

Research Challenge 2026 Competition Guidelines

The Research Challenge supports health care professionals, staff and clinicians who are new to research to learn about conducting a clinical practice project to improve patient care across Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH).

Purpose

The Research Challenge supports applied health, community based, and/or patient-oriented research that improves clinical practice within VCH. VCH health care providers partner with experienced researchers who will mentor them through the entire research process, from proposal to project completion.

Funding Partners

Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute (VCHRI) partners with VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation, Richmond Hospital Foundation (RHF), Lions Gate Hospital Foundation (LGHF), and Organ Donation and Transplant Research Foundation (ODTRF) of BC.

- ODTRF is partnering with VCHRI to fund one highly ranked award related to patient identified research priorities in solid organ transplantation.

Deadlines

Registration is mandatory for this competition.

- Registration deadline: Monday November 10, 2025 by 4:00pm (PT)
- Grant Development 1-on-1 session (20 minutes, recommended): December 8th- December 12th, 2025
- Patient-Oriented Research Workshop (recommended): Date - TBD
- Application submission deadline: Monday February 23, 2026 by 4:00pm (PT)

Complete applications must be received via online submission link by the times specified or they will not be accepted. Notification of results will be available in late spring 2026.

Research Team Eligibility Criteria

Please contact the VCHRI Internal Awards team if you are unsure if you meet the eligibility requirements.

Principal Investigator (PI): You are eligible to be the PI on an application if you meet all of the following criteria. The PI:

- must be a regular part-time or full-time (>0.5 FTE) VCH clinician and/or health care professional (e.g. physician, nurse, OT, PT, dietician, SLP, counsellor, mental health worker, etc.) in a permanent position for at least one year.
 - Medical residents, clinical/academic research fellows, academic researchers are **not** eligible for this competition. Casual, contract or consulting staff are **not** eligible for this competition.
- conducts the majority of their clinical work at a VCH site. This does **not** include BCCA, BCCDC, PHC or PHSA sites or medical offices not on a VCH site.
- has **not** held (or currently holds) external peer-reviewed research funding as the PI or co-PI. Funding from VCH, UBC, other health authorities, educational institutions or affiliated research institutes/centres are **not** considered external research funding.
- does **not** hold any of the following university appointments at any academic institution: assistant professor, associate professor, professor, clinical associate professor or clinical professor.
 - Clinical assistant professor, clinical instructor, and other appointments are acceptable.

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- has identified an experienced researcher who agrees to be your Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) and actively mentors you throughout the course of the project from proposal development and application submission to implementation and completion of the project.
- does **not** have an outstanding final report from past VCHRI internal award competitions.
- is **not** the PI on a currently funded Research Challenge project.

Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI): The Co-PI must be an experienced researcher who is actively conducting their own research. The Co-PI is not only part of the investigator team, they also agree to contribute as a mentor to the PI during the duration of the project, from registration and application to project completion. The Co-PI:

- must have appropriate research experience and an independent program of research. It is recommended the Co-PI have active research funding within the last 2 years, and a track record of holding external peer-reviewed funding. This research experience will be evaluated by the review committee based on the information contained in the Biographical Sketch and Research Module.
- can only be a Co-PI on one application per competition cycle.
- can be from any organization. The expectation is that the PI and Co-PI will work together to design and implement the project.

Co-Investigators: individuals contributing to a grant application and carrying out the research project. It is expected that individuals listed will contribute to the intellectual direction of the research or research-related activity, play a role in the conduct of the research or research-related activity, or have some responsibility for aspects of the research. The maximum number of Co-Investigators is six for a project. All co-investigators are required to submit a biosketch.

Collaborators: individuals contributing to carrying out the research project. These individuals may contribute to the grant application, inform the intellectual direction of the research or research-related activity, play a role in the conduct of the research or research-related activity, or have some responsibility for aspects of the research. There is no maximum number of collaborators for a project. Collaborators are *not* required to submit a biosketch.

