



Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation  
Fondation ontarienne de neurotraumatologie

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
**Issued: August 1, 2017**

**“Addressing Evidence Gaps in Moderate to Severe  
Traumatic Brain Injury Rehabilitation”**

The deadline for receipt of submissions is  
**7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 23, 2017.**

*Pre-requirement: Notification to ONF of intention to apply is due September 15, 2017*

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**Contents**

Invitation.....	1
Length and Amount of Funding .....	1
Purpose .....	2
Eligible Projects.....	2
Process and Timelines.....	3
Proposal Submission Requirements and Instructions .....	4
Budget Expenditures.....	6
Adjudication of Proposals .....	7
ONF Contact Person.....	9
Information for Public Purposes .....	9
Appendix 1 .....	10

**Invitation**

The Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation (ONF) invites research teams to submit proposals for **“Addressing Research Gaps in Moderate to Severe Traumatic Brain Injury Rehabilitation”**.

**Length and Amount of Funding**

Funding of up to \$200,000 may be requested for each project, over a period of two (2) years.

## Purpose

The purpose of this funding initiative is to fund four or five research projects that address priority gaps in current evidence for the Rehabilitation of Adults with Moderate to Severe Traumatic Brain Injury. The research questions should address important areas where the **INESSS-ONF Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG)** team found only consensus level evidence (Grade C) to support key recommendations (<https://braininjuryguidelines.org>)

The INESSS-ONF CPG, released in October 2016 involved a methodologically rigorous guideline development process that incorporates the best evidence available. The content of these guidelines are based on the scientific knowledge available at the time of their finalization (2016) as well as on the opinion of the experts who participated in the development of the guidelines.

ONF has decided to issue a Call for Proposals addressing some of the key areas where the existing evidence is insufficient and where clinical expertise and consensus was needed to support a much needed recommendation. Due to the volume of recommendations and themes that fit these broad criteria, a five-factor model was used to distinguish priority themes for this call for proposals. More details about how the priority areas were identified are provided in Appendix 1.

Successful applications to this RFP process will address assessment and/or interventions in the identified areas, and yield tangible research evidence that can strengthen recommendations for subsequent editions of the INESSS-ONF CPG.

## Eligible Projects

- The research project must be strongly based in Ontario, though collaboration with centres outside of Ontario is permitted.
- This funding initiative is not intended to augment or supplement existing research projects.
- Research on moderate to severe TBI in adults.
- Eligible research projects will address one or more of the areas listed below. These areas were identified through a five-factor model of priority that considers: interests of people living with Brain injury and their family caregivers, highest priority topics for the CPG by target users, range and strength of evidence, the expertise existing in Ontario, and feasibility for completion within a 2-year research time frame. (Appendix 1)

### Highest priority:

- Cognitive function (attention and memory, and ability to learn and apply knowledge)
- Strategies to address or mitigate behaviour disorders at any phase of rehabilitative care
- Mental health complications of traumatic brain injury
- Psychological strategies to improve mood, depression and irritability
- Strategies to enhance social participation and community life (personal relationships)

Other priorities:

- Continuity of care and coordination mechanisms
- Communication strategies
- Fatigue and sleep disturbances
- Skill maintenance and quality of life

**Proposals are required to:**

1. Address the evaluation of specific assessment tools or interventions to target the particular area of TBI.
2. Include outcome measurements.
3. Articulate how they may yield research evidence that can strengthen recommendations or themes in the next edition of the INESSS-ONF CPG.

**Not Eligible:**

- Research involving individuals with mild TBI or Concussion
- Research involving children under age 18 (Pediatric research)
- Areas of research that are already supported by Level A Evidence
- Systematic reviews
- Proposals addressing fundamental knowledge, descriptive and epidemiological research
- Medication trials
- Themes not among those listed above
- Research projects that are based outside of Ontario, or where the majority of the project team is not in Ontario.

