

Request for Applications (RFA)

Canadian Spinal Cord Stimulation Team Planning Grant

About Praxis

The Praxis Spinal Cord Institute is a Canadian-based not-for-profit organization that drives innovation in spinal cord injury (SCI) research and care. By facilitating an international network of researchers, health care professionals, entrepreneurs, investors, individuals with SCI, and their supporters, we strive to improve the lives of people living with SCI in Canada and around the world.

Background

The objective of [Praxis' Cure Program](#) is to support work leading to better diagnosis of, and promising treatments for SCI. Areas of focus include biomarkers to assess impairment, and development of neuro-protective and neuro-restorative therapies to maximize function. In order to achieve this, we fund innovative initiatives selected through strategic investments and open competitions that align to our program objective.

Description of this RFA

Individuals experience difficulties with neurological function after SCI, which can lead to physical and emotional challenges that may reduce overall quality of life and lead to secondary health complications. Recently, neuro-modulation which is the use of electrical interfaces to alter neural activity ([James et al. 2018](#)) including epidural and transcutaneous spinal cord stimulation, has shown promise to improve autonomic functions (e.g. cardiovascular function) as well as motor function in individuals with SCI. To facilitate the translation of this technology to individuals living with SCI, it is critical to:

- engage consumers and other key stakeholders in the design of clinical studies,
- ensure the desired outcomes are assessed and the technology provides a meaningful benefit,
- include standardized outcome measures,
- engage multiple study centres, and ultimately
- develop a pragmatic and ideally open source protocol focusing on the technology that can be translated into clinical practice.

To date, no such study exists in Canada so there is a need to provide support for Canadian researchers, clinicians, and consumers to form a collaborative team and engage other stakeholders to develop major grant proposals.

Outputs/deliverables of this RFA may include:

- A strategy for the development and submission of the proposal to an external funding agency;
- Pilot research directly relevant to the preparation and writing of a competitive proposal for submission;
- An application for a major funding agency (e.g. CIHR, U.S. Department of Defense).

The intended outcomes of this RFA include:

- **Short-term outcome:** Increased collaboration between researchers, clinicians, consumers, and other stakeholders and between multiple study centres to develop and submit a major grant proposal for spinal cord stimulation in SCI.
- **Medium-term outcome:** Increased high quality and robust studies for developing and evaluating spinal cord stimulation in SCI to advance the evidence for regulatory approval process.

- **Long-term outcome:** Increased access to spinal cord stimulation for Canadians with SCI to help restore neurological function.

Award Amount and Term

Up to C\$50,000 is available for this competition. Award amount will be determined based on assessment of information provided in the application (i.e. quantity and quality of deliverables planned). The award will have a term ending no later than March 31, 2022.

Awards can only be used to support direct initiative expenses. Ineligible expenses include:

- Rent
- Capital expenses (e.g. computers, office equipment, furniture, fixtures)
- Indirect expenses (e.g. overhead, administrative costs)
- Travel and accommodation expenses (prohibited during pandemic)
- Activities that are not part of the initiative
- Costs that are already otherwise funded

Eligibility Criteria

The Principal Applicant or Co-Principal Applicants must:

- Be affiliated with a Canadian organization eligible to hold Praxis funds (be a [qualified donee](#) registered with Canada Revenue Agency)
- Be in a position which allows him/her to pursue and lead independent initiatives, including the proposed initiative
- Accept Praxis' conditions of funding ([Appendix 1](#))

All Applicants must:

- Have the support of their organization to participate in the initiative
- Be an independent researcher or knowledge user who has an active, meaningful role in the initiative
- Disclose all real or perceived conflicts of interest (COI) ([Appendix 2](#) and [3](#))

Each Application Team must include:

- At least one consumer (patient partners or individuals with lived experience) for whom appropriate compensation must be offered as per [CIHR](#) and be reflected in the budget
- One clinician from at least three Canadian provinces to support the relevance and feasibility of application in practice in a Canadian health care setting
- Additional stakeholders (e.g. hospital administrators, clinic owners) to facilitate the logistics of offering the technology as part of care

Team can also include researchers and clinicians from a non-Canadian study centre. The Principal Applicant, however, must be affiliated with a Canadian organization.

