



## Frequently Asked Questions

Health System Impact Fellowship funding opportunity  
(for doctoral trainees and post-doctoral fellows)

Last update: November, 2021

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### **General Questions** (pages 4-5):

1. What differentiates the Health System Impact Fellowship from the open CIHR Fellowship?
2. I am uncertain about my career goals. What career paths does this fellowship target?
3. Where can I learn more about the CHSPRA Training Modernization Strategy?
4. Who should I contact if I have questions about the funding opportunity?
5. My organization would like to host a fellow – who should I contact to get involved?
6. How often is the online webpage with the host partner profile resource tool updated?
7. COVID-19 has impacted my research and studies. Can I explain this in my application?

### **Eligibility / Application Questions** (pages 5-16):

1. Am I eligible to apply?
2. My PhD is/was not in health services and policy research. Am I eligible?
3. For doctoral trainee applicants, are there any eligibility requirements regarding degree stage or is this fellowship open to doctoral trainees at any stage of their studies?
4. I would like to apply for the post-doctoral stream but will not complete my PhD by the application deadline. I expect to defend my dissertation by the funding start date. Can I still apply?
5. I am a current Health System Impact Doctoral Fellow. Am I eligible to reapply?
6. Will applications for the doctoral and post-doctoral stream be peer reviewed together?
7. Where can I learn more about the previous cohorts of Health System Impact Fellows, their host partner organizations, and their programs of work?
8. If I do not have existing relationships with health system organizations, can CIHR help me find a host partner?
9. Does CIHR provide help to find an academic supervisor?
10. Am I required to apply with a host partner organization featured in the [Partner Linkage Tool](#)? Will applicants working with organizations from the Partner Linkage Tool receive bonus points in peer review?
11. How do I express my interest to potential host partner organizations?
12. I have met with multiple organizations and want to confirm my interest in one. How do I do this?

13. Do the host partner organizations have specific projects in mind, or is it up to the applicant to propose a project to the host in line with their profile?
14. Above and beyond the details of the experiential learning opportunity and embedded project, are there other things I should discuss with my proposed host partner organization that will help pave the way for a high-quality fellowship experience?
15. What qualifies as an eligible host partner organization?
16. Can I partner with more than one host partner organization, if one is considered the main host partner (e.g. primary supervisor, provides the funds, hosts the fellow), and the other provides expertise?
17. Are federally-funded organizations like Health Canada and others eligible to participate as host employer partner organizations?
18. Can an applicant submit multiple proposals with different host partner organizations?
19. Can an organization put forward more than one applicant?
20. Can I work remotely from my host partner organization?
21. I live in a different province than my proposed host partner organization. Can I use my stipend to support relocation expenses?
22. What if my proposed host partner organization and academic supervisor are in different provinces?
23. If the supervisor from the host partner organization also has a university appointment, can they also serve as the academic supervisor?
24. Is the supervisor from the host partner organization expected to have a PhD?
25. Should the postdoctoral fellow have completed their doctorate degree with the same academic supervisor as the proposed academic supervisor for the HSI Fellowship?
26. Is there an eligibility window to have obtained a doctoral degree no more than five years prior to the competition deadline?
27. Can the academic supervisor be located at the host institution as well (assuming they have an academic affiliation that allows them to supervise trainees)?
28. Eligibility states that I must be a trainee affiliated with a CIHR eligible institution. What does this mean?
29. I'm an organization interested in becoming eligible to hold and administer CIHR funds. How do I do this?
30. What is the difference between a one-year and two-year fellowship?
31. Are cross-jurisdictional projects allowed?
32. Are organizations focused on global health eligible?
33. If I believe my fellowship is relevant to one of the partner Institutes (e.g., CIHR -IPPH), should I specify this in my application?
34. I anticipate completing my PhD by the start date of the fellowship (September 1) but what if there are delays and I have not defended in time? Can I defer?
35. How do I decide the % of my time to spend within the host partner organization? The funding opportunity specifies 60-100%, depending on whether I'm a doctoral or postdoctoral applicant. If I opt for 70%, what do I do with the remainder of my time?
36. How is 60% defined? 70%? Does this time need to be allocated equally across the year, for example 3.5 days per week every week?

37. Can I defer the start date of my fellowship from the start date (September 1) to January of the following year?
38. If I applied to the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship, Canada Graduate Scholarship - Doctoral, CIHR Fellowship or the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship, am I allowed to apply for the Health System Impact Fellowship?
39. I already hold a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship, Canada Graduate Scholarship - Doctoral, CIHR Fellowship or Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship, but I am interested in enriching my training with experiential learning embedded within a health system organization. Am I able to apply for the Health System Impact Fellowship as well?
40. The HSI Fellowship funding opportunity specifies that eligible applicants must not be current or former employees of the host partner organization, unless I fall within the special exception case. What does this mean? And, what if I am currently (or formerly) a postdoctoral fellow with the organization? What if I am doing (or did) a research internship with the organization? What if I am on contract with the organization?
41. My host partner organization and I are keen to get started on the work. Can I accept a short-term contract with my host partner organization while I await the fellowship notice of decision?
42. Can I hold the HSI Fellowship and a private, local, or provincial fellowship?
43. What is the added benefit of consenting to flow the host partner organization's funds through Mitacs?
44. What evaluation criteria will be used to assess my application?
45. Does the project/program of work need to be related to the student's PhD dissertation work?
46. I am a physician (MD) and I completed an MSc in Health Systems Am I eligible to apply?
47. For the doctoral award, does the candidacy exam need have already been completed prior to applying?
48. Could one of the host partner organizations be an organization located outside of Canada?

