GenomeBritishColumbia

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Sector Innovation Program Guidelines

Contents

Sector Innovation Program
Guidelines

A. Introduction and Background

Genome British Columbia (Genome BC) is a not-for-profit organization supporting world-class genomics research and innovation to grow globally a competitive life sciences sector and deliver sustainable benefits for British Columbia, Canada and beyond. Since its inception in 2000, Genome BC has invested nearly $1.3B in over 500 genomics research projects.

Genomics[1] is the science that aims to decipher and understand the entire genetic information of an organism. Genome BC aims to encourage genomics research which can provide social, environmental, and/or economic benefits to the citizens of British Columbia. Genome BC invests in research to address challenges in key sectors: health, forestry, agriculture and agri-foods, fisheries and aquaculture, mining, energy and the environment.

B. Program Objective

The Sector Innovation Program (SIP) aims to support strategically important genomics research with long-term potential to address the needs and challenges of key sectors in BC's economy and society.

C. Program Parameters

To date, Genome BC has committed an investment of $11M to the SIP program and plans to allocate funds, as necessary, to run regular intakes of the program. As each SIP intake has a strategic focus, applications to SIP will only be open to projects that address the strategic focus of each particular intake.

NOTE: The program-specific parameters may vary for a particular intake. Refer to the Intake Information Sheet for the focus and any intake-specific parameters or additional eligibility criteria. Intake Information Sheets for active intakes are available on the Genome BC website (www.genomebc.ca) or via email at sip@genomebc.ca.

The general SIP program parameters are as follows:

- Co-funding (matching funds) is not required.
- The allowable project budget range is $75,000 to $250,000, but this may vary for a particular intake.
- The allowable project term range is 12 to 24 months, but this may vary for a particular intake.

D. Eligibility

SIP submissions are eligible when they meet both applicant and project eligibility criteria:

[1] The term genomics is defined here as the comprehensive study of the genetic information of a cell or organism, including the function of specific genes, their interactions with each other and the activation and suppression of genes. For ease of reference, it includes related disciplines such as bioinformatics, epigenomics, metabolomics, metagenomics, proteomics and transcriptomics.

Applicant Eligibility

- The Project Leader is an academic researcher based at one of the following types of BC institutions: (1) post-secondary institutions or their affiliated hospitals or research institutes; (2) regional health authorities; (3) laboratories of federal government departments or agencies[2]; or (4) non-governmental, not-for-profit organizations (including community or charitable organizations) with an explicit research or knowledge translation mandate.
- The Project Leader is not currently leading an active project funded through the SIP program.
- The Project Leader[3] is not listed in that role on more than one Statement of Interest (SOI) for a SIP project/application to a particular intake.
- If the Project Leader has any existing Genome BC-funded projects, administrative requirements (e.g., reporting) for those projects must be up to date.

Project Eligibility

- The project aligns to the objectives of the program and the particular intake.
- The project plans to employ genomics to achieve the project objectives.
- The project meets the specific program parameters for the particular SIP intake.

NOTE: Refer to the Intake Information Sheet for the intake-specific focus, parameters, and any additional eligibility criteria. Intake Information Sheets are available on the Genome BC website (www.genomebc.ca) or via email at sip@genomebc.ca.

E. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are essential to achieving excellence and the full potential of the research ecosystem. Applicants are encouraged to consider how EDI-related considerations can be integrated into their research design and practices. For reference, see the Government of Canada's Best Practices in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research Practice and Design guide: https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/nfrf-fnfr/edi-eng.aspx

F. Application Process

Application submission instructions are available in the *Sector Innovation Program – Application Form*, available on the Genome BC website. Applications must meet the SIP eligibility criteria outlined in Section D of the SIP Program Guidelines and the Intake Information Sheet for the particular intake. Applications must address the evaluation criteria described in Appendix 1 of these SIP Program Guidelines.

A companion SIP Application Budget must be provided as part of the application. The SIP budget template is also available on the Genome BC website. Financial Guidelines are described in Appendix 2 of these SIP Program Guidelines.

Applications and associated documents must be submitted directly to Genome BC via email at: sip@genomebc.ca by the Application Submission Deadline indicated in the Intake Information Sheet

[2] Researchers at B.C. Provincial government labs are not eligible for this program since Genome BC funds cannot flow to B.C. Provincial government organizations.

