

# Evaluation of the Collaborative Health Research Projects Program

## CIHR and NSERC Management Response

March 4, 2014

### Context

The Collaborative Health Research Projects (CHRP) program is a joint initiative between the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The CHRP program supports natural sciences or engineering researchers to work collaboratively with health researchers to address interdisciplinary research challenges through innovative research projects.

An evaluation was conducted to provide NSERC and CIHR senior management with a retrospective assessment of the relevance and performance of the CHRP program. The evaluation was also designed to meet the requirements of section 42.1 (1) of the *Financial Administration Act* and the Treasury Board Secretariat's *Policy on Evaluation* (2009).

### Comments

The evaluation found that the program has been relevant, effective and efficient. It confirmed management's expectations for the program in achieving both its immediate and intermediate outcomes pertaining to interdisciplinary research, interdisciplinary relationships, knowledge transfer and student training.

The findings confirm the need for a program that funds collaborative research projects involving natural sciences or engineering (NSE) and health sciences, and suggest that the availability of other comparable funding sources is limited. This reinforces management's view that this program fills a very specific niche in the continuum of research funding programs in Canada.

The CHRP program provides support to the NSERC and CIHR communities to collaborate and integrate their expertise in interdisciplinary research activities and knowledge translation, while allowing each agency to respect their specific mandates. There are no comparable stand-alone programs at NSERC or at CIHR that would allow for the full support of such interdisciplinary projects.

Recommendation	Response (Agree or Disagree)	Management Action Plan	Responsibility	Timeline
<p>1) Consider continued funding to collaborative health research involving health and NSE researchers through the CHRP program and further clarify and communicate the position of the program in the continuum of funding opportunities provided by NSERC and CIHR.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agreed. CIHR and NSERC will continue to co-fund the 2013-14 and 2014-15 CHRP competitions as committed to in the current Memorandum of Understanding. The agencies will also engage in discussions to explore the continued funding of this program beyond 2015, in light of strategic priorities and available resources.</p> <p>The CHRP program fits a very specific niche as it intersects with the mandates of both agencies by supporting interdisciplinary collaborative research projects with participation from both the NSE and health communities. Communication will be improved regarding how this program is positioned vis-à-vis other funding opportunities offered at both agencies. This will be achieved through additional text in the funding opportunity and/or a communications strategy.</p>	<p>CIHR Science, Knowledge Translation and Ethics (SKTE) and Communications and Public Outreach Branches, in consultation with NSERC</p>	<p>Additional text for the 2014-15 CHRP funding opportunity and/or a communication strategy will be developed and implemented by March 31, 2014.</p> <p>Discussions regarding the continued co-funding of CHRP beyond 2015 will be completed by early 2015.</p>

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<p>2) Make improvements to program design and ongoing performance measurement.</p> <p>a) Assess whether it is feasible to provide more substantial feedback on Letters of Intent (LOIs) to applicants.</p>	Agree	<p>Agreed. Program Delivery staff will explore the feasibility of requesting more feedback on LOIs without unduly increasing reviewer workload. It is anticipated that CIHR will be able to increase efforts to ensure that reviewers provide a substantive statement to support any negative assessment made during the LOI stage.</p>	CIHR Open Programs Branch	<p>An assessment will be completed by March 31, 2014 and any ensuing actions will be implemented before the next CHRP LOI deadline of May 15, 2014.</p>
<p>2. b) Review the program's performance measurement strategy (including the logic model) to ensure that it effectively monitors the extent to which the CHRP program supports its new objectives, the impacts of the new partner requirements on the research community and program impacts on HQP.</p>	Agree	<p>Agreed. CIHR, in collaboration with NSERC, will review the performance measurement strategy and logic model for CHRP to ensure that it continues to respond to the evolving objectives of the program. This will include investigating the electronic final report currently used for the CHRP program, to ensure the relevant information regarding partner involvement and knowledge translation is being captured.</p>	CIHR SKTE and Performance and Accountability Branches	<p>Any required updates to the performance measurement strategy and logic model will be implemented by March 31, 2014.</p>

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<p>2. c) Record information on whether researchers can be identified primarily as NSE or health researchers.</p>	<p>Agree in part</p>	<p>Agreed in part. Further action will be dependent on CIHR's review of the performance measurement strategy and logic model (outlined in Recommendation 2.b). A process to record this information will be put in place if it is deemed to be a useful measure.</p>	<p>CIHR SKTE and Open Programs Branches</p>	<p>The performance measurement strategy and logic model will be reviewed and any required changes will be implemented by March 31, 2014.</p>
<p>2. d) Establish a protocol for sharing applicant, partner and HQP data between NSERC and CIHR.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Agreed. CIHR will ensure that a statement is included in the CHRP funding opportunity and/or ResearchNet to make it clear to applicants that when submitting they are agreeing to their application information being shared with NSERC for administrative and evaluation purposes. This will facilitate the sharing of CHRP application information between the two agencies.</p>	<p>SKTE and Open Programs Branches</p>	<p>Any changes required to the CHRP funding opportunity and/or ResearchNet will be made, and a protocol for sharing application information with NSERC will be confirmed by March 31, 2014.</p>