



WSIB Grants Program

Proposal Instructions

Closing Date:

Initial Proposals: October 9, 2020
11:59 p.m. (EST)

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Program overview

Introduction

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) is committed to delivering exceptional programs and services for Ontario's workers and employers. The WSIB facilitates return to work and recovery when a work-related injury or occupational disease occurs. The WSIB's mandate also includes promoting health and safety in the workplace and providing compensation and other benefits when return to work cannot be achieved.

The Grants Program contributes to the WSIB's mandate by funding highly practical research studies from leading experts. WSIB grants address current and emerging issues and strengthen Ontario's workers' compensation system now and in the future.

Program objective and expected outcomes

The objective of the WSIB Grants Program is to enhance workers' compensation system outcomes by supporting innovative proposals that are aligned to the WSIB's strategic mandate. This is accomplished through highly practical, expert research studies that address current and emerging challenges, and strengthen Ontario's workers' compensation system now and in the future.

The WSIB Grants Program will award up to \$1.5 million in funding for its 2021 Grants competition, which will focus on the impact of COVID-19¹. The expectation is that proposals will lead to practical outcomes that can inform programs, policies, and/or products and services for the WSIB and/or stakeholders within the workers' compensation system.

The WSIB Grants Program accepts the following types of proposals:

1. Research Proposals

- Expert research proposals that deliver practical results for the workers' compensation system
 - Results will lead to policy, program and practice improvements
 - Proposals for systematic reviews will also be considered
- Workplace-based projects that involve collaborations between the workplace, researchers and organizations
 - Proposals may include implementing completed research, piloting programs, and conducting evaluations to improve outcomes

¹ Decisions will be finalized in 2021 and are pending program budget approval.

2. Training Proposals

- Initiatives that help workers, employers and the compensation system resolve long-standing barriers
- Innovative opportunities that build capacity in the community and offer significant potential to improve compensation system results

Program information

Grant priority areas

The 2021 WSIB Grants Program will focus on the impact of COVID-19. Three considerations for the competition include:

- 1) COVID-19 is changing how we work
- 2) COVID-19 is changing how we approach health and safety
- 3) COVID-19 is changing how we support return-to-work and recovery

The Grants Program is committed to supporting the WSIB's strategic priority of being financially responsible and accountable through the operating practices of the program on an ongoing basis. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals that align to the topics of interest identified within the 2021 Grants Agenda.

More detailed information about these priority areas is available in the appendix or on the [WSIB website](#).

Eligibility criteria

Grant proposals fall into two major categories: research grants and training grants. Both proposal types must be highly practical, delivered by leading experts and demonstrate significant potential to improve outcomes for workers, employers or the broader compensation system.

1. Who can apply to the WSIB Grants Program?

RESEARCH GRANTS

- Expert researchers affiliated with an eligible applicant organization:
 - Publicly funded universities or colleges
 - Public hospitals with a specialized research area
 - Not-for-profit or registered charitable organizations with the capability and capacity to conduct research
 - Canadian non-governmental organizations with the capability and capacity to conduct research
 - Other organizations that have the capability and capacity to conduct research and are not privately owned and operated may also be eligible for a WSIB grant.

- Master's or Ph.D. students conducting research at a Canadian institution are eligible to submit a proposal as a Secondary Lead. The Project Lead must be an expert researcher who agrees to supervise the student and accept accountability for grant management and performance.

Private organizations are not eligible to apply for a WSIB research grant as a Project Lead. Private organizations may be identified as a partner or collaborator of an eligible applicant organization.

TRAINING GRANTS

- Educators or trainers with a Master's degree or higher in education, a post-graduate diploma in adult education, or other similar qualifications (with relevant experience and demonstrated successes), highly qualified healthcare professionals including, but not limited to:
 - Physicians
 - Psychologists
 - Nurse Practitioners
 - Occupational Therapists
- In all cases, educators, trainers, and healthcare professionals must have specialized workers' compensation system knowledge and relevant experience in conducting training initiatives or have identified a qualified partner or collaborator to ensure the project team has the necessary expertise to be successful.

