The mission of the Maternal Newborn Child and Youth Strategic Clinical Network™ (MNCY SCN™) is “to bring together people, evidence and data to achieve the best possible health outcomes for mothers, newborns, children and families within a sustainable, publicly funded health care system.” To facilitate this mission, the MNCY SCN™ is pleased to announce its 2018 Seed Grant funding opportunity. Funding is being made available for up to TWO Seed Grants of up to $15,000 each to support research focused on innovative approaches to improve health outcomes in Alberta’s maternal, newborn, child and/or youth populations.

Projects must focus on one or more of the priority populations of the MNCY SCN:

- Maternal
- Infant
- Fetal
- Child
- Neonatal
- Youth
- Newborn

Research funded by this seed grant competition must fall into one of the following three CIHR research themes:

II. Clinical Research:
“Clinical research is research with the goal of improving the diagnosis, and treatment (including rehabilitation and palliation), of disease and injury; improving the health and quality of life of Albertans as they pass through normal life stages. Clinical research usually encompasses research on, or for the treatment of, patients.”

III. Health Services Research:
“Health services research includes research with the goal of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of health professionals and the health care system, through innovative changes to practice and policy. Health services research is a multidisciplinary field of scientific investigation that studies how social factors, financing systems, organizational structures and processes, health technologies, and personal behaviours affect access to health care, the quality and cost of health care, and, ultimately, Albertans’ health and well-being.”

IV. Social, Cultural, Environmental, and Population Health Research:
“Population and public health research comprises research with the goal of improving the health of Alberta’s population, or of defined sub-populations [in Alberta], through a better understanding of the ways in which social, cultural, environmental, occupational and economic factors determine health status.”
Important Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 8, 2017</td>
<td>Call for MNCY SCN™ Seed Grant applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 30, 2017</td>
<td>Register Intention to Submit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 8, 2018</td>
<td>Applications Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 28, 2018</td>
<td>Notice of Decision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants:
- Principal investigator (PI) must have a university appointment at one of Alberta’s academic institutions (e.g., clinical faculty or academic faculty such as adjunct/assistant/associate/full professors).
  - The money must be held in a research account under the PI’s name at the academic institution.
- PI’s may only hold a single active grant from the 2018 MNCY SCN™ Seed Grant competition, but may be co-investigators on multiple awards.
- A member of the research team must be affiliated with AHS.

Project:
Funding will be considered for any of the following activities:
- Research focused on improving health outcomes of maternal/fetal OR pediatric (newborn, infant, child, and/or youth) populations in Alberta.
- Pilot research projects, with intent to use the results to pursue later funding for a larger grant application to agencies such as Alberta Innovates, CIHR, or other external research funding agencies.
- Pilot or small studies that conduct new research, are feasibility studies, test new approaches, or develop a new idea.
- Pilot or small research projects/activities that are realistic in terms of scope and goals within the grant timelines. Projects should have clear and measurable goals.

Funding Eligibility
Use of funding shall follow the Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide. Some eligible and ineligible expenses are listed below. Questions about specific items can be answered using the Tri-Agency Guide and/or contacting the Assistant Scientific Director of the MNCY SCN™.

a. Funding may be requested for:
- Stipend support for trainees or salary support for research associates and technical/professional assistants.
- Research operating expenses, including general office supplies.
- Expenses for travel that is essential for the conduct of the study (such as data collection or to attend study training).
• Other expenses will be considered, but must be justified.

b. **Funding will NOT be provided for:**
   • Previously incurred expenses: funding will not be provided for expenses incurred prior to implementation of the grant.
   • Investigator salaries.
   • Tuition or scholarships for project staff.
   • Publication costs, legal or patent fees, membership fees, academic fees, secretarial support.
   • Travel to conferences, symposiums, presentations or meetings.
   • University, facility, or institute overhead or indirect costs.

**Evaluation of Applications**

Applications considered eligible for funding will be evaluated by a review panel informed by the MNCY SCN™ Core Committee members, administrators, researchers, clinicians, patients, and members of other SCNs. The following criteria will be provided to reviewers who will assess proposals for scientific excellence and alignment with the funding competition. Each criterion will be scored on a scale of 0-8 (see rubric below) unless otherwise noted:

1. **Background:**
   • Have the applicants provided enough background information?
   • If applicable, are preliminary data and/or information from a demonstration project included?

2. **Research question/objectives:**
   • Are they clearly written?
   • Are the objectives realistic and achievable?
   • Are the research questions answerable?

3. **Study Design and Methodology:**
   • Is the study design appropriate to the research questions/objectives?
   • Is the project design appropriate to the population(s) involved?
   • Are the methods described in sufficient detail? Were any key pieces of information missing?
   • Are the approaches to data gathering, storage, analysis and interpretation described and appropriate?
   • Are the outcomes clearly linked to the research questions/objectives and rationale?
   • Does the application provide evidence that the proposed activities can be completed within the term of the grant (12-24 months)?

