



**Investigator Awards Program  
New Candidate Guide  
Version 6.0 – February 2026**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, OICR has invested in developing a critical mass of world-class researchers in Ontario to drive the discovery and translation of cancer innovations. These people-support programs now make up OICR's Talent Mobilization theme. One of the primary vehicles for supporting talented scientists in Ontario has been the Investigator Awards (IA) Program. For more information on OICR and our research themes, visit [our website](#).

### 1.1. OICR Investigator Awards (IA) Program

The OICR IA Program is designed to strengthen Ontario's cancer research capacity by attracting outstanding researchers as Principal Investigators (PIs) and Clinician Scientists (CSs) to the province. The OICR IA Program provides stable recruitment and retention funding for PIs and CSs involved in OICR programs, strategic initiatives and other OICR supported research activities.

The OICR IA Program has two streams:

- **Principal Investigator (PI):** Investigators who hold an independent research appointment at an academic or research institution and have full autonomy over their research activities.
- **Clinician Scientist (CS):** Investigators who are actively licensed physicians in the province of Ontario with protected time for research.

Within the streams, IA categories include:

#### Principal Investigators (PIs)

- **Early-Career Investigator (ECI):** Designates PIs in the **first five years** of their career as an independent researcher at the time of application. ECIs are eligible to submit one renewal for promotion to Mid-Career Investigator at the end of their first term; however, a second ECI term is not permitted.
- **Mid-Career Investigator (MCI):** Designates PIs who have spent **five to ten years** as an independent researcher at the time of application. MCIs are eligible to submit one renewal at the same level or for promotion to Senior Investigator at the end of their first term.
- **Senior Investigator (SI):** Designates PIs who have spent **at least ten years** as an independent researcher at the time of application. This category applies to either promote MCIs to the Senior level or the recruitment/retention of SIs for a single five-year term. **SIs are not eligible for renewal after their first term.**

#### Clinician Scientists (CS)

- **CS I (80 per cent):** Designates CSs who are actively licensed physicians in the province of Ontario with 80 per cent of their time protected for research. A CS I may submit one renewal application except if they are at the senior level (see Section 1.2 for more details).
- **CS II (50 per cent):** Designates CSs who are actively licensed physicians in the province of Ontario with 50 per cent of their time protected for research. A CS II may submit one renewal application except if they are at the senior level (see Section 1.2 for more details).

**For all categories of awardees, OICR IAs will often form the foundation of the recruitment package that will be coordinated with a host institution.** Leaves of absence, including, but not restricted to, maternity/parental leave, will be considered when assigning candidates to a career-level stage (see Section 7.5 for more details). When possible, host institutions and/or candidates should inform OICR of any leaves which should be considered in advance of submitting an IA application.

OICR is committed to **focus on the recruitment and retention of Early and Mid-Career candidates to build the next generation of world-leading translational cancer researchers.** With this focus, senior PIs and CSs will be recruited by exception, in cases where senior-level expertise is required to address local expertise gaps and/or for leadership succession purposes.

All early-career investigators (within five years of their first appointment), whether they are PIs or CSs, receive an initial **six-year term** to provide extra time to develop their research programs. All other awards will be for a **five-year term**.

**Table 1: IA categories and term details**

| Designation   | Maximum OICR contribution<br>(Salary & research support) | Term              | Renewable?  |
|---|--|-------------------|---|
| <b>Principal Investigators (PI)</b>   |  |                   |   |
| Early-Career Investigator (ECI)   | \$250,000 per year                                       | Six years         | Yes, once, only as a promotion to MCI. Not renewable for a second ECI term.         |
| Mid-Career Investigator (MCI)   | \$300,000 per year                                       | Five years        | Yes, once, at the same level or as a promotion to SI.                               |
| Senior Investigator (SI)<br>(100 per cent matching required, see Section 1.3 below) | \$250,000 per year                                       | Five years        | No.   |
| <b>Clinician Scientists (CS)</b>  |  |                   |   |
| CS I (80 per cent)  | \$350,000 per year                                       | Five or six years | Yes, once, except those at the senior level. Senior level awards are non-renewable. |
| CS II (50 per cent)   | \$250,000 per year                                       | Five or six years |   |

### 1.2. Career stage

The following criteria will be used to assess the career stage for all IA candidates:

- **Early-Career:** A PI or CS who, at the time of application, has held a full-time, independent research appointment for a period of no more than five years (60 months).
- **Mid-Career:** A PI or CS who, at the time of application, assumed their independent research position 5-10 years ago.
- **Senior:** A PI or CS who, at the time of application has assumed their first independent position at least 10 years ago. Further, senior level awardees are expected to demonstrate national and international level leadership in their field.

### 1.3. Award matching or co-funding

For external candidates, matching or co-funding is **strongly encouraged** at the early- and mid-career levels for both the PI and CS streams. For senior-level awards, including the within the CS stream, **the host institution must provide a 100 per cent match to the OICR contribution toward the award.**



If matching/co-funding will be included as part of the application, contact OICR ([ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca](mailto:ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca)) in advance to discuss eligibility.

#### 1.4. Priority areas

OICR may seek to recruit new candidates aligned with current Institutional priority areas, and candidates may be selected accordingly. Priority areas may include specific cancer research areas, geographic regions, or initiatives intended to support researchers or institutions from underrepresented communities or regions. Candidates should refer to the OICR website for the most up-to-date list of priority areas prior to applying.

#### 1.5. Investigator Awards as 'partner funds' for Mitacs

IA recipients who are based at institutions external to OICR (i.e., not an OICR employee) may be eligible to use a portion of their IA as partner funds in support of a Mitacs application, subject to Mitacs program requirements, institutional policies and OICR approval. Eligibility and feasibility will depend on the specific Mitacs program, the proposed project and the roles and responsibilities of the participating organizations.

Awardees who are interested in exploring potential Mitacs opportunities are encouraged to contact their host institution and OICR to discuss whether a proposed project may be appropriate and permissible. Use of award funds for this purpose is not guaranteed and requires alignment with the objectives of the funded project and any applicable policies.