Training grants are not intended to replace or supplement the professional vocational rehabilitation services provided through the WSIB Work Reintegration program. Proposals that do not meet these criteria will be deemed ineligible.

2. What legislation guides the WSIB Grant Program?

Proposals must be consistent with Section 159(5) of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, which provides the WSIB authority to offer grants for research, training and investigations, and in amounts and subject to such conditions as the Board considers acceptable.

3. What is the maximum grant length? What is the maximum funding limit per year?

The maximum grant length is two years (24 months). The maximum funding request is up to \$150,000/year for a total maximum budget of \$300,000. The WSIB does not renew grants for the same grant purpose. Applicant organizations may submit more than one distinct proposal for consideration during each application cycle.

Evaluation criteria

The WSIB Grants Program is two-staged and involves a rigorous and transparent proposal selection process based on pre-established criteria. The Evaluation Criteria for the Initial Proposal stage is available in the Appendix.

Managing and measuring progress

WSIB grant recipients will be required to regularly report on their progress. Quarterly reports will ensure the WSIB can support recipients in early identification and removal of barriers.

The exact approach to managing and measuring progress will depend on the scope and scale of each project. The WSIB will work with recipients to confirm expectations for managing progress prior to starting grant activities. During the proposal process, you will be provided with an opportunity to outline a proposal timeline that will reasonably allow the WSIB to monitor your progress towards achieving your objectives and outcomes. The WSIB will determine the exact approach to managing and measuring progress in consultation with grant recipients.

Project team descriptions

Project Lead – The Project Lead must be based in, or formally affiliated with, an eligible host organization (university, college, hospital, research institute or other qualified not-for-profit organization). The Project Lead will be responsible for managing and monitoring the proposed activities, including administrative and financial responsibility for the grant. The Project Lead is not eligible to receive salary support from a WSIB grant.

Secondary Lead – The Secondary Lead shares responsibility for the grant and, in most cases, should be able to assume Project Lead responsibilities as necessary. The Secondary Lead is not eligible to receive salary support from a WSIB grant.

Co-Applicant – Co-Applicants may or may not have a formal affiliation with the project host organization, but will take responsibility for specific administrative and scientific aspects of the project. Co-Applicants are not eligible to receive salary support from a WSIB grant.

Project Personnel – Project Personnel includes undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research assistants, statisticians, technicians, programmers, analysts, etc., who may contribute to the activities of the Project Lead. Project Personnel may receive salary support or honoraria from the grant in keeping with the funding use restrictions.

Collaborator – The project may include collaborators who are central to the project and not otherwise identified in the categories above. Their role in the proposed activities is to provide a specific service (e.g., access to equipment, training in a specialized technique, statistical analysis, access to a patient population, etc.). Collaborators may be eligible to receive project funds for specified services or resources if it can be demonstrated that their contribution is essential to the work being undertaken and not otherwise available to the project team. Project

advisory committee members are generally viewed as collaborators and may not be eligible to receive grant funds for the time they may contribute to the project.

Proposal selection process

The selection process is rigorous, but also considers the time and effort it requires to submit a proposal. The Initial Proposal is a streamlined opportunity to explain your idea with a focus on plain language delivery of the project overview. The Detailed Proposal involves submitting more information regarding budget, work plan, project risks, and other key factors. The WSIB only invites selected proposals of interest to continue past the Strategic Review phase.

