

Stage 2 Foundation 2014 Applications: Most Common Weaknesses Observed by CIHR Reviewers

Outlined in this document is a summary of the most common weaknesses listed by CIHR reviewers in feedback received by University of Alberta applicants to the Stage 2 Foundation 2014 competition. Analysis was performed on 53 reviews of 11 applications. Four of the applications analyzed were approved at Stage 3 and seven applications were not approved.

The common weaknesses were analyzed by the [Stage 2 review sub-criteria](#): Research Concept, Research Approach, Expertise, Mentorship & Training, and Quality of Support Environment. The particular evaluation points for each sub-criterion, as they were presented to reviewers in ResearchNet, are marked with arrows. The number of reviews that commented on a particular evaluation point is shown as a percentage of the total number of comments for that evaluation point for applications that were approved (A) (19 reviews total) or not approved (NA) (34 reviews total). The actual number of mentions is given in square brackets after each percentage. Representative types of comments within each evaluation point are also listed, with their frequencies.

Sub-Criterion Research Concept

- The potential program outputs are not significant to health and may not have high impact – A: 5% [1]; NA: 26% [9]
 - Outputs may not be significant – A: 0% [0]; NA: 15% [5]
 - Outputs may not high impact on health – A: 0% [0]; NA: 12% [4]
- Objectives and/or goals of the proposal are not well-defined – A: 32% [6]; 35% [12]
 - Objectives/goals/aims are not well-defined – A: 5% [1]; NA: 18% [6]
 - Objectives/goals/aims are not well-justified – A: 26% [5]; NA: 21% [7]
- The framework is not coherent and there is little conceptual coherence within the program of research - A: 11% [2]; NA: 15% [5]
 - Framework is not coherent – A: 0% [0]; NA: 6% [2]
 - Program of research and goals are not coherent – A: 11% [2]; NA: 9% [3]
- The program has little translational (ex. clinical studies) or Knowledge Translation (KT) component – A: 16% [3]; NA: 9% [3]
 - Program has a weak translational component – A: 16% [3]; NA: 6% [2]
 - Program has a weak knowledge translation component – A: 0% [0]; NA: 3% [1] 0
- The concept, hypothesis and/or approach are not novel – A: 0% [0]; NA: 15% [5]
 - Concept is not novel – A: 0% [0]; NA: 6% [2]
 - Hypothesis is not novel – A: 0% [0]; NA: 3% [1]
 - Approach is not novel – A: 0% [0]; NA: 6% [2]

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- Did not make a discovery to advance field – A: 0% [0]; NA: 0% [0]
- The area of study is not of high importance and/or intriguing – A: 0% [0]; NA: 0% [0]
- The applicant does not have a strong track record in field – A: 0% [0]; NA: 6% [2]

Sub-Criterion Research Approach

- Research approach is not reasonable, appropriate, and will not deliver on objectives – A: 37% [7]; NA: 29% [10]
 - Research approach was not sufficiently detailed – A: 26% [5]; NA: 21% [7]
 - Research approach will not deliver on objectives – A: 11% [2]; NA: 15% [5]
- Approach does not allow for flexibility – A: 5% [1]; NA: 15% [5]
- Approach does not consider challenges and mitigation strategies – A: 5% [1]; NA: 12% [4]
- Applicant(s) does not have expertise and resources to execute the approach – A: 0% [0]; NA: 6% [2]
- Inappropriate methodology – A: 16% [3]; NA: 32% [11]
 - Methodology described is not appropriate – A: 11% [2]; NA: 21% [7]
 - Other methods need to be considered – A: 11% [2]; NA: 15% [5]
- Research approach is not innovative – A: 0% [0]; NA: 3% [1]
- Proposed work is not clinically important – A: 11% [2]; NA: 0% [0]
- Research approach does not include a Knowledge Translation (KT) plan – A: 5% [1]; NA: 12% [4]
- Clear timeline not provided – A: 0% [0]; NA: 0% [0]
- Measurement of program success is not appropriate – A: 11% [2]; NA: 18% [6]

Sub-Criterion Expertise

- The applicant(s) do not have the appropriate expertise and relevant experience to lead and manage the proposed program of research, considering its objectives and scope – A: 21% [4]; NA: 41% [14]
 - Weaker publication record – A: 16% [3]; NA: 9% [3]

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- Applicant has received less strong funding, fewer awards or speaking invitations – A: 0% [0]; NA: 6% [2]
 - Lacks experience in leading research teams – A: 0% [0]; NA: 9% [3]
 - Is not a leader in the field – A: 0% [0]; NA: 12% [4]
- There is not an appropriate complement and level of engagement and/or commitment from key Program Expert(s) – A: 26% [5]; NA: 21% [7]

Sub-Criterion Mentorship & Training

- The research program does not include a comprehensive mentorship and training plan for building capacity and positioning students, trainees, knowledge users, emerging scholars, and/or new/early career investigators for successful research careers and/or other career paths in non-academic health-related fields – A: 26% [5]; NA: 29% [10]
- The proposed plan does not demonstrate an appropriate and innovative approach for meeting its objectives in relation to the program of research and the research field – A: 11% [2]; NA: 15% [5]
- The plan does not include a strategy for identifying and mitigating potential challenges – A: 11% [2]; NA: 12% [4]

Sub-Criterion Quality of Support Environment

- The described environment(s) is not appropriate to enable the conduct of the program of research, and to manage and deliver on the objectives and key components of the proposed research program (e.g., research, knowledge translation, mentoring/training) through the provision of, or access to, the required infrastructure – A: 32% [6]; NA: 29% [10]
- Physical infrastructure – A: 11% [2]; NA: 0% [0]
 - Expertise of colleagues, consortia, professional networks – A: 16% [3]; NA: 6% [2]
 - Equipment and specialized facilities – A: 0% [0]; NA: 24% [8]
 - Cash or in-kind support from department, Faculty or university – A: 0% [0]; NA: 3% [1]