NOVA SCOTIA
Health Research
FOUNDATION

Policies, Legislation and Ethics Requirements

Updated February, 2017

Table of Contents

NSHRF Conflict of Interest Policy

The NSHRF makes every effort to ensure not only that its decisions are fair and objective, but also that they are seen to be so. Therefore, applicants, peer and merit review committee members, review committee observers, funding partners, potential funding partners and consulting experts must avoid any actions that might give the appearance that a conflict of interest exists or could reasonably be viewed as affecting objectivity of the review process or funding decisions.

Review of submitted materials, or observation of that review, must not occur if the committee member/ reviewer/ observer:

a) is in a position to gain or lose financially, professionally or personally from the outcome of the application review
b) is a team member on an application being reviewed in the same funding competition
c) feels that he or she cannot provide an objective evaluation of the application
d) has a professional or personal relationship with any team member named on the application (hereinafter referred to as "the applicant(s)"). Specifically, if the committee member/ reviewer/ observer is a(n):
    i. colleague from the applicant(s)' immediate department within the past five years
    ii. individual with whom the applicant(s) has collaborated closely on a project, published an article or been a co-applicant on a funding application within the past five years (or plans to do so in the immediate future)
    iii. former student/trainee or teacher/supervisor of the applicant(s) within the past ten years
    iv. close personal friend of the applicant(s)
    v. close relative of the applicant(s)
    vi. individual with whom the applicant(s) has had significant or long-standing professional or personal differences.

It is the duty of the committee member/ reviewer/ observer to identify potential or actual conflicts of interest to the NSHRF as soon as he/she becomes aware of such an instance. When a committee member/ reviewer/observer is uncertain as to whether a conflict exists, he/she should inform the NSHRF and a final decision will be made by the NSHRF.

NSHRF Confidentiality Policy

All documents and information provided to the NSHRF for the purpose of peer review are subject to the conditions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Therefore, the documents and information and any discussions thereof, must be treated as strictly confidential and may not be used for any purpose beyond that for which they are originally intended.

All materials related to the review process must be stored in a secure manner to prevent unauthorized access. When documentation is no longer required, it must be destroyed using a secure method such as burning or shredding or returned to the NSHRF for destruction. It is the intention of the NSHRF that all information gained by reviewers by reason of their participation in this program is to remain absolutely confidential. This would include information as to who may or may not be in a list of competitors for grants and awards, as well as information concerning applicants who have submitted proposals for review. All inquiries received by committee members, reviewers, or scientific officers concerning the review of any application should be referred to the NSHRF.

Freedom of Information, Privacy, and Personal Information Protection

The NSHRF is subject to provincial legislation regarding privacy, as outlined in Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act 1993 (the FOIPOP Act) (see Appendix A). The NSHRF is committed to openness and transparency, while ensuring the protection of private information and intellectual property of Nova Scotia researchers. Personal information collected by the NSHRF about applicants is used to: review applications, administer and monitor grants and awards, compile statistics and support health research in Nova Scotia.

While respecting the application of the FOIPOP Act, all signing parties involved in a collaborative agreement will also be bound by the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). All personal information (as identified by the PIPEDA) collected, used or disclosed in the course of any commercial activity under collaborative agreements related to the funding opportunity will be collected, used and disclosed in compliance with the PIPEDA.

Collection, Use, Disclosure and Retention of Personal Health information

The NSHRF is subject to provincial legislation governing the collection, use, disclosure and retention of personal health information, as defined by the Personal Health Information Act, 2010 (the PHIA). The NSHRF is committed to openness and transparency, while ensuring the protection of personal health information in accordance with the PHIA. See Appendix B for more information about consent and compliance with the PHIA.

Ethical Conduct Requirements

The NSHRF is committed to supporting and enabling research of the highest quality to improve the health of Nova Scotians. Funded research must comply with ethical conduct requirements.

Research Involving Humans

Research involving humans must comply with TCPS 2 – Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

The appropriate local review committee operating in accordance with the relevant statements of the TCPS2 policy must approve any research involving human subjects before it starts.

