# OPEN FUNDING CALL FOR OVARIAN CANCER RESEARCH:
## COMPETITION GUIDELINES

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### B. Key Dates

| | |
|---|---|
| Competition materials available online | September 12, 2024 |
| Full application submission deadline | October 24, 2024 |
| Application review period | November 2024 |
| Competition results communicated to researchers | December 2024 |
| Funding start date | December 2024 |

### C. Competition Funder

Ovarian Cancer Canada (OCC) is the only national organization dedicated to overcoming ovarian cancer (OC). Our mission is to boldly and unapologetically take action against OC until the number of deaths from this disease is zero. Central to this is our commitment

to investing in all stages of research from bench to bedside to drive scientific progress and improvements to patient-centered care in OC prevention, early detection, treatment and survivorship (https://ovariancanada.org/about-our-research).

**D. Project eligibility & evaluation criteria**

**This competition is open to all clinical and scientific researchers studying OC in Saskatchewan. The goal is to fund the most innovative and impactful projects and initiatives with the greatest potential to benefit OC patients in the province.** Projects of all types, at all stages of research, and throughout the OC continuum (prevention, diagnosis, treatment, survivorship) are eligible to apply. In line with OCC research principles, meaningful engagement with patients as research partners – throughout the planning and implementation of the project - is required. Types of research could include:

- Discovery-based, pre-clinical or translational research
- Clinical trials, including pragmatic clinical trials and correlative studies on longitudinally collected biospecimens
- Patient-centred surveys or focus groups
- Research on social determinants of health in relation to the OC experience
- Collection and analysis of relevant health administrative data
- Implementation research
- Scientific resources e.g., research models, tissue banks, biorepositories

The following criteria will be considered when evaluating applications:

- Project fit
- Scientific merit/research strategy
- Potential for impact
- Qualifications of research team/research environment
- Innovation/novelty
- Patient engagement
- Clarity of communication
- Readiness
- Strength of supporting/preliminary data
- Budget & timelines

## E. Budget & study term

A total funding envelope of $825,000 will be made available, with a suggested per project budget range based on research type/stage. Applicants can apply for 1, 2, or 3 years of funding. Funding will start upon execution of the funding agreement with the Principal Applicant's host institution. The intent is to allocate all funding through one round of competition, with the option for a second round if needed.

***Recommended budget ranges***

| Research stage | Budget range/project |
|---|---|
| Discovery/translational | $100,000-$200,000 |
| Clinical trials | $250,000-$500,000 |
| Patient-centred surveys/focus groups | $20,000-$50,000 |
| Scientific resources (e.g., research models, tissue banks, biorepositories) | $10,000-$50,000 |

***Eligible expenses***

- Salary support to staff (e.g., research coordinators, assistants, associates, technicians) or trainees (e.g., graduate students and post-doctoral fellows) responsible for the work;
- Research consumables and service costs (e.g., core facilities) required to carry out the work;
- Costs related to acquisition, processing and molecular characterization of human biospecimens;
- Costs associated with data collection and analysis;
- Costs related to engaging patients in the planning and implementation of the project, including but not limited to honoraria for patient partners;
- Costs related to sharing of materials (e.g., clinical biospecimens, research models) and data to facilitate multi-institutional collaboration;
- Publication fees up to $4,000;
- Up to $2,000 per year for attending meetings, seminars or conferences (e.g., registration, travel, accommodation).

***Ineligible expenses***

- Remuneration of Principal Applicant, Co-Applicants or Collaborators;

- Purchase of equipment, unless approved in advance;
- Indirect costs to institutions;
- Sabbatical or maternity/parental leave;
- Publication fees in excess of $4,000;
- Meeting, seminar or conference expenses in excess of $2,000 per year.

**F. Applicant eligibility criteria**

Study principal applicant/s must hold a research position at an academic institution in Saskatchewan and be able to hold research funds at their institution. Study co-applicants and collaborators may be affiliated with institutions outside of Saskatchewan; however, funds must be spent within the province.

**G. Multiple applications**

There are no limits on the number of applications submitted, as either a principal applicant or co-applicant.