Timeline	Selection Process	Description
Deadline to submit Initial Proposal: Oct 9, 2020	Step 1: Initial Proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All interested parties submit an Initial Proposal.
November 23, 2020	Step 2: Strategic Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial Proposals are evaluated based on pre-established criteria (*see Appendix). Candidates will be notified at this stage of the process if their proposal will be invited to proceed to Step 3: Detailed Proposal
Deadline to submit additional information: Feb 22, 2021	Step 3: Detailed Proposal (by invitation only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed Proposal form will be provided to all candidates invited to continue in the evaluation process Specific information may also be requested to supplement content presented in the Initial Proposal.
March 2021	Step 4: Subject Matter Expert and Peer Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each proposal is evaluated by WSIB subject matter experts and by external peer reviewers.
April 2021	Step 5: Final Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A panel of senior WSIB leaders conducts a comprehensive review of each proposal and provides funding recommendations to the WSIB's President & CEO.
May 2021	Step 6: Executive Approval of Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSIB's President & CEO reviews recommendations and provides final approvals for grants.

*At any stage during the proposal selection process, the WSIB may request additional information for the purpose of evaluating a proposal.

Submission instructions for initial proposals

All applicants must complete Sections 1-7 of the Initial Proposal Form.

Email an **unprotected or unsecured PDF** signed copy of the completed proposal to grants@wsib.on.ca on or before **11:59 p.m. (EST) on October 9th, 2020**. Hard copies of the application are not required.

Proposals received after the deadline will not be included in the application and selection process. Incomplete proposals will not be accepted.

Appendices

Please include References in this section. If required, up to three additional pages of appendices will be allowed to accompany your proposal. Please attach and number the additional pages and clearly identify the section that the pages belong to.

Please note that appendices will be allowed as supporting documentation to the application, but that reviewers are not required to evaluate them. Appendices should not be an extension of application content.

Please contact the WSIB if you have questions regarding the application and selection process.

Email: grants@wsib.on.ca

Additional considerations

Funding use restrictions

Grant recipients are prohibited from using WSIB funds (“Funds”) for the following purposes; therefore, applicants should ensure these costs are not included in a proposal to the WSIB Grants Program:

Salaries and stipends

The Funds may not be used towards salary support for any Key Research Team Member who is a full-time researcher, a full-time faculty member of a college or university, a full-time educator, trainer or healthcare professional. However, Funds may be used to provide salary support for other project team members such as coordinators, statisticians, and technical and other support staff. All positions will be reviewed and further clarification may be required prior to accepting the budget. Funds may only be used towards direct salaries, not charge out rates (i.e. the amount paid to an employee and specified in the Budget). The WSIB reserves the right to set a ceiling on its contribution to salaries on a classification basis.

If the person for whom support is being requested is a full-time employee of the Grant Recipient, the Funds may be used towards a salary value based on the number of days or part days that the individual will work on the Project and that such amount will not exceed a reasonable amount based on the Grant Recipient’s regulations, policies, or guidelines.

If a person is to be employed on a contract basis, then Funds can be used towards compensation calculated on an hourly, daily, weekly or monthly basis. The Funds may only be used towards compensation received by the employees and may not include an allowance for overhead and/or benefits.

The Funds may be used towards a salary contribution for Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows engaged on the Project, provided such amount will not exceed an amount determined by following normal university or college regulations, policy or guidelines.

Employee benefits

No more than 20% of salaries can be used towards the cost of benefits for employees (e.g., E.I./U.I.C., C.P.P., health benefit coverage), but not in respect to any key research team member who is a full-time researcher, a full-time faculty member of a college or university or a full-time educator, trainer or healthcare professional.

Indirect or overhead costs

The Funds may not be used towards capital expenditures, overhead costs, maintenance costs, and other incidental expenses. Please contact the Grants Team for approval of questionable IT hardware or software purchases prior to submitting your budget.

Publications, reports and memberships

The Funds may not be used to purchase subscriptions to or individual copies of scientific journals, computer manuals, books or other publications. The Funds may not be used towards membership fees to societies. However, the Funds may be used towards reasonable costs incurred in the publication of research results, which includes printing material for presentation at conferences, (with acknowledgement of the WSIB) to the extent explicitly set out in the proposed budget and approved by WSIB.