#### 1.6. Eligible expenses and access to resources

The OICR IA is a salary award, but funds can be used for the investigator's salary and/or other research-related expenses. **Overhead is not included in the IA**, consistent with other salary award programs. Should an external investigator assume a senior administrative position (defined as Vice President-level and above), the value of the award per year will be capped to support research costs only, based on a justified budget. See OICR's guide on eligible expenses, located on the [Funding Opportunities page](#), for more details.

The calculation of overall compensation for IA recipients must be transparent. The awardee must receive a compensation package that is aligned with others with similar expertise and professional qualifications and align with the host institution's policies on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (or similar).

IA recipients may request access (at OICR's discretion) to the MaRS-based OICR facilities, expertise and resources. A request for such access should be made to the Scientific Director of the IA recipient's OICR Research Theme (e.g., Head of the Therapeutic Innovation theme), who will follow the internal process for access requests. All requests are subject to review and approval from OICR Executive.

#### 1.7. Award renewal

With the exception of senior-level PIs and CSs (refer to Section 1.2) IAs are renewable, **once**, subject to favourable review by the IA Scientific Advisory Committee (IA SAC), OICR Board of Directors approval and sustained OICR funding from the province of Ontario.

IA renewals are subject to any revised program guidelines in effect at the time of renewal.



## 1.8. Affiliation with OICR

### During the award term

OICR IA recipients are required to list their affiliation as an 'OICR Investigator' in all research publications and outputs supported by the award. Since the award provides salary support for the recipient, it is expected that a significant portion, if not all, of the awardee's research efforts should include reference to their OICR IA affiliation. Doing so ensures that the investigator's work is properly connected to the partnership between them and OICR and highlights the impact of the collective research community.

### Post-award

At the conclusion of the first award term for senior PIs and CSs, and the second award term for early and mid-career PIs and CSs, awardees are no longer eligible to apply for an IA.

The Institute has developed an appointments program that fosters collaboration with Ontario researchers in alignment with OICR's translational research priorities. OICR *Affiliate* and *Associate* appointments are **status-only appointments** granted to exceptional investigators located at research institutions across Ontario. At the end of their final IA term, investigators are eligible to request a status-only appointment to retain their affiliation with the Institute and membership within OICR's Scientific Consortium.

- **Institute Affiliate:** OICR Affiliate appointments are status-only appointments granted to exceptional investigators located at research institutions across Ontario and, in exceptional circumstances, outside the province. OICR Affiliates share scientific focus with OICR and engage in research collaborations with OICR investigators to support OICR's research priorities and strategic initiatives.
- **Institute Associate:** Similar to Affiliates, Associates share scientific focus with OICR and engage in research collaborations to support OICR's research priorities and strategic initiatives. Associates are expected to be **highly engaged and vital to the success of one or more OICR research project(s)** and should be active members of the OICR community, attending meetings and providing project leadership and insight.

Details regarding appointment requirements and access to OICR resources will be shared with awardees nearing the end of their final award term.

Internal IAs (i.e., MaRS-based investigators) will be transitioned to OICR's Faculty Stream at the conclusion of their final IA term in accordance with the investigator's terms of employment with OICR.

## 2. MENTORSHIP OF NEW INVESTIGATORS AND CLINICIAN SCIENTISTS

Mentors are critical in the development of PIs and CSs in the first five years of their career for helping to establish a successful independent research laboratory/program. Generally, mentors are distinct individuals from the investigator's direct supervisor. Mentors should help foster the development of the candidate's knowledge, technical and analytical skills, and capacity for an international and independent research program with strong publications. The mentor should act as an advocate for the candidate at the departmental, institutional and professional level. Where needed, the mentor should provide advice on time management and organizational skills, and how to find a balance between being a 'good scientific citizen' (e.g., institutional obligations, co-



authorship, team-science, etc.) versus individual productivity (e.g., grant applications, publications as senior authors, etc.).

Mentoring activities, including regular meetings and an informal review of a new PIs or CSs starting at the end of the second year, are to be clearly delineated in a letter of mentoring support included as part of the initial application. During the third year of the award for PIs and CSs, a letter of evaluation outlining the mentor's assessment of the awardee's performance will be requested by OICR and provided to the IA SAC and OICR Executive who will conduct a mid-term review of the awardee's progress (refer to Section 8.2 for more details on the mid-term review process). OICR will contact the supervisor and mentor to discuss course correction, if necessary. The mentor's assessment over the award period will be considered in the mid-term evaluation of new investigators.

### 3. NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES

The budget for the OICR IA Program is managed by OICR. When budget permits the consideration of a new IA nomination, OICR will communicate this to the community through its mailing lists, website and social media channels.

Institutions and potential candidates are encouraged to regularly consult the OICR website for updates, including a list of current priorities the OICR IA Program is seeking to address. When budget allows and vacancies arise, applications will be considered from eligible host institutions; however, nominations that align with the identified priorities will be given stronger consideration for funding.

The strategic allocation of OICR IAs is critical to the success of the Institute. OICR will identify recruitment needs that target essential expertise which are vital to the translational mission of the Institute and are aligned with research priorities as defined in OICR's strategic plan. Additional consideration will also be given to candidates to promote equitable distribution of awards across geographical regions, and to support the inclusion of underserved populations in research, and/or candidates from under-represented communities.

#### **Individuals cannot apply to the OICR IA Program directly.**

IA applications are a **two-step process** consisting of the following stages:

- **Expression of Interest (EOI):** To be submitted by the host institution, not the candidate.
- **Full application (invitation only):** To be submitted by the candidate.

The sections below outline the process for identifying and nominating candidates to the OICR IA Program.

#### 3.1. External (recruitment and/or retention at non-OICR institutes)

##### **Candidate not yet identified**

When positions are defined to specifically target essential expertise and align with OICR's strategic plan, but no appropriate candidate has yet been identified, OICR may co-develop a recruitment strategy with institutions that can provide a suitable environment and scientific cluster relevant to an OICR program, research theme or other OICR-supported research activities.