**H. Application process & instructions**

Ovarian Cancer Canada will administer and manage this single-stage (full application only) competition. All applications must be submitted in English to facilitate peer review by international reviewers. To be considered a complete submission, the following information must be compiled into a single PDF document and emailed to atone@ovariancanada.org with the subject line **"OCCxSK Ovarian Cancer Competition_lastname"** by **Oct 24, 2024 @11:59pm ET**:

1) **Application form** – includes basic project information and applicant demographics. Will be available at https://ovariancanada.org/for-researchers by Sept 12, 2024.

2) **Written components** – description and page limits indicated below. *Formatting guidelines for each: single-spaced, minimum of ¾" (2 cm) margin all four sides, 12pt font. Please note that non-compliance to the guidelines could lead to an administrative rejection of a submitted application prior to its scientific evaluation.*

   a) **Scientific abstract (max 1 page)**
      - Describe the rationale, research aims, methodology, anticipated outcomes and their potential impact for patients.

b) **Lay summary (max 1 page)**
   - ❖ Summary of the research project in lay terms, to be understood by those who are not in biomedical research.

c) **Research proposal (max 5 pages)**
   - ❖ Describe the proposed research project, considering the following elements:
     - Rationale and background;
     - Proposed aim(s)/objectives and hypotheses;
     - Study design/methodology
     - Patient engagement plan;
     - How the proposed project fits eligibility/evaluation criteria;
     - Significance of the proposed research and expected outcomes;
     - Study timelines.

d) **Research team (max 1 page)**
   - ❖ Describe the expertise and contributions of the applicant, co-applicant(s) and other research personnel involved in the proposed research.

e) **Budget summary and justification (max 2 pages)**
   - ❖ All budget items, including salaries and stipends, must be justified in terms of the objectives and milestones of the project. For every item in the budget, the applicant must provide a complete breakdown of the amounts requested for the project. Where there are subprojects, clearly itemize the budgetary requirement for each one.

3) **Figures & Tables (max 3 pages)**
   - ❖ Preliminary data and/or study schema

4) **References (no page limit)**
   - ❖ List of references cited in the Research Proposal

5) **Letters of Support (no limit)**
   - ❖ From collaborators and service providers, as applicable (optional)
   - ❖ From lead institution, ensuring that the necessary infrastructure support is available for the project (mandatory)

6) **Abbreviated CV for principal applicant and all co-applicants**
   - Academic degrees;
   - Details of employment since graduation;
   - 3-5 research and clinical contributions;
   - List of publications (including submitted manuscripts and manuscripts in preparation) during the last 5-full time or equivalent working years;
   - Grant support received in the past 5 years + relevant pending support – please note any potential overlaps with the current submission.

**I. Scientific resources available to researchers**

We encourage all researchers to take advantage of the following national resources (most recent reports available at https://ovariancanada.org/for-researchers):

- **OCC Tissue Banking Network** – a virtual network of biobanks which collect, store, and distribute biological samples (e.g., tumour tissue/cells, normal tissue/cells, blood) generously donated by individuals with ovarian cancer to enable ovarian cancer research in Canada and abroad. Scientists interested in accessing human ovarian cancer biospecimens for their research are encouraged to contact the individual biobanks for more information.
- **OvCAN Collection** – a virtual collection of high-fidelity research models of ovarian cancer, whose development and/or characterization has been funded by OCC. The purpose of the OvCAN Collection is to facilitate the creation and sharing of these gold standard models among the ovarian cancer research community, to enable and expedite high-quality research focused on improving ovarian cancer outcomes. If you are interested in incorporating one of these models into your study, please contact the individual lab for more information.

