

Research Ethics and Integrity Policy

Grand Challenges Canada supports high-quality initiatives that are in accordance with applicable ethical guidelines and standards.

PURPOSE

This Policy outlines expectations of any innovator who receives funding from Grand Challenges Canada to complete research through their innovation project, as well as how Grand Challenges Canada is able to support the innovators we fund.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all innovators who receive funding from Grand Challenges Canada.

VISION

Grand Challenges Canada is committed to empowering innovators to engage in high-quality and ethical research, in a manner that aligns with their worldviews, values and principles, in order to bring about Bold Ideas with Big Impact®.

We recognize and acknowledge that research is rooted in worldviews, and informed and influenced by the social, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional and political structures in which it takes place, reflecting power dynamics and resulting in possible harms. This Policy, and the accompanying Research Ethics and Integrity Guidelines, aim to be responsive and accountable to calls to action, concerns and recommendations voiced by those most impacted by research and its outcomes.

PRINCIPLES

Through this Policy, we intend that all research activities and programs funded through Grand Challenges Canada be:

- Of the highest quality, and promote honesty, responsibility, fairness and accountability.
- Collaborative in nature, and respect the rights of innovators, individuals and communities to self-determine on issues of research design, implementation and governance.
- Committed to establishing and maintaining safe spaces for any person who is leading, participating and/or impacted by research activities.
- Committed to respectful sharing of knowledge, and of sharing, acknowledging and honouring the reciprocal accountabilities and rights inherent to diverse knowledge-producers and contributors.

All research and learning activities funded through Grand Challenges Canada and its affiliated programs will also need to be in accordance with relevant international, national, regional and locally-based research ethics standards, codes, guidelines and protocols.

IN PRACTICE

Where able, Grand Challenges Canada and its affiliated programs will work with innovators to ensure that their research aligns with this Policy and is conducted in accordance with the relevant ethical standards, codes, guidelines and protocols. Innovators are responsible for identifying the relevant ethical requirements and developing a plan to align with them. To support this, we recommend that innovators include the anticipated costs associated with implementing high-quality and ethical research activities in their requests for funding and ultimate budgets.

The following research is subject to additional regulations and will require appropriate research ethics approval by an agreed-upon, independent research ethics board and/or research ethics process. If you are not sure if your proposed research will be able to meet some (or all) of the relevant ethical requirements, please reach out to your contact at Grand Challenges Canada and, to the best of our abilities, we will work with you to identify and address these barriers.

In addition, we have developed a set of Research Ethics and Integrity Guidelines to accompany this Policy. These Guidelines are intended to provide further guidance and resources; we would strongly recommend that innovators confirm with their institution and/or community those resources that would be most appropriate and relevant to the proposed research initiative.

Research Involving People

Research ethics standards and principles are intended to ensure that research involving human participants is conducted in a way that demonstrates respect for persons, dignity, justice and concern for the welfare of individuals, families and communities.

Research involving human participants must follow the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki and must abide, where applicable, by the ethical standards outlined in the Canadian “Tri-Council Statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans”.

It follows that:

- Proposed research must respect, recognize, and protect the rights and interests of participants and their culture, knowledge, worldviews and natural environment, recognizing that research design and implementation must be considered within the context in which it takes place.
- Proposed research must take all reasonable actions to prevent harm, exploitation, abuse, discrimination and harassment as a result of the research, across all stages and the systems in which it occurs; this is especially true when working with individuals and communities that have experienced or continue to experience systemic and structural oppression.
- Innovators must be explicit about and address any potential power dynamics and power relationships that exist in the context of the research and the research setting.
- Innovators must establish collaborative and equitable research relationships and engagements with individuals and communities impacted by the proposed research.

- Proposed research must be viewed as valid and useful from all perspectives – innovators, the participating individuals and communities, as well as those who are intended to benefit from the research – as well as having potential social or scientific value, and have a favourable balance of risks and potential benefits.
- Proposed research must take all reasonable steps to minimize risks and maximize benefits to the individuals and communities with whom research is being conducted. The benefits must be defined and, ideally, the benefits are also experienced by the individuals and communities themselves.
- Proposed research must ensure all potential participants are provided with the opportunity to provide free, prior and informed consent, recognizing that informed consent is a process and that potential and enrolled participants have the right to determine how they would like to consent, and the right to decline or withdraw from the research at any time, without impacting their access to community services or any benefits that may result from the research. Consent can be obtained from potential participants in many ways other than in writing; where needed and/or possible, consider alternatives, such as verbal and or electronic consent processes. Where a person is not able to provide consent – for example, where capacities are limited – appropriate ethical alternatives and rationales will need to be approved in advance.