Conferences

No more than \$1,500 of the total Funds may be used to support knowledge and dissemination at a conference (registration and/or publication fees). **The funds may not be used towards travel, or accommodation for conferences.**

Personnel hiring

The Funds may not be used towards costs associated with hiring of project personnel, including advertising and travel costs.

Hiring of consultants

Funds may not be used towards consulting fees. If additional expertise is required to fulfill a study objective and an external expert is hired for this purpose (i.e. a statistician), the expert should be included as a part of the project personnel and their role and salary clearly outlined, if it is not being completed by the study lead.

Administration fees

The Funds may not be used towards administration or tuition fees.

Materials and supplies

The Funds may not be used towards materials and supplies, including office supplies, at a fixed rate; they may only be used on an "as used basis".

Entertainment and hospitality

The Funds may not be used for entertainment or hospitality of any kind (and for greater certainty, the Funds may not be used for the purchase of alcohol).

Incidental expenses or gifts

The Funds may not be used towards costs associated with any incidental expenses while traveling, such as tips, dry cleaning, and long distance calls; or gifts, including gifts for investigators, research staff, or participants.

Purchase of equipment

No more than 10% of the total Funds may be used towards equipment purchase expenditures. Provided an equipment purchase is explicitly included in the proposed budget and approved by WSIB, any equipment purchased with the Funds becomes the property of the grant recipient.

Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive

Grant recipients shall comply with the terms of the [Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive](#) (the “Directive”) published by the Government of Ontario (or in any addenda or successor policies associated therewith), as though the Recipient’s personnel were employees of a government ministry. For greater certainty, any WSIB funds budgeted by the Recipient for travel, meals or hospitality must not exceed the amounts permitted in the Directive for employees of government ministries. Where the Directive requires ministry approval for an activity or expenditure, the Recipient shall seek approval from the WSIB. The WSIB, at its discretion, may require terms that are more strict than those of the Directive as a requirement of awarding a grant.

Conflict of Interest

The applicant organization must acknowledge if there is a perceived, potential, or actual conflict of interest (a “Conflict of Interest”) associated with the proposal. The applicant organization must also promptly inform the WSIB in writing if a Conflict of Interest becomes known at any time. A Conflict of Interest includes, without limitation, the following:

- situations, circumstances, or conduct that could give a grant candidate an unfair advantage during the proposal selection process or compromise the ability of the candidate to perform its obligations under a contract with the WSIB
- the offer or giving of a benefit of any kind, by or on behalf of a grant candidate to anyone, employed by, or otherwise connected with the WSIB, and
- additional circumstances described in the WSIB’s [Code of Business Ethics and Behaviour](#) (available at www.wsib.on.ca).

The WSIB reserves the right to:

- solely determine whether any situation or circumstance constitutes a Conflict of Interest
- require grant candidates participating in the proposal selection process to declare any Conflict of Interest
- disqualify grant candidates from the proposal selection process due to a Conflict of Interest, and/or
- prescribe the manner in which a grant candidate should resolve a Conflict of Interest in order to avoid disqualification.

Confidentiality and Freedom of Information

The information submitted in connection with this proposal may be disclosed by the WSIB in accordance with FIPPA (the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.F.31, as amended).

Intellectual Property Rights

A component of the Grant Agreement will be provisions that provide the WSIB with a non-exclusive, perpetual and irrevocable right to use, reproduce, display and distribute copies and prepare derivative works of all material produced from the grant activities. The WSIB may do so in any manner it considers useful or helpful to the administration of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

Grant Agreement

The WSIB intends to notify successful applicant organizations in Spring 2021. Successful applicant organizations must complete a grant agreement satisfactory to the WSIB ("Grant Agreement") prior to receiving grant funds.

Program contact information

If you have questions regarding the WSIB Grants Program, please contact:

Email: grants@wsib.on.ca

The WSIB appreciates the time and effort it takes to submit a proposal. Thank you for your dedication to the workers' compensation system of Ontario.