### **Award Administration Questions (pages 16-18):**

1. How and to whom do CIHR and the host partner organization flow their funds?
2. At some universities, postdoctoral fellows are paid salary and benefits, rather than stipend. Is the \$70K inclusive of benefits or would the host partner organization or academic institution need to provide benefits over and above the \$70K?
3. Will I need to apply for ethics approval for my proposed project/program of work?
4. What constitutes an eligible expense under the research allowance?
5. Will my professional development training and research allowance be put on hold until research ethics approval is obtained?
6. Do I need to do anything if I am planning to decline the award?
7. In the funding opportunity, it mentions the maximum dollar contribution per award. Can you confirm that host partners could offer more than 30%, and if the applicant would receive this additional amount?
8. How are the regions and awards allocated and determined for Canada? Is it by the location of the trainee, academic supervisor or the host partner organization?

9. At some universities, doctoral trainees receive a funding package that includes tuition coverage. If I accept the HSI Fellowship, will my university funding package be affected? Will I still need to pay tuition given I will be at my host partner organization for at least 60% of my time?
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## General Questions

1. **Question:** What differentiates the Health System Impact Fellowship from the open CIHR Fellowship?  
**Response:** The Health System Impact (HSI) Fellowship aims to better prepare PhD trainees and post-doctoral fellows to embark on a wider range of career paths with greater impact. It is founded on the concept of experiential learning within health system and related organizations coupled with professional development training in an [expanded set of competencies](#) (e.g., leadership, negotiation, project management, change management) designed to accelerate professional growth. The fellowship provides doctoral trainees and post-docs with an opportunity to apply the skills they developed through their doctoral training to “real world” challenges faced by health system organizations, while also developing professional experience and networks. Additionally, the HSI Fellowship peer review criteria emphasize, in addition to the applicant’s academic excellence, their professional accomplishments and leadership potential ([see evaluation criterion #1](#)) and a program of work designed to advance the organization’s health system impact goals.
2. **Question:** I am uncertain about my career goals. What career paths does this fellowship target?  
**Response:** The HSI Fellowship was designed to support multiple career goals, but goals that share the common objective of applied research, evidence-informed decision-making, and health system improvement. We anticipate that individuals with career goals as Embedded Scientist will find this program valuable; that individuals with goals of independent researcher/scientist but who want to conduct applied and policy/system-relevant research (and see this as an opportunity to establish relationships and partnerships outside the university, to apply their research and critical thinking skills in a health system setting, to develop transferrable skills, and keep time protected for academic research) will find the program valuable; and that individuals who aspire to management, leadership and administrative roles in health system and related organizations (and want “real world” experience) and who are committed to using research in these roles will find the program valuable.
3. **Question:** Where can I learn more about the CHSPRA Training Modernization Strategy?  
**Response:** [Click here](#)
4. **Question:** Who should I contact if I have questions about the funding opportunity?  
**Response:** For all inquiries about the funding opportunity, please contact:  
CIHR Contact Centre  
Telephone: 613-954-1968  
Toll Free: 1-888-603-4178  
Email: [support-soutien@cihr-irsc.gc.ca](mailto:support-soutien@cihr-irsc.gc.ca)

5. **Question:** My organization would like to host a fellow – who should I contact to get involved?  
**Response:** For all inquiries about how to get involved as a host partner organization, please contact:  
Erin Thompson  
CIHR-IHSPR Project Manager  
[ethompson.ihspr@ices.on.ca](mailto:ethompson.ihspr@ices.on.ca)
6. **Question:** How often is the online webpage with the host partner profile resource tool updated?  
**Response:** It is updated on an ongoing basis (as soon as new profiles are added).
7. **Question:** COVID-19 has impacted my research and studies. Can I explain this in my application?  
**Response:** Yes. Adaptations to the funding opportunity have been made to recognize the COVID-19 context. An additional one (1) page can be attached in the “Attach Other Application Materials” section of your application outlining how the applicants were affected, depending on their stage of career, personal situations and area of research.

## Eligibility and Application Questions

1. **Question:** Am I eligible to apply?  
**Response:** You are [eligible](#) if you are:
- A [trainee](#) who is enrolled full-time in a doctoral degree and studying HSPR (i.e. the field of scientific investigation that generates evidence on how to create systems, policies and organizational structures and invest in programs, services and technologies that maximize health and health care system outcomes) or related fields for their doctoral training at Canadian [CIHR eligible institution](#) by the application deadline and who is not a current or past employee of their proposed host partner organization (unless the candidate falls within the special case exception - see below for definition of current or past employee) and who has not previously held a HSI doctoral fellowship award; or
  - A [trainee](#) who has obtained their doctoral degree in HSPR (see above a.) or a related field (e.g. population health, public health, public policy, economics, political science, sociology, epidemiology) who has not previously held a HSI post-doctoral Fellowship award, and/or who is not a current or past employee of their proposed host partner organization (unless the candidate falls within the special case exception - see below for definition of current or past employee).
2. **Question:** My PhD is/was not in health services and policy research. Am I eligible?  
**Response:** If you believe you meet the objectives and the eligibility criteria of the HSI Fellowship opportunity, we encourage you to apply. Please note that the funding opportunity specifies “PhD in HSPR or related fields,” and we recognize there are many related fields. Illustrative but non-exhaustive examples are provided in the funding opportunity in the