Host institutions may contact OICR ([ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca](mailto:ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca)) at any time to initiate co-recruitment discussions. Where appropriate, OICR Executive may approve a placeholder for a future IA while the recruitment process is underway. Alternatively, host institutions may submit an EOI without prior discussion with the Institute. Once a suitable candidate has been identified, the host institution must submit a revised EOI for further consideration. Candidates deemed suitable will then be invited to submit a full IA application. Requests for unnamed candidates will be considered alongside requests with named candidates.

### **Candidate identified**

Prior to the submission of an EOI, host institutions are encouraged to contact the OICR Scientific Secretariat ([ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca](mailto:ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca)) regarding outstanding translational cancer researchers who would be a strong candidate for the OICR IA Program. Alternatively, host institutions may submit an EOI without prior discussion with the Institute. Candidates deemed suitable will then be invited to submit a full IA application.

### **3.2. Internal/OICR employees**

For internal candidates (MaRS-based OICR employees), OICR Executive and Program Directors will identify PI recruitment needs. Successful PI candidates will be hired according to OICR's internal hiring processes, managed by Human Resources. Once an employment agreement has been executed, the candidate will be provided with access to the full IA application (an EOI is not required). The IA process will follow the principles outlined in this guide, including the requirements for periodic reviews/renewals, as applicable. Internal IAs will transition from the OICR IA Program to OICR's internal Faculty Stream at the end of their eligible IA term(s), contingent upon a positive review of the individual's future research and leadership plan at the Institute.

Under special circumstances, OICR reserves the right to consider internal and external IAs outside the typical process to ensure business continuity and leadership for the Institute.

## **4. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

### **4.1. Equity, diversity and inclusion**

All OICR-supported research is expected to align with the Institute's principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). OICR's Commitment to EDI in Research Statement can be found on our [website](#). OICR is committed to:

- Ensuring our research serves those from all relevant communities, especially those that are historically underrepresented.
- Fostering a more diverse and inclusive research community.
- Creating a work environment where all can thrive and feel included.
- Collecting and analyzing demographic data to better understand the diversity of candidates, funded researchers and project teams in order to identify gaps and develop approaches to address those gaps.
- Continuing to evaluate our processes, ask for input, collect data and improve.
- Communicating how we will achieve equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Sharing best practices and lessons learned to help drive equity, diversity and inclusion across the cancer research community.



#### 4.2. Patient partners

Patient perspectives and insight can be transformative to research planning, execution and knowledge transfer. Patient partnership in OICR-supported research ensures that:

- Projects and/or studies meet the needs of the people intended to benefit, and
- Projects and/or study activities and results are communicated in an accessible way to patients, caregivers and the wider community.

All applications must include a patient partnership plan, in which candidates describe how patient partners and stakeholder communities are being, or will be, engaged throughout their research program. Candidates are encouraged to involve patient partners as early as possible in the research process, as they can help shape research questions, develop patient partnership plans and contribute in many other ways to a successful research program. Candidates can explore the resources available on the [Patient Partnership page](#) of the OICR website, as well as those offered by their host institution, on how to recruit and involve patient partners and communities into the research process. Patient reviewers will participate alongside the IA SAC throughout the term of the award to provide ongoing guidance to awardees.

#### 4.3. Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA)

OICR is a signatory to the [Declaration of Research Assessment](#) (DORA). As such, we are aligned with DORA principles through our commitment to assess the quality and impact of scientific research through means other than journal impact factors. This means that OICR and our reviewers will:

- **Consider the value and impact of all research outputs** in addition to research publications (e.g., preprints, training delivered, contribution to consortia, community outreach, patents, key datasets, software, novel assays, and reagents etc.).
- Recognize that the **content of a scientific paper** and its influence in the field **holds more significance** than publication metrics or where it was published.

As part of our commitment to these principles, we ask that institutions and/or candidates do not include journal impact factors or other journal-based metrics in any document submitted as part of the application process.

#### 4.4. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

OICR aligns with the Canadian federal research funding agencies (“the agencies”) [Guidance on the use of Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) in the development and review of research grant proposals](#). As part of the application process, candidates will be required to clearly state if and where application material has been generated by AI.

Reviewers must abstain from the use of AI when drafting their feedback and must never copy/paste applications (or excerpts) into AI platforms as doing so will constitute a breach in confidentiality.

#### 4.5. Research security and geopolitical risk

As part of the full application, the candidate must identify if their research program fits the Federal Government’s definition of a [‘Sensitive Technology Research Affiliation of Concern’ \(STRAC\)](#) and, if appropriate, attest that they do not have any collaborations (including the receipt of in-kind support) with entities listed on the federal government’s Named Research Organizations list.

## 5. APPLICATION PROCESS

### 5.1. Initiating an application

**Individuals cannot apply to the OICR IA Program directly.** Candidates must be nominated by their host institution to OICR as per the process outlined below.

IA applications are a **two-step process** consisting of the following stages:

- **Expression of Interest (EOI):** To be submitted by the host institution, not the candidate. However, at the institute's discretion, the candidate can be added to the EOI in ReportNet to assist with completing the application requirements prior to submission. Host institutions must contact the Scientific Secretariat ([ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca](mailto:ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca)) to request access to the EOI form.
- **Full application** (if invited): To be submitted by the candidate.

To initiate a nomination, the host institution **must request** the EOI form from OICR ([ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca](mailto:ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca)). Please include the following information with your request:

- Name and email address of administrative authority at the institution who will be responsible for submission.
- Name of 'Delegate' who will assist with the nomination (optional).
- Placeholder or named candidate nomination.
  - If candidate is known, the name, institution (if different from host institution) and email address of the nominee.

### 5.2. Online submission of applications through ReportNet

The EOI and full applications are both submitted on [ReportNet](#). Open text fields accept plain text only, meaning that any text formatting (bold, italic or underlined font, bulleted lists, etc.) will not be accepted. If the field requests a file to be uploaded (i.e., PDF, Excel, etc.) candidates are welcome to use any text formatting but must use 11-point Arial font and one-inch margins. Refer to the [ReportNet instructions](#) for more details.

