

Strategic Plan
CIHR Regional Partnership Program in Saskatchewan
October 2007; Updated May 14, 2008

I. Purpose

The Regional Partnership Program (RPP) is a partnership program offered by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to support the development of health research capacity in a number of provinces, including Saskatchewan, where CIHR funding has historically been low. The program contributes to CIHR's mandate of supporting quality health research in Canada as defined in the CIHR Act. In Saskatchewan, RPP helps to build health research capacity as part of the province's *Health Research Strategy* and raises the level of federally supported health research activity in Saskatchewan, leading to increased new knowledge with the potential to benefit health, health care and the economy.

II. Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the RPP in Saskatchewan is to raise the level of health research activity to the normal level in Canada, with an emphasis on some areas described below. In Saskatchewan, the normal level is defined as three percent of CIHR funding activity, the equivalent of Saskatchewan's proportion of the Canadian population.

To achieve this goal, RPP in Saskatchewan focuses on the following objectives:

1. Increase the number and quality of funding applications to CIHR;
2. Increase the number of CIHR-funded researchers and trainees in Saskatchewan;
3. Provide matching funding for high-quality grants and awards that are not funded in CIHR's regular program allocations due to financial limitations;
4. Provide funding for high-quality research in the provincial priority areas; and
5. Foster partnerships among stakeholder organizations committed to building health research capacity in Saskatchewan.

III. Funding and Priorities

Given its emphasis on capacity-building, the Saskatchewan RPP focuses on the following funding CIHR programs:

1. Open Operating Grants (2 years);
2. New Investigator Salary Awards (5 years);
3. Doctoral Student Awards and Fellowships for health professional graduate students enrolled in Ph.D. programs (max. 3 years); and
4. Post-Doctoral Fellowships only if resources are available at year end (1 or 2 years).

Open Operating Grants and New Investigator Salary Awards are funded with a consideration to priority research areas that address areas of need and strength defined in the provincial *Health Research Strategy*, as shown below. This is done by providing the first 50% of available funds to the highest rated eligible applications in the provincial priority areas and the remaining funds to any eligible applications in order of the peer-review ranked list.

The provincial research priority areas are:

1. Health needs of specific populations, with emphasis on Aboriginal people and Seniors;
2. Health systems and policy research, with emphasis on: health human resources and workforce planning; quality management and improvement; primary health care; mental health and addictions; innovative delivery models; and rural and remote health services;
3. Determinants of health status, including early childhood development and the prevention and underlying causes of chronic and lifestyle-related disease (particularly diabetes, obesity and smoking);
4. Public health including infectious diseases and water and food safety; and
5. Synchrotron-based health research.

Saskatchewan's provincial *Health Research Strategy* (available at www.shrf.ca) has four major themes: advancing priority areas (above); emphasizing knowledge translation; building health research capacity; and evaluating progress and impact. The RPP is an important mechanism in each of these major themes.

IV. Operating Principles

In Saskatchewan, the RPP operates in a collegial manner under the guidance of a multi-stakeholder advisory committee that has been in place since 1999. The Sask-CIHR RPP Background and Policies (available at www.shrf.ca, under Funding Programs>>Sask-CIHR RPP) describe in detail the procedures and policies by which the committee administers the program in Saskatchewan, within the overall context of CIHR's guidelines for RPP.

The Saskatchewan committee accepts the peer reviewed rankings and financial recommendations of CIHR and does not substitute any additional review.

Periodically, the Saskatchewan committee organizes a media release or event to acknowledge RPP-funded researchers and their work and to promote the importance and success of the program in building health research capacity in the province. These media events are organized in collaboration with the various funding partners. A list of all Saskatchewan RPP-funded grants and awards is maintained on Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation website.

The Saskatchewan committee is committed to evaluating the outcomes and impact of RPP and reporting on these to government and in the SHRF Annual Report. Evaluation activities include: a Saskatchewan evaluation in 2002; regular monitoring of success rates and funding levels; participating in CIHR evaluations of the program; and requesting reports from each RPP-funded researcher about outcomes such as publications, subsequent grants, trainees supported, individuals employed, innovation potential, and contributions to education and health care.

Sask-CIHR RPP

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