PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Background

Maintaining the quality and accessibility of health care in the face of rising costs and demand is a major challenge facing governments and health care organizations around the world. Alberta Innovates (AI) and Alberta Health Services (AHS) co-launched the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Health System (PRIHS) program out of a shared commitment to developing research and innovation (R&I) activities that contribute to health system sustainability in Alberta.

Program Objectives

Building on the momentum of previous competitions, PRIHS V provides a streamlined process for connecting Alberta’s academic institutions with Strategic Clinical Networks™ (SCNs), patients, providers and leaders in AHS to:

- Translate research evidence into testable solutions that address priority health system challenges in Alberta as articulated by the SCNs; and
- Generate the evidence needed to identify and accelerate the spread and/or scale of solutions that foster more efficient and/or effective use of health care resources.

The PRIHS Challenge

PRIHS is designed to align the knowledge production efforts of researchers with the evidence needs of the health system. This is achieved by providing opportunities for researchers to propose solutions to priority health system challenges and access support from SCNs and other expertise within AHS to administer implementation studies. These implementation studies will help AHS identify and advance solutions that improve health care quality, health outcomes and value for Albertans.
Objectives and Performance Metrics

**OBJECTIVES**
- Translate research evidence into testable solutions that address priority health system challenges/performance gaps in Alberta as articulated by the SCNs; and
- Generate the evidence needed to identify and accelerate the spread and/or scale of solutions that foster more efficient and/or effective use of health care resources.

**PROJECT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**
Performance indicators for each project will be developed in consultation with AI and AHS. These indicators must address:

1. Fidelity to implementation plans and processes
2. Progress measuring the impact of the solution on resource utilization (e.g., service utilization / cost) and one or more of the following:
   - Patient and population health outcomes;
   - Patient and family experience; and/or
   - Experience and/or safety of the workforce

**ALBERTA IMPACTS**
- Reduce burden of disease
- Improve quality of care
- Accelerate health and wellness innovation
- Improve robustness of health data

**PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**
- # of innovations tested for impact
- # of innovations advanced for sustainable scale and spread.
- Measurable change in health outcomes and/or the quality of care at the patient cohort level.
- Improved value for money
- Measurable impact on burden of disease (economic and health outcomes)
HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Eligibility

Only proposals that are developed in collaboration with one or more SCN and consist of an implementation study in the Alberta health system will be considered for funding. All PRIHS V applications must include:

- At least one lead applicant who holds an academic or research appointment at an Alberta-based Institution.
- SCN Scientific Directors (SDs) and Assistant Scientific Directors (ASDs) are eligible to apply as a lead or co-lead. SD’s and ASD’s are exempt from all involvement in PRIHS Stage 1 and Stage 2 process review, evaluation and selection processes and panels.
- SCN staff as part of the implementation study team or if applicable a co-lead
- Other collaborators and/or knowledge users from the broader SCN network, including operational leaders, are encouraged.

Funding Available

AI and AHS are investing up to $7 million in the PRIHS V competition. No maximum budget is set for each proposal.

Term

Up to three years (2020-23).

The role of SCNs in PRIHS

SCNs consist of networks of patients and families, academic partners, clinical leaders, and other stakeholders who are knowledgeable about specific areas of health and serve as enduring structures for setting R&I priorities and driving clinical innovation within AHS. SCNs are key to the success of PRIHS. Developing PRIHS applications in collaboration with SCNs ensures that:

- Project teams have access to key health system expertise, stakeholders, and leadership as early as possible in the PRIHS lifecycle; and
- Only those projects with the appropriate line of sight to health system priorities and sustainability are developed into full applications.
Competition Design

PRIHS V consists of a two-stage developmental process as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Competition Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE 1</th>
<th>ADJUDICATION</th>
<th>STAGE 2</th>
<th>ADJUDICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem Definition (quantify magnitude) + Relevance + Description of the Solution and Implementation Study (initial sketch) + Expected Improvement (measurable outcomes &amp; estimates of change)</td>
<td>10 Projects Advance to Stage 2</td>
<td>Operational Considerations + Implementation Design (expert consult provided) + Description of the Solution and Implementation Study (strengthened) + Expected Improvement (strengthened with operations and health economist consult)</td>
<td>Funding Recommendations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consultations with operational, health economic and implementation science expertise within AHS will be provided to all teams progressing to Stage 2 to strengthen implementation study designs. This includes ensuring the impact/performance of the solution is measurable and evidence on the implementation itself (e.g., fidelity, contextual factors, barriers and enablers) is generated to support assessments of generalizability and scale/spread potential.