**Process and Timelines**

Notification to <b>ONF Contact Person</b> of intention to apply	September 15, 2017
<b>Submission of Full Proposals</b>	<b>7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 23, 2017</b>
Notification of funding status	December 11, 2017
Start of Project	January 2018

*Sponsoring Organization and Principal Investigator*

An organization is eligible to be named as the Sponsoring Organization, provided that the organization possesses charitable registration or tax exempt status, has a secure financial infrastructure to administer the funds, and has the capacity and infrastructure to conduct research.

If a proposal is awarded funding, an Officer of the Sponsoring Organization will sign the ONF funding agreement.

The Principal Investigator must be employed by or affiliated with the Sponsoring Organization and hold research privileges at the Sponsoring Organization.

## **Proposal Submission Requirements and Instructions**

### **Submission Instructions**

Proposals in full are to be submitted to [info@onf.org](mailto:info@onf.org) by 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 23, 2017.

Late or incomplete submissions, supplementary materials or misdirected submissions will not be accepted. No part of any submission will be accepted by any other means, unless requested by ONF.

### **Proposal Requirements**

- One pdf document must contain A and B
- One pdf document must contain all Appendices

#### **A. Cover pages:** (1-2 pages)

- name and contact information for the Principal Investigator
- name of the Sponsoring Organization
- research project title, amount requested and length of the project.
- list co-investigators, their affiliations, and role and responsibility on the project

#### **B. Main proposal** (15 pages maximum, 11 or 12 point font, single line spacing with one-line breaks between paragraphs).

Organize the proposal according to the following questions that can be copied into your document. There are no page limits for specific sections, provided that this section totals no more than 15 pages.

1. Provide a detailed, comprehensive rationale and background for the proposed research, discussing which section/theme from the INESSS-ONF CPG the research addresses, and why. Describe existing knowledge and evidence (or lack thereof) that supports the rationale. References must immediately follow this section.
2. Describe the project's methodology, including objective(s), hypothesis(es), design, study groups, participants and recruitment strategy, outcome measures and analysis plan.
3. What is the potential impact and significance of this research? Provide any other details pertinent to evaluating outcome and impact.

4. Identify who the key audiences of interest for this research might be. Outline how information on the project will be shared with these audiences, by traditional academic and non-traditional means of knowledge translation.
5. Describe any ethical considerations, potential pitfalls or limitations of the research and provide proposed solutions to address these. Potential challenges to recruitment must be addressed.
6. Provide a timeline for the research that includes considerations related to questions 5 and 7.
7. Provide a budget chart indicating expenditures for the research project, followed by justifications for these budget items. (*Refer to budget eligibility for guidance*)
8. Discuss any other issues related to the research project or additional information you would like to share that have not been addressed in the above questions.
9. Provide a three to four paragraph summary of the research project for ONF's purposes. Briefly, and in language suitable for a general audience outline the objectives, approach and significance of the study.

**Appendices** - one pdf document containing:

- A. A page with the signatures of all members of the research project, acknowledging their role and responsibility for the project.
- B. Signed letter from an Officer of the Sponsoring Organization acknowledging the organization's willingness to support the research and administer the project's funds, if awarded funding.
- C. Provide the name and full contact information of an Officer of the Sponsoring Organization (Research, Finance or Management Head) who will administer the funding, if awarded.
- D. Up to 3 other letters of support speaking to the relevance and value of the research and/or potential applications of the results.
- E. Any consent forms, assessment tools, figures or tables to support the proposal.