Research Involving Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Communities or Indigenous Cultural Heritage

The following principles must also be considered and addressed by innovators when research involves Indigenous peoples, Indigenous communities or Indigenous cultural heritage:

- Any research proposals that are with and/or about Indigenous peoples must acknowledge and respect Indigenous research frameworks alongside recommendations, as outlined in the United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹ and, where relevant, in Chapter 9 of the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement: “Research involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people of Canada”.
- These must be considered along with other national, regional and/or local Indigenous community research guidelines, with local Indigenous community research guidelines taking precedence over all others.
- All proposed research with Indigenous peoples and/or Indigenous communities must recognize, respect and support Indigenous- and community-led research and data oversight requirements, and Indigenous research ethics protocols and committees.
- Where research occurs within and across Indigenous communities, the research must demonstrate a direct benefit to those participating communities, as defined by the communities themselves.

Clinical Trial Registration

¹ The Government of Canada has passed Bill C-15, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, which will advance full implementation of the Declaration.

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) requires that clinical trials be registered before enrollment to be eligible for publication. As part of this Research Ethics and Integrity Policy, Grand Challenges Canada works with its partners and innovators to promote sharing of the learning and innovations that it supports. Innovators who plan to initiate clinical trials – defined as any research that assigns human participants to one or more health-related interventions to evaluate the effects on health outcomes – must register their trial in a public, searchable database.

We acknowledge that, for a small number of innovators, clinical trial registration may not be necessary and/or possible. In these instances, to the best of our abilities, we will work with innovators to come to an agreed-upon solution.

Research Involving Animals

Research involving animals must broadly conform to the guidelines developed by the Canadian Council on Animal Care, where applicable.

Grand Challenges Canada also expects that:

- Research using animals must account for local and regional processes, and observe local, regional, and/or community standards and protocols for the humane care and treatment of animals at the site where the research is being conducted.
- For research involving animals that are located on or within any Indigenous land, territory or community, researchers must consider the interconnectedness of these animals to Indigenous peoples, and the direct and indirect impacts of altering the ecosystems that they exist within.

Research Subject to Additional Regulatory Requirements

Research may be subject to enhanced regulation and oversight, in addition to those defined above. Examples include, but are not limited to, research involving recombinant DNA, biohazards, gene drive, human pluripotent stem cells, banking of biological materials and data, or the release of genetically modified organisms into the environment.

This research must be conducted in accordance with relevant and/or international guidelines, such as UNESCO's International Declaration on Human Genetic Data, and may require additional oversight by relevant institutional, regional and/or national regulatory bodies.

RESEARCH CONDUCT

Grand Challenges Canada encourages all innovators to conduct research and engage in related research activities according to the highest applicable research and ethical standards.

Grand Challenges Canada also acknowledges that research misconduct does happen and we are committed to protecting those who report research misconduct. Anyone making these reports in good faith will be treated confidentially, unless required otherwise by law. Grand Challenges Canada is committed to supporting individuals to make such reports.

Any innovator who becomes aware of, observes or experiences research misconduct by a Grand Challenges Canada representative, and/or as part of a research initiative funded by Grand Challenges Canada, is asked to advise their Grand Challenges Canada contact.

If you are unsure of who to contact, please email info@grandchallenges.ca for additional assistance or refer to Grand Challenges Canada's [Code of Conduct and Anti-Harassment Policy](#).

For confidential whistleblowing, please contact GCC's General Counsel at GeneralCounsel@grandchallenges.ca.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Anyone who is involved in the conduct and/or support of research funded by Grand Challenges Canada is expected to address any real, potential or perceived financial or personal conflicts of interest that may arise at any time during the research initiative, in accordance with Grand Challenges Canada's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

EVALUATION AND LEARNING

This Policy is a living document and, in recognition of changing circumstances and needs, we will continue to adapt it as necessary. This Policy is under the purview of Grand Challenges Canada's Governance & Human Resources Committee. We will report to the Governance & Human Resources Committee any deviations from the application of this Policy and its principles as they arise.

We are interested in learning from the people that we work with and the innovators who we fund. At all times, we welcome feedback from innovators regarding their experiences with this Policy. We welcome your questions, comments and requests regarding this Policy and our practices. For further information, please contact Grand Challenges Canada at info@grandchallenges.ca.

LAST UPDATED: March 22, 2022