In addition to the provisions outlined in Chapter 9 of the TCPS 2 (Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada), applicants whose proposed research will involve Aboriginal people are encouraged to consult the Mi'kmaw Research Principles and Protocols (Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch) to ensure awareness of any principles and protocols established by local Aboriginal communities.

Other Ethics Guidelines

Other applicable ethical guidelines include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Canadian Biosafety Standard (CBS) and Canadian Biosafety Handbook (Public Health Agency of Canada and Canadian Food Inspection Agency)
- Canadian Council on Animal Care Guidelines

Integrity in Research

The NSHRF is guided by national standards and procedures related to integrity in research, as described in the Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research (2016). This framework is used as a guide to promote integrity in research and scholarship, and when investigating any allegations of misconduct in research and scholarship.

The primary responsibility for ethical conduct lies with the researcher(s); the institution administering funds must have boards, committees or agreements in place for the review and monitoring of this conduct.

APPENDIX A: Consent and Compliance Undertaking Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPOP Act) provides for certain rights of public access to information contained records of the Government of the Province of Nova Scotia and public bodies as defined by the FOIPOP Act. The FOIPOP Act also provides rights of privacy protection with respect to the use and disclosure of personal information in the custody and control of Government of the Province of Nova Scotia and public bodies.

The text of the FOIPOP Act may be viewed here. Regulations enacted under the FOIPOP Act may be viewed here.

The Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation is subject to the provisions of the FOIPOP Act. This section is intended to ensure that Applicants are fully aware and consent to the intended use, including disclosure, of the information provided to the Foundation under the Research Programs, and that the Applicants will ensure that information obtained from third parties for the purpose of any work under a Grant, or submitted to the Foundation in this Application, is compliant with the FOIPOP Act.

Applicants (including team members listed on a NSHRF grant registration/application submitted via the GMS) consent to the use and disclosure of information contained in this Application, including personal information, as may be reasonable for the purpose of:

- relevance review by Foundation staff, funding partners and potential funding partners of the Foundation, peer review committee members and consulting experts; and
- funding decisions by Foundation staff, funding partners and potential funding partners of the Foundation, peer review committee members and consulting experts.

If a Grant is approved as a result of the submission of this Application, the Applicants undertake to the Foundation that all information, including personal information, provided to the Foundation as part of the work product of such Grant:

- will be obtained in compliance with the FOIPOP Act;
- may be used and disclosed by the Foundation for the purposes of the subject research in compliance with the FOIPOP Act; and
- the Applicant will obtain written consents from the persons who the information is about, as may be required by the FOIPOP Act.

APPENDIX B: Consent and Compliance Undertaking Personal Health Information Act

The Personal Health Information Act (PHIA) provides for certain obligations and restrictions with respect to the collection, use, disclosure and retention of personal health information, as defined in the PHIA. The text of the PHIA may be viewed here.

The Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation is subject to the provisions of the PHIA. This section is intended to ensure that Applicants are fully aware of the provisions of the PHIA and that the Applicants will ensure that personal health information obtained from third parties for the purpose of any work under a Grant, or submitted to the Foundation in this Application, is compliant with the PHIA.

Applicants (including team members listed on a Foundation grant registration/application submitted via the GMS) undertake that use, disclosure and retention by the Foundation of any personal health information contained in this Application will be compliant with the PHIA when used or disclosed as may be reasonable for the purpose of:

- relevance review by Foundation staff, funding partners and potential funding partners of the Foundation, peer review committee members and consulting experts; and
- funding decisions by Foundation staff, funding partners and potential funding partners of the Foundation, peer review committee members and consulting experts.

If a Grant is approved as a result of the submission of this Application, the Applicants undertake to the Foundation that all personal health information, provided to the Foundation as part of the work product of such Grant:

- will be obtained in compliance with the PHIA;
- may be used, disclosed and retained by the Foundation for the purposes of the subject research in compliance with the PHIA; and
- the Applicant will obtain written consents from the persons who the personal health information is about, as may be required by the PHIA.