

Collaborative Research Seed Grant Program Terms of Reference

Preamble

An important strategy to attain higher research impact by the University of Toronto - Department of Radiation Oncology (UT-DRO) is to promote collaboration among UT-DRO investigators at the Odette Cancer Centre, the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, the Carlo Fidani Cancer Centre and the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Centre. One effective mechanism to achieve this synergy is through seed funding for collaborative research.

The primary purpose of the Collaborative Research Seed Grant Program is to support innovative and creative collaborative research within the UT-DRO community that has the potential to significantly impact the science of radiation medicine and/or improve patient outcome. Applications from all areas and disciplines of radiation medicine research will be considered. Criteria for funding, in addition to scientific merit and potential impact on clinical outcome, will include co-leadership from at least two of the five participating centres, and engagement of all five centres whenever feasible.

Funds available

Two seed-grants of approximately \$50,000 each will be awarded annually, dependent on the availability of funds. Grants will have a maximum term of 2 years. Grants will not be renewable. Funding will be provided to support the direct costs of research, including supplies, salaries (but not UT-DRO faculty salaries), and equipment associated with the proposed work. Equipment requests will not exceed 20% of the requested budget. Indirect costs will not be eligible. Proposals should include a description of how the requested funds will be allocated amongst the participating centres.

Eligibility

This competition will be open to all full and affiliated UT-DRO faculty members. Inclusion of all five participating centres is expected. A justification must be provided if all centres are not included. Applications must include a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of each centre towards achieving the scientific objectives of the research.

Application

The **application form** will include the following:

- The name and contact information of the **Principal Investigator(s)** and all **co-investigators**
- The project **title**
- A brief **scientific summary**
- A **statement of relevance** to radiation medicine research, including a clear, concise, and non-technical description of how the project will accelerate radiation medicine research. Indicated how the research will impact clinical practice. Describe the “next steps” and future direction following completion of the project.

- A **statement of collaboration** indicating how the project will achieve synergy between investigators at the Odette Cancer Centre, the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, the Carlo Fidani Cancer Centre and the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Centre.
- A detailed **budget description**

In addition, a **detailed scientific proposal** will be required (5 pages maximum, 1 inch margins, Arial 12-pt font, single spaced including all text, figures, tables and references). The proposal should outline the rationale for the research, a briefly review of the literature and/or preliminary data, the hypothesis and aims a description of the methods and analysis plan, a sample size justification (if appropriate), the time line and a budget justification.

Review Criteria

The review criteria will include (but not necessarily be restricted to) the following criteria.

Innovation

- Potential to address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field
- Potential to improve or apply a new theoretical concept, approach, methodology or tool
- Degree to which the research is original, unique, and creative
- Potential gain relative to (any) perceived risk
- Degree to which the research proposes new paradigms or challenges existing ones

Research Strategy

- Scientific merit and convincing rationale that considers critical review and analysis of preliminary data and/or published literature, as appropriate
- Identification of potential problems and how they will be addressed, including alternative approaches
- Appropriateness of the term and amount of support requested

Impact and Relevance to Radiation Medicine

- The potential to drive innovative and creative research that will impact radiation medicine and improve clinical outcomes

Collaboration

- **Collaboration among the five UT-DRO centres will weigh heavily in the overall ranking of the applications.** Projects will be evaluated based on their potential to foster increased collaboration and generate new synergies.

Review Process

- A review committee chaired by the UT-DRO Vice-Chair of Research will adjudicate the award competition.
- The review committee will be comprised of the UT-DRO Vice-Chair of Research, the UT-DRO Director of Research and ad hoc reviewers with the necessary expertise to evaluate the applications. Every attempt will be made to balance the review team by professional discipline and participating centre. At least one member of the review team will be from the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, the Carlo Fidani Cancer Centre or the Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Centre.
- A minimum of two reviewers will evaluate each application.
- Every attempt will be made to select reviewers with relevant expertise. While reviewers will usually be UT-DRO faculty, external reviewers may be used to assure relevant expertise.

- Applications will be evaluated according to the criteria specified above.
- Reviewers will score each application using the scale below and write a brief structured, critique, which will be provided to the applicants after the competition.
- Reviewers will attend (either in person or by telephone) a meeting to discuss the applications and make recommendations about funding.
- **Reviewers must commit in advance to participating fully** to assure the integrity of the process.
- The review process will adhere to the UT Faculty of Medicine policies for avoiding conflict of interest and adhering to other good practice.

RMP Collaborative Research Seed Funding Program – Application Scoring Scale	
Score	Description
4.8-5.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional research with extremely significant and novel aims • Extremely likely that all objectives will be met • No weaknesses
4.5-4.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding research with very significant and novel aims • Very likely that all objectives will be met • Virtually no weaknesses
4.2-4.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent research with significant and novel aims • Somewhat likely that all objectives will be met • At least one minor weakness
3.9-4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good research with important and novel aims • Very good likelihood that most objectives will be met • Some minor weaknesses that can be addressed during the term of the grant
3.6-3.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good research with important aims • Good likelihood that most objectives will be met • At least one moderate weakness
3.5 and below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not suitable for funding

Administration of Funds

Funds will be administered through the UT-DRO office and distributed to the centres according to the allocation specified in the budget justification, in accordance with established institutional policies.

Deliverables

A one-page report must be submitted to UT-DRO at the end of the funding period.