## J. Patient engagement in research

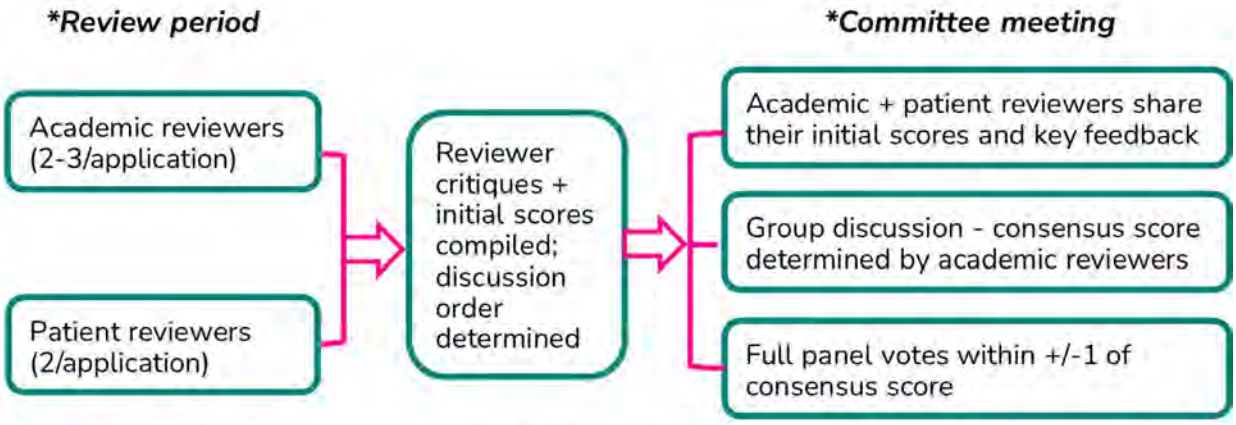
All projects funded through this competition are **required** to meaningfully engage patient partners throughout the study period. We encourage (although do not require) applicants to collaborate with OCC's Patient Partners in Research (PPiR) program to facilitate patient-researcher partnerships; this national program currently has three team members from Saskatchewan. A brief overview of the PPiR program and considerations for patient engagement are included in **Annex A**.

Information on how to engage with the OCC PPiR team is included in the "FAQ for Collaborators" document (here).

## K. Independent review process

All Applications will be evaluated by an independent expert review committee, made up of Canadian and/or international clinical and scientific experts ("academic reviewers") and individuals with lived experience of ovarian cancer ("patient reviewers"). OCC has years of experience and processes in place for training of patients to participate in grant review panels and manage any potential conflicts of interest with submitted applications that may arise from patient-researcher collaborations. The selection of reviewers will be made in compliance with OCC conflict of interest policies and guidelines, and all committee members will be required to sign a Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest agreement prior to receipt of their assigned applications.

Each proposal will be initially reviewed and scored by 2-3 academic and a team of 2 patient reviewers. At the final committee meeting, the proposal will be presented, discussed and scored (see process on following page). Final application scores and rank order will be reviewed by OCC leadership, with funding recommendations made to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health for approval.




**L. Research ethics & institutional policies**

Prior to commencing OCC-funded research activities, researchers shall ensure that the research protocol is consistent with the principles set out in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* and is reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board at each participating institution. All Research Ethics Board approval letters shall be forwarded to OCC's Director, Research at atone@ovariancanada.org.

It remains the responsibility of the principal applicant, co-applicants and collaborators to respect the rules and policies of their institutions.

**M. Reporting requirements**

All award recipients will be required to provide regular updates on progress to OCC as a condition of funding. Reporting templates and deadlines will be provided to recipients upon notice of funding.

**N. Contact**

For questions regarding the competition, please contact Alicia Tone (Director, Research; atone@ovariancanada.org)

## Annex A: Patient engagement guidelines

The Patient Partners in Research (PPiR) program was developed in 2020 by OCC as part of OvCAN to keep the voices of those with lived experience at the forefront of research (link), and has since become an integral component of all research at OCC. Engaging ovarian cancer patients as partners in research reflects our philosophy that the relevance, importance and impact of scientific and clinical inquiry can be enhanced by valuing the input and viewpoints of those affected by this disease. The PPiR program is led and managed by two OCC research staff and two patient advocates. Our PPiR team includes a diverse representation of ovarian cancer types, age, sexuality, cultural backgrounds, and geography with each member bringing their unique perspective and shared experiences as ovarian cancer patients, caregivers or loved ones.