Eligibility section (e.g., population and public health, economics, epidemiology, political science, artificial intelligence, etc.). **Additionally**, as outlined in the [How to Apply](#) section, all applicants are required to include a statement with their application **that explains how the PhD degree in HSPR or related fields meets the definition** given in the Eligibility section and the HSPR Studies Validation form. Applicants should articulate how their training (e.g., course work, thesis work, experiential learning opportunities, volunteer work that was enabled through their PhD degree, etc.) is relevant to the eligibility definition and prepares them to bring value to health system organizations through their experiential learning opportunity. All applications undergo an eligibility screen and relevance review process once submitted to CIHR to assess whether individuals and projects meet the eligibility as specified in the funding opportunity and are relevant to the objectives and relevant research areas. CIHR will only be in a position to confirm eligibility after the eligibility screen and relevance review has taken place.

- 3. Question:** For doctoral trainee applicants, are there any eligibility requirements regarding degree stage or is this fellowship open to doctoral trainees at any stage of their studies?  
**Response:** The fellowship is open to doctoral trainees at any stage of their degree. They must, though, be at a stage where they are able to commit at least 60% of their time to being embedded within their host partner organization and focused on the impact - oriented project/program of work. They must also have the support of their doctoral thesis supervisor, who must serve as the academic supervisor for the fellowship. Finally, they must be enrolled full-time in a doctoral degree at a Canadian CIHR eligible institution by the Health System Impact Fellowship application deadline and be able to provide proof of PhD registration and proof that they are studying HSPR or related fields.
- 4. Question:** I would like to apply for the post-doctoral stream but will not complete my PhD by the application deadline. I expect to defend my dissertation by the funding start date. Can I still apply?  
**Response:** Yes. The [Conditions for Funding](#) indicates that applicants to the post-doctoral stream must have completed their PhD requirements by the start date of the award (September 1). Proof of completion must be provided, which can include official confirmation via a letter from their Program Director or equivalent that the applicant has completed their PhD requirements (PhD graduation, PhD oral defense, or at minimum a confirmed oral defense date scheduled within two months of the award start date\*). \*Some universities will not officially register a post-doctoral fellow until the PhD defense has been successfully completed.
- 5. Question:** I am a current Health System Impact Doctoral Fellow. Am I eligible to reapply?  
**Response:** Current HSI Fellows **cannot** re-apply to the Fellowship during the same degree. Doctoral fellows can re-apply to the HSIF if transitioning from PhD to post-doctoral studies. Please refer to [eligibility](#) criteria of Funding Opportunity.
- 6. Question:** Will applications for the doctoral and post-doctoral stream be peer reviewed together?

**Response:** The same peer review criteria will be used for both streams; there will be a specific peer review committee to evaluate applications from each stream, and each stream has its own funding pool and dedicated budget (see the [Funds Available](#) section of the funding opportunity).

7. **Question:** Where can I learn more about the previous cohorts of Health System Impact Fellows, their host partner organizations, and their programs of work?

**Response:** Check out the web profiles for the [Health System Impact Fellows](#)

8. **Question:** If I do not have existing relationships with health system organizations, can CIHR help me find a host partner?

**Response:** Yes. We have developed a [Partner Linkage Tool](#) for applicants that features profiles of health system and related organizations from across the country that have expressed interest in hosting a Health System Impact Fellow (doctoral trainee, postdoctoral fellow, or either/both). These organizations are committed to the objectives of the funding opportunity, are enthusiastic about hosting fellows for experiential learning opportunities centered on high priority challenges and contributing to fellows' professional development, and have earmarked the required host partner funding contribution.

Applicants are invited to review the profile of these organizations and reach out directly to those of interest to discuss details and explore fit. Applicants are encouraged to review the list frequently as it will be routinely updated as more organizations express interest in the program.

9. **Question:** Does CIHR provide help to find an academic supervisor?

**Response:** No. It is the applicant's responsibility to find an academic supervisor. Note the [Eligibility criteria \(#3\)](#) which state that for applicants to the **doctoral stream**, the academic supervisor must be the trainee's primary PhD supervisor. Applicants are encouraged to consider the Eligibility criteria when considering academic supervisors, and the commitments that academic supervisors are required to make to the fellow, as outlined in the [How to Apply section](#) of the funding opportunity.

10. **Question:** Am I required to apply with a host partner organization featured in the [Partner Linkage Tool](#)? Will applicants working with organizations from the Partner Linkage Tool receive bonus points in peer review?

**Response:** No. The partner profile tool is an optional resource. Applicants can apply with an organization profiled in the tool or seek out their own host partner organization **that meets the funding opportunity's eligibility criteria**. One will not be favoured over another in terms of peer review. Regardless of whether the host partner organization is from the tool or not, the same peer review criteria will be used.

11. **Question:** How do I express my interest to potential host partner organizations?

