



Call for Choosing Wisely Alberta Research Funding Proposals 2021

Program Background

Choosing Wisely Alberta (CWA) is part of a larger Canadian movement (Choosing Wisely Canada) (CWC) that advocates for reducing unnecessary tests and treatments in health care. The steering committee of CWA is composed of representatives from:

- Alberta College of Family Physicians (ACFP)
- Alberta Medical Association (AMA)
- Alberta Health (AH)
- Alberta Health Services (AHS)
- Choosing Wisely Alberta
- Choosing Wisely Canada (CWC)
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA)
- Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA)
- Patient Partner

CWC inspires and engages health care professionals to take leadership in reducing unnecessary tests, treatments and procedures, and supports them with simple tools and resources that make it easier for the health care professional and the patient to choose wisely. CWC partners with various professional societies, clinical specialties, and patients to develop lists of “Things Clinicians and Patients Should Question” that identify commonly used tests and treatments that are not supported by evidence and could expose patients to harm. These lists can be found at <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/recommendations/>.

Striving for appropriate testing and treatment helps to balance risks and benefits for the person, as well as optimizing resource utilization for the system. Addressing unwarranted variation in practice patterns and reducing low value testing and treatments liberate resources from lower value care to be re-directed to other areas of need.

Over the past six years, a variety of health system partners in Alberta have undertaken projects incorporating CWC recommendations. Some of these groups include the Physician Learning Program, Strategic Clinical Networks, Improving Health Outcomes Together, and Enhancing Alberta Primary Care Research Network. Initiatives have included reducing unnecessary tests and treatments in hospitals,

ensuring appropriate antipsychotic and sedative use in seniors, conducting appropriate Pap smear testing, and measuring Vitamin D levels judiciously, just to name a few.

Choosing Wisely Alberta is again funding innovative projects that promote appropriate testing and treatment consistent with the goals and recommendations of CWC. Project proposals are being accepted for funding from Choosing Wisely Alberta.

Eligibility

Funding proposals will be accepted from individuals or groups within Alberta. Proposals must be grounded in one or more CWC recommendations (<https://choosingwiselycanada.org/recommendations/>).

Proposed projects should describe the plan for an intervention and its evaluation, focusing on producing a measurable impact on appropriate testing and treatment, reducing low value care and/or improving patient outcomes.

Priority areas of interest include projects that will:

- Focus on patients in the community setting.
- Identify and reduce unwarranted variation in areas of high resource utilization within Alberta.
- Reduce delivery of low value diagnostic imaging.

Application Process

Applicants should submit their funding proposals by sending a letter of intent along with a full proposal (double-spaced and five pages maximum length) to choosingwiselyab@ucalgary.ca.

The proposal should address the following questions:

1. What is the problem or situation being addressed (e.g. identify that a test, treatment, or procedure is not being used appropriately)?
2. What is the evidence that suggests that this is a problem in Alberta?
3. Which CWC Canada recommendation(s) will you be addressing?
4. What is the proposed solution? Has this solution worked elsewhere and what is the evidence to suggest that this solution will work in Alberta?
5. Has a jurisdictional review been completed to identify whether the proposed work, or work similar to the proposed work, is being done elsewhere? Please share the results of the review.

6. To what degree has the solution been co-designed with target stakeholders (i.e. patients, front line healthcare providers, health policy experts)? Are solutions co-created with end users and contextually appropriate to achieve the desired solutions?
7. Who are the team members and/or partners involved?
8. What is the size of the population that could potentially benefit from this solution?
9. What is the impact on a typical patient in terms of experience and outcomes?
10. Describe how you think change will happen.
11. What are the means of measuring or quantifying this impact (i.e. source of the data, study design)? Is there an existing data source or will you be collecting new data? How will the data be analyzed?
12. Will Ethics approval be required?
13. What are the estimated project expenses? Are there any other funding sources?

Adjudication

Full proposal applications will be reviewed by a panel of experts and stakeholders in March 2021. The review committee will rank order the proposals and make recommendations to the Choosing Wisely Alberta Steering Committee.

The review committee will use a rubric to assess applications on the following criteria:

Problem/Solution Specification

- Identification of a test, treatment, or procedure is not being used appropriately
- Evidence of unwarranted variation in areas of high resource utilization within Alberta

Relevance

- Extent to which the targeted problem and solution are relevant to the overarching objectives of Choosing Wisely Canada (i.e. reducing unnecessary tests and treatments in health care)

Feasibility

- The degree to which the solution has been co-designed with target stakeholders (i.e. patients and families, front line health care providers, health policy experts)
- Suitability of the project team for the proposed activities (e.g. expertise, roles)
- Extent to which the study deliverables and timelines are realistic and reflect a good understanding of the resources and operational activities required

Scientific Merit

- Extent to which the proposed solution(s) and the implementation study are informed by evidence, methodologically sound, and designed to generate high quality evidence on the impact of the solution and the implementation process

Impact

- Extent to which the proposed solution will be applicable across Alberta
- Anticipated potential to improve health outcomes and/or quality of life of patients, and if applicable, their families and caregivers

Terms and Conditions of Funding

A maximum of three projects will be funded to a maximum of \$75,000 each.

Choosing Wisely Alberta funding should be used primarily on emerging or advanced interventions, as outlined in Eligibility, which could not reasonably be covered by existing resources. Appendix One provides a summary of Eligible and Ineligible Expenses.

The maximum project length is two years. The carry over of funds from one fiscal year to the next will only be allowed for multi-year projects, otherwise budgets must be structured to achieve the deliverable in the time frame proposed.

Summary of Key Dates

March 31st, 2021: Applications are due

Early April 2021: Review of applications

Late April 2021: Conditional approval

May 2021: Funding announcement and initial disbursement of funds

Appendix One¹

Category	Eligible Expenses	Ineligible Expenses
Labour	Labour costs for those individuals specifically identified as working on the Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overhead costs charged to employee labour rates • Professional training & development • Salary support for Leads and Co-Leads • Professional fees unless directly related to the Project
Materials	Reasonable material costs	Sales and marketing collateral
Capital Assets & Software	Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major equipment (>\$5,000) • Acquisitions of land or buildings • The undepreciated value of eligible capital costs which extends beyond the Project term
Travel	Mileage, lowest economy class airfare, and accommodation where the Industry Partner's place of business is located in a different city than the Applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs relating to meals, entertainment, hospitality or gifts • Passport or immigration fees • Reimbursement for airfare purchased with personal frequent flyer programs • Commuting costs between place of residence and place of employment
Sub-contractors	Services or products of another entity	
Other	Costs which Choosing Wisely Alberta pre-approves in writing as an eligible expense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmaceutical drug-related trials • Local programs or projects in one zone or one hospital that are not applicable to other zones or sectors • Costs associated with development and protection of intellectual property • Federal and provincial income taxes, goods and services taxes • Expenses for projects or activities outside the approved Project • Costs associated with applying for government grants and programs • Technical or professional journals • Provisions for contingencies • Routing testing and maintenance • Costs Choosing Wisely Alberta deems ineligible at its sole discretion

¹ This overview of eligible and ineligible expenses has been borrowed from the PROGRAM GUIDE: Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Health System (PRIHS): 2020-2021