MEMORANDUM

Date: August 9, 2024

To:
- AHS Scientific Directors and Assistant Scientific Directors
- Leaders of the Program Improvement and Integration Networks
- Dr. Braden Manns, AVPRI, Health Research, University of Calgary & Senior Associate Dean, Clinical Research, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary
- Dr. Jason Acker, AVPRI, Research Integrity Support, University of Alberta
- Dr. Lawrence Richer, Associate Dean of Research, College of Health Sciences, University of Alberta
- Dr. Jon Doan, Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge
- Dr. Maggie Quance, Associate Dean, Research Scholarship and Community Engagement, Faculty of Health Community and Education, Mount Royal University
- Dr. Christy Raymond, Dean, Faculty of Nursing, MacEwan University

From: Marc Leduc, Senior Provincial Director, Health Evidence and Innovation and Office of Partnerships for Health Services Research, Innovation & Improvement

RE: **AHS Letters of Support for Academics Applying to Research Funding Competitions**

Please cascade as appropriate.

With the implementation of the *Learn Improve Together* (AHS access required) approach for improvement in our health system, AHS is evolving its learning health system to implement 14 Program Improvement and Integration Networks (PINs). In support of the eight acute care PINs (see addendum), twelve former SCN Scientific Offices will be consolidated into the Office of Partnerships for Health Services Research, Innovation & Improvement, within AHS' Health Evidence and Innovation department. The remaining six Scientific Offices will support PINs for three provincial programs (Cancer, Indigenous Health, and Population and Public Health) and Alberta's three new Provincial Health Agencies (Recovery Alberta, Primary Care, and Continuing Care). These changes are underway and the acute care PINs are actively implementing priorities for improvement.

I am pleased to clarify the process for requesting Letters of Support when applying for external research funding under the new structure. AHS recognizes the important role these letters have in supporting the research efforts of clinical scientists and other researchers. Their access to patients and families, health information, clinicians and decision makers is critical to advancing care for Albertans, Canadians, and patients around the world.

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Requesting a Letter of Support when Applying for Research Funding Competitions

Principal Investigators (PIs) with relationships with clinical program leaders may continue to approach them directly for a Letter of Support when their teams have specific competencies needed to conduct their research. The Office of Partnerships is prepared to help all PIs navigate and coordinate such requests across the health system, including Provincial Health Agencies, and other AHS and provincial programs relevant to their study.

Information Requirements and Timelines

PIs (or designates) are asked to submit requests for a Letter of Support via email **14 days or more before the PIs' deadline** to the Office of Partnerships (PartnershipsOffice@ahs.ca). While inclusion of a draft letter can expedite the process, it is not required.

In the request (not necessarily in the draft letter), PIs must clearly define:

- The funding agency name
- The date by which the PI needs to receive the letter
- A brief (lay) overview of the study, including aims/hypothesis and patient population (if relevant)
- How these aims align with health sector organizational, program or clinical priorities
- Study start and end dates, if funded
- The support(s) they are seeking from AHS (or the provincial program or Provincial Health Agency), including in-kind assistance, time commitments of knowledge users, and/or potential impacts to clinical information systems/data interoperability
- What AHS services will be purchased or offset though the grant (if relevant), thus eliminating the need to clarify that afterwards (budgets are not required when submitting the request).

The Office of Partnerships personnel will use this information to navigate the system and obtain input from the relevant clinical areas and teams regarding feasibility to support the request.

Types of Requests

a. General purpose; no active involvement of AHS staff and clinicians

For general purpose letters intended to affirm the relevance and importance of the research, and where the PI does not require active involvement of AHS staff and clinicians to conduct the study, the Office of Partnerships will seek to quickly review and complete the Letter of Support.

b. **Letters requesting in-kind resources or ongoing engagement with AHS staff to conduct the study, including as a knowledge user**

Engagement requirements by the Office of Partnerships and Health Evidence and Innovation (HEI) team will vary depending on the nature of the project and its alignment with PIN priorities. Specifically:

For studies that align with current or emerging priorities for improvement established by the PINs (i.e., AHS operational areas):

i. The HEI team will determine what deliverables can be supported directly by the HEI department and the Office of Partnerships and contribute to the letter.

ii. The Office of Partnerships will engage with relevant AHS program leaders for them to assess their capacity to support the research effort. Note: Once studies are funded and approved by the Research Ethics Board, the AHS Health System Access team will obtain operational approval from the applicable clinical (and/or non-clinical) areas. Please note: Even though AHS may indicate support for a study at the application stage, operational approvals are required to deal with changes in circumstances, study requirements or health system capacity. Please refer to 'Obtaining Operational Approvals' for more information.

For studies that do not align with PIN priorities: The Office of Partnerships will determine which leaders of the affected AHS program(s) should be engaged to assess the request.

Signatures

- Marc Leduc will sign letters involving resources within the Health Evidence and Innovation department and the Office of Partnerships for Health Services Research, Innovation & Improvement.
- For Letters of Support requiring resources from other AHS or provincial programs (clinical or non-clinical), including support areas like lab, pharmacy and diagnostic imaging, the Office of Partnerships will seek the appropriate leader to co-sign the letter.
- If the study design or knowledge generated is provincial in scope, the Office of Partnerships will engage with the PIN leaders for input and potential signature on behalf of their program area.

A reminder that for PINs in the three provincial programs (Cancer, Indigenous Health, and Population and Public Health) and three Provincial Health Agencies (Recovery Alberta, Primary Care, and Continuing Care), the Office of Partnerships will direct requests to the appropriate Scientific Offices and leadership team(s) for assessment.

Questions

I anticipate questions will arise as PIs finalize their applications and consider what support they need. Please send questions to the PartnershipsOffice@ahs.ca and we will work with you to find a way forward.

Our objective is to improve the care of Albertans, strengthen the competitiveness of Alberta's PIs, ensure AHS program leaders can support you if funded, and reduce confusion in navigating the health system.

Addendum: Leadership of the Acuter Care Pins

Acute Care PIN Leadership

PIN	Zone Executive Lead	Operations Lead	Medical Lead	Integration Lead
Emergency & EMS	Calgary	Karen Foudy & EMS co-leader Anne MacDonald	Dr. Shawn Dowling	Sherri Kashuba
Critical Care	Edmonton	Kelly Longard	Dr. Wendy Sligl	Christopher Burnie
Neuroscience & Stroke	South	Amanda Weiss	TBD	Balraj Mann
Medicine	Central	Linda Tessman-Potvin	Dr. Anna Purdy	Jeremy Slobodan
Surgery	North	Holly Mackin	TBD	Jill Robert
Cardiovascular	Calgary	Mishaela Houle	TBD	Shelley Valaire
Women's Health	Edmonton	Jordanna Lambert	TBD	Lene Jorgensen
Children's Health	South	Christine Westerlund	Dr. Piushkumar Mandhane	Shannon Erfle