### 5.3. Completing an Expression of Interest (EOI)

Unless otherwise stated, all sections are mandatory. The EOI must be submitted by the Host Institution, not the candidate. The EOI consists of the following sections:

#### Award information

- **Name of IA candidate**
- **Host institution:** This should be the institution that will administer the award should the full application be successful.
- **Placeholder request:** If the EOI is requesting a placeholder for a future candidate, select 'Yes'. If the candidate has been identified, select 'No'.
  - If 'Yes' is selected, the host institution is encouraged to provide a letter of support from a member of OICR's Leadership as part of the 'Supporting information' section below.
- **Candidate recruitment:** Select if the candidate is a new recruit to Ontario.
- **Stream**
- **Career stage**
- **Award category**
- **Start date of the candidate's first independent research appointment**
- **OICR research priority affiliation**
- **Proposed start date for the award**



- **Cancer type**
- **Candidate's proposed research area (max. 2,000 words):** Outline the candidate's research program. If the EOI is a placeholder, outline the proposed job description and subject area for the ideal candidate. Describe how the area of research aligns with OICR's Strategic Plan and/or research themes. This section can be drafted by the host institution alone or in collaboration with the candidate.
- **Translation (max. 500 words):** Describe how the candidate's research program fits OICR's translational mandate. Not required for placeholder requests.
- **Excellence and leadership (max. 500 words):** A description of the candidate's excellence and/or leadership activities in the field or beyond. Not required for placeholder requests.
- **Host Institution's EDI statement (max. 250 words):** Describe how the candidate aligns with the host institution's EDI policy/statement/action plan (or similar), and how the candidate can help achieve the commitments outlined in Section 4.1. Use specific examples of their work and practices. For placeholder requests, outline the Institute's hiring practices related to EDI and how candidates will be selected.
- **Institutional statement of support (max. 1,000 words):** Outline the institution's rationale for nominating the candidate and detail the support that they will provide over the proposed award term (funding, start-up packages, access to resources, mentoring, etc.). The statement should also include preliminary plans for continued support of the researcher at the conclusion of the final IA term (i.e., additional funding opportunities providing salary and/or research support, tenure etc.)
- **Co-funding (max. 250 words):** Outline whether the award will be co-funded by the host institution or other sources. If known, indicate the amount and the start and end dates of co-funding. Co-funding is strongly encouraged for all awards.

### Attachments

As outlined in Section 4.3, OICR is a signatory to DORA. As such, we are committed to assessing the quality and impact of scientific research through means other than journal impact factors. We ask that supporting documents not include journal impact factors or other journal-based metrics.

The following supporting information is requested as part of the IA application:

- Candidate's CV: Not required for placeholder requests.
- Supporting information (Placeholder requests only): Letter of support from OICR Executive outlining the rationale for the placeholder and timeline to fill the position.

### 5.4. Completing a Full Application

Candidates deemed suitable (refer to Section 6.1 for EOI evaluation process) for an IA after review of the EOI will be invited to submit a full IA application. Full applications are to be submitted by the candidate.

Unless otherwise stated, all sections are mandatory. Referees must submit their letters of support **directly** to the OICR Scientific Secretariat ([ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca](mailto:ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca)). The application consists of the following sections:

### Candidate information

- Information from the EOI will be carried forward.
- Candidate name, email address, institution and address will be pre-populated.
- Candidate must attest that they are not in breach of any standard of research ethics or integrity.

- Invite contacts: The candidate is welcome to invite a PI delegate who can assist with preparing the application using the **Invitations** tab on the left-hand menu. PI Delegates provide an administrative role that can assume the duties of the PI, including editing and submitting the application on behalf of the PI(s).

### Summaries

- **Candidate biosketch (max. 500 words):** Provide a brief biographical sketch including academic training, professional appointments, and research experience. For successful candidates, this information may be used by OICR and/or the Ontario Government for internal or external announcements.
- **Lay summary (max. 500 words):** The lay summary should explain complex research ideas in simple terms and plain language that can be easily understood by non-specialists. This is unlike a scientific abstract, which is written for subject peers. The lay summary may be used by reviewers and patient partners during the review process. It may be used to communicate your research program to the public and funders. The candidate is strongly advised to engage a patient partner to co-write or review the lay summary.

An overview of each of the following topics is recommended, as applicable:

- Background/context to the research
- Description of the current standard of care
- Research question or problem to be solved
- Thorough description of proposed research/method(s)
- Potential benefit to patients/impact on the field

Bullet points are acceptable to highlight key points. Use plain English while avoiding acronyms, scientific jargon and technical, field-specific terms unless a short explanation is added. Short sentences with easy sentence constructions are advisable.

- **Scientific summary (max. 500 words)**

### Research proposal

- **Research proposal (max. 10 pages):** Figures, tables and references may be included and will not count towards the page limit. Upload a PDF of your proposal using 11-point Arial font, single spacing and one-inch margins and include the following sections:
  - **Research excellence, translational impact and, for CSs only, clinical innovation**
    - Overall statement justifying the research excellence, clinical innovation (CSs only) and the potential translational impact of the proposal.
    - Past significant independent and collaborative/team research activities. For collaborative research activities, the candidate must describe their role within the team and specify their contributions to multi-authored publications.
    - Candidate's vision statement for their career path
    - CSs only: Clinical expertise and innovative aspects of the candidate's clinical research
  - **Research objectives and plan for the term of the award**
    - Objectives of the proposed research
    - Relevance of the proposed research to cancer
    - Fit of the proposed research with OICR's strategic direction and translational research priorities
    - Collaborations with researchers and OICR programs and strategic initiatives, with detailed information on how the research proposal will complement OICR programs, strategic initiatives or other OICR-supported research activities

- Consultation activities, such as experimental and/or clinical trial design and interpretation, on projects critical to OICR's mission
- Well-defined deliverables and milestones, including key go/no-go decision points, where applicable
- Leveraging opportunities with other government agencies, charities, industry, etc.
- CSs only:
  - Participation in clinical initiatives and/or clinical trials
  - The amount of time dedicated to research versus clinical activities.

### Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

- Provide a description (max. 500 words) of how EDI will be addressed as part of your overall research program. Refer to OICR's guidelines on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion tactics in research, located on the [Funding Opportunities page](#), for more details.
  - Outline how you will align your program to the principles of EDI with regard to the project team, knowledge users (such as patients, clinicians and other healthcare professionals, health technology assessment agencies, and health policy decision makers) and the conduct of the research. At minimum, the plan should:
    - Describe the candidate's approach to drawing samples and/or patients from diverse populations (where appropriate), specifically historically underrepresented populations. If this is not possible, please explain.
    - Describe how projects within the overall research program may be of particular benefit to any historically underrepresented groups, and what those benefits may be.
    - Include specific, actionable and measurable and time-bound tactics and address multiple areas wherever possible (e.g., outline tactics relating to both research team recruitment and dissemination of results).
    - Note that stating the team is currently diverse, that the team will follow the EDI policies of their institution, or that the institution serves a diverse patient population does not satisfy the requirement for an EDI plan.
  - PI Equity, Diversity and Inclusion attestation: OICR requires that candidates complete, at a minimum, the CIHR Sex and Gender Training Modules (<https://www.cihr-irsc-igh-isfh.ca/>) in advance of submitting their application.

### Additional information

- **Patient and/or partner engagement (max. 500 words):** Patient perspectives and lived experience can meaningfully shape how research questions are developed, how research is carried out, and how results are shared. Candidates should describe how they plan to engage patient partners and patient communities across their *overall research program*. This may include shaping research priorities, study design, implementation, interpretation of findings, and knowledge sharing. Candidates should also describe the overall impact their research program is expected to have on the health of Ontarians, either now or in the future. This may include improvements in prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care delivery, or health system outcomes. This section must be written as a stand-alone piece and should not assume that readers have reviewed the full research proposal. Candidates should focus on the direction, goals, and long-term vision of their research program or research group, including how patient engagement is integrated into that program and how it contributes to meaningful health impact. The section should be written in clear, plain language that can be easily understood by a high-school graduate.
- **Differentiation (max. 250 words):** Provide a description of what makes this research unique, better and/or disruptive compared to the work of other researchers in your field (i.e., what is



distinguishing about this research that makes it more attractive than other existing work).

- **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI; max 200 words):** If applicable, candidates must clearly state if and where application material has been generated by AI.
- **Research Security and Geopolitical Risk Attestation**

### Attachments

- **Budget**, using the Excel template provided. Upload as both an Excel and PDF file.
  - Download the budget template provided in the application, complete budget request details. Expenses must adhere to OICR's guidelines for eligible expenses, located on the [Funding Opportunities page](#).
  - The total budget should represent the OICR contribution. Additional contributions committed from other funding sources or collaborators should be included as co-funding (section provided at the end of the Excel template).
  - Overhead is not an eligible expense for OICR IAs.

**Curricula Vitae (CV; upload as a PDF):** The CV can be in any format so long as it addresses education/training, employment, honours and awards, professional affiliations, research funding in the past five years, student/fellow training and research outputs (e.g., publications, IP, presentations, etc.).

### Host institution information (not required for OICR-based candidates)

- Provide the contact details for the individual at your nominating host institution who can legally bind the institution.
- Using the PDF form provided, the candidate must obtain the signature of the institutional administrative authority attesting to the terms outlined in the form. Upload as a signed PDF.
- Provide details on the support (financial, access to resources, etc., as appropriate) provided by the nominating host institution over the term of the award. Institutions may update and expand upon the information provided in the 'Institutional Statement of Support' that was provided at the EOI stage. Submit as a PDF upload.

### Referee and mentor details

- **Referees:** Provide contact information for three mentors, collaborators or other individuals who can act as a referee for your application. You must also request that the three referees write a letter in support of your application **which must be sent directly to the OICR Scientific Secretariat** at [ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca](mailto:ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca). While not mandatory, candidates are *strongly* encouraged to include referees from outside their host institution and/or city of work, where possible.
- **Mentor:** For candidates in the first five years of their career applying to an OICR ECI or CS award, provide contact information for a mentor, and request that they write a letter committing to providing formal mentorship during the first term of the award and describing in detail these mentoring activities. This letter can be included in the application (i.e., it does not need to be emailed directly from the mentor to OICR).



### **Common Scientific Outline (CSO) coding**

The candidate must select a primary classification for the research. Secondary and tertiary classifications may also be selected if applicable but are not required. CSO codes should reflect the main aim of the research program that is achievable within the lifetime of the award. Coding should NOT include potential or future applications of the research findings. Information on selecting an appropriate code can be found in the [International Cancer Research Partnership \(ICRP\) Coding Guidelines](#).

### **Research Security and Geopolitical Risk Attestation**

Once you have completed all required fields, select the green **Submit Application** button at the bottom of the screen.

## **6. REVIEW PROCESS**

### **6.1. EOI review and evaluation considerations**

EOIs will undergo an administrative review by OICR's Scientific Secretariat who may follow up with the host institution for additional information or for clarification; this process is intended to be iterative.

EOIs will be discussed and evaluated by OICR Executive and the IA SAC Chair (or delegate) according to the criteria below. It is not expected that EOIs will meet each criterion. Consideration will be given to EOIs that best align with OICR's strategic plan, priority areas and current needs of the OICR IA Program and the OICR research community. EOIs will be considered contingent upon the availability of funding from the Government of Ontario and the availability of funds in the OICR IA Program budget.

#### **Alignment with OICR research priorities:**

- Candidate's research program aligns with one of OICR's themes (AO, CT, TI, Implementation Science) and/or fills an identified gap in OICR's research priorities.

#### **Career stage:**

- Candidate is an early or mid-career investigator

#### **EDI:**

- The host institution has provided a statement outlining how the candidate aligns with their EDI action plan/policy (or similar)
- The nomination is aligned with a current OICR priority call/area
- The candidate identifies as being from a historically under-represented group
- The host institution is located in an under-represented region in Ontario
- Number of current IAs held by the host institution

#### **Other considerations:**

- Application has secured co-funding for the award
- Candidate is a new recruit to Ontario or the candidate will be retained in Ontario with IA support
- Recruitment and/or retention considerations

EOIs deemed appropriate for IA consideration will be invited to submit a full IA application. Refer



to Section 5.4 for full IA application details.