## Budget Expenditures

<p><b>Eligible Expenses</b></p> <p><i>The following may be requested from ONF within the budget, provided that they are entirely relevant to the proposed research:</i></p>	<p><b>Ineligible Expenses</b></p> <p><i>The following may <u>not</u> be requested from ONF within the budget:</i></p>
<p>Research personnel (coordinator, assistant)</p> <p>Professional and technical services if appropriate</p> <p>Data collection and analysis, including access to unique databases or information critical to the success of the project</p> <p>Supplies and materials essential for the proposed research project (excluding computers and software)</p> <p>Travel costs for research subjects/participants</p> <p>Meeting coordination, travel costs as reasonably required for the project.</p> <p>Knowledge mobilization focused on measures to link scientific and clinical audiences and other stakeholders (people with lived experience, service providers and associations, policy-makers)</p>	<p>Investigator or Co-Investigator Salaries</p> <p>Sponsoring Institution overhead, including rent, utilities and administrative charges such as secretarial, administrative and accounting support or services. This also includes use of facilities normally and readily provided through the institution where the research will be conducted.</p> <p>Costs for service provision or delivery</p> <p>Equipment, materials and technical components (computers and software), cannot be eligible if normally and readily available through the institution where the research will be conducted.</p> <p>Legal, patent fees or consultant fees normally incurred by the research institution</p> <p>Open access fees for publication.</p> <p>Membership or subscription fees of any kind</p> <p>Retroactive payments of any kind</p>

### **Matching Funds**

The above eligible and non-eligible budget items reflect ONF policies. We understand that projects often require additional expenditures that are not eligible from ONF. The Research team and Sponsoring Organization will need to cover these or find additional sources of funding for those expenditures. ONF welcomes matching funds for the project from other sources. If any organization is providing matching funds for this project, please indicate the source and amount of matching funds over the term of the research project.

### ***Budget Breakdown and Justification***

Create a budget chart including major budget lines for personnel, professional costs, materials, travel, conferences and knowledge mobilization, other). For projects of more than one year, provide annual breakdowns in the chart.

The budget chart must be followed by budget justifications. Examples of how to justify budget items are as follows.

- *Personnel*: Indicate the FTE, hourly rate, benefits, total number of hours, and total amount for each person. A brief description of the responsibilities and/or tasks anticipated for each role is also needed.
- *Travel*: Expenditures for local travel must be for project purposes (within reason) and can include:
  - *Between team members for collaborative purposes,*
  - *Travel to project participants, if applicable,*
  - *For participants to travel to project sites.*
- *Meetings*: A brief description of the purpose and relevance of meetings to the project is needed. Indicate the nature of the meetings, the estimated number of people who will attend, the costs associated with the meeting room, catering, meeting materials, and any other related costs.
- *Translation/Transcripts*: Indicate which information will be translated or transcribed. For translations, include cost per word; for transcriptions include cost per hour.
- *Materials (excluding supplies, computers and technical equipment)*: indicate which materials are needed to conduct the project with estimated costs and quantities.

The deadline for receipt of submissions to [info@onf.org](mailto:info@onf.org) is  
**7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 23, 2017.**

### **Adjudication of Proposals**

Proposals will be reviewed and adjudicated by an expert panel convened by ONF. The adjudication process will adhere to ONF Policies of Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest for Adjudication.

Any communication by a potential applicant with members of the Adjudication Panel, pertaining to the submission of a proposal to this competition or regarding the adjudication, other than at the request of the Panel, is strictly prohibited and may lead to disqualification of that proposal.

## Adjudication Criteria

Proposals will be adjudicated with the following considerations.

<p><u>Applicants</u></p> <p>Is the principal investigator well placed and capable of overseeing the project? Does the project team collectively consist of the expertise necessary for the nature of the research? Do the investigators/team members have the collective capacity to achieve the desired results?</p>
<p><u>Rationale</u></p> <p>Is the purpose and rationale for the research clear? Are the significance and potential impact of this research clearly outlined? Are the objectives and concepts clearly defined? Does this research have the potential to inform subsequent editions of the INESSS-ONF Guideline?</p>
<p><u>Approach and Evaluation</u></p> <p>Is the research approach clearly described? Are outcome measures clearly described and appropriate for the nature of the project? Are appropriate methods for analysis in place? How well does the evaluation address the objectives? Have the applicants identified possible pitfalls and solutions for these? Is the project feasible? Are the timelines reasonable and sufficient to complete the project? Have potential ethical considerations or pitfalls been considered and satisfactorily addressed with proposed solutions?</p>
<p><u>Engagement of Key Stakeholders and Knowledge Mobilization</u></p> <p>Are key stakeholders for the project identified and engaged in a meaningful way? Is there demonstrated support (letters) from these key stakeholders? To what degree does the project have potential for broader impact beyond its setting?</p>
<p><u>Budget</u></p> <p>Are the items in the budget eligible? Is the budget reasonable and well justified for the nature of the project? Have any matching funds been identified to cover non-eligible ONF costs?</p>