Competition Process

Solutions/Ideas are Pitched to SCNs

Applicants contact the Scientific Director (SD) or Assistant Scientific Director (ASD) of the appropriate SCN to discuss potential ideas or solutions. During this initial discussion, the SD/ASD will ascertain if the idea:

- Addresses a priority as outlined in the SCN Transformational Roadmaps or emerging priorities approved by the SCN;
- Consists of one or more evidence-based solution(s) that can be formulated into an implementation study;
- Can be accomplishable within the timeframe of a PRIHS grant; and
- Has the potential to deliver significant, measurable impact to health system performance.

Prospective applicants whose solutions align with the above criteria will be asked to complete an intake form by June 15th, 2019.
Prioritization of Solutions for Further Development
Each SCN will review the intake forms and select up to three solutions to co-develop into a Stage 1 application. SCN’s may work together to support applications that address cross-cutting challenges / pan SCN priorities. Each SCN will inform prospective applicants of its desire to move forward on a Stage 1 application by June 30th, 2019.

Stage 1

Application Development: Stage 1 applications must be developed in collaboration with SCN partners and submitted through the Alberta Innovates website by September 27, 2019 at 4:00PM.

Adjudication: Stage 1 applications will be reviewed by a panel of experts and stakeholders on October 25th, 2019. Up to 10 applicants will be invited to proceed to Stage 2 (full proposal).

Stage 2

Application Development: Stage 2 applications must be developed in collaboration with SCN partners, as well as in consultation with operational and implementation science expertise in AHS. Stage 2 application must be submitted through the Alberta Innovates website by January 31, 2020.

Adjudication: Stage 2 (Full Proposal) applications will be reviewed by a panel of experts and stakeholders during the week of February 17-21, 2020. Applicants will have the opportunity to present in person and address reviewer questions and concerns directly. The review committee will rank order proposals and make funding recommendations to the PRIHS Steering Committee.

Conditional Approval: Those proposals endorsed by the Steering Committee will be given conditional approval and enter into the final development of their evaluation plans and KPI’s (week of March 1, 2020). Agreement execution will take place prior to public announcements.

Summary of Key Dates

May-June 2019: SCN engagement and co-design
June 30, 2019 SCNs select up to 3 projects for submission to PRIHS
September 27th, 2019: Stage 1 application deadline
October 25th, 2019: Stage 1 review and recommendations
November-January 2020: Co-design of full proposal for top 10 applications
January 31th, 2020: Stage 2 application deadline
February 17-21, 2020: Stage 2 review (in-person) and recommendations
Early March, 2020: Conditional approval
March 2020: Funding announcement and initial disbursement of funds
HOW APPLICATIONS ARE ASSESSED:

Five criteria will be used to identify PRIHS-ready solutions with high potential for impact that employ research evidence in addressing priority health system challenges/gaps.

Problem/Solution Specification:
- Strength of the problem/solution description and fit (e.g., quantification of the problem, details of the solution(s), evidence to suggest the proposed solution(s) will perform better than the status quo and/or other options).

Relevance:
- Extent to which the targeted problem & solution(s) are relevant to: a) the overarching objective of PRIHS (i.e., contributing to health system sustainability); and b) health system need / priorities (as endorsed by the SCN communities).

Feasibility:
- Extent to which the study deliverables and timelines are realistic and reflect a good understanding of the resources and operational activities required.
- Extent to which foreseeable risks (e.g., data access, requirement for AHS IT services, team member changes) have been identified and appropriate mitigation strategies are outlined.
- Extent to which affected areas have been engaged in implementation planning and endorse the design as reasonable and sustainable.
- Suitability of the project team for the proposed activities (e.g., expertise, roles).