Key Dates

Key Dates	Timeline
Deadline to submit proposal	November 13, 2020
External review	November 16 - December 4, 2020
Notice of decision	Week of December 14, 2020
Grant agreement process	December 2020 - January 2021

Application Instructions

Applicants must complete the Application Cover ([Appendix 4](#)) and include the following:

1. Lay Summary (up to 250 words) & Five Key Words
2. Proposal (5 pages maximum)
 - a. Significance of this initiative that will be the focus of a proposal to be developed and submitted to an external funding agency;
 - b. Brief review of relevant literature, citing where appropriate research of the team;
 - c. Strategy for the development and submission of a proposal to an external funding agency, including aims and a set of activities (e.g. pilot research);
 - d. Potential risks and mitigation strategies for the proposal development;
 - e. Distinction between the aims of the present proposal with related research activities to be conducted within the timeline of the grant award and the aims of the grant proposal to be developed and submitted to an external funding agency;
 - f. Identification of a specific external funding agency to which the proposal will be submitted with substantiation of the agency's likelihood of funding the topic (e.g. evidence of fit with the agency's research goals and priorities and/or a specific RFA issued by the agency).
3. Budget Request and Work Plan (additional 1 page maximum, excluding budget and Gantt chart)
 - a. Provide an itemized budget (use budget template - [Appendix 5](#)) and provide justification;
 - b. Provide a work plan that is related to the budget and that includes a breakdown of milestones, deliverables, and timeline in a Gantt chart.
4. Attachments
 - a. COI Disclosure Form signed by all Applicants ([Appendix 3](#))
 - b. CV of all Applicants
 - CV formatted for CIHR or other formats as appropriate to reflect member's role (e.g. non-researcher clinicians, consumers, community organization staff, etc.) may be used.
 - c. Letter of Support (e.g. from organizations/partners)

Submission

Complete application must be compiled into a single and indexed (i.e. include a table of contents) PDF or Word document. Submit your application package electronically to funding@praxisinstitute.org before the deadline.

Application Package:

1. Application cover
2. Lay summary
3. Proposal
4. Budget request and work plan (budget, Gantt chart)
5. Attachments: Signed COI Disclosure Forms and CVs from all Applicants, and letter(s) of support

Review Process

For quality improvement purpose, a team of reviewers will evaluate the application using the criteria below.

Evaluation Criteria

- **Strategic Alignment:** Does the initiative align with Praxis’s strategic plan, vision, and mission?
- **Significance:** What is the extent to which the proposal to be developed and submitted to an external funding agency will make an original and important contribution to the field of inquiry it addresses?
- **Project Development Strategy:** What is the extent to which the pilot research and the information (data) generated will provide the foundation for a sound and competitive proposal? Were outcomes selected meaningful to consumers and were standardized outcome measures included in study design? Is there collaboration from multiple study centres on the initiative? Is the intent to engage a broad range of stakeholders to facilitate a collaborative team grant?
- **Quality of Presentation:** What is the extent to which the proposal demonstrates a level of “grantsmanship” reflecting the quality of the proposal to be submitted to an external funding agency?
- **Likelihood of Funding:** What is the extent to which the proposal identifies an appropriate funding agency and the likelihood the proposal to be developed and submitted will be selected for funding by the external agency?
- **Potential Impact:** Does this initiative address a clearly defined need? To what extent will the initiative’s output be meaningful and of value to the SCI community?
- **Consumer Engagement:** Is there evidence of meaningful engagement with individuals with SCI throughout the initiative? Is the plan in engaging consumer well thought out, appropriately budgeted for, and feasible? What is the extent to which their engagement contributes to the development of the proposal?

Funding Decision-Making Process

Upon completion of the review process, the review committee presents a recommendation to the CEO for a final decision on initiative funding.

Questions

Please contact funding@praxisinstitute.org for questions regarding this RFA.