*Proposals must be submitted electronically in their entirety. Incomplete submissions or misdirected submissions will not be accepted. No part of any submission will be accepted by fax, email or courier, unless requested by ONF.*

## **ONF Contact Person**

All requests for information regarding this funding initiative must be directed to Corinne Kagan, Senior Program Director, ABI by e-mail to [corinne@onf.org](mailto:corinne@onf.org) or by phone to (416) 422-2228, ext 204.

*IMPORTANT: During the initial application period, any revisions to the content or process of the funding initiative will be issued on the ONF website. Applicants are advised to check the site regularly during the application period to ensure that they are up to date on revisions or clarifications. ONF will not be responsible for applicants' failure to keep up to date with this information. Following the notice of intention to apply on September 15, 2017 any information on revisions to the content or process will be sent directly by email to those who provided notice to ONF of intention to apply.*

## **Information for Public Purposes**

By applying for funds from ONF, the applicant(s) accept that if awarded funding, information regarding the research will be made publicly available. This information includes the names of the project team members, the organization where the project will be conducted and the names of partner organizations, the title of the project and a summary appropriate for general audiences, the amount and length of funding.

Note: In accordance with ONF's Policy on Confidentiality, the names of applicants that apply for funding but are not awarded are never made public.

## Appendix 1

### Five Factor Model to distinguish priority areas of the INESSS-ONF CPG.

The INESSS-ONF CPG was publicly released in October 2016. This involved a rigorous methodology including scoping reviews, quality assessments of existing guidelines, literature scans, a survey of user needs, matrix development, a consensus conference and post-conference workgroups, external review and stakeholder consultation.

The resulting guideline contains 20 sections and 266 recommendations, covering rehabilitative care provided in sub-acute, inpatient rehabilitation and outpatient rehabilitation settings. Several areas of the guideline are also applicable to community-based rehabilitative care. Due to the comprehensive and enormous coverage of areas, it is not practical to hold a wide-open call for proposals encompassing the entire scope of the CPG.

To narrow down the eligibility, a five-factor model of priority was employed, including:

1. The interests of 113 people living with TBI regarding areas of research, as identified through a national survey conducted during the Neurotrauma to Neurorecovery application development in 2015.
2. The interests of 112 caregivers of people with TBI, also from the above survey.
3. Highest priority topics identified by 487 target users in Ontario and Quebec in 2014, completed as a step in the ONF-INESSS guideline development process.
4. Range of evidence (Levels A through C) currently supporting areas of the INESSS-ONF CPG.
5. Feasibility for a 2-year time frame for completion and expertise existing in Ontario to conduct the research.

The five factors were mapped onto a matrix and assessed in terms of high, medium and low strength. As much as feasible, themes were matched. Not all areas were possible to match.

Where the mapping demonstrated at least three and in some cases four highly ranked factors, these were distinguished as highest priority. Where there was a blend of high and medium ranking factors, these were considered a priority.

The resulting areas of eligibility for this Call for Proposals are:

#### Highest priority:

- Cognitive function (attention and memory, and ability to learn and apply knowledge)
- Strategies to address or mitigate behaviour disorders at any phase of rehabilitative care
- Mental health complications of traumatic brain injury
- Psychological strategies to improve mood, depression and irritability
- Strategies to enhance social participation and community life (personal relationships)

#### Other Priorities:

- Continuity of care and coordination mechanisms
- Communication strategies
- Fatigue and sleep disturbances
- Skill maintenance and quality of life