Impact Potential:
Demonstrated potential to impact:
- one or more of the following areas:
  - Patient and family experience
  - Patient and population health outcome
  - Experience and/or safety of the workforce
  AND
- generating evidence on resource usage (i.e., costs and/or service utilization) to inform health system sustainability

Note: the magnitude of the expected impact(s) will be assessed along with the evidence upon which the estimate is based and the capacity to measure and attribute change. Factors such as how transformative the solution(s) is and if it addresses a cross-cutting theme or leverages an emerging technology will be considered in assessments of impact potential.
**Scientific Merit:** Extent to which the proposed solution(s) and the implementation study are informed by evidence, methodologically sound, and designed to generate high quality evidence on the impact of the solution and the implementation process.

**ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE EXPENSES:**

The guiding principle is that PRIHS funding should be used primarily to test innovation and support activities that could not reasonably be covered by existing resources. Funding can be used for costs associated with the proposed activities.

**Summary of Eligible and Ineligible Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Eligible Expenses</th>
<th>Ineligible Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>✔ Labour costs for those individuals specifically identified as working on the Project</td>
<td>✗ Overhead costs charged to employee labour rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✗ Overhead costs charged to employee labour rates</td>
<td>✗ Professional training &amp; development</td>
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<td>✗ Salary support for Leads and Co-Leads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✗ Salary support for Leads and Co-Leads</td>
<td>✗ Professional fees unless directly related to the Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>✔ Reasonable material costs</td>
<td>✗ Sales and marketing collateral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Assets &amp; Software</td>
<td>✔ Capital improvements</td>
<td>✗ Major equipment (&gt;$5,000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Capital equipment</td>
<td>✗ Acquisitions of land or buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✔ Software or information databases</td>
<td>✗ The undepreciated value of eligible capital costs which extends beyond the Project term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>✔ Mileage, lowest economy class airfare, and accommodation where the Industry Partner’s place of business is located in a different city than the Applicant</td>
<td>✗ Costs relating to meals, entertainment, hospitality and gifts</td>
</tr>
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<td>✗ Passport or immigration fees</td>
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<td>✗ Passport or immigration fees</td>
<td>✗ Reimbursement for airfare purchased with personal frequent flyer programs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✗ Reimbursement for airfare purchased with personal frequent flyer programs</td>
<td>✗ Commuting costs between place of residence and place of employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-contractors</td>
<td>✔ Services or products of another entity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other

✅ Costs which Alberta Innovates pre-approves in writing as an eligible expense

❌ Pharmaceutical drug-related trials

❌ Local programs or projects in one zone or one hospital that are not applicable to other zones or sectors

❌ Costs associated with development and protection of intellectual property.

❌ Federal and provincial income taxes, goods and services taxes

❌ Expenses for projects or activities outside the approved Project

❌ Costs associated with applying for government grants and programs

❌ Technical or professional journals

❌ Provisions for contingencies

❌ Routine testing and maintenance

❌ Costs Alberta Innovates deems ineligible at its sole discretion

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT:**

*Over the life of a Project, Alberta Innovates employs an active project management philosophy, regularly monitoring performance and supporting the Applicant to reach their objectives. Funding is tied to outcomes and achievement of results. For this reason, Alberta Innovates funds on a milestone completion basis. This means the Applicant are expected to submit a Progress Report before Alberta Innovates advances the next tranche of funds.*

Once Projects are completed, Alberta Innovates continues to monitor performance for five (5) years to accurately evaluate the economic, social and environmental benefits realized for the province. All Investment Agreements outline performance indicators tracked over the course of the Project and the responsibilities of the Applicant to report on outcomes subsequent to the completion of the Project.

**HOW TO APPLY:**

Prospective applicants connect with relevant SCNs to discuss proposed solutions. SCN contact information and the priority areas of each SCN can be found at AlbertaInnovates.ca

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