Research Project Eligibility Criteria

- Projects must address important practice-based research questions and/or patient-oriented research, so the results will be directly applicable to the provision of care/service at VCH.
- The intent of this competition is to support new projects, and not to provide additional funding for existing and/or larger projects. For that reason, all successful projects must have a separate REB approval. **Adding the project as an amendment to another existing REB approval is not acceptable.**
- Multi-organizational projects, where VCH is one 'site' on the project are not eligible.

Designated Awards

One award will be designated for a project related to patient identified research priorities in solid organ transplantation. **Note:** to be eligible for the designated ODTRF grant, the practice-based research questions must 1) adopt a patient-oriented research lens with meaningful engagement, 2) be formulated with a clear focus on the [patient identified research priorities](#) as defined by the [Canadian National Transplant Research Program](#), (see appendix), and 3) applicants must complete the patient engagement module.

One award will be designated for a project related to Indigenous Health. **Note:** to be eligible for the designated award, applicants must complete the Indigenous Health Research section of the research module and consult the [Indigenous Health Research Unit](#).

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Funding and Eligible Expenses

- Proposals will be considered for a maximum of \$10,000 for operating expenses, plus a top up of \$1,000 for patient-family partner honorariums (if applicable). Projects must be able to be completed within 18 months of receiving the funds. Unused funds are to be returned to VCHRI. Awards are non-renewable.
- Projects must be completed within the \$10,000 maximum budget as matching/partner funding is not allowed; however, the maximum budget amount does not include in-kind contributions (e.g. staff support, use of space and other resources etc.).
- Teams can request an additional \$1,000 to cover patient-family partner honorariums. These funds will be held in a separate cost centre managed by VCHRI.
- This project must not be started yet as funding is to support new projects.
- Please refer to the application instructions for detailed description of eligible expenses.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary selection committee, including patients. Applicants should therefore explain the proposed research clearly and define discipline specific terms used. Assume that the topic of your project is completely new to the person reviewing your grant.

Applications will be assessed based on:

- strength of the PI/Co-PI's research and healthcare practice experience to guide the project; the appropriateness of each team member and their roles; key collaborations outlined, and letters of support included (if applicable); the team's capacity to do the proposed work.
- rigour of the research proposal; importance and applicability of the project to the provision of healthcare/service at VCH; feasibility of the project within the timeframe/budget. This includes consideration to equity, diversity and inclusion, and involvement of or impact on Indigenous Peoples, communities, lands or partnerships within the research.

Approvals

Notification of awards will occur in spring 2026. Funding will be made available as of September 1, 2026. After September 1, 2026, funds will be released to the successful applicants as soon as the required ethics and VCH approvals have been obtained. It is strongly encouraged applicants request ethics approval as soon as they receive notice of funding, since projects must be initiated before December 31, 2026. **Funding will not be available after this date.**

Outcomes and Reporting

Annual and project end financial reporting is required. As well, a final project report is required at the end of the grant. VCHRI and its funding partners use the project reports to publicize research activities and to evaluate the impact of the program.

Contact Information

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Appendix

Table 1: Patient identified priorities for ODTRF grant.

Post-transplant care research priorities	Research priorities in organ donation
1. How to improve graft survival.	1. How to educate the public and raise awareness about donation.
2. How to achieve personalized use of anti-rejection drugs; better immune monitoring and decreased use.	2. How to improve donor management and graft quality.
3. How to reduce adverse effects and long-term medical complications of anti-rejection drugs.	3. How to foster a culture of donation in hospitals and in society at large; appropriate funding for programs (coordination, social, work, etc.).
4. How to improve psychological support and the management of complications such as anxiety.	4. How to support living donors and families; understand long term impact and psychological care.
5. How to improve quality of life.	5. How to increase the number of donors (deceased and living).

F. Ballesteros, J. Allard, L. Wright, S. Anthony, D. Hartell, V. Dumez, M. Josée Hébert, L. West, G. Knoll, & M. Chantal Fortin, *Patient priorities in research and perspective on patient engagement: The results of a national workshop*, Transplantation Direct, 2018;4: e360.

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