**Response:** The [Partner Linkage Tool](#) includes instructions (and tips) to applicants regarding how to submit an expression of interest (EOI) to potential host partner organizations. The instructions specify that EOIs must be sent by email (see the contact details in the host

partner organization's profile) and must include, in addition to a general introduction and purpose statement, the applicant's CV (professional CV, not Common CV) and half page "Relevant Accomplishments and Abilities" component of the HSIF application as attachments. Organizations will use these documents for initial screening. Review the host partner profile resource tool page for detailed instructions.

**12. Question:** I have met with multiple organizations and want to confirm my interest in one. How do I do this?

**Response:** When a mutual fit is confirmed between a candidate and an organization, an email between the two will officially verify the partnership, the anticipated percentage of time embedded, the health system supervisor's commitment to supervision and mentorship, and the host partner organization's 30% funding commitment. At this stage, a partnership is considered established, and applicants and organizations are discouraged from continuing to explore other opportunities that could jeopardize their commitment to each other. The candidate and host partner organization will then develop the CIHR application.

**13. Question:** Do the host partner organizations have specific projects in mind, or is it up to the applicant to propose a project to the host in line with their profile?

**Response:** It varies. In some cases, the organization has a project or projects in mind while in other cases the organization has signaled high-level priorities and welcomes ideas from candidates about what to focus in on and how to do so. Applicants are encouraged to explore this with the organizations of interest to them. Applicants are also encouraged to keep the [peer review criteria \(See FO for further information\)](#) and the additional notes to applicants and peer reviewers (in the "[Additional Information](#)" section) and in particular the focus on the extent to which the project/program of work proposal addresses a critical challenge/impact goal faced by the host partner organization and the impact potential within the organization (#3a) and the extent to which hosting the fellow will add value to the organization (#4b).

**14. Question:** Above and beyond the details of the experiential learning opportunity and embedded project, are there other things I should discuss with my proposed host partner organization that will help pave the way for a high-quality fellowship experience?

**Response:** Yes. Here are a few recommendations:

- Professional development that accelerates career readiness and ability to make an impact is a key aspect of the HSI Fellowship program, and the "Quality of the host partner organization's and academic institution's training, supervision and mentorship" is one of [four core peer review criteria](#) upon which your application will be assessed. We encourage you to meet jointly with your proposed health system and academic supervisors to discuss professional development and mentorship opportunities.

With embedded, partnered research, it is good practice to discuss intellectual property, conflict resolution, confidentiality of information, publication policies, and acknowledgements and authorship up front. CIHR's intellectual property policy is that intellectual property is governed by the institutional policies.



- For post-doctoral applicants, we encourage you to discuss potential academic supervisors with expertise that is complementary to the focus of the embedded project, and that you discuss strategies for co-mentorship (e.g., regular meetings that involve the fellow, health system supervisor and academic supervisor).
- CIHR recommends that if the host partner organization is **not** a CIHR Eligible Institution (i.e., eligible to receive and administer the CIHR funds), that it set up an agreement with the fellow's academic institution and transfer its 30% to the university to administer (along with the CIHR 70% portion of the funds). A preliminary discussion to ensure the organization has a mechanism to transfer the funds, if the fellowship is funded, is recommended.

**15. Question:** What qualifies as an eligible host partner organization?

**Response:** The [Eligibility section](#) of the funding opportunity defines “health system or related host partner organization” as follows: A health system or related host partner organization may be a public, private for-profit, not-for-profit or Indigenous health organization at the local, regional, provincial/territorial, or federal/national level (e.g., national health or health-related organization, Indigenous health organization [community-based or other], ministry of health, hospital, health authority, quality council, public health organization, health charity, consulting firm undertaking health or health-related work, pharmaceutical company, health-related professional association or university-affiliated hospitals\*). A health system or related host partner organization is defined as an organization that contributes to: direct service delivery; mandated quality monitoring; the development of policy or programs that affects the health of individuals, populations and/or the health system; the development, provision or evaluation of technologies/products/services; or consulting services aimed at improving health outcomes and/or health system effectiveness and efficiency. This year, with the addition of a pilot international stream, eligible international health system host partner organizations are those featured in the Partner Linkage Tool. While universities and university-based research institutes may be integrated into the function of health system partner organizations, they are not eligible host partner organizations in this funding opportunity. Similarly, CIHR-funded entities (e.g., networks, teams) are not eligible host partner organizations. Please refer to [host partner resource page f](#) for a list of organizations that have expressed interest in hosting trainees. The list is not exhaustive; applicants may also approach organizations that are not on the list.

**\*NOTE:** Universities and university-based research institutes are not eligible to participate as the host partner organization.

**16. Question:** Can I partner with more than one host partner organization, if one is considered the main host partner (e.g. primary supervisor, provides the funds, hosts the fellow), and the other provides expertise?

**Response:** There is nothing in the funding opportunity that precludes this. However, applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the [peer review criteria](#) upon which the application will be evaluated, including impact, feasibility, value-add to the host partner organization, and more. Peer review will be conducted in accordance with the CIHR Reviewers' Guide for Health System Impact Fellowship. An extract from this guide

demonstrating how each criterion will be assessed is included in the [“Additional Information”](#) section. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to review it.**

**17. Question:** Are federally-funded organizations like Health Canada and others eligible to participate as host employer partner organizations?

