician, as defined in the AHSC AFP Agreement.
- Innovation Funds should be used to support the human resources and infrastructure necessary to implement, test and/or evaluate new concepts and modes of health care delivery. In general, the funds are not intended for equipment; however, the innovative use of equipment could form the basis of a project. Funding may not be used to defray the cost of implantable medical devices or drug trials. While this funding is clearly intended to support innovative clinical care to patients, it is not intended as a substitute for perceived inadequacies in either the OHIP fee schedule or individual institutional funding.
- The Innovation Fund was intended to support projects for up to 2 years.
- AMOSO currently uses the IFPOC definition of Innovation as well as a local definition (see page 1). Each proposal should reference that definition and indicate why the project is innovative for our institution.
- The IFPOC will review each application submitted by AMOSO. Those projects that do not conform to the Provincial Framework or do not meet the criteria established by the Governance Organization will be returned to the Governance Organization for revision, or the Governance Organization will be invited to replace that project with another application during the review process that year and no later than the end of March.

Evaluation of Project Proposals

Competitive Peer Review Process

Each AHSC AFP Governance Organization will establish a competitive peer review process that invites expressions of interest from across the AHSC and results in funding recommendations that are based on demonstrated merit, not equity. Governance Organizations are encouraged to include one or more representatives on their peer review committee from outside of their AHSC Governance Organization, to support an objective review process.

Review Criteria

The assessment of proposals by each Governance Organization competitive peer review committee should continue to be guided by the above, and should be based on the following criteria:

a. *Potential impact*

- Potential impact within and beyond the local institution and the academic community: the likely significance of the project in generating and transferring new knowledge and beneficial results beyond the project participants.
- Potential to improve understanding in the project's subject field: presence of a documented and coherent knowledge translation strategy for exchanging information generated by the project beyond the project participants.

b. *Proposal merit*

- Innovative and original idea(s)/objectives
- The applicants should indicate why the proposal is innovative for their institution or constituency
- Well-written and focused proposal
- Comprehensive relevant performance metrics that can be used at the end of the first year (and any subsequent years) of funding
- Appropriateness and relevance to scope of Innovation Fund
- Feasibility and viability of project, including consideration of budget costs

c. *Team strengths*

- Experience and skills of the project team - track record; historical productivity and impact; likelihood that this team can complete the Innovation project being proposed; time and availability to commit to the project; and, collaborative arrangements with colleagues if applicable

d. *Assessment*

- What are the metrics for evaluation?
- What are the timelines and when do you expect to see progress?
- What kinds of progress do you expect?
- How will you judge whether or not your project has been a success?

e. *Priority*

- IFOPC requests that review committees and Governance Organizations give priority to projects which have the potential to impact health care delivery in multiple institutions or across the Province
- If two projects otherwise have equal priority, the Selection Committees and Governance Organizations are asked to give priority to projects that could impact health care delivery beyond their institution and/or could be adapted across the province.

IFOPC Members will consider the proposals submitted for funding based on a number of guiding criteria:

- *Assessment*: clear and measurable outcomes indicating that the project will improve health care delivery
- *Merit*: distinctly “innovative”
- *Potential impact*: the project can be translated to clinical practice and impacts health care delivery
- *Strength*: quality of proposal and participants
- *Scope*: the potential to impact health care delivery in multiple institutions across the Province