4. **Relevance:**
   • Is there a gap in knowledge related to the maternal/fetal OR pediatric (newborn, infant, child, and/or youth) population in Alberta that this study will fill, or contribute to filling?
   • Does the project description demonstrate a real need for carrying out research in this topic area in Alberta?
• Will the research generate knowledge that can potentially inform a larger health services research project relevant to health care and/or health services (e.g., policies and/or practices) of mothers, newborns, infants, children, and/or youth in Alberta?

5. Anticipated impact of the project:

Likelihood that the study will develop evidence which may generate knowledge to inform policy and practice (including quality of care), and contribute to improving the health and/or health care of mothers, newborns, infants, children, and/or youth in Alberta. The following may be considered:

• Significance of issue (e.g., burden of disease)
• Likely significance of the project in generating beneficial results beyond the project participants
• Potential for impact within and beyond the local institution/jurisdiction and the academic community
• Likely significance of the project in transferring new knowledge – this includes development of pilot data

6. Integrated Knowledge Sharing/Translation (iKT) Plan:

• Is the iKT plan appropriate to the quality and generalizability of the information to be created?
• Does the iKT plan use methods appropriate to non-academic stakeholder groups (which may include community organizations, service providers, and/or decision/policy-makers)?
• Does the iKT plan include effective sharing of information with other researchers?

7. Team Composition and qualifications:

• Does the team have the necessary qualifications, expertise and experience to undertake this study?
• If applicable, does the team engage academics from more than one discipline, faculty or department?
• Are patients included as part of the research team (i.e., development of the proposal/plan) and/or is patient engagement included as part the methodology?
• Has the team engaged and described the role of other partners and stakeholders, including any of the following: community partners, service providers, policy-makers, decision-makers, patients?
• Is there evidence that existing or proposed stakeholder linkages will provide meaningful input to the study, and that the outcomes of the work will be meaningful to these stakeholders (including patients)?
• If applicable, does the team engage students and/or junior investigators, and support research capacity-building in Alberta?

8. Feasibility and Environment:

• Timeline is feasible
• Budget is appropriate
• Is there evidence of institutional support?
• Are the facilities, equipment, access to databases or services and personnel described adequate?
• Required signatures
9. Work with Indigenous Populations (if applicable):

If projects include work with Indigenous populations the team must abide by Tri-Council Guidelines for Research involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada (see: http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/29339.html). This criterion is not scored, but if not met by applicable studies, the study is automatically removed from eligibility for funding.
- Does the team appropriately address these guidelines?

10. Ethical Considerations:

- Are there any ethical issues in question?
- Does the application show evidence of consideration for participant privacy, informed consent, data storage and access, etc.?

11. Additional criteria:

These criteria need to be addressed by applicants but are not scored; comments are provided by reviewers to support the further development of the project.

Ease of Review:
- Is the application well written and easy to follow?
- Is the application complete according to the required standards (font size, page length, etc)?
- Is the application free of spelling and grammatical errors?
**Scoring Rubric**

The review committee will use a 9-point scale (0-8) for evaluation. Proposals scoring 6 or higher may be eligible for funding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Additional Guidance on strengths and weaknesses</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses</td>
<td>May be funded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Very strong with only some minor weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses</td>
<td>Not Funded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strong but with at least one moderate weakness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some strengths but with at least one major weakness</td>
<td>Not Funded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A few strengths and a few major weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Reporting Requirements

Each successful Principal Investigator (PI) will submit the interim and final reports. An interim progress report six months after initiation of the project will also be required. A report template will be provided and must be completed within 8 months of initiation of the project (2 months after the 6 month mark). A final report within 2 months of completing the project or ending the funding term, whichever is first.

Successful PIs will be invited to present their findings to the MNCY SCN™ Core Committee and/or Standing Committee(s). This is an opportunity for dissemination of findings to key health system decision makers and provides an opportunity to identify potential future collaborations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting Activity</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interim report</td>
<td>8 months after study initiation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final report</td>
<td>2 months after study completion or end of funding (whichever is first).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation(s)</td>
<td>Required during study period and/or after completion of funding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Application Process

Please refer to the registration and application instructions:
http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/scns/Page13271.aspx

The Seed Grant registration must be emailed to the MNCY SCN™ Assistant Scientific Director (Seija.Kromm@ahs.ca) by 4 pm (MDT) on Thursday, November 30, 2017.

The full application must be submitted to the same email by 4 pm (MST) on Monday, January 8, 2018.

Late or incomplete registrations/applications will not be accepted. Applications will NOT be accepted from any ‘unregistered’ applicants.

We hope that the seed funding will allow investigators to develop innovative ideas and/or grants for larger provincial, national, or international competitions.

Contact Information

For questions please contact Dr. Seija Kromm, Assistant Scientific Director of the MNCY SCN™ by email at Seija.Kromm@ahs.ca or by phone at 780-902-2940.