**Response:** Yes. In fact, the Public Health Agency of Canada is included in the [Partner Linkage Tool](#). However, CIHR-funded organizations (e.g., SPOR SUPPORT Units) are not eligible.

**18. Question:** Can an applicant submit multiple proposals with different host partner organizations?

**Response:** No. An applicant is permitted to submit only one application to CIHR. However, an applicant is permitted to explore opportunities with multiple potential host partner organizations before deciding which one to partner with (i.e., expressions of interest to multiple organizations is permitted in the partnership-development phase), but must ultimately partner with one organization and submit only one CIHR application.

**19. Question:** Can an organization put forward more than one applicant?

**Response:** Yes, as long as it has the capacity (e.g., supervision and mentorship, as well as office space) and resources (i.e., the 30% host partner funding contribution is required for each applicant) to support multiple fellows. When an organization commits to a fellow (by way of the letter of support), it is committing to providing the experiential learning opportunity, the mentorship and supervision, and 30% funding to the fellow if they are successful in peer review.

**20. Question:** Can I work remotely from my host partner organization?

**Response:** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program required that the majority of time be spent physically embedded within the host partner organization. Now, amidst the pandemic and public health guidelines, remote embeddedness and experiential learning is permitted. Applicants and their supervisors are required to demonstrate in the “Training Environment and Support” section of their application how high-quality training, mentorship and professional development will be provided in a remote context.

**21. Question:** I live in a different province than my proposed host partner organization. Can I use my stipend to support relocation expenses?

**Response:** Yes. Relocation expenses are an eligible use of award funds.

**22. Question:** What if my proposed host partner organization and academic supervisor are in different provinces?

**Response:** This is allowed. You will be based in the province of the host partner organization and can make appropriate arrangements for academic training with your academic supervisor (e.g., short-term intensive in-person training, remote training, a combination of both, etc.). The appropriateness and feasibility of these arrangements, whether in-person or remote, must be specified in the application and will be assessed in peer review ([see evaluation criterion #2](#)). A remote relationship with your academic supervisor is likely more feasible for post-doctoral fellows, who are not in the midst of doctoral course or thesis work.

- 23. Question:** If the supervisor from the host partner organization also has a university appointment, can they also serve as the academic supervisor?  
**Response:** No. As outlined in the [Eligibility criteria](#) of the funding opportunity, the application must include a Primary Supervisor from the host partner organization that is a decision maker *and* a supervisor with an academic appointment with a university-based HSPR (or related) graduate training program in Canada “and who is a different individual than the decision maker supervisor.” Note: as per the Eligibility guidelines, for doctoral trainee applicants, the academic supervisor must be the trainee’s primary PhD supervisor. For post-doctoral applicants, it is possible that the host partner organization will have suggestions for possible academic supervisors with complementary expertise, skills and networks, but it is ultimately the applicant’s decision about who to pursue as an academic supervisor.
- 24. Question:** Is the supervisor from the host partner organization expected to have a PhD?  
**Response:** No. The supervisor from the host partner organization is required to be a “decision maker” that is committed to providing the fellow with professional development, mentorship and support. It is her/his professional experience, skills, advice and networks that the decision maker is sharing with the fellow, in addition to a commitment to provide professional development in alignment with CHSPRA’s enriched core competencies. Please review the [“Additional Information”](#) section of the funding opportunity, which includes further detail on the evaluation criteria for both applicants and reviewers.
- 25. Question:** Should the postdoctoral fellow have completed their doctorate degree with the same academic supervisor as the proposed academic supervisor for the HSI Fellowship?  
**Response:** No, this is not required. Applicants should ensure the proposed academic supervisor meets the eligibility criteria outlined in the funding opportunity, and are encouraged to consider seeking out an academic supervisor whose expertise complements the scope of work that will be pursued with the host partner organization.
- 26. Question:** Is there an eligibility window to have obtained a doctoral degree no more than five years prior to the competition deadline?  
**Response:** This eligibility requirement has been removed. Candidates who have obtained their doctorate degree prior to the competition deadline are now eligible to apply. This approach reduces eligibility barriers for some disciplines and fosters the mobility of talent across sectors, so as to enhance the diversity and excellence of Canada's cadre of trainees.
- 27. Question:** Can the academic supervisor be located at the host institution as well (assuming they have an academic affiliation that allows them to supervise trainees)?  
**Response:** Yes.
- 28. Question:** Eligibility states that I must be a trainee affiliated with a CIHR eligible institution. What does this mean?  
**Response:** This means you must currently hold or seek affiliation as a trainee (i.e., as a doctoral trainee or post-doctoral fellow) with the university at which your proposed

academic supervisor is based. It also means, in most cases, that the CIHR portion of your fellowship funds will flow through the university to you. A list of CIHR eligible institutions is available [here](#).

**29. Question:** I'm an organization interested in becoming eligible to hold and administer CIHR funds. How do I do this?

**Response:** We are supportive of this and see this as an essential step to building embedded research capacity and learning health systems. The eligibility and application process is outlined on CIHR's website, available [here](#).