[3] A Researcher may not submit more than one SOI where they are listed as the Project Leader to a particular intake. However, they may be involved in more than one project in different roles. For example, as co-project leader or co-applicant.

Applications will be evaluated by external reviewers using the evaluation criteria in Appendix 1 of the SIP Program Guidelines and the Intake Information Sheet. Financial due diligence reviews will be conducted by Genome BC using the financial requirements outlined in Appendix 2.

Genome BC reserves the right to modify the review process to accommodate the number of applications and ensure that the evaluation criteria are followed and program goals are met. Following the full decision process, all applicants, whether recommended for funding or not, will be provided with written reviews of their application. Successful applicants will receive a Notice of Results with conditions that must be met prior to project launch.

The decision of Genome BC regarding any project is final and appeals will not be considered. Applicants who are not funded on a given project are not precluded from submitting new project proposals to the program as applicable.

G. Administration Following Notice of Results

The plan for disbursement of approved funds will be determined based on the specific needs of the project. The first disbursement of funds will flow to projects once all conditions for the release of funds have been met as detailed in the Notice of Results.

Funded projects will be required to provide Genome BC with updates on the project progress throughout the project term. The reporting requirements and schedule will be determined in the funding agreement. *Genome BC reserves the right to hold back a portion of the funding until receipt and approval of the final report.*

H. Timelines

Refer to the Intake Information Sheet for specific intake timelines. Current Intake Information Sheets are available on the Genome BC website (www.genomebc.ca) or via email at sip@genomebc.ca.

I. Genome British Columbia Contact

Interested researchers are encouraged to contact Genome BC at sip@genomebc.ca with any questions or clarifications required. Further information is available on the Genome BC website (www.genomebc.ca).

APPENDIX 1. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Refer to the application form for a description of the required contents for each section.

To ensure that SIP objectives are met, applications will be evaluated on each of the following major criteria, which are regarded as equally important:

A. Strategic importance to the sector(s) aligned to:
    - Economic, social and/or environmental benefits to BC;
    - Demonstrated sector need for the outcomes of this research; and
    - Project is positioned to advance the research towards sector uptake or implementation;
B. Research, management and financial feasibility.

A. Strategic importance to the sector(s)/target area

1. How convincing is the argument that the project deliverables are of strategic importance to the sector or target area of interest, as outlined in the relevant Intake Information Sheet?
2. Are the deliverables realistic and achievable?
3. Are the potential economic, social and/or environmental benefits of this research well-described and reasonable?
4. How significant are the potential benefits of this research in terms of impact on the sector or target area of interest?
5. Have the potential users of the outcomes of this project been identified?
6. How will this project position the applicants to advance this research if the project is successful? For example, follow-on projects, partnerships with key sector users, collaborations etc.

B. Research, Management and Financial Feasibility

<u>Research</u>

1. How will genomics be used to realize the proposed objectives?
2. Are the major activities consistent between the research plan, budget and Gantt chart?
3. Do the proposed activities have specific, measurable scientific objectives that will support the project deliverables?
4. Are the proposed objectives, goals, milestones and critical path feasible? Milestones must be constructed so as to provide objective, quantifiable measures of success and should be realistically attainable during the proposed timeframe.
5. How suitable are the available resources, facilities and equipment?
6. Are the design, methods and analysis adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project?
7. Does the project include links to collaborators that are essential to the success of the project?
8. How appropriate are the plans for handling the research data and biological resources (data protection, release and publication, resource sharing, etc.)?
9. If proposing analysis of samples that are subject to seasonal availability, does the team have access to existing samples or ability to complete sample collection very early in the project?

Management

10. How appropriate is the expertise and time commitment of the research team in terms of realizing the research goals?
11. Does the project team have demonstrated leadership, research experience and subject knowledge, particularly in this type of research initiative?
12. How well does the management plan cover project governance, accountabilities of personnel, and processes for decision-making on research direction?
13. Has the team clearly demonstrated how they will make the research results accessible to the research community, when intellectual property protection is not a concern? For example, has the team defined data repositories to share data?
14. To what extent does the project support equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) by having a project team that attains gender parity and includes members of under-represented groups (racialized persons, people living with different abilities, Indigenous peoples, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community)?