Appendix

2021 Grants Agenda

Research Priorities

The central areas of focus of the 2021 WSIB Grants Program support the WSIB's Strategic Plan with a focus on the impact of COVID-19:

1. COVID-19 is changing how we work
2. COVID-19 is changing how we approach health and safety
3. COVID-19 is changing how we support return-to-work and recovery

The Grants Program is committed to supporting the WSIB's strategic priority of being financially responsible and accountable through the operating practices of the program on an ongoing basis.

COVID-19 is changing how we work

This refers to the impact of COVID-19 on how a worker is expected to perform their job. COVID-19 has resulted in a number of changes, including where we work and how we interact in the workplace. It is important to understand how the changing approach to work will affect work injuries. Topics of interest include:

- How will working from home impact the definition of work-related injuries and illness?
- What factors of new work arrangements and remote-work impact work-related injuries and illness?
- What is the effect of COVID-19 on different sectors and occupations in terms of health and safety, and working conditions?
- What will be the future claim types and volumes?
- How will isolated workplaces affect social, mental and physical wellbeing?

COVID-19 is changing how we approach health and safety

This refers to the impact of COVID-19 on Ontario workplaces. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant changes to how we work. It is important to understand that some old practices should be left behind, while some new processes that have been implemented should be carried forward. New ways of working can potentially minimize the risk to workers, and it is imperative to leverage the insight gained to improve occupational health and safety.

Topics of interest include:

- How has COVID-19 impacted the perception of and/or investment in occupational health and safety?
- What new occupational health and safety measures are (were) effective and should be maintained?
- What past occupational health and safety measures should not be carried forward?
- How to implement occupational health and safety in a remote-working environment?

- How to maintain the occupational health and safety movement caused by COVID-19?
- What are effective programs or guides to support safe, effective and productive business operations against future pandemics or waves of COVID-19?
- What occupational health and safety gaps have been identified and need to be addressed to better protect and support vulnerable/high-risk occupations?
- What opportunities exist to better leverage, align, and/or link data within the workers' compensation system to improve outcomes?

COVID-19 is changing how we support return-to-work and recovery

This refers to the impact of COVID-19 on the ability to achieve early, safe, and sustained return-to-work (RTW) and recovery for injured and ill workers. COVID-19 has changed how we make decisions, deliver care, and support injured and ill workers. It will be important to leverage these changes to improve the workers' compensation system. Topics of interest include:

- Are new approaches for delivering care effective?
- What factors influence RTW and recovery post-COVID-19?
- How to support early and sustained RTW in a work-from-home or remote workplace?
- What skills and training will be needed for the evolving workforce?
- How can remote/virtual (online, telemedicine) care be optimized?
- How does the fear of pandemic impact readiness/willingness to RTW and how can it be addressed?
- What are the defining features of mental health claims in frontline or essential workers and how can they be supported?

Initial Proposal evaluation criteria

Initial Proposals will be evaluated based on their relevance to the WSIB and/or stakeholders within the workers' compensation system. An emphasis is placed on the practicality and business value of the proposal.

The evaluation process also considers Reputational, Financial and Operational risk to the WSIB. This assessment is inclusive of any partners or collaborators identified in the proposal.

When developing the proposal, please note the following criteria will be considered as key elements of the evaluation:

- *Is the proposal addressing real issues facing the WSIB and /or the workers' compensation system?*
- *How will the proposal ensure the objectives and priorities outlined remain relevant to the business upon completion of the study?*
- *How will the proposal generate meaningful change upon completion of the study?*
- *Will the proposal generate data and / or information that can impact practices, programs or policies within the WSIB and/or workers compensation system?*
- *Will the proposal general data and / or information that can impact business activities and evidenced based decisions within the WSIB and/or workers compensation system?*

While it is important to ensure the proposed approach and methodology being presented aligns to the objectives of the proposal, a more thorough examination will be conducted for those invited to the second stage of the competition.