**30. Question:** What is the difference between a one-year and two-year fellowship?

**Response:** **One-year** fellowships are for doctoral trainees and are generally suited to well-defined, discrete, projects with clear deliverables (e.g. an economic evaluation of a new drug or treatment; a retrospective or prospective policy analysis of a program or intervention). **Two-year fellowships** are for post-doctoral fellows and are generally suited to programs of work that involve multiple projects addressing one or more priority areas that are conceptually linked (e.g. designing, testing and evaluating a new financing or service delivery model).

**31. Question:** Are cross-jurisdictional projects allowed?

**Response:** Yes. However, the focus and details of the project or program of work will be determined by the host partner organization or jointly determined by the applicant and host partner organization. Additionally, note that all program/project proposals will be assessed with the peer review criteria outlined in the funding opportunity, including the "extent to which the program of work proposal addresses a critical challenge/impact goal faced by the host partner organization."

**32. Question:** Are organizations focused on global health eligible?

**Response:** Yes, as long as they meet the definition outlined in the Eligibility section. ([see eligibility criteria](#)).

**33. Question:** If I believe my fellowship is relevant to one of the partner Institutes (e.g., CIHR-IPPH), should I specify this in my application?

**Response:** This is encouraged. As outlined in the Review Process section of the funding opportunity, "CIHR and partners will perform relevance review to identify applications that are in alignment with the [objectives](#) and [research areas](#) of this funding opportunity." Thus, all Institute partners and external funding partners will conduct relevance review on all of the applications. Clarity of relevance in the applications improves the relevance review process.

**34. Question:** I anticipate completing my PhD by the start date of the fellowship (September 1) but what if there are delays and I have not defended in time? Can I defer?

**Response:** No, deferrals due to delayed PhD completion times are not permitted for this program. However, if the applicant has successfully defended their thesis by September 1st

or has a confirmed defense date scheduled for within two months of the September 1st fellowship start date, they may contact CIHR to discuss.

**35. Question:** How do I decide the % of my time to spend within the host partner organization? The funding opportunity specifies 60-100%, depending on whether I'm a doctoral or postdoctoral applicant. If I opt for 70%, what do I do with the remainder of my time?

**Response:** In some cases, the host partner organization will specify the required percentage of time based on the anticipated scope of work. In other cases, you and your host partner organization will jointly determine the appropriate percentage of time based on the anticipated scope of work and your shared goals with respect to academic training and collaborations. Flexibility in the time commitment is intended to enable fellows to make meaningful contributions to the host partner organization's program of work, become immersed in the culture and operations of the organization, and benefit from mentorship by executive leaders, while also making it possible to protect a portion of time for doctoral program commitments (e.g., course or thesis work) or post-doctoral academic research with the academic supervisor.

As outlined in the [Conditions of Funding](#) section of the funding opportunity:

- For doctoral trainee applicants, "the remaining percentage of time (if any) must be spent on their doctoral program commitments (e.g., course work, comprehensive exam, dissertation) with their academic supervisor."
- For post-doctoral applicants, "the remaining percentage of time (if any) must be spent on academic research and related activities (e.g., publishing thesis manuscripts, teaching at the university, advancing an existing program of research and/or developing a new one) under the supervision of their academic supervisor."

**36. Question:** How is 60% defined? 70%? Does this time need to be allocated equally across the year, for example 3.5 days per week every week?

**Response:** 60% is defined as on average, 3 days per week (based on a 37.5 hour work week). 70% is defined as, on average, 26 hours per week (based on a 37.5 hour work week). The 60-100% time does not need to be allotted equally on a weekly basis for the fellowship duration. A few illustrative examples include:

- Spending 100% of the time embedded within the host partner organization over the summer (or other) term, and reducing the time commitment accordingly in subsequent months to focus on doctoral program commitments.
- Spending 100% of the time embedded within the host partner organization for 31 of 52 weeks (60% of 52 weeks), and spending the balance of time focused 100% on doctoral program commitments.
- Spending 100% of the time embedded within the host partner organization for 12 months.

Regardless of the approach chosen, the fellow and their health system and academic supervisors must agree and outline this in the application.

**37. Question:** Can I defer the start date of my fellowship from the start date (September 1) to January of the following year?

**Response:** No, deferrals are not permitted. However, given there is flexibility in how the fellow's time is allocated, one scenario, as long as the fellow and their health system and academic supervisors are supportive, could be that the fellow starts the fellowship from the start date (September 1) but spends 100% of the first quarter on doctoral research, and 100% of the second through fourth quarters embedded at the host partner organization on the impact-oriented project.

**38. Question:** If I applied to the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship, Canada Graduate Scholarship - Doctoral, CIHR Fellowship or the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship, am I allowed to apply for the Health System Impact Fellowship?

**Response:** Yes. A candidate may apply for the HSI Fellowship and other federal awards (e.g., CGS Doctoral Award, Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship, Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship) in the same year. If the candidate is successful in the HSI Fellowship competition and other award competitions, a request for a deferred start date for the other federal funding must be granted before funding for the HSI Fellowship will be administered. Note: because the HSI Fellowship program is funded with strategic funds, deferrals for the HSI Fellowship (e.g., to commence other federal awards) will not be permitted. As per the [Tri-agency Research Training Award Holder's Guide](#), the maximum Deferment / Interruption is 12 months, which has implications for postdoctoral applicants that are offered or hold another federal multi-year post-doctoral award at the time of HSI Fellowship application or notice of decision (e.g., applicants that are awarded both a HSI Fellowship and a CIHR Fellowship or Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship in the same year will not be permitted to accept both).