## 6.2. Full application evaluation process

Full applications will undergo an administrative review by OICR's Scientific Secretariat who may follow up with the host institution for additional information or for clarification; this process is intended to be iterative.

Full applications will be reviewed by OICR leadership and the IA SAC Chair (or delegate) for scientific content and fit with OICR's strategic plan, as well as by unbiased experts in the field, as needed. This review provides an opportunity to strengthen the proposal and optimize the impact of the research. OICR leadership may return the application to the candidate for additional clarification and/or modification to address administrative and/or scientific issues. Although most initial awards are pre-negotiated with host institutions and fill unmet needs and seize opportunities for the Ontario cancer research community, in order to ensure the highest level of translational research quality, the Institute retains the right to require that the candidate modify the research proposal to align with OICR strategic priorities.

At a minimum, candidates will be required to satisfactorily address the following:

- Alignment with OICR's Strategic Plan and strategic priorities
- Expertise addresses a critical gap/priority in oncology research in Ontario
- Research track record, proposed research plans and potential translational research impact
- Collaborative team-building skills
- Fit with OICR-supported research activities in terms of meaningful participation and contribution
- Leadership qualities (particularly for senior PIs)
- Clinical expertise and innovation (CSs only)
- Protected research time (CSs only)

## 7. AWARD ADMINISTRATION AND TERMS

### 7.1. Establishment of agreements

Following approval of the application, OICR will establish a funding agreement with the host institution. The agreement will cover the general principles regarding the conduct of research activities, eligible research expenses, terms and conditions regarding the disbursement of funds, agreements with third-party funders, financial and progress reporting, PI covenants, IP, commercialization, publications and communication policies. In addition, OICR will establish a commercialization framework, which will require the recipient and OICR to set up an IP co-management plan, where applicable.

### 7.2. Terms and conditions of funding

- Note that delays in execution of research agreements may impact OICR's ability to disburse funds. **Funding is contingent upon available funding from the Government of Ontario via the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security** and the availability of funds in the OICR IA Program budget.
- Host institutions will be responsible for distributing OICR funds for eligible expenses and for financial reporting to OICR. Annual statements will be requested from all awardees and host institutions. Funding levels may be adjusted if there is significant deviation from expectations.
- Internal awardees located at the MaRS Centre will report annually as part of the regular reporting process of the OICR program or strategic initiative with which they are affiliated.

Awardees who are not located at the MaRS Centre will be requested to submit an annual progress report to OICR. If progress is deemed to require improvement, OICR will provide feedback to the awardee, their host institution, supervisor and mentor, as applicable.

- If confirmation of faculty appointment was not available for the candidate at the time of the initial application, OICR reserves the right to require such confirmation, at any time, to allow for initial or continued IA fund disbursement.
- Carryover of annual unspent funds is not permitted. Excess funds at the end of the term must be returned to OICR.
- OICR IAs are transferable to another Ontario institution but must receive prior approval from OICR.
- OICR Investigators (including CSs) will need to specify both time percentage and hours per week spent in clinic (if applicable) and on administrative and research activities. This time allocation should be confirmed by the host institution.
- Awardees will be expected to follow the agreements of OICR and the host institution regarding the disclosure and management of Intellectual Property.
- The initial term of the award will be agreed upon by the candidate, host institution and OICR in accordance with the designation of the awardee as described in Section 1.1. In some cases, the term of the award may be less than the durations listed in Section 1.2.
- Awards may be discontinued prior to the end of the term if the awardee:
  - Leaves the host institution
  - Is dismissed from the host institution
  - Ceases to contribute to OICR programs, strategic initiatives or other OICR-supported research activities
  - Creates a research program which is outside the scope of OICR's strategic direction and/or translational research priorities
  - Fails to meet the requirements of the host institution for obtaining a faculty position (first award) or for promotion
  - Does not maintain required certifications by the Research Ethics Board, animal use (if required), biohazard/radioactivity safety (if required) or fails to comply with Conflict of Interest policies of the host institution
  - Engages in conduct that may impair or damage the reputation of OICR or its employees, including but not limited to fraud, theft, dishonesty, research misconduct, illegality, breach of statute or regulation, conflict of interest or gross incompetence
  - Fails to foster scientific collaboration, such as failing to disseminate or make available research results
  - Fails to submit an annual progress report to OICR
  - Fails to include their OICR affiliation on research publications and outputs supported by the award
  - Fails to improve participation or performance related to OICR supported research activities within a one-year period following written notice by OICR
- With the exception of senior level awards in either stream, IAs may be renewable, once, subject to a favourable review of the renewal application and sustained OICR funding.

### 7.3. Recognition of funding

In addition to listing the OICR Investigator affiliation on all research publications and outputs, awardees agree they will acknowledge and credit the support, in whole or in part, of OICR and Ontario in any promotional material, including, without limitation, scientific publications of whatever nature or kind, and in any communication materials or publications by referencing the award-funded research with the following statement: *"This study was conducted with the support*



*of the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research through funding provided by the Government of Ontario. The views expressed in the publication are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Ontario.”*

#### 7.4. Prolonged absence from work

All awardees will notify OICR of any illness or other cause necessitating an absence from work exceeding three months or resulting in reduced time devoted to the project by twenty-five per cent or greater from the level that was approved at the time of the award. Continuation of the award during the absence will be at OICR’s discretion. OICR must approve any alternate arrangement proposed by the awardee host institution.

**Approval for a prolonged absence:** Approval requests should include a justification for the changes to the research plan and any budget amendments resulting from the proposed change. If the arrangements proposed by the awardees are not acceptable to OICR, the award may be suspended or terminated.

**Maternity/parental leave:** Up to an 18-month (78 week) extension of the award term resulting from maternity/parental leave will be granted. Any extension longer than one year will require documentation explicitly describing the time away from research in months and years. OICR may request additional documentation to support the request to better establish a reasonable extension period, as a special case. Written notification must be sent to OICR for approval.

- **Benefits during leave:** Host institution policies will determine the benefit eligibility, terms and duration for the investigator. The award payment will be restricted to the top-up portion (where applicable) of annual earnings plus benefits as per the host institution’s policy.