The role of the PPiR program is to train and match patient partners to research opportunities with the goal to complement and maximize the impact of research being done by Canadian researchers. All team members are required to complete the Science of Cancer online course (link), in addition to task-specific training dependent on the engagement opportunity. Some examples of activities that PPiR team members have participated in include:

- Serving as patient reviewers on grant funding (pre-clinical and clinical) and trainee award review panels;
- Participating as embedded research team members on OCC-funded projects (both clinical and pre-clinical). Roles have included:
  - Review of grant applications and submission of letters of support;
  - Consultation on research study design, research questions, eligibility criteria and recruitment plans;
  - Review of lay language material (e.g., public summary, recruitment materials and informed consent forms);
  - Evaluation of patient surveys;
  - Participation in working groups led by research teams;
  - Co-development of patient decision aids and educational tools/modules;
  - Attendance at regular team meetings;
  - Review of manuscripts, meeting abstracts and other knowledge mobilization materials.

- Consulting on strategic planning, PPiR program guidelines, research partnership agreements, programmatic design and patient engagement best practices
- Participating as speakers and/or panelists at OCC events and external research conferences
- Participating on graduate student advisory committees
- Sharing their experiences and learnings with research teams and clinical trainees
- Participating in research and system advocacy alongside OCC staff and members of the research community.

The goal of PPiR is to build sustainable partnerships between patients and researchers, so that patient partners are updated regularly on the research progress and how their contribution is shaping the research project. Please consider the following when designing your patient engagement plan:

- Use the buddy system: we recommend including two patient partners for your study; this helps them feel more comfortable and also mitigates the impact of members' changing health status on the dynamics of the research team.
- For long-term partnerships, Ovarian Cancer Canada will schedule check-ins every 6 months to ensure the partnership is successful. Research teams are encouraged to have a closing meeting, where they present the results and conclusions of the research study as well as share how the input of patient partners has impacted their research project. Patient partners may also present their own reflections on their experience collaborating on the research project, to help researchers hone their patient engagement skills.

- Ask yourself these questions:
  - Why is this a good research opportunity to engage patients?
  - What will the role of the patient partner(s) be?
  - How will their input be used in the research process?
  - Are there any requirements to participate in the research opportunity? (e.g., living in a specific geographical region)
  - Does the patient partner need to have any specific experiences that they can speak to? (e.g., specific ovarian cancer type, experience with a specific treatment)
  - Will OCC need to provide task-specific training to best prepare the selected patient partners?

- What level of participation is required from the patient partners (hours/month)?
- What stage will the patient partner begin to participate in the research process?
- How long will the patient partners be involved?
- Is this a one-time engagement event or are there regular meetings?
- Will patient partners be compensated? *Note: this is not a strict requirement; however, patient partners should be made aware from the beginning*.

❖ Below are some helpful resources on patient engagement in research:

- Richards DP, Poirier S, Mohabir V, Proulx L, Robins S, Smith J. Reflections on patient engagement by patient partners: how it can go wrong. *Res Involv Engagem.* 2023 Jun 12;9(1):41. PMID: 37308922
- Richards DP, Cobey KD, Proulx L, Dawson S, de Wit M, Toupin-April K. Identifying potential barriers and solutions to patient partner compensation (payment) in research. *Res Involv Engagem.* 2022 Feb 23;8(1):7. PMID: 35197113
- Liabo K, Boddy K, Bortoli S, Irvine J, Boult H, Fredlund M, Joseph N, Bjornstad G, Morris C. Public involvement in health research: what does 'good' look like in practice? *Res Involv Engagem*. 2020 Mar 31;6:11. PMID: 32266085
- Richards DP, Jordan I, Strain K, Press Z. Patients as Partners in Research: How to Talk About Compensation With Patient Partners. *J Orthop Sports Phys Ther.* 2020 Aug;50(8):413-414. PMID: 32736501
- *"A How-to Guide for Patient Engagement in Research"* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research; link)