**39. Question:** I already hold a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship, Canada Graduate Scholarship - Doctoral, CIHR Fellowship or Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship, but I am interested in enriching my training with experiential learning embedded within a health system organization. Am I able to apply for the Health System Impact Fellowship as well?

**Response:** Yes. If you are successful in the HSI Fellowship, you can hold both awards simultaneously. However, a candidate cannot receive funding from these other federal awards at the same time. A request for [Interruption of Award](#) from other federal funding sources must be granted before funding for the HSI Fellowship will be administered. The maximum Interruption is 12 months, which has implications for post-doctoral applicants that hold a federal post-doctoral award at the time of HSI Fellowship application. Note: An Interruption from the HSI Fellowship is not permitted for the purposes of taking up another federal award.

**40. Question:** The HSI Fellowship funding opportunity specifies that eligible applicants must not be current or former employees of the host partner organization, unless I fall within the special exception case. What does this mean? And, what if I am currently (or formerly) a post-doctoral fellow with the organization? What if I am doing (or did) a research internship with the organization? What if I am on contract with the organization?

**Response:** It varies.

- Current/former doctoral trainees and post-doctoral fellows are eligible to apply and must, in their CIHR application, specify the value -add that the HSI Fellowship will bring to their current training with the same organization.

- Current/former research interns are eligible to apply if their internship was 12 months or less in duration and must, in their CIHR application, specify the value - add that the HSI Fellowship will bring to their current training with the same organization.
- Current/former employees and individuals on paid contract with the organization are ineligible to apply. Individuals on paid contract are viewed as contract employees of the organization. The HSI Fellowship is not intended to serve as a vehicle to extend paid contract work. **However, the exception to this is in the case of large organizations (defined as 500 or more employees), with multiple branches/departments/divisions, and where the fellow would be embedded in a different branch/department/division than their current one and be supervised and mentored by a different Vice President (or equivalent) than that to which they currently report for their employment.**

Applications in this scenario are strongly encouraged to pay close attention to [peer review criterion #4](#): Potential value-add to the applicant and the host partner organization.

**41. Question:** My host partner organization and I are keen to get started on the work. Can I accept a short-term contract with my host partner organization while I await the fellowship notice of decision?

**Response:** Yes. An applicant is permitted to accept short-term employment with their host partner organization that commences after the fellowship application deadline, while they await the notice of decision.

**42. Question:** Can I hold the HSI Fellowship and a private, local, or provincial fellowship?

**Response:** Federal guidelines stipulate that individuals can hold only one federal (e.g., CIHR, SSHRC, NSERC) award at the same time. Thus, if you hold another federal award you will need to terminate it prior to commencing the HSI Fellowship. For other fellowships you will need to check with the rules of that organization.

**43. Question:** What is the added benefit of consenting to flow the host partner organization's funds through Mitacs?

**Response:** The CIHR and Mitacs partnership has increased the availability of funds for this program such that a higher number of fellowships can be funded and more host partner organizations can be involved. Additionally, Mitacs-funded post-doctoral fellows are eligible to participate in the [Mitacs Elevate professional development training program](#). Mitacs' eligibility criteria for its funding requires that the host partner organization's 30% contribution flow through Mitacs to the fellow. Mitacs invoices the host partner organization for the 30% and adds HST. As per the [Additional Information section](#) of the funding opportunity, Primary Supervisors from the host partner organizations must indicate in their letter of support whether they provide consent to flow their funds through Mitacs. Mitacs must receive the partner organization's contribution BEFORE it flows any funds to the academic institution. **Note:** if consent is not provided, the applicant's proposal remains in the competition but is not eligible for Mitacs co-funding.

**44. Question:** What evaluation criteria will be used to assess my application?

**Response:** Please refer to the [Review Process and Evaluation](#) section of the funding opportunity. We also **strongly encourage** you to review the [additional detail on evaluation criteria for applicants and reviewers section](#), in Additional Information, which is an extract from the peer review guide that the HSIF peer reviewers will use.

**45. Question:** Does the project/program of work need to be related to the student's PhD dissertation work?

**Response:** It would be very helpful for the project/program of work and thesis work to align, but this is not a requirement.

**46. Question:** I am a physician (MD) and I completed an MSc in Health Systems. Am I eligible to apply?

**Response:** As per the eligibility criteria of this funding opportunity, applicants must be trainee enrolled full-time in a doctoral degree (PhD) or has obtained their doctoral degree (PhD) (e.g. MD PhD is eligible, MSc MD is not).

**47. Question:** For the doctoral award, does the candidacy exam need have already been completed prior to applying?

**Response:** As long as you have been accepted to a full-time program, you can apply (i.e., you do not need to have completed candidacy exams prior to applying). However, you require approval from your thesis supervisor as she/he must serve as the academic supervisor for your HSI Fellowship, too.

**48. Question:** Could one of the host partner organizations be an organization located outside of Canada?

**Response:** Yes. This year, with the addition of a pilot international stream, international health system host partner organizations that are featured in the Partner Linkage Tool are also eligible to participate as a host partner organization..