**Sabbatical leave:** Sabbaticals and other absences must be divulged to OICR by the awardee and the host institution at least four months in advance of the planned leave and earlier if possible. This will be particularly important in cases where a modification of the award is necessary in order to accommodate the sabbatical or absence. OICR awards may be modified or put on hold, depending on the specific circumstances. OICR will assume that the awardee has met all the requirements of the host institution.

**Return from prolonged absence or maternity/parental leave:** Upon conclusion of the maternity/parental leave or prolonged authorized absence, the awardee/host institution must send written confirmation to OICR so that the fully approved payment schedule can be reinstated.

## 8. REVIEWS DURING THE TERM OF THE AWARD

### 8.1. Initial introduction to the IA SAC

New IA recipients will be invited to briefly introduce themselves and present their research program to the IA SAC at the annual SAC meeting in the fall. This informal presentation will afford an opportunity to meet the IA SAC and discuss goals and collaboration opportunities early in the award term.

### 8.2. Mid-term review for new investigators and CSs

New IA recipients will be subject to a mid-term review in the second or third year of their initial award term. The purpose of this review is to ensure that awardees are progressing in the right direction to be successfully reviewed at the end of their first term. Awardees will be requested to submit a brief report on progress made since the start of the IA term, including updates on patient



partnerships and EDI, an updated CV and list of publications. Early-career investigators, in both streams, will also need to provide a letter from their mentor outlining: (a) the mentorship activities that have taken place since the start of the IA term; and (b) an assessment of progress to date. These documents will be reviewed by a committee consisting of the awardee's mentor and/or supervisor/department head (as appropriate), OICR Leadership, and the OICR IA SAC. A face-to-face meeting will be organized to discuss the committee's feedback and recommendations.

### 8.3. Renewals

With the exception of senior-level awards in both streams, IAs are renewable, once, subject to sustained OICR funding in the future. All awardees will undergo a rigorous, tenure-like review in the second last year of their award. Under exceptional circumstances, and to accelerate promotion for outstanding achievements, ECI and MCIs can request that an accelerated review take place halfway through the third (MCI) or fourth (ECI) year of the award. The request, together with a supporting letter from the supervisor and mentor, must be submitted to OICR by the end of January in order for the review to take place in the Fall. This does not apply for senior-level awardees who are not eligible for promotion (refer to the *OICR IA Program Retention and Promotion Guide*).

If the renewal review is unsuccessful, the last year of funding will be maintained in order for the awardee and the host institution to seek other funds. OICR acknowledges that the review may not align with the timing of a formal tenure review by the host institution. In such circumstances, OICR will work with the host institution to ensure alignment of reviews.

### 8.4. End-of-term review (optional)

At the request of the host institution or if deemed appropriate by OICR, an end-of-term review may be conducted as part of the annual IA SAC meeting for investigators in their final year of their final IA award term.

The IA SAC meets in October of each year. The end-of-term review will be scheduled for the IA SAC meeting within one year prior to the term end date (timelines will be provided at the time of request). To be eligible for an end-of-term review, the IA recipient must be in the last year of their award. Reviews will not be conducted once the award term has ended. To request an end-of-term review, the host institution must email [ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca](mailto:ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca). Requests must be submitted by the end of January in advance of the Fall meeting.

The purpose of this review is to obtain the IA SAC's assessment of the overall impact of the investigator's contributions to OICR and their respective field over the term of the award. Awardees will be requested to submit a brief report on progress made since the start of the award term highlighting impact and contributions, recognitions received, a statement on how the award has contributed to their research program and development, and an updated CV that focuses on contributions/recognitions/activities over the award term. These documents will be reviewed by the IA SAC. The IA SAC may request *ad hoc* reviewers to participate in the assessment if appropriate and the investigator may be invited to present to the IA SAC at the annual meeting. A report summarizing the discussion and feedback from the IA SAC will be returned to the host institution. This review will provide qualitative feedback and will not involve scores/rating the investigator.



## 9. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

### Financial reporting

The following schedule (Table 2) will be used for financial reporting. Note that the deadlines indicated are moved to the next business day if they fall on a non-working day.

**Table 2: Financial reporting**

| Period covered       | Responsible party and action                       |                   |
|----------------------|--|-------------------|
|                      | Financial Officer                                  | PI (or designate) |
| Q1-Q4<br>April-March | Annual fiscal year financial report:<br>Due May 31 | N/A               |

### Progress and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Reporting

All projects will be included in OICR's annual reporting process, as required by the Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security according to the schedule below (Table 3). Note that the deadlines indicated are moved to the next business day if they fall on a non-working day.

**Table 3: Reporting requirements**

| Report     | Period covered              | Due date                                  | Person(s) responsible | Action                                       |
|------------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------|--|
| KPI report | Fiscal year:<br>April-March | April 30 of the<br>subsequent fiscal year | PIs                   | Provide quantitative KPIs<br>using ReportNet |

### Post-award reporting

Within five years of the award end date, candidates will be required to submit a post-award report to OICR outlining additional outputs, achievements and impacts of the OICR's funding. Additional details will be provided to candidates in advance of the report being due.

## 10. CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: [ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca](mailto:ScientificSecretariat@oicr.on.ca)

## 11. APPENDIX I: EOI EVALUATION RATINGS

EOIs will be reviewed and rated internally by OICR Leadership and the IA SAC Chair (or delegate). A consensus rating/score for each criterion will be returned to the host institution along with the final EOI decision. EOIs are not expected to meet each item listed below, but consideration will be given to those who address the most urgent strategic opportunities for the Institute.

OICR is a signatory to the [Declaration of Research Assessment](#) (DORA). As such, we are aligned with DORA principles through our commitment to assess the quality and impact of scientific research through means other than journal impact factors. This means that OICR and reviewers will:

- **Consider the value and impact of all research outputs** in addition to research publications (e.g., preprints, training delivered, contribution to consortia, community outreach, patents, key datasets, software, novel assays and reagents etc.).
- Recognize that the **content of a scientific paper** and its influence in the field **holds more significance** than publication metrics or where it was published.

As part of our commitment to these principles, we ask that candidates do not include journal impact factors or other journal-based metrics in any document submitted as part of the application process.