Financial

15. Do the budgeted costs comply with the eligible costs outlined in the Financial Guidelines (Appendix 2)?
16. Are the budgeted costs aligned with the proposed research plan and activities?
17. Is there a clear relationship between the costs and proposed benefits of the project?
18. How effective are the financial and budgetary control processes?
19. Do the documentation and principal financial assumptions support the proposed budget?
20. Are all of the costs allocated to Genome BC incurred and paid for in the Province of BC? Costs incurred in BC utilizing fee-for-service providers located outside of the Province are eligible, but quotes and justification must be provided.

APPENDIX 2. FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

Eligible costs are defined as reasonable and new costs for items that directly support the objectives of the Genome BC approved project. Genome BC funds cannot be used to cover overhead costs.

Note that Genome BC funds cannot flow to a company or to a BC Provincial government laboratory unless they are providing the work on a Fee-for-Service basis (see Services from Others).

The main categories of eligible costs are 1) Salaries and benefits, 2) Consumables, 3) Services from Others, 4) General and Administrative costs and 5) Equipment.

Eligible costs may include the following:

1. Salaries and benefits:
    a. Salaries for team members, apart from Project Leader or Co-leaders, who do not hold existing, ongoing or permanent salaried positions through their institution. Salaries must be shown to be new and incremental and represent at least 0.15 FTE per year.
    b. Benefit rate as charged by the host institution, not to exceed 20% of the employee's salary per year.
    c. Salaries to support administration and co-ordination of the project, such as a Project Manager, to a maximum of $5,000 per year (pro-rated for partial years) in total costs for small-scale ($250k and under) projects. These costs cannot exceed more than 5% of the total budget.
2. Consumables:
    a. Materials and supplies consumed as part of the research, such as laboratory reagents and supplies (e.g., microtitre plates, pipette tips, kits, reagents). For consumables utilized in most laboratories, a general rate per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) may be accepted, provided that the rate is appropriately justified in the supporting documentation.
    b. Items that meet at least one of the following: 1) expendable tangible property, 2) useful life of 1 year or less, or 3) a cost of less than $2000. For example, a $2000 piece of equipment, such as a laptop, would be considered a consumable cost.
    c. Travel for research activities (e.g., sample collection).
    d. Equipment service contracts, provided that the need for the use of the equipment is justified.
3. Services from Others:
    a. External costs that are incurred based on a reasonable fee-for-service arrangement or contract.
    b. Costs related to Intellectual Property protection services, such as patent registration, filing, and maintenance costs incurred during the term of the project, as long as the service is provided by a company external to the host institution.
    c. A copy of a quote or Statement of Work (SOW) must be provided to support any individual cost that exceeds $15,000.
    d. Genome BC strongly recommends the use of service providers based in B.C. The use of out-of-province or out-of-country service providers must be justified in the appropriate section of the application.
4. General and Administrative (G&A):

a. Reasonable and low general and administrative (G&A) costs directly linked to the project. For example, travel costs that are not directly related to the research activities (e.g. travel to conferences and meetings), costs for the project's communications and public outreach activities, and costs associated with scholarly publications, including fees to provide open access to the findings (e.g. costs of publishing in an open access journal or making a journal article open access).
b. G&A costs must not exceed five percent (5%) of the non-administrative costs of the project budget (calculated as total budget less administrative costs).

5. Equipment:
    a. Equipment is defined as any item (or interrelated collection of items comprising a system) which is used wholly or in part for the research proposed and meets all three of the following conditions: 1) non-expendable tangible property, 2) having a useful life of more than 1 year, and 3) a cost of $2,000 or more.
    b. A strong justification for the need to purchase equipment for a Genome BC project must be provided.
    c. Any items of equipment over $15,000 require a copy of a quote to be provided with the application.

Ineligible costs include, but may not be limited to:

- Indirect costs to the project, such as institutional overhead costs applied to funds from partners.
- The opportunity cost of using existing infrastructure.

Genome BC will conduct a financial due diligence review as part of the review process to assess if costs are eligible and well-justified.