## **Award Administration Questions**

**1. Question:** How and to whom do CIHR and the host partner organization flow their funds?

**Response:** CIHR flows its funds to a CIHR eligible institution. A list of CIHR eligible institutions is [available online](#). In most cases, this will be the applicant's academic institution. In some cases, though, it could be the host partner organization if it is a CIHR eligible institution (e.g., Fraser Health Authority, Vancouver Island Health Authority, North York General Hospital). If the fellow's university and host partner organization are both eligible to hold CIHR funds, the fellow can choose where funds should flow in the application (in the ResearchNet task "Enter Proposal Information," "Institution paid" – see [How to Apply section](#) for further details).

CIHR stipend funds flow on a pro-rated monthly basis, and the professional development training allowance funds flow in full lump sum payment at the start of each funding year. Host partner organizations that are not CIHR eligible institutions are strongly encouraged to establish an



agreement with the fellow's academic institution and flow funds there. This ensures a streamlined payment system for the HSI Fellow (one rather than multiple payers), and also maintains the fellow's status as a doctoral trainee or post-doctoral fellow of the institution, not an employee of the host partner organization. Based on experience with the inaugural round of the HSI Fellowship program, establishing this agreement, if it is a first-time relationship, can take time and we encourage host partner organizations and academic institutions to start the process as soon as the fellow receives the CIHR Notice of Decision (i.e., start the process in the summer). We also encourage that, during the application phase, the host partner organization confirm internally that it has a mechanism to transfer funds to the university.

- 2. Question:** At some universities, postdoctoral fellows are paid salary and benefits, rather than stipend. Is the \$70K inclusive of benefits or would the host partner organization or academic institution need to provide benefits over and above the \$70K?

**Response:** Institutional policies related to the status of fellows and fellowship payments may differ according to specific legislation and/or institutional policies. The \$70K stipend must be paid in accordance with the institution's policies. Benefits cannot be deducted from the \$70K stipend. The stipend is a cost of living allowance provided to the individual to support their training endeavors. The stipend is not provided in the context of income compensation for the individual's services, as the individual is not an employee of the Agency. Benefits are not provided by CIHR.

**Fellows are encouraged to discuss benefits options with their supervisors prior to commencing the fellowship, and how they will be paid if benefits are required (in many cases, fellows can purchase private plans through the university, though this varies by university).**

- 3. Question:** Will I need to apply for ethics approval for my proposed project/program of work?  
**Response:** Very likely yes, especially if you intend to publish the findings. We encourage you to discuss this with your health system and academic mentors early on, during the application phase.

- 4. Question:** What constitutes an eligible expense under the research allowance?

**Response:** The Research Allowance portion of this award is primarily intended for, but not limited to, the following expenses: 1) Expenses related to travel and accommodation required for the national cohort meeting (if held in person, pending evolution of the COVID-19 context); and 2) Fees associated with professional competency development or equivalent training that aligns with the [enriched core competencies](#). Applicants should review the [Use of Grant Funds](#) section of the Tri-Agency (CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC) Guide on Financial Administration for a complete listing and description of allowable costs and activities.

- 5. Question:** Will my professional development training and research allowance be put on hold until research ethics approval is obtained?

**Response:** The Research Allowance portion of this award is primarily intended for, but not limited to, the following expenses: 1) Expenses related to travel and accommodation required for the national cohort meeting (if held in person, pending evolution of the COVID-19 context); and 2) Fees associated with professional competency development or equivalent training that aligns with the [enriched core competencies](#).

The responsibility for ensuring proper management of funds provided by the Tri-Agency falls solely to the administering institution. Fellows are encouraged to meet early on with their Office of Research Services to learn about the policies and procedures for accessing the training allowance.

**6. Question:** Do I need to do anything if I am planning to decline the award?

**Response:** Yes. As we will potentially be offering your award to the next applicant on the ranking list, we need to know that you are declining the award as soon as possible and certainly no later than 15 business days after the offer has been posted to your ResearchNet account. Please send CIHR a signed copy of the Response to an Offer of Award form stating that you are declining the award and letting us know why. As this is a partnered program and you have made commitments to a host partner organization about a high-priority and impact-oriented program of work, you must also notify your proposed health system and academic supervisors.

Please note that if recipients decline or terminate their open CIHR award funding for whatever reason they will not be eligible to receive, or continue receiving (for prizes with multi-year commitments), any CIHR prize funds.

**7. Question:** In the funding opportunity, it mentions the maximum dollar contribution per award. Can you confirm that host partners could offer more than 30%, and if the applicant would receive this additional amount?

**Response:** Yes. As long as the 30% host partner contribution is confirmed at time of application, offering more than this is permitted.

**8. Question:** How are the regions and awards allocated and determined for Canada? Is it by the location of the trainee, academic supervisor or the host partner organization?

**Response:** The location of the host employer partner organization defines the applicant's regional funding pool. Please refer to the funding opportunity for more information. The host partner organization locations are used to determine funding pool divisions.

**9. Question:** At some universities, doctoral trainees receive a funding package that includes tuition coverage. If I accept the HSI Fellowship, will my university funding package be affected? Will I still need to pay tuition given I will be at my host partner organization for at least 60% of my time?

**Response:** University policies with respect to funding packages vary, as do university policies regarding what happens to funding packages when external awards are received. We strongly encourage doctoral applicants to meet with their department chair (or equivalent) to discuss the HSI Fellowship and departmental funding package.