The following items will be considered:

| Topic  | Area(s) of interest/focus  |
|--|--|
| <b>Alignment with OICR research priorities</b> | Candidate's research program and proposed research plans align with one of OICR's themes (Adaptive Oncology, Clinical Translation, Therapeutic Innovation, Implementation Science) or fulfills an identified opportunity in OICR's research priorities |
| <b>Career stage</b>                            | Candidate is an Early- or Mid-Career Investigator  |
| <b>EDI</b>                                     | <b>Item 1:</b> The host institution has provided a statement outlining how the candidate aligns with their EDI action plan/policy (or similar)   |
|  | <b>Item 2:</b> The nomination is aligned with a current OICR priority call/area  |
|  | <b>Item 3:</b> The candidate identifies as being from a historically under-represented group   |
|  | <b>Item 4:</b> The host institution is located in an under-represented region in Ontario   |
|  | <b>Item 5:</b> Number of current IAs held by the host institution  |
| <b>Other considerations</b>                    | <b>Item 1:</b> Application has secured co-funding for the award  |
|  | <b>Item 2:</b> Candidate is a new recruit to Ontario, or the candidate will be retained in Ontario with IA support   |
|  | <b>Item 3:</b> Recruitment and/or retention considerations   |

Rating/scores:

| Rating/score           | Alignment with OICR research priorities  | Career stage  | EDI   | Other considerations   |
|------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Fully satisfies (3)    | Candidate's research program and leadership in the field are fully aligned with OICR's Strategic Plan and/or opportunities identified by OICR.   | Candidate is an Early- or Mid-Career Investigator (ECI or MCI)  | <p><b>Item 1:</b> Institution has provided a thoughtful and comprehensive statement on EDI that includes how the candidate meets or exceeds their institution's EDI policies.</p> <p><b>Item 2:</b> The nomination is aligned with at least one, but likely more than one, current OICR priority call/area.</p> <p><b>Item 3:</b> The candidate self-identifies as a member of a historically under-represented group (visible minority, Indigenous, member of the LGBTQ+ community, etc.).</p> <p><b>Item 4:</b> The host institution is located in an under-represented region in Ontario (e.g., Northern Ontario).</p> <p><b>Item 5:</b> The host institution is under-represented in terms of current IA allocations. In most cases, the institution would have no current IAs, or for larger institutions, no more than one.</p> | <p><b>Item 1:</b> For ECI and MCI awards, the host institution has confirmed that the award will be co-funded. For Senior Investigators, co-funding is a requirement for an IA.</p> <p><b>Item 2:</b> The host institution has noted that the award would have a significant impact on the ability to recruit the candidate from an institution outside of the province OR would allow the institution to retain an investigator who might otherwise leave the institution.</p> <p><b>Item 3:</b> OICR support is critical to the host institution's ability to recruit or retain the candidate. Failure to secure this support could result in the loss of a highly valuable researcher to the Ontario cancer research community.</p> |
| Somewhat satisfies (2) | Candidate's research program and leadership in the field are somewhat aligned with OICR's strategic plan and/or opportunities identified by OICR but may also include areas of research outside OICR's key strategic priorities. | <p>Not applicable.</p> <p><i>This rating is not applicable to the 'Career stage' consideration.</i></p> | <p><b>Item 1:</b> Institution has provided a statement on EDI that references how the candidate meets or exceeds their institutional EDI policies.</p> <p><b>Item 2:</b> The nomination is aligned with a current OICR priority call/area.</p> <p><b>Item 3:</b> Not applicable.<br/><i>This rating is not applicable to the 'historically under-represented groups' consideration.</i></p> <p><b>Item 4:</b> Not applicable.<br/><i>This rating is not applicable to the 'located in an under-represented region in Ontario' consideration.</i></p> <p><b>Item 5:</b> The host institution may be considered under-represented in terms of current IA allocations. In most cases, the institution would have no more than one current IA, or for larger institutions, no more than three.</p>  | <p><b>Item 1:</b> For ECI and MCI awards, the host institution has proposed that co-funding is expected (but not yet secured). For Senior Investigators, lack of co-funding would make the EOI ineligible for further consideration.</p> <p><b>Item 2:</b> The host institution has noted that the award could impact their ability to recruit the candidate from another institution OR could allow the institution to compile an offer that might retain an investigator who would otherwise leave the institution.</p> <p><b>Item 3:</b> OICR support would help the institute to recruit or retain the candidate.</p>  |

| Rating/<br>score        | Alignment with<br>OICR research<br>priorities  | Career stage  | EDI  | Other considerations  |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Does not<br>satisfy (1) | Candidate's<br>research program<br>and leadership in<br>the field do not<br>align with OICR's<br>strategic plan<br>and/or<br>opportunities<br>identified by<br>OICR. | Candidate is a<br>Senior<br>Investigator<br>(>10 years<br>since their first<br>independent<br>research<br>appointment). | <p><b>Item 1:</b> Institution has not provided a statement on EDI or has provided a statement but has not referenced how the candidate meets or exceeds their institutional EDI policies to the expected degree.</p> <p><b>Item 2:</b> The nomination is not aligned with a current OICR priority call/area.</p> <p><b>Item 3:</b> The candidate does not self-identify as a member of a historically under-represented group (visible minority, Indigenous, member of the LGBTQ+ community, etc.).</p> <p><b>Item 4:</b> The host institution is not located in an under-represented region in Ontario (e.g., Northern Ontario).</p> <p><b>Item 5:</b> The host institution is not under-represented in terms of current IA allocations. In most cases, the institution would have more than one current IA, or for larger institutions, more than three.</p> | <p><b>Item 1:</b> The Host Institution has not proposed to co-fund the award. For Senior Investigators, lack of co-funding would make the EOI ineligible for further consideration.</p> <p><b>Item 2:</b> the Host Institution has not noted any recruitment or retention needs.</p> <p><b>Item 3:</b> OICR support is not required for the institute to recruit or retain the candidate.</p> |

When necessary, ratings/scores for each criterion will be summed to give a total score for the EOI, which may be used to rank submissions should the number of EOIs for